

Editorial
INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

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The landscape of biblical counseling is quite exciting! On the horizon we see a movement that is burgeoning with interest, resources, qualified practitioners and teachers, non-profits, educational institutions and churches that are perpetuating the biblical care of souls. It is a time of great excitement and great rejoicing for what the Lord has done to re-centralize his word in the care of souls. Never before has biblical counseling been able to enjoy such broad interest with so little need for an apologetic posture.² In light of this rapid growth, it seems one of the greatest needs of the biblical counseling movement in modern day is no longer an apologetic of jurisdictional boundaries, but a thoughtful and biblical preservation of the theological principles that promote its methodology.

As a movement grows, the tendency can be a weakening of its fundamental structure and mission as it assimilates new people and processes. Growth brings about inherent challenges to remain biblical and faithful, and this is also true of biblical counseling. Perhaps there is no better illustration of this than the American University. Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and the University of Chicago are all examples of institutions that began with firm biblical commitments to the Scriptures, religious involvement, orthodox theology, and yet all have consistently

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² Of note, the majority of Jay Adams's original work in biblical counseling was apologetic in nature as he sought to regain the jurisdiction of soul care within the realm of the Christ and the church. "Adams sought to mobilize pastors against what he perceived as a fourfold foe: their own ineptitude in and evasion of the counseling task, the secular mental health system, the liberal pastoral theologians, and the evangelical psychotherapists" (51) in David Powlison's *The Biblical Counseling Movement* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2010). His apologetic tone is seen throughout *Competent to Counsel* about which he said, "It was a war cry for people" (Ibid., 51). This war cry was that "Jesus Christ is at the center of all true Christian counseling. Any counseling which moves Christ from that position of centrality has to the extent that it has done so ceased to be Christian" Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970), 41. Furthermore, Ed Welch, in an article written to secular psychologists said: "Your theories are heavy with assumptions about who we are, why we do the things we do, and where we are going. This is clergy turf" (emphasis added) in "A Discussion Among Clergy: Pastoral Counseling Talks with Secular Psychology," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Winter 1995). Notably, this article was written over twenty years ago when an apologetic tone was the order of the day, however this apologetic tone has by-and-large ceased to exist.

transitioned towards non-belief.³ This weakening can come through individuals that bring a false teaching, as seen in the hiring of John Dewey at the University of Chicago who helped ushered in an era of pragmatism. However, this weakening can also come through an emphasis on collaboration at the expense of doctrinal integrity.⁴ Really, theological weakening can come in many ways, even for biblical counseling, including an overemphasis on methodology and no theoretical or theological accountability. The editors of the JBSC see this and it is from this awareness that we have sought to fill the gap, so to speak.

The purpose of the Journal of Biblical Soul Care (JBSC) is to advance scholarship for the biblical care of souls within higher education. This effort is driven by the understanding that for biblical counseling to truly be biblical in fifty years, it will need individuals to focus on the theological and theoretical principles that undergird the methodologies of the movement. The popularity and relevancy of biblical counseling methodology has a potential to underemphasize (perhaps already has?) the foundational theology upon which those methodologies are and were built. Therefore, the JBSC is seeking to emphasize the advancement and preservation of those theological and theoretical principles that allow for truly biblical soul care.

³ George Marsden recounts this progression in his work, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). He displays how religion was supplanted by postmodernism and naturalism: "One way to describe the current state of affairs, however, is that, in effect, the only points of view that are allowed full academic credence are those that presuppose purely naturalistic worldviews... Despite counter efforts to restore religious perspectives in the 1950's, naturalism and pragmatism held the field academically" (430). Also see J.A. Appleyard's "The Secularization of the Modern American University," in *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 10 (1996): 31-33. This secularization serves as a warning for those who would seek to remain biblically faithful during times of growth and expansion.

⁴ Historically, creeds and confessions have established the boundaries of fellowship and Christian collaboration. In speaking of the necessity of creeds and confessions, Samuel Miller noted, "Creeds and confessions, then, so far from having a tendency to 'alienate' and 'embitter' those Christian denominations which think nearly alike, and ought to maintain fraternal intercourse, really tend to make them acquainted with each other; to lay a foundation for regular and cordial intercourse; to beget mutual confidence; and thus to promote the harmony of the church of God" *Doctrinal Integrity* (Dallas, TX: Presbyterian Heritage, 1989), 16. Miller even argues that collaboration best comes when Christians are rallying around creeds and confessions (14), which notes the importance of collaboration based on doctrinal integrity. Conversely, collaboration for the sake of collaboration is destined to fracture.

