

A BIBLICAL COUNSELING COALITION BOOK

BIBLICAL COUNSELING AND THE CHURCH

GOD'S CARE THROUGH GOD'S PEOPLE



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FOREWORD BY PAUL TRIPP

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN

Biblical Counseling and the Church

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CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL COUNSELING
AND SOUL CARE IN
THE CHURCH

FIGURE 1
DISCIPLESHIP AND COUNSELING CONTINUUM

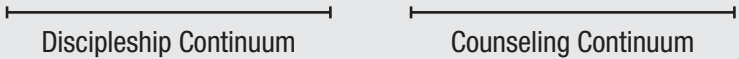


FIGURE 2
DISCIPLESHIP & CARE CONTINUUM

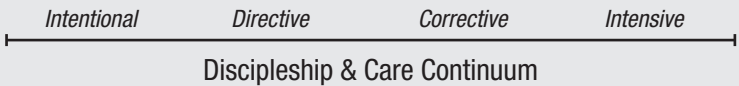


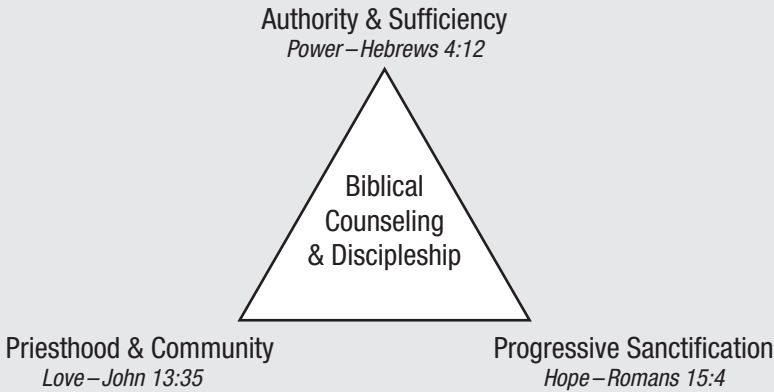
TABLE 1
KEY DIFFERENCES IN COUNSELING METHODS

	Secular (Medical) Model	Traditional Biblical Counseling	Counseling in Community
50 minute sessions	✓	✓	Usually Longer
One-on-one	✓	✓	Rarely
Trained “expert” practitioner	✓	✓	Sometimes**
Formal setting	✓	✓	Sometimes**
Biblical authority	n/a	✓	✓
Biblical sufficiency	n/a	✓	✓
Advocates/godly friend involved	n/a	*	✓
Relational 360-degree assessment	n/a	*	✓
Emphasis on small group/community	n/a	*	✓
Local church based care	n/a	*	✓
Apprentices in counseling sessions	Sometimes	*	✓

* Some para-church counseling ministries and conventional bc departments in churches are increasingly moving toward adopting these in their counseling approaches.

** CIC includes both informal and formal counseling. In the higher levels of care, our BSC ministry, for example, uses trained counselors in more formal office settings.

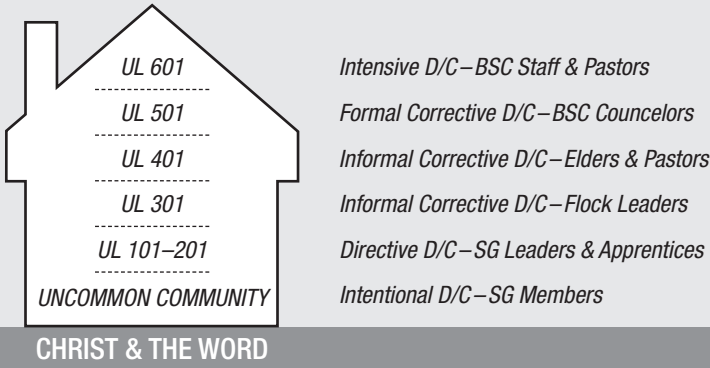
FIGURE 3
BIBLICAL COUNSELING & DISCIPLESHIP



