

Editorial

**A NEW ERA FOR THE
JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL SOUL CARE**
Dr. Greg E. Gifford¹

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In 2017, I surveyed the landscape of biblical counseling and soul care to notice that there were no academic journals within our field. A designated place where leaders, experts, scholars, and varying academic institutions could dialogue. There were excellent publications by CCEF, like the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, but those were more methodological in their scope. Also, varying publishers have picked up on the value of biblical counseling so publishing has burgeoned year-over-year. But there was still not a place for academic conversations in print form. Then, ACBC started what was known as its “Essays.”

Around 2018, the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors was transitioning executive directors—from Heath Lambert to Dale Johnson—and also began its academic publications known as ACBC Essays. I had the opportunity to speak at the ACBC Colloquium and publish my paper in the subsequent ACBC Essays of 2019, volume II. Concurrently, the Biblical Counseling Coalition has hosted a retreat of sorts in northern Georgia where invitation-only leaders were welcome to come, read papers, sharpen one another, and potentially publish those papers.

Again, there was no consistent academic journal for upstream conversations within our field. I have desired to fill that academic niche with the *JBSC*, eager to welcome new authors and contributors. “Focus on the ideas behind the methods,”

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is my mantra to would-be contributors. As projected in the 2017 edition of the *JBSC*, this was no easy task. Here are my words from that volume:

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.²

That vision is continuing to drive the *JBSC* into its fifth year of publications and forward.

A NEW ERA WITH ACBC

This past year was one of no small significance for the *JBSC*. I began to approach organizations who were positioned to better distribute the *JBSC* and were willing to commit resources to its publication. I found my colleagues at The Master's University to be excellent sounding boards and wise friends, but saturated in the busyness of ministry. Thus, the day-to-day of publication schedules, editing, and further acquisition of articles was understandably falling largely on me. I wanted to get support and further resources, which is why I contacted ACBC.

ACBC is not a new organization but has grown in the past few years to offer greater emphasis on publications. As of late, ACBC has even founded their own resource arm, *Truth in Love*®, which include a podcast, books, and booklets. They were a natural candidate, and after several conversations, the *JBSC* has migrated to ACBC's purview. You are reading the first volume after the transition of the *JBSC* to ACBC.

It has been my intention to carve out the upstream conversations of biblical soul care, and that is the continued mission of the *JBSC* going forward. ACBC has hosted Colloquiums to this end, published ACBC Essays to this end, and welcomed the *JBSC* as part of their desire to foster discussions upstream. The

² Greg E. Gifford, *The Journal of Biblical Soul Care*, (Fall 2017: Vol. 1): 5-6.

JBSC's purpose statement is to “advance scholarship for the biblical care of souls within higher education.” That was the mission five years ago, at the inception of the *JBSC*, and that is the mission statement now. *ACBC Essays*, that were similar in target, are now going to be superseded by the *JBSC*. The *JBSC* will continue in this new era to speak to the same target audience—educators, theologians, instructors in counseling, and academics.

My position has changed a bit, however. I was acting as a Managing Editor by working with authors, editors, copy/content editing, and administration. Now, I will serve as the General Editor and provide oversight to the articles, themes, provide some content editing, and work with the *ACBC* publication staff. It is my personal aim, and the aim of *ACBC*, to grow the quality of articles, theme of volumes, and critique of authors would only grow in excellence through these new roles.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

As stated above, our mission statement will remain the same. The structure of each volume is informed by that statement, to include editorials, articles, responses, and book reviews. Each of these aspects are a key element of the upstream conversation of biblical soul care.

Articles

Articles are a means of helping contribute through increased clarity on a topic, advancement of a conversation, the exposition of key biblical texts, and other related areas. If you would like to contribute an article, just remember that we are addressing the “why” that informs the “what.” And, to be candid, the more exegetical your work, the better! The *JBSC* is aimed at writing upstream articles. These may have been read at different contexts or be parts of a dissertation, but the articles are supporting our mission of advancing scholarship.

Reviews

Reviews are another means of advancing scholarship. A copious book review helps readers, educators, writers, and academics think sharply on a given topic. A

good book review should not be laudatory only. Rather, it should identify what makes a book worth-while and share the strengths of the content of that book. To be candid, within biblical soul care, I have often wondered what books do we *not* recommend? There are glowing endorsements on every new book that has been published by varying leaders in our movement. At times, I'd like to think there are certain erroneous concepts that make a book "unusable." The goal of the JBSC's reviews is not to provide greater notoriety to the author, but genuinely evaluate the book through the lens of Scripture.

Responses

In five years, we have not had one response. *Not one.* Now, there are varying cultural reasons I believe contribute to this phenomenon. For instance, we don't want to be seen as a curmudgeon, who only has negative comments with no positive contributions (or hopefully we don't!). Many leaders in the movement are too busy to write their own article, nonetheless, thoughtfully critique another person's article. The individuals who are most willing to critique are often PhD students who may not be the most qualified for such a task. Or some amalgamation of the above reasons might prevent us from responding.

Yet, those in the biblical soul care movement know of the importance of a good response. Our movement has been shaped by them. In 2002, Ed Welch published, "How Theology Shapes Ministry: Jay Adams' View of the Flesh and an Alternative" in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*.³ That response by Welch warranted another response by Jay Adams, which brought about further clarity in the movement and particularly around habituation, the flesh, Romans 7, and behaviorism. Whatever we think of Welch's response, his work elucidates my point: good responses are necessary for the development and excellence of a field.

So, feel free to send your responses to jbsc@biblicalcounseling.com. This section of our volumes will remain present, even if they are currently empty. They are a sign to the reader that we must continue to sharpen each other and subject our own thoughts to that of established scholars in our own field. Too often biblical soul care has harbored self-proclaimed experts, and our responses (not to mention greater peer review) are integral to a faithful future.

³ Ed Welch, "How Theology Shapes Ministry: Jay Adams' View of the Flesh and an Alternative," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 20, no. 3 (2002): 16–25.

THIS PARTICULAR VOLUME (VOL. VI, I)

I am pleased to introduce two newer authors to you, and two authors you've heard from in the past. Marshall Adkins is a Pastor in Kentucky who has brought us an article assessing the compatibility of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) with biblical anthropology. His answers are insightful because he breaks down the anthropology of EFT, which leads to a biblical analysis. Take a look at Adkins' work for even a template of how to assess psychological methods and let him show you the dangers of counseling eclecticism.

Rhenn Cherry, a known author to the *JBSC*, has provided an assessment of Richard Baxter's pastoral theology. Particularly, Cherry homes in on the use of Scripture by Baxter. This was a strikingly interesting thesis because Baxter has been commended by many great individuals: Spurgeon, Keller, Powlison, Piper, and so forth. But I've never paused to evaluate how he used Scripture to develop the doctrines he so prominently taught. Cherry does so and, I think, answers the use of Baxter's place in soul care.

Ed Wilde has continued to provide Grade-A articles and has done so again in this volume. Wilde has an uncanny ability to articulate the way we should be thinking, as you may recall from last volume's "Knowledge Hermeneutic." In this volume, he critiques Empiricism by demonstrating what it is and next, where it is incompatible with certain theological commitments.

Lastly, a newer name—Jeremy Oliver. The first paper I read from Jeremy was not on Chrysostom's pastoral care, but another paper regarding Ephesians 4. When I read that paper, I knew Oliver was just the type of author that the *JBSC* needed. He graciously has submitted an article studying Chrysostom's pastoral care here. Try to keep up with Oliver and you will be blessed immensely by his work.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

—1 Timothy 1:17