Three Counseling Conversations: Upstream, Mid-Stream and Downstream

In order to advance scholarship for the biblical care of souls within higher education we recognize that there are three conversations that must be understood and articulated. Currently, there aren't essentially three conversations taking place in regards to biblical counseling: upstream conversations, mid-stream conversations, and downstream conversations.⁵ Upstream conversations are those that are not as focused on the "how" of the counseling process but on the "why." These conversations do not always produce an immediate fruit but often produce long-term fruit.

Examples of upstream conversations within biblical counseling can be seen in articles like, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair" or "The Sufficiency of Scripture in Counseling."⁶ These articles are not fundamentally methodological, even though there are great implications for methodology. The answers given by Powlison and Mack to those "why" questions have profoundly influenced the practice of biblical counseling, which are the mid-stream conversations. These articles—and others like them—serve as a great example of upstream conversations within the biblical counseling movement and their corresponding importance. It was Powlison's article that helped to formalize an understanding of human motivation in counseling as being one primarily of a worshiper.⁷ He promoted an idea in upstream conversation that has perpetuated itself some twenty plus years later.

The mid-stream conversations are those that are answering the "how to" questions. Currently, this is seen in the vast publication of mini books, books, articles, blogs, and even video/audio resources. Thankfully, there are many biblical counseling resources that are beginning to address the prior void of resources. Most of the conversations taking place within biblical counseling are an attempt—

⁵ Part of this verbiage and understanding has greatly been sharpened by the insightful voice of Joe Keller of The Master's University.

⁶ David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and 'Vanity Fair,'" *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 13/2 (Winter 1995): 35-50 and Wayne A. Mack, "The Sufficiency of Scripture in Counseling," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 9/1 (Spring 1998): 63-84.

⁷ "It would be difficult to overstate the influence Powlison's contribution has had on biblical counselors. Indeed it could be fair to say that over the past twenty years the movement has been defined by the usage of Powlison's metaphor. The 'idols of the heart' metaphor has been used extensively by a number of authors" in Heath Lambert's *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 76.

in some form or another—to answer the “how to” questions. How to help someone who is depressed, how to counsel a couple post-adultery, how to counsel the grieving mother and so forth. These are much-needed conversations notably, though, they are mid-stream conversations. There is something to celebrate in this dynamic as we see that God is equipping his people to think theologically about emotional, social, and behavioral problems and the sins that surround them. “How to” resources are necessary, and so are the conversations that steer them. But these conversations dwell between the upstream and downstream; they live between the theory and the practice.

The downstream conversations are those that break upon the jetties of where counselee and counselor meet. These conversations are not so much, “how to” but rather application of the “how to” conversation to the lives of people. This looks like the faithful pastor who is counseling the wayward husband: his conversation with the wayward husband is developed through certain understandings of “how to” but is not immediately explaining those understandings. Our counsees are rarely interested in the mid-stream or upstream conversations that steer our counsel to them. Most times there is a combination of bewilderment about God and his doings coupled with a need for someone to orient them to the living God and his doings. Regardless of the counselee’s interest, though, those counseling room conversations flow out of both the midstream and upstream conversations. You cannot get to the downstream conversation without the upstream and midstream conversations. And if you do, your downstream practice will be sloppy and quasi-biblical.

The goal of the Journal of Biblical Soul Care is to contribute to the upstream conversation that will eventually benefit mid-stream and downstream conversations, practice, and biblical soul care. If you are familiar with the process of snowmelt, you recognize that the amount of snow that melts directly feeds rivers that provide valuable water runoff and essential water supply. Upstream conversations serve in a snowmelt-type capacity in that they are needed and in their absence there will be long-term methodological droughts. The current void of upstream conversations may, in fact, prove to be a long-term liability to the practice of biblical counseling if we are not intentional. If the biblical counseling movement does not focus inwardly on the ideologies and preservation of critical doctrines that

undergird its methodologies, and seek to advance them, there will be a weakening of our effectiveness in the long-term. In our good desire to be relevant and helpful to our counselee, we must equally cling to the need of developing right theological frameworks from which those methods are built.

Therefore, our goal with the JBSC is to initiate conversations that will make their way downstream. The journal is written and will be written in such a way that we address those who are upstream along with upstream topics—educators, counselors, trainers, academics, executive directors, and pastors/elders. Most counsees will not be immediately helped by the JBSC, along with most of the mid-stream practitioners. We are not thrilled about this reality, but see this work as contributing to them in a long-term way. Despite the esoteric nature of our material, we find solace in the fact that these conversations will bless the counselee—eventually.