CHAPTER 7

BIBLICAL COUNSELING
AND UNCOMMON
COMMUNITY

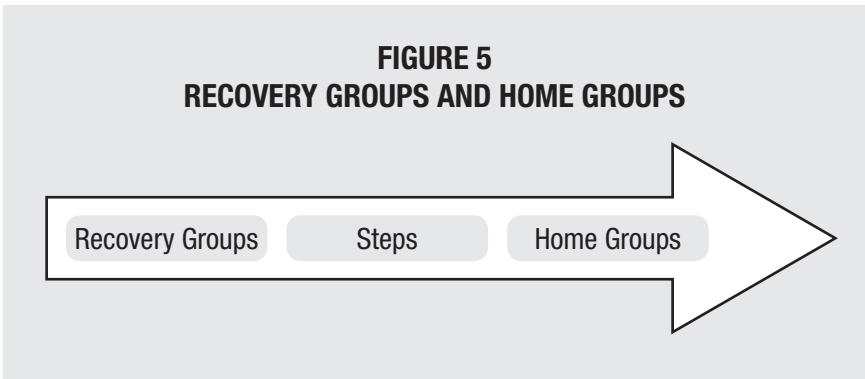
FIGURE 4
BEING BUILT UP AS A SPIRITUAL HOUSE
1 PETER 2:4–5



CHAPTER 8

BIBLICAL COUNSELING AND SMALL GROUPS: COUNSELING IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY

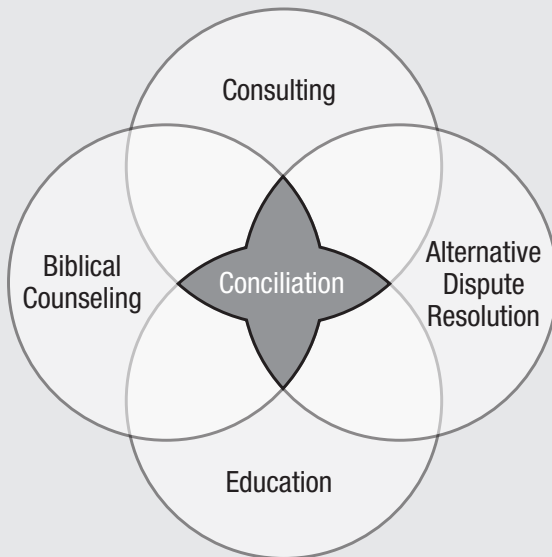
FIGURE 5
RECOVERY GROUPS AND HOME GROUPS



CHAPTER 10

BIBLICAL COUNSELING, THE CHURCH, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

FIGURE 6
BIBLICAL COUNSELING & DISCIPLESHIP

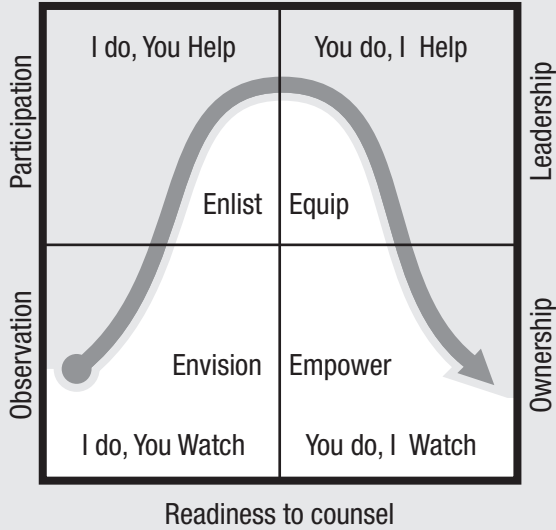


EQUIPPING BIBLICAL COUNSELORS FOR YOUR CHURCH

TABLE 2
THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF COMPREHENSIVE
BIBLICAL COUNSELING EQUIPPING

Christlike Character:	“Full of Goodness”	Heart/Being
Biblical Content:	“Complete in Knowledge”	Head/Knowing
Relational Competence:	“Competent to Instruct”	Hands/Doing
Christian Community:	“Brothers/One Another”	Home/Loving

FIGURE 7
READINESS TO COUNSEL



LAUNCHING AND LEADING A BIBLICAL COUNSELING MINISTRY FOR THE CHURCHES OF THE NATIONS

FIGURE 8 SEVEN PHASES IN OUR COUNSELING UNDERSTANDING

1. **You Discover Your Need for** ... (Biblical Counseling Training) ... Training in Biblical Sufficiency-Based Redemptive Discipleship
2. **You Learn about** ... (Biblical Counseling) ... Truly and Purely Biblical Soul Care
3. **You Train to** ... (Counsel Biblically) ... Do the Biblically Based and Personalized Ministry of Soul Restoration
4. **You Do** ... (Biblical Counseling), meaning you ... Engage in the Ministry of Using the Scriptures to Graciously Restore Broken Believers to a Vital Relationship with Jesus Christ
5. **You Talk about** ... (Biblical Counseling) ... the Impact of Practical Theology That Is Personally Applied
6. **You Train Other Believers** ... (Biblical Counselors) ... to Use the Bible to Help Their Fellow Believers with the Challenges of Life
7. **You Train Christian Leaders** ... (Biblical Counseling Trainers) ... to Train Other Christians

ETHICAL AND LEGAL ISSUES IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING IN THE CHURCH: CARING LIKE CHRIST

TABLE 3
THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF COMPREHENSIVE
BIBLICAL COUNSELING QUALIFICATION

<i>Christlike Character:</i>	"Full of Goodness"	Heart/Being
<i>Biblical Content/Conviction:</i>	"Complete in Knowledge"	Head/Knowing
<i>Counseling Competence:</i>	"Competent to Instruct"	Hands/Doing
<i>Christian Community:</i>	"Brothers/One Another"	Home/Loving

