

Editorial

## THE BATTLE FOR BIBLICAL COUNSELING

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In the mid-70s Harold Lindsell wrote an exposé of the biblical case for inerrancy: *The Battle for the Bible*. It is a chronicling of the degrading of institutions, organizations, churches, pastors, and faculty who no longer confessed full inerrancy of Scripture. As uncouth as it may seem, Lindsell used names. In a shocking and provocative way, Lindsell articulated the slippage that was occurring on biblical inerrancy and helped instigate the Chicago Statement for Inerrancy that would become a confession of sorts for Protestant churches.

*Similar fracturing has happened in biblical counseling.*

As of the past month, we have watched the biblical counseling movement come to a head, one that is slowly defining itself. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary published the *Southeastern Theological Review* (Spring 2024) with some very provocative articles. Particularly, Dr. Nate Brooks (former author for the *JBSC*, notably) wrote an article entitled, “Everybody Integrates: Biblical Counseling and the Use of Extra-Biblical Material.” This SEBTS journal volume, to include Brooks’ article, prompted Heath Lambert to publish a long-form video and online article response.<sup>2</sup> To say the least, conversations have helped formulate what is biblical counseling and who is a biblical counselor.

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<sup>2</sup>“Six Crucial Confusions of The New Integrationists | First Baptist Church Jacksonville,” May 20, 2024, <https://fbcjax.com/first-thoughts/six-crucial-confusions-of-the-new-integrationists/>.

Lambert answers Brooks' claims to still be practicing biblical counseling by highlighting that the *Southeastern Theological Review* article is a new type of integrationism, or neo-integrationism. This moment has been coming for some time, however. Yet, the claim to who is a biblical counselor and who is not a biblical counselor are not the thrust of the matter. The greater concern is, "who is depending on the Scripture alone to counsel?" versus "Who is adding to the Scripture to do the work of counseling?" Call it biblical counseling, nouthetic counseling, nouthetic confrontation, or Christian counseling, the sufficiency of Scripture is at stake. This is the battle for biblical counseling—the battle for the application of the sufficiency of Scripture.

What do the definitional battles of biblical counseling have anything to do with *The Journal for Biblical Soul Care*? This journal is committed to forging those definitions with the absolute sufficiency of Scripture and thus, the application of that doctrine to counseling. "Let God be true and every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). The battle for biblical counseling is a battle for the sufficiency of Scripture applied to counseling. And that battle is worthy—for Christ and His church. The wisdom of God will always be wiser than men, and these definitional battles will again prove that to be true. A journal is a place for collegial disagreement and professional critique, while still possessing warm appreciation for the one being critiqued.

The *JBSC* is carving another definitional battle, one that I'm not sure we've arrived at with clarity as a movement. What is this battle? *Common grace*. You are preparing to read a diverse set of published and esteemed authors say very different things about common grace, to include whether the phrase, "common grace" should be jettisoned altogether. Abner Chou anchors his structure for common grace in Genesis 9 and Ed Welch anchors his definition of common grace in theology and counseling experience. My paper is regarding the role of the body and the soul, especially after trauma. Ernie Baker's paper is the demonstration of what this looks like in counseling application.

For the discerning reader, you will sense that this edition of the *JBSC* started the conversation but didn't arrive. Some of our perspectives (i.e., Chou's and Welch's) are on opposite sides of the spectrum. I take this to mean that we are not there, yet. However, we are getting closer. Common grace cannot

be the legitimizing of all things for all time, but what are the delineations? That is where this JBSC edition will help. I suspect that common grace and epistemology or common grace and anthropology will be the next aspects to tease out.

As you read this edition, rejoice. Iron sharpens iron. Gone are the days of three men in the entire world who were writing about biblical counseling in an *ex cathedra* capacity. We now have colloquiums, journals, and online platforms that are strengthening our theology and practice. Moreover, there will be lines that are drawn—to the exclusion of some—but this is a healthy process. We want educated men and women to vet their ideas through the Scripture and the wisdom of others. These battles can be friendly, but are battles nevertheless. Common grace must be settled as quickly as possible for the sake of biblical counseling, but more for the sake of our view of the Bible.

*May God give us grace to honor his sufficient word for his glory and the good of our counselees!*