Admittedly, this upstream focus has inherent difficulties, some of which we acknowledge and some of which will be discerned in-process. One of the inherent difficulties of upstream conversations is that they lack immediate applicability as mentioned above, and applicability is what is so helpful about biblical counseling. There are those who ransack biblical counseling material for ‘what to do next,’ yet the JBSC knowingly will leave them unsatisfied in their pursuit. This is a worthwhile difficulty, we believe. The reason being is that we cannot only teach methodologies, despite the burgeoning interest for them, because those methodologies will fail once the biblical theology that undergirds them has been forgotten. Methods are always an outworking of theology, be that good theology or poor theology; there is no exception to this, especially in soul care.

Secondarily, the JBSC will also engage the ideas that are undergirding certain modern biblical counseling methodologies, a task which can communicate a critical tone or ‘unsportsmanlike’ posture. We also recognize this to be a difficulty but intend to offer critiques without becoming critical. The editors are not wanting to suggest that we are the experts. We, too, bring ourselves and our work underneath the copious evaluation of our peers based off of Scripture and biblical wisdom. There is a sense in which our critical engagement is not intended to be critical, but to

be sharpening. A healthy part of the purity of doctrine and beliefs is accountability, and we hope that both our materials and the materials of others would find a godly, amiable platform for consideration, input, and critical evaluation. We believe this will prove to sharpen all of us as we grow in the ability to biblically care for souls.

Thirdly, of the many difficulties, we expect the limits of resources and authors to be one of the most challenging. Through God's kindness many are capable of addressing midstream issues, but few desire or are qualified to speak into the upstream conversations. There are even those who express genuine disdain for the upstream conversation or those who would love to serve in those ways but find their giftedness limited to do so. In facing this last difficulty, we cannot let the absence of resources promote further lack of resources. As the biblical counseling movement grows, there will be less of a void and less of disinterestedness. Therefore, we find this to be a worthwhile challenge. If we can start a conversation that promotes scholarship that feeds upstream biblical soul care conversations, we will be greatly satisfied.

Ambiguity of the Term Biblical Counseling

The current climate of biblical counseling leaves the term biblical counseling somewhat ambiguous.⁸ There is inevitable ambiguity as to what one actually means when they use the term, especially in light of the rapid growth of the biblical counseling movement and increasing world-wide participation in biblical counseling.⁹ It is important to note that the editors affirm and employ the term

⁸Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling: Personal and Emotional Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). Clinton and Hawkins employ the term biblical counseling but use that term to encapsulate the process of integrating biblical principles with behavioral and social sciences. They describe this in their purpose statement of their book: "The knowledge base of biblical and theological studies, combined with the behavioral and social sciences, is advanced far faster than anyone can keep up with in the twenty-first century. Therefore, we have culled from this burgeoning data the most critical and relevant facts and contextual clues that you should know for each of the forty topics that make up the content of this and all the books to follow" (8).

⁹Since the 1990's the term biblical counseling has morphed into a very marketable term. David Powlison notes the rapid growth of biblical counseling post-90's saying, "But around 1990, even as the therapeutic movement among evangelicals came into full flow, nouthetic counseling institutions began to grow, and doubts about psychotherapy became increasingly evidence among conservative Protestants" (Powlison, 219). Previously, nouthetic counseling was the term that would be used instead of biblical counseling. Jay Adams coined the term nouthetic confrontation and all he meant by it was that, "Nouthetic confrontation consists of at least three basic elements ... teaching ... nouthetic confrontation ... [and] a beneficent motive" (44-45, 49) in *Competent to Counsel*

biblical counseling in our ministry of teaching but that—like any term—we also recognize the natural limitations that this term possesses. Limitations like what exactly is the scope of the Bible in the counseling process; how is the Bible employed in the counseling process; or what is the approach one takes to the Bible when counseling from it. In a very real sense we can be a biblical counselor and integrate secular psychologies if by biblical counselor we mean that we incorporate the Bible into our counseling. This ambiguity necessitates greater clarity and we, the editorial team, sense that.