FIGURE 9
FOUR MARKS OF CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER THAT
EVERY BIBLICAL COUNSELOR MUST CULTIVATE

- 1. Relating like Christ:** Loving God and Others Passionately
- 2. Thinking like Christ:** Renewing My Mind to View Life from God's Eternal Perspective
- 3. Choosing like Christ:** Dying to Self and Living Sacrificially for Others
- 4. Feeling like Christ:** Facing Life Honestly and Managing My Moods Biblically

FIGURE 10
**EIGHT ULTIMATE LIFE QUESTIONS THAT EVERY BIBLICAL
COUNSELOR MUST ADDRESS**

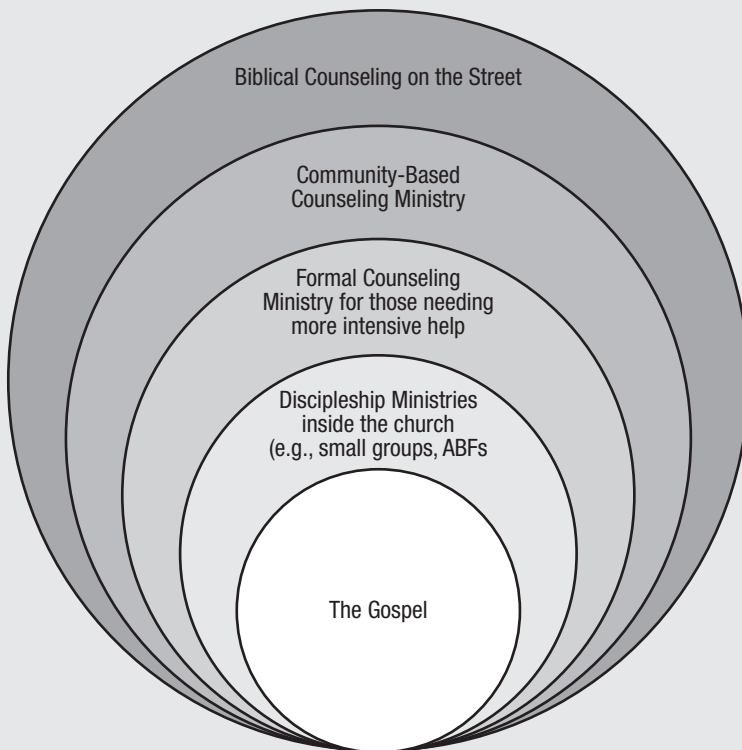
- The Word: “Where do we find wisdom for life in a broken world?”
- The Trinity/Community: “What comes into our mind when we think about God?”
- Creation: “Whose are we?”
- Fall: “What’s the root source of our problem?”
- Redemption: “How does Christ bring us peace with God?” “How does Christ change people?”
- Church: “Where can we find a place to belong and become?”
- Consummation: “How does our future destiny with Christ make a difference in our lives today as saints who struggle against suffering and sin?”
- Sanctification: “Why are we here?” “How do we become like Jesus?”

FIGURE 11
**FOUR CORE RELATIONAL COMPETENCIES THAT
EVERY BIBLICAL COUNSELOR MUST DEVELOP**

- Sustaining Competencies for *Parakaletic* Biblical Counseling
- Healing Competencies for *Parakaletic* Biblical Counseling
- Reconciling Competencies for *Nouthetic* Biblical Counseling
- Guiding Competencies for *Nouthetic* Biblical Counseling

BIBLICAL COUNSELING, THE CHURCH, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

FIGURE 13
CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING INFLUENCE



APPENDIX I

THE BIBLICAL COUNSELING COALITION CONFESSIONAL STATEMENT

PREAMBLE: SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE — A VISION FOR THE ENTIRE CHURCH

We are a fellowship of Christians committed to promoting excellence and unity in biblical counseling. Our goal is to foster collaborative relationships and to provide robust, relevant biblical resources that equip the body of Christ to change lives with Christ's changeless truth. We desire to advance the biblical counseling movement in Christ-centered cooperation by relating in ways that are loving and wise, pursuing the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

We pursue this purpose by organizing our thinking around one central question: "What does it mean to counsel in the grace and truth of Christ?" All that we do flows from our calling to equip people to love God and others in Christ-centered ways (Matt. 22:35–40).

More than counseling, our vision is for the entire church to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:11 – 16). We are dedicated to developing the theology and practice of the personal ministry of the Word, whether described as biblical counseling, pastoral counseling, personal discipleship, one-another ministry, small group ministry, cure of souls, soul care, spiritual friendship, or spiritual direction. We seek to promote the strengthening of these ministries in churches, para-church organizations, and educational institutions by ministering to people who offer care, people who are seeking care, and people who train caregivers.

