

**Editorial**  
**Quick, Upstream Expansion**  
**Greg E. Gifford<sup>1</sup>**

It has been quite remarkable to witness the results of the *Journal of Biblical Soul Care*. This current issue is only the second publication within the *JBSC*'s existence and we already have five academic institutions being represented by the authors of this issue—colleges, universities, and seminaries!<sup>2</sup> The editors understood that there was a void that existed within biblical counseling, but were not aware of how this journal would resonate within the field of biblical counseling. Candidly speaking, we were pleasantly surprised and encouraged by the response of the first publication. There *is* an upstream audience within biblical counseling, a niche of individuals that has previously been unassimilated, and the *JBSC* seems to have found fertile ground for receptivity and interest with these individuals.

Think of the shifts in education that have occurred within the past 20 years of biblical counseling. Prior to the early 2000's, there were three to four institution of higher education teaching biblical counseling.<sup>3</sup>The amount of institutions teaching have doubled and nearly tripled in their size. There are groups of educators that are doing the work of education in the field of biblical counseling, and are at the beginnings of a formal pedagogy in instruction within biblical counseling. Yet, we educators have a great distance to cover as our pedagogy is often different, lacking standardization, and missing a common body of knowledge that any biblical counseling student should

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<sup>1</sup> Greg E. Gifford is managing editor of the *Journal of Biblical Soul Care* and Assistant Professor of Biblical Counseling at The Master's University in Santa Clarita, CA. He can be reached at [ggifford@masters.edu](mailto:ggifford@masters.edu).

<sup>2</sup> The seminaries, universities and colleges represented in this issue are Brookes Bible College, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, The Master's University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Reformed Theological Seminary.

<sup>3</sup> These institutions would have been Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Westminster Theological Seminary, The Master's University, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. However, Westminster and Master's were the original trailblazer's of biblical counseling, which is directly attributed to the influence of Jay Adams. Adams taught at Westminster Theological Seminar from 1964-77 and 1982-1990, according to David Powlison in his work, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 134-35. The turning of The Master's University toward biblical counseling came in the late 1990's with the influence of Jay Adams on John MacArthur as seen in MacArthur's writings in both *Our Sufficiency in Christ* and *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*. It was MacArthur who would then lead The Master's University to transition to a sufficiency of Scripture model for the care of people, and hired Robert Smith and Wayne Mack who were direct disciples of Jay Adams. Also note the publication of *Christian Psychology's War on God's Word* by Jim Owen as another key turning point in the biblical counseling conversation at Master's.

know.<sup>4</sup> Some of the rudimentary texts that would support and enhance the pedagogy of biblical counseling have yet to be written, and scholarly resources in regards to biblical counseling are just as sparse. So we can look back and celebrate the slow formation of educational institutions perpetuating a biblical care of souls, yet we look forward with a significant amount of work that lies ahead in our field!

The JBSC wants to continue to create a space for academic and scholarly conversations that will influence the practice of biblical counselors both now and in the future. We are educators seeking to equip educators for the work of further education. Although the successes of upstream conversations have been encouraging, we still look to the future with an understanding that the work has only just begun. It will be demonstrated in this volume that certain qualified, and competent educators have written what we believe to be contributions towards these upstream conversations. And we are particularly excited to introduce the second issue of the JBSC to you!

### **Overview of Articles**

The authors of this issue are educators within the field of biblical counseling in various capacities serving across the landscape of the movement; they are interdenominational, varied in their experience, and academically diversified.<sup>5</sup> This blend of scholarship directly corresponds to the JBSC's vision and mission to advance scholarship for the biblical care of souls within higher education. Each of these authors are writing, practicing, and teaching within the realm of higher education, and are the one's directing upstream conversations that will shape the future of biblical counseling methodology. The JBSC desires to function within this operational wheel-house, and to incorporate others like them to advance the biblical care of souls. As was mentioned before, this work is slow, mildly esoteric, tedious, unpopular to general readership and yet vital to the advancement of the biblical care of souls.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Yet, again these tides are changing as evidenced in seminal works being developed as we speak. For instance, the work of Heath Lambert to develop *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* could not be overstated in regard to its importance. Lambert's contribution is significant, but rare as there are still great texts and resources that need to be developed within the biblical counseling curriculum.

<sup>5</sup> Two authors are pastors or former pastors (Akers and Wilde), two teach in full time in biblical counseling (Akers and Clutterham), two hold terminal degrees (Akers and Wilde [J.D.]), three have a PhD in biblical counseling or are in process (Brooks, Stephens, and Akers), and all are assorted in their denominational affiliation.

<sup>6</sup> Greg E. Gifford, "Editorial: Introduction, Purpose, and Overview," *The Journal of Biblical Soul Care*, Fall 2017 (1:1): 5-6.