The term soul care is preferable to us because we understand that soul care has been the historically dominant way in which biblical counseling has been articulated. The term biblical counseling is set against the backdrop of a psychologized, modern society, whereas soul care is set against the backdrop of biblical anthropology and the holistic ministry that comprises care of the soul throughout history. Historically, the cure of souls, or care of souls, has been the way in which biblical counseling has been articulated. *Cura animarum* is often the classical way of referring to modern day soul care, while *Seelsorge* would have been a Reformation-era way of referencing this same concept.¹⁰ John McNeill notes,

In the phrase “cure of souls” the word “cure” has something like the range of meaning of the Latin *cura* from which it comes. The primary sense of *cura* is “care,” and it is readily applied either to the tasks involved in the care of a person or thing, or to the mental experience of carefulness or solicitude concerning its object. Occasionally the former

(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970). However, this term was often confusing as it was a transliteration of the Greek term, *νοσητέω*. Furthermore, it did not encapsulate other aspects of the counseling process that were less confrontational. The term Christian Counseling has been used as an alternative to nouthetic counseling and biblical counseling as seen in the works of Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* and *A Christian Counselor’s Manual*. Yet, again, that term was incorporated by those Christians who would be counselors, with or without the sufficient word of God, still leaving a lack of clarity. David Powlison even incorporates the terms psychology bashers classification (and caricature) of those who espouse to the sufficiency of Scripture in the counseling process David Powlison, “Cure of Souls (And the Modern Psychotherapies),” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Spring 2007): 8.

¹⁰ “Pastoral theology is narrower. It refers to the theological rationales used to undergird those ministries most specifically related to the guidance or care of persons—what is often referred to in the classical literature as the cure of souls or *cura animarum*.” In Don Browning, *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976), 15. “Early church practice of pastoral care was called *cura animarum*, the cure of *anima* which was the Latin word for the Hebrew *nephesh* and the Greek *psyche*. For Luther, *Seelsorge* was a necessary pastoral alternative to the obligatory confessional” in Anderson, Herbert. “Whatever Happened to *Seelsorge*?” *Word and World*, 21, no. 1 (2001): 32–41.

direction of meaning is further specialized to signify “healing,” or the means by which healing is affected. It was natural that the Latin Church should employ the expression *cura animarum* in such a way as to comprehend these variations of the meaning of *cura*, and it is in this comprehensive sense that the term “cure of souls” has come into common use in English.¹¹

Plato and Socrates are some of the first to use the term soul care, Socrates even seeing himself as a “healer of the soul.”¹² Notably neither of them were using this term to refer to a biblical care of the soul but both were illustrative of soul care as a historical term. We can also read the works of Gregory the Great in the 6th Century as he employs the term; he said, “How foolish it is for the inexperienced to assume pastoral authority when the care of souls is the art of arts” (emphasis added).¹³ Martin Bucer employs the term “carers of souls,” in the 16th Century when referring to pastors.¹⁴ All of these varying uses indicate, at a minimum, that the employment of the term soul care is not a recent phenomenon.

As with biblical counseling, there are many who would be agreeable to the term soul care but would find much disagreement in terms of the nature of that care.¹⁵ However, the term biblical soul care adds a level of clarity that is warranted and quite helpful. What biblical soul care does accomplish is to (1) focus the care of a

¹¹ John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), vii.

¹² “When we consider fighting in armor, we do so for the sake of the soul of the young men. So the teacher we seek is expert, not about fighting in armor but about care of the soul [*italics mine*].” Plato, *Ion*; Hippias Minor; Laches; Protagoras (New Haven: Yale, 1996), 52. “Socrates was, and wished to be, ἰατρός της ψυχής, a healer of the soul. These Greek syllables have been recast to form the word, ‘psychiatrist’” (McNeill, viii). Also see Socrates’ comment, “For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the great improvement of your soul” in Socrates, *Apology* (Champaign, IL: Project Gutenberg, n.d.), 19.

¹³ Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s University Press, 2007), 29.

¹⁴ Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2009), 98.

¹⁵ For instance, Betsy Barber and Chris Baker of Talbot said “In short, to imitate Christ by the power of the Spirit is soul care. Since the goal of a Christocentric soul care is to have Christ formed in us (Gal. 4:19), the care of souls must involve whatever aids our progress in sanctification (i.e., the process of becoming holy and wholly like Jesus)” in “Soul Care and Spiritual Formation: An Old Call in Need of New Voices,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2014): 273. This statement lends itself to a panoply of bad methodologies that are problematic if we are to be consistent with that way of viewing soul care. Again, Eric Johnson says of soul care that it is “a broad category that includes psychotherapy, counseling and spiritual direction, and in fact encompasses the main tasks of the church” in *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 9. Again, there are hints of ambiguity even with the term soul care.

person primarily on their soul (i.e., not their body or environment), and (2) lend itself towards a biblical framing of that care. These two tasks alone are counter-cultural in a naturalistic society that seeks to find solutions apart from God in entirely empirical capacities. Biblical soul care reminds us of the importance of the soul and the nature of the task as being solely within the jurisdiction of God and his word.¹⁶ Jesus reminds us of this important emphasis on the soul when he said, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul” (Mark 8:36-37). Thus the historical employment of the term and the soul-ward orientation of the term seem to be fitting for the purposes of this journal.