INTRODUCTION: IN CHRIST ALONE

The goal of biblical counseling is spiritual, relational, and personal maturity as evidenced in desires, thoughts, motives, actions, and emotions that increasingly reflect Jesus (Eph. 4:17 – 5:2). We believe that such personal change must be centered on the Person of Christ. We are convinced that personal ministry centered on Christ and anchored in Scripture offers the only lasting hope and loving help to a fallen and broken world.

We confess that we have not arrived. We comfort and counsel others only as we continue to receive ongoing comfort and counsel from Christ and the body of Christ (2 Cor. 1:3 – 11). We admit that we struggle to apply consistently all that we believe. We who counsel live in process, just like those we counsel, so we want to learn and grow in the wisdom and mercies of Christ.

All Christian ministry arises from and is anchored in God’s revelation — which is both the written Word (Scripture) and the living Word (Christ). This is true for the personal ministry of the Word (conversational and relational ministry which our culture calls “counseling”) and for the various public ministries of the Word. In light of this core conviction about Christ-centered, Word-based ministry, we affirm the following central commitments as biblical counselors.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE ANCHORED IN SCRIPTURE

We believe that God's Word is authoritative, sufficient, and relevant (Isa. 55:11; Matt. 4:4; Heb. 4:12–13). The inspired and inerrant Scriptures, rightly interpreted and carefully applied, offer us God's comprehensive wisdom. We learn to understand who God is, who we are, the problems we face, how people change, and God's provision for that change in the Gospel (John 8:31–32; 10:10; 17:17). No other source of knowledge thoroughly equips us to counsel in ways that transform the human heart (Ps. 19:7–14; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:3). Other systems of counseling aim for other goals and assume a different dynamic of change. The wisdom given by God in His Word is distinctive and robust. He comprehensively addresses the sin and suffering of all people in all situations.

Wise counseling is an insightful application of God's all-embracing truth to our complex lives (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6; Phil. 1:9–11). It does not merely collect proof-texts from the Bible. Wise counseling requires ongoing practical theological labor in order to understand Scripture, people, and situations (2 Tim. 2:15). We must continually develop our personal character, case-wise understanding of people, and pastoral skills (Rom. 15:14; Col. 1:28–29).

When we say that Scripture is comprehensive in wisdom, we mean that the Bible makes sense of all things, not that it contains all the information people could ever know about all topics. God's common grace brings many good things to human life. However, common grace cannot save us from our struggles with sin or from the troubles that beset us. Common grace cannot sanctify or cure the soul of all that ails the human condition. We affirm that numerous sources (such as scientific research, organized observations about human behavior, those we counsel, reflection on our own life experience, literature, film, and history) can contribute to our knowledge of people, and many sources can contribute some relief for the troubles of life. However, none can constitute a comprehensive system of counseling principles and practices.

When systems of thought and practice claim to prescribe a cure for the human condition, they compete with Christ (Col. 2:1–15). Scripture alone teaches a perspective and way of looking at life by which we can think biblically about and critically evaluate information and actions from any source (Col. 2:2–10; 2 Tim. 3:16–17).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE CENTERED ON CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL

We believe that wise counseling centers on Jesus Christ—His sinless life, death on the cross, burial, resurrection, present reign, and promised return. Through the Gospel, God reveals the depths of sin, the scope of suffering, and the breadth, length, height, and depth of grace. Wise counseling gets to the heart of personal and interpersonal problems by bringing to bear the truth, mercy, and power of Christ's grace (John 1:14). There is no true restoration of the soul and there are no truly God-honoring relationships without understanding the desperate condition we are in without Christ and apart from experiencing the joy of progressive deliverance from that condition through God's mercies.

We point people to a person, Jesus our Redeemer, and not to a program, theory, or experience. We place our trust in the transforming power of the Redeemer as the only hope to change people's hearts, not in any human system of change. People need a personal and dynamic relationship with Jesus, not a system of self-salvation, self-management, or self-actualization (John 14:6). Wise counselors seek to lead struggling, hurting, sinning, and confused people to the hope, resources, strength, and life that are available only in Christ.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE GROUNDED IN SOUND THEOLOGY

We believe that biblical counseling is fundamentally a practical theological discipline because every aspect of life is related to God. God

intends that we care for one another in ways that relate human struggles to His person, purposes, promises, and will. Wise counseling arises from a theological way of looking at life—a mindset, a worldview—that informs how we understand people, problems, and solutions. The best biblical counselors are wise, balanced, caring, experienced practical theologians (Phil. 1:9–11).