You will find that this issue of the JBSC provides excellent contributions to our field, and demonstrates the rising talent in scholarship that is among us. Joshua Clutterham made a case for the call of Walter Kaiser to bridge the gap in exegesis and practical theology. Clutterham suggested that the field of pastoral care remained unaffected by Kaiser's syntactical-theological method of biblical exegesis, while the field of exegesis was greatly influenced by the cooperative work of biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, natural theology, and practical theology. Clutterham's article suggested that the work of soul care needs to take note of Kaiser's input and also reflect the importance of the above categories theologies in the expression of soul care's "practical theology."

Next, Ed Wilde offered Part 1 of his explanation of common grace with its limitations and its purposes. The title of Wilde's article is telling, "Why Common Grace is Not Enough for Christians Who Counsel." Wilde proposed a context in which common grace can be understood and embraced. For those who are familiar with the nuances of common grace in the care of souls you will find the article to be extremely pertinent. Wilde represents the fault lines of biblical soul care within his article and offers the beginnings of an argument for what common grace can and cannot accomplish. Wilde's article, and its implications, come at an important time in the development of biblical soul care.

Finally, Matthew Akers proposed a paradigm for understanding conflict in multi-cultural marriages in his article. Akers suggested that to better equip the counselor, one must understand primary "external and internal dynamics that threaten multi-ethnic marriages." Akers spoke into sources of conflict, while providing an evaluation of what counselors can be aware of in their own practice. In a very real sense, Akers addressed the upstream conversations that will shape the counseling room conversations within marital counseling and he does so as an educator, pastor, and counselor.

Finally, you will find two book reviews in this issue. Mike Emlet's *Descriptions and Prescriptions* is thoroughly evaluated by Samuel Stephens. Emlet sought to provide a digestible resource to help Christians think through the role of psychoactive medications. Stephens will walk the reader through the purpose of Emlet's work,

demonstrate Emlet's claims, and articulate the strengths and weaknesses of Emlet's work. Likewise, Nate Brooks has done the same for Mark McMinn's *The Science of Virtue*. McMinn sought to offer Christians who counsel a positive regard toward human psychology, and believes that the marriage of psychology to human virtue necessary. Brooks engaged these claims and offers the reader a fair, yet evaluative alternative to the claims of McMinn. What is important about both of these reviews is that they are lovingly critical. Both Brooks and Stephens have demonstrated the JBSC's intent of engaging a resource with thoughtful criticisms and thoughtful affirmations. Surprisingly, this important process of peer review, and critical engagement is not happening within biblical counseling at this time.

You, as the reader, will inevitably benefit from the articles and reviews within this issue. However, we also predict that you will disagree and have pushback for the authors and reviewers. We, at the JBSC, welcome both. The JBSC desires to affirm proficient scholarship and that affirmation is exhibited through copious review and rebuttal. All of our work is sharpened when it is thoughtfully critiqued, and engaged by qualified peers. Thus, we continue to maintain a section in the JBSC entitled, "Responses." We want you to see this section as an opportunity to affirm, question, evaluate, critique, or even challenge the claims of the given articles. This evaluative process will only strengthen the upstream conversations that we are seeking to develop.

### **Call for Submissions**

As a reader, we are inviting those who are qualified to make contributions to the JBSC. In a field that is experiencing rapid growth, we look forward to ways of sharpening thoughts with the sufficient Word of God and subjecting our own conclusions to those who uphold God's word. Thus, a qualified contributor is one who possesses advanced education in the field of theology, biblical studies, or biblical counseling and holds fast to the trustworthy word (Tit. 1:9). And with the advancement of formal education in biblical counseling, these qualified educators are growing quickly. If you would like to make a contribution, we encourage you to do so. Scholarship takes vetting, contrasting, and critiquing and your contribution has the potential to accomplish all of these.

## **A Proposed Way Forward**

Next issue it is our intention to have international participation by biblical counseling educators who are doing the work of education in biblical soul care in foreign countries. It was perhaps short-sighted on our part to neglect a global perspective in our last issue, but others were gracious in their expressions of reminding me of this global movement of biblical soul care.<sup>7</sup> In the next issue of the JBSC, we intend to engage those who are doing the work abroad. The upstream conversation for biblical soul care is not only for those who are in Western countries, but this is quickly expanding abroad. And this worldwide-receptivity demonstrates both the apparent need and opportunities that lie before educators in the process of teaching the biblical care of souls at a global level. May God count us faithful in this important task.

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

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<sup>7</sup> Special thanks goes to Wayne Vanderwier who reminded me that the apologetic tone for biblical counseling has not changed in other parts of the world. John Street furthermore reminded me of the great difficulties of using the term *biblical counseling* in Germany, where *soul care* is a term that better encapsulates the ideas of biblical counseling.