Distinctives of the JBSC

Finally, for the sake of the reader, we thought it would be most helpful to formally articulate the commitments of the JBSC. The JBSC is a conversation that will be steered by The Master’s University – at least in its beginnings. Master’s is unique in that we have a unified faculty, staff and administration that not only assents to the Scriptures for soul care, but holds the sufficiency of Scripture as a conviction. This unified posture and our organization as an institution of higher education has allowed us to corporately build the JBSC. Consequently, we have the like-mindedness and platform upon which to start a conversation. That is what we are doing. If we simply start the conversation and nothing more, then we will give thanks to God for kindly allowing us to do so.

Finally, by way of clarity, the commitments of the editorial board are as follows:

- God-ward Soul Care: God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Source of the biblical care of souls. To help others in the task of soul care is to help them understand themselves in light of God, and then to be transformed into his likeness as worshipping image-bearers (2

¹⁶ “The language of soul has not been in vogue in pastoral theology, partly out of fear of returning to old body/soul dualisms and partly because the psychological paradigm has dominated definitions of the human. As a result, modern pastoral care has attended more carefully to the human story than to the presence of God in human life. The recovery of soul is therefore prerequisite to rediscovering Seelsorge for our time” in Herbert Anderson’s, “Whatever Happened to Seelsorge?” *Word and World*, 21, no. 1 (2001): 34.

Corinthians 3:18). We are committed to a care of souls that is based off of God and the revelation he provides in Scripture.

- **Biblical Epistemology:** This epistemology is one that sees the Scripture as authoritative for life and godliness over experience, senses, or sciences. Furthermore, it is one that informed through a historical, literal and grammatical hermeneutic of Scripture. We believe that when one espouses to the authority of Scripture and proper hermeneutics, it results in an understanding of the Scripture's sufficiency for and in the care of souls (2 Peter 1:3-4).
- **Biblical Anthropology:** In spite of a predominant naturalistic understanding of man, we are committed to a biblical anthropology. This anthropology informs us that man is both material and immaterial, possesses a soul, and lives out the overflow of his inner man, most commonly referred to as his heart (Proverbs 4:23). Furthermore, man is an active participant in life despite the circumstances or environments in which he finds himself.
- **Biblical Soteriology:** We are committed to faith in Jesus as being the basis for all true and lasting change, and that this gospel-oriented view of change must be seen in light of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 15:5; Ephesians 2:8-9). Therefore, to omit the centrality of repentance from sin and faith in Jesus in the care of souls is to truncate that care. Moreover, to neglect growth in sanctification through the power of the Holy Spirit is to omit the fundamental nature of change within soul care (Galatians 5:21-25).

We recognize that there will be those that contribute articles to the JBSC that do not run in our circles or camp where we camp. However, as the editorial team, we are unified and convicted of the above truths in the care of souls, contributing to what we believe to be the biblical care of souls. Those that contribute will be aware of our positions, while given opportunity to express theirs.

Overview of the Current Issue

This first issue has taken a strong Protestant Reformation focus. We have John Street who has proposed that Luther contributed to the idea of the sufficiency of Scripture through Luther's advancement of sola Scriptura. Dale Johnson offers the insights of the Reformers understanding of soul care jurisdiction to provide a warning to the nature and relationship of the government to the care of souls. Stuart Scott has proposed that the Protestant Reformers were not only effective preachers, but loving shepherds who engaged in the care of souls. In our "Reviews," Joe Keller has offered a critical review of Sinclair Ferguson's *Devoted to God: Blueprints for Sanctification*.

Furthermore, we have left the "Response" section blank by way of invitation. We hope these articles will generate congenial conversations that sharpen the work of soul care and the responses to this issue will be found in the "Response" section going forward, while soul care resources will be reviewed in our "Review" section.

Ultimately, our prayer is that God may see fit to use the JBSC for the preservation of biblical soul care within the jurisdiction of his church, his revealed word, and pastoral authority for the good of the body of Christ and the evangelization of the lost. And in so doing, may all of these resound in glory to God through Jesus Christ, His Son!

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).