Biblical counselors relate the Scriptures relevantly to people's lives (Heb. 3:12–19). All wise counseling understands particular passages and a person's unique life experience within the context of the Bible's larger story line: God's creation, our fall into sin, His redemptive plan, and the consummation of all things. Thus we engage in person-specific conversations that flow naturally out of a comprehensive biblical theology of life.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE DEPENDENT UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PRAYER

We believe that both genuine change of heart and transformation of lifestyle depend upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15–16:16; 2 Cor. 3:17–18). Biblical counselors know that it is impossible to speak wisely and lovingly to bring about true and lasting change apart from the decisive, compassionate, and convicting work of the Spirit in the counselor and the counselee. We acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the One who illuminates our understanding of the Word and empowers its application in everyday life.

Wise counselors serve in the truth that God reveals and by the strength that God supplies. By the Spirit's work, God receives glory in all the good that takes place in people's lives. Biblical counselors affirm the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to guide and empower the counselor, the counselee, and the counseling relationship. Dependent prayer is essential to the work of biblical counseling (Eph. 6:18–20). Wise counselors humbly request God's intervention

and direction, praise God for His work in people's lives, and intercede for people that they would experience genuine life change to the glory of God (Phil. 4:6).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE DIRECTED TOWARD SANCTIFICATION

We believe that wise counseling should be transformative, change-oriented, and grounded in the doctrine of sanctification (2 Cor. 3:16–18; Phil. 2:12–13). The lifelong change process begins at salvation (justification, regeneration, redemption, reconciliation) and continues until we see Jesus face-to-face (1 John 3:1–3). The aim of wise counseling is intentional and intensive discipleship. The fruit of wise counseling is spiritually mature people who increasingly reflect Christ (relationally, rationally, volitionally, and emotionally) by enjoying and exalting God and by loving others well and wisely (Gal. 5:22–6:10).

Wise counseling seeks to embrace the Bible's teaching regarding God's role and human responsibility in spiritual growth. God's strength and mercy call for our response of faith and obedience. A comprehensive theology of the spiritual life provides the basis for applying relevant biblical methods of spiritual growth. Biblical counseling helps believers to understand what it means to be in Christ (Rom. 6:3–14). It equips them to apply the principles of progressive sanctification through renewing their minds and actions based on Scripture with a motive of love for God and others (Rom. 12:1–2).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE ROOTED IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

We believe that we best reflect the Trinity as we live and grow in community (John 17; Ephesians 4). Sanctification is not a self-improvement project, but a process of learning to love and serve God and others. Wise counseling embeds personal change within God's community—the

church—with all God’s rich resources of corporate and interpersonal means of grace (1 Cor. 12:12–27). We believe that the church should be both the center and the sender of Gospel-centered counseling (Rom. 15:14).

By example and exhortation the New Testament commends the personal, face-to-face, one-another ministry of the Word—whether in one-to-one or small group relationships (Heb. 3:12–19; 10:19–25). God calls the church to mutual wise counseling just as He calls the church to public ministries of the Word in preaching, teaching, worship, and observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. God desires His people to love and serve each other by speaking His truth in love to one another (Eph. 4:15–16). The primary and fullest expression of counseling ministry is meant to occur in local church communities where pastors effectively shepherd souls while equipping and overseeing diverse forms of every-member ministry (Eph. 4:11–14). Other like-minded counseling institutions and organizations are beneficial insofar as they serve alongside the church, encourage Christians to counsel biblically, and purpose to impact the world for Christ.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE FOUNDED IN LOVE

We believe that Christ’s incarnation is not just the basis for care, but also the model for how we care (Heb. 4:14–16; John 13:34–35). We seek to enter into a person’s story, listening well, expressing thoughtful love, and engaging the person with compassion (1 Thess. 2:8). The wise and loving personal ministry of the Word takes many appropriate forms, from caring comfort to loving rebuke, from careful listening to relevant scriptural exploration, all while building trusting, authentic relationships (1 Thess. 5:14–15; 1 John 4:7–21).

Wise counseling takes into account all that people experience (desires, thoughts, goals, actions, words, emotions, struggles, situational pressure, physical suffering, abuse, injustice, etc.). All of human experience is the

context for understanding how God's Word relates to life. Such awareness not only shapes the content of counseling, but also shapes the way counselors interact so that everything said is constructive, according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to the hearer (Eph. 4:29).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE ATTENTIVE TO HEART ISSUES

We believe that human behavior is tied to thoughts, intentions, and affections of the heart. All our actions arise from hearts that are worshipping either God or something else; therefore we emphasize the importance of the heart and address the inner person. God fully understands and rightly weighs who we are, what we do, and why we do it. While we cannot completely understand a person's heart (even our own), God's Word reveals and penetrates the heart's core beliefs and intentions (Heb. 4:12–13).

Wise counseling seeks to address both the inward and outward aspects of human life to bring thorough and lasting change into the image of Christ. The Bible is clear that human behavior is not mechanical, but grows out of a heart that desires, longs, thinks, chooses, and feels in ways that are oriented either toward or against Christ. Wise counsel appropriately focuses on the vertical and the horizontal dimensions, on the inner and the outer person, on observable behavior and underlying issues of the heart (Matt. 23:23–28). Biblical counselors work to help struggling people to learn wisdom; to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength; to love one's neighbor as oneself; and to endure suffering in hope.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE IN UNDERSTANDING

We believe that biblical counseling should focus on the full range of human nature created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–28). A

comprehensive biblical understanding sees human beings as relational (spiritual and social), rational, volitional, emotional, and physical. Wise counseling takes the whole person seriously in his or her whole life context. It helps people to embrace all of life face-to-face with Christ so they become more like Christ in their relationships, thoughts, motivations, behaviors, and emotions.

We recognize the complexity of the relationship between the body and soul (Gen. 2:7). Because of this, we seek to remain sensitive to physical factors and organic issues that affect people's lives. In our desire to help people comprehensively, we seek to apply God's Word to people's lives amid bodily strengths and weaknesses. We encourage a thorough assessment and sound treatment for any suspected physical problems.

We recognize the complexity of the connection between people and their social environment. Thus we seek to remain sensitive to the impact of suffering and of the great variety of significant social-cultural factors (1 Peter 3:8–22). In our desire to help people comprehensively, we seek to apply God's Word to people's lives amid both positive and negative social experiences. We encourage people to seek appropriate practical aid when their problems have a component that involves education, work life, finances, legal matters, criminality (either as a victim or a perpetrator), and other social matters.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE THOROUGH IN CARE

We believe that God's Word is profitable for dealing thoroughly with the evils we suffer as well as with the sins we commit. Since struggling people usually experience some combination of besetting sin and personal suffering, wise counselors seek to discern the differences and connections between sin and suffering, and to minister appropriately to both (1 Thess. 5:14).

Biblical counseling addresses suffering and engages sufferers in many compassionate ways. It offers God's encouragement, comfort,

and hope for the hurting (Rom. 8:17–18; 2 Cor. 1:3–8). It encourages mercy ministry (Acts 6:1–7) and seeks to promote justice. Biblical counseling addresses sin and engages sinners in numerous caring ways. It offers God’s confrontation of sins, encourages repentance of sins, presents God’s gracious forgiveness in Christ, and shares God’s powerful path for progressive victory over sin (1 John 1:8–2:2; 2 Cor. 2:5–11; Col. 3:1–17; 2 Tim. 2:24–26).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE PRACTICAL AND RELEVANT

We believe that a commitment to the sufficiency of God’s Word results in counseling that demonstrates the relevancy of God’s Word. Biblical counseling offers a practical approach to daily life that is uniquely effective in the real world where people live and relate (1 John 3:11–24). By instruction and example, the Bible teaches foundational methodological principles for wise interaction and intervention (Acts 20:26–37; Gal. 6:1–5; Col. 1:24–2:1).

Within the Bible’s overall guidelines for the personal ministry of the Word, there is room for a variety of practical methods of change, all anchored in applying scriptural truth to people’s lives and relationships. The Bible calls us to use wise methods that minister in Christ-centered ways to the unique life situations of specific people (Prov. 15:23; 25:11). We are to speak what is helpful for building others up according to the need of the moment, that it may benefit those who listen (Eph. 4:29).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MUST BE ORIENTED TOWARD OUTREACH

We believe that Christianity is missionary minded by its very nature. Biblical counseling should be a powerful evangelistic and apologetic force in our world. We want to bring the good news of Jesus and His Word to the world that only God can redeem. We seek to speak in relevant ways to Christians and non-Christians, to draw them to the Savior and the distinctive wisdom that comes only from His Word (Titus 2:10–15).

We want to present the claims, mercies, hope, and relevance of Christ in a positive, loving, Christlike spirit (1 Peter 3:15). We seek to engage the broad spectrum of counseling models and approaches. We want to affirm what is biblical and wise. Where we believe models and methods fall short of Christ's call, we want to critique clearly and charitably. When interacting with people with whom we differ, we want to communicate in ways that are respectful, firm, gracious, fair-minded, and clear. When we perceive error, we want to humbly point people forward toward the way of truth so that we all become truer, wiser, more loving counselors. We want to listen well to those who disagree with us and learn from their critiques. Our mission to spread the truth and fame of Jesus Christ includes a desire that all counselors appreciate and embrace the beauty of a Christ-centered and Word-based approach to people, problems, and solutions.

CONCLUSION: UNITY IN TRUTH AND LOVE

We are committed to generating a unified effort among God's people to glorify Christ and multiply disciples through the personal ministry of the Word (Matt. 28:18–20). We trust in Jesus Christ in whom grace and truth are perfectly joined (John 1:14). We cling to His Word, in which truth and love live in perfect union (Eph. 4:15; Phil. 1:9; 1 Thess. 2:8). We love His church—living and speaking the truth in love, growing up in Him who is the Head, and building itself up in love as each part does its work (Eph. 4:15–16).

We desire to encourage this unity in truth and love through a fresh vision for biblical counseling. When people ask, “What makes biblical counseling truly biblical?” we unite to affirm:

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

We invite you to join us on this journey of promoting excellence and unity in biblical counseling. Join us as we seek to equip one another to promote personal change, centered on the Person of Christ through the personal ministry of the Word.

APPENDIX 2

THE BIBLICAL COUNSELING COALITION DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

The following statement summarizes the core doctrinal beliefs of the Biblical Counseling Coalition. It is not an exhaustive statement, but a theological framework concerning our core affirmations regarding the central doctrines of the Christian faith.

ABOUT THE BIBLE

We believe that God has given the Bible as His inspired, infallible, inerrant, and living revelatory Word. We affirm the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible and are therefore committed to the complete trustworthiness and primacy of Scripture. The Bible is God's relevant, profound, deeply personal communication to us that invites us to intimate fellowship with Him. The Scriptures consist of the sixty-six books

of the Old and New Testaments. They are the totally sufficient, authoritative, and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice, and doctrine, and are profitable for glorifying God through growth in likeness to Christ, which is our life purpose.

The Bible is complete in its revelation of who God is, His person, character, promises, commandments, and will for the salvation of a people for His own possession. The Bible reveals who we are: created in God's image, accountable to God, fallen into sin against God, judged and justly condemned by God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and transformed by the Holy Spirit. The Bible reveals the meaning of our total life situation in each and all its aspects—all the blessings of this life, the variety of sufferings and hardships, Satan, the influence of other human beings, etc. The Bible also reveals the nature of the Christian life and the ministries of the church, showing the content, the functions, and the goals that express the image of Christ.

ABOUT THE TRIUNE GOD

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. They are forever equal in nature, attributes, and perfection, yet forever distinct in Their relations to one another and distinct in Their particular relationships both to the creation and to the actions and processes of redemption. They are equally worthy of our worship, love, and obedience. This One true and living God is infinitely perfect both in His love and in His holiness. The triune God, in affectionate sovereignty, sustains and rules over all things, providentially bringing about His eternal good purpose to redeem a people for Himself—to the praise of the glory of His grace.

ABOUT GOD THE FATHER

We believe that God, as the Father, reigns over His entire universe with providential care, holy justice, and saving mercy, to His own glory. In

His holy love, the Father is all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing, and all-wise. He is fatherly in attitude toward all, but Father, indeed, to those who have been made children of God through salvation in Christ.

ABOUT GOD THE SON, JESUS CHRIST

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who humbled Himself by taking on the form of a man by means of His virgin birth, becoming forever both fully human without ceasing to be fully God. We affirm that He lived a sinless life of active love and perfect wisdom. He died by crucifixion on the cross, by His shed blood and death making a vicarious, substitutionary atonement for our sins. After three days, He was resurrected bodily from the dead, unto an indestructible life. After appearing to His disciples and instructing them for forty days, He ascended to heaven. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for believers, reigning as King over all creation, and working in and through His Church. He will personally return in power and glory to judge the living and the dead, and to raise to immortality those who eagerly await Him, perfecting them in His image.

ABOUT GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that God the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, has come into the world to reveal and glorify Christ, and to convict and draw sinners to Christ. From the moment of spiritual birth, He indwells believers, individually and corporately, as their Helper. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family. He imparts new life to believers, placing them into the body of Christ, transforming and empowering them for Christlike living, and sealing them until the day of redemption. He is the source of power for all acceptable worship and ministry as He imparts a diversity of enabling gifts that equip God's people for service. He provides the power to understand and apply God's truth in love.

ABOUT HUMANITY — CREATION

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, male and female, and declared them “very good,” granting them all the capacities of image bearers. God created them to reflect and to enjoy His glory. They were created material and immaterial, physical body and spiritual soul, these qualities united and inseparably interdependent. They were created with a conscience able to discern good and evil, with the capacity to relate, think, choose, and feel in all the fruitfulness of wisdom. They were designed and commissioned to love God and one another, living in holy and devoted fellowship with God and in loving, complementary relationship with each other. They were designed and commissioned to care for and govern His creation, working in and ruling over all creation as God’s faithful servants and stewards.

ABOUT HUMANITY — FALL

We believe that because of voluntary sin against God, Adam and Eve fell from the actively good, sinless, and innocent state in which they were first created. They became self-willed, perverse, and transgressive against God and each other. Immediately they died spiritually and also began to die physically. Consequently, for them and all their progeny, the image of God was distorted and their nature depraved and corrupted in every aspect of their being (spiritually, socially, mentally, volitionally, and emotionally). While human beings are corrupted in every aspect of their being and functioning, because of God’s common grace the image of God has not been totally eradicated, and evil is not given full reign. God preserves and enables many common goods. All people have true dignity, a conscience in which clarity coexists with distortion, and many powers of mind, action, and feeling. All humanity is separated and alienated from God and thus spiritually dead — until God’s own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to God; and the only hope of all human beings is to

receive the undeserved grace of God in Christ. God alone can rescue us and restore sinners to Himself.

ABOUT SALVATION — REDEMPTION

We believe that salvation is the gift of God by grace alone and is received through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is wholly conceived, accomplished, and applied by God's sovereign grace. It is not, in whole or in part, conceived or accomplished by human will or works. We believe that salvation refers comprehensively to the entire work of God that redeems His people from the penalty, power, and eventual presence of sin while imputing to His people the righteousness of Jesus Christ and all the benefits of adoption into His family. This salvation overthrows the dominion of darkness and creates a new people who enter Christ's body of light, truth, and love.

We affirm that salvation is only through Christ, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Christ voluntarily took upon Himself the form of a man, was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin in nature, word, or deed. He honored the Divine Law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins. Jesus, having risen bodily from the dead, is now enthroned in heaven, serving as the suitable, compassionate, all-sufficient Savior and the Mediator for His believer-priests.

We believe that all the blessings of salvation are free gifts of God, and that each is a glorious facet of union with Christ. In Christ, persons once justly condemned are now forgiven and justified because Christ died bearing our sins, because He was raised for our justification, and because God imputes to His people the righteousness of Jesus Christ. In Christ, persons once dead in trespasses and sins are now made spiritually alive in the new birth, receive the Holy Spirit, and receive eternal life. In Christ, persons whose father and master was the devil are now adopted by God the Father into His family and become citizens and servants in God's kingdom. In Christ, persons who were estranged

from God are now reconciled forever. God gives all these gifts, and more, by the Holy Spirit, and we receive all these gifts by faith.

We believe that by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. On the cross He canceled sin, satisfied by His sacrifice the wrath of God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all who believe. We believe that by His resurrection, Christ Jesus was vindicated by His Father, broke the power of death, defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all His people. We believe that by His ascension, Jesus Christ has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with Him. We believe that at His return, Jesus Christ will wipe away all tears, will remove all sin and suffering, will establish forever His kingdom of love, joy, and peace, and will perfect His holy Bride. We believe that all whom God regenerates are made at once children of God, justified in His sight through faith alone in Christ's atoning work, and brought into His family. We believe that believers are kept by the power of God through faith in a state of grace and are eternally secure apart from any human works. We believe that we who are Christ's body will see Him face-to-face, and that we will live with Him and with one another forever.

ABOUT SANCTIFICATION

We believe that sanctification is the process by which believers, each one and all together—set apart from sin and united in Christ—are increasingly conformed to the image of Christ. Sanctification has past, present, and future aspects. First, believers are “chosen, holy and beloved” in Christ, set apart for God in union with Christ, and are actually made new by regeneration (positional or definitive sanctification). Second, believers begin to mature in their new life, set apart day-by-day through growth in grace into the likeness of Christ. This process (progressive sanctification) takes place by the power of the Holy

Spirit, through the Word of God, in the communion of the saints, by the continual use of God's appointed means of growth in grace, each member contributing to the growth of the whole unto maturity in Christ. Third, believers will be set apart from the very presence of sin when sanctification is completed (glorification) at the coming of Christ for the Church. Definitive sanctification in the past and glorification in the future provide anchors that sustain hope and bring encouragement amidst the failures and sufferings that make progressive sanctification a long and arduous pilgrimage.

ABOUT THE CHURCH

We believe that the Church, the Body of Christ, is composed of all persons living and dead who have been joined to Christ and one another by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every true believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ and thus united in Christ to one another in unity and love across social, economic, and ethnic lines. We affirm that the local church is God's primary instrument and context for His work today; that every believer should be an active member in a local assembly; and that the Christian community is the context where believers are mutually encouraged, equipped, and empowered to conform to the image of Christ through worship, fellowship, discipleship, stewardship, and ambassadorship (evangelism). The sanctification of an individual is not a personal self-improvement project, but is the formation of a constructive, fruitful member of the Body of Christ. We believe it is every believer's privilege and obligation to be an instrument in the Redeemer's hands. This requires an intentional involvement in the lives of others: learning to speak and to live the truth in love, learning humility, and learning to forgive and to give, so that we all grow in unity and maturity into Christ, who is the Head. The true mission of the Church is to bring God glory, as believers (individually and corporately) live consistent with the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper

are ordained by the Lord Jesus Himself. They are our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and our anticipation of His return and of the consummation of all things.

ABOUT THE ETERNAL STATE AND THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ when His kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of Him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the eternal home of righteousness. On that day, the Church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering, and triumph of Christ; all sin will be purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all, His people will be enthralled with Him, and everything will be done to the praise of His glorious grace.

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