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Discussing a Dozen Dreams (Part I of V): Biblical Counseling Will Be Scriptural & Theological

An Extended Conversation with Robert W. Kellemen, Ph.D.
By Bradley Charles Hambrick

When was the last time you had a long conversation about your hopes and dreams for Biblical Counseling? When was the last time you sat down with someone who has spent over two decades studying, living, pastoring, and analyzing Biblical Counseling to glean from their experience and journey? When was the last time you allowed yourself to be challenged and asked challenging questions about your theory and practice of counseling? I hope your answer to these questions is recently, but not many of us have the blessing of time or an experienced partner for such edifying talks. This was my (Brad Hambrick) privilege over the latter part of 2008. My companion in this conversation was Dr. Robert Kellemen—he will introduce himself to those who have not had the privilege of meeting him shortly.

The outline for these extended conversations comes from Dr. Kellemen's article "The Future of Biblical Counseling: Dreaming a Dozen Dreams." After reading the article, I asked Dr. Kellemen if he would be willing to engage in a series of conversations that would seek to "unpack" his dreams for the Association of Biblical Counselors. In order to structure these conversations for *The Journal of Counseling & Discipleship*, we dialogued electronically, passing questions and answers back and forth via e-mail. Once completed these were edited and prepared for publication. We intentionally wrote conversationally in order to allow the articles to have a personal rather than academic feel.

Our goal was not simply to trace the history of Biblical Counseling from Dr. Kellemen's experience in order to dream about its future, but to model mutually-respectful, thought-provoking conversation about the history, theory, practice, and future of Biblical Counseling. We do not always share the same conclusions (doubtless many readers may disagree with both of us in the pages that follow), although I greatly respect his core convictions and heart for counseling.

As you read, please do not reflect merely on the questions you would have asked or your evaluations of the answers given. Reflect also on how the tone of the conversation (for better or worse) contributes to the quality and quantity of progress made in the dialogue.

Getting to Know Dr. Robert W. Kellemen

BCH: Dr. Kellemen would you please take a moment to introduce yourself to our readers. As we get ready to discuss your dreams for the future of Biblical Counseling, I think it would help our readers to know a bit of your background, testimony, counseling heritage, and ministry settings.

RWK: Brad, thanks for the opportunity to engage you and your readers on the vital issue of the future of Biblical Counseling. And thank you for allowing me to start at a personal level.

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In 1974, I was saved as a teenager at Grace Baptist Church in Gary, Indiana under the ministry of Pastor Bill Goode, who many of your readers knew well as a pioneer in Biblical Counseling. I was discipled by Pastor Ron Allchin, another leader in the Biblical Counseling movement. I also grew up with and remain great friends with Pastor Steve Viars, yet another Biblical Counseling leader. (I have a few stories I could tell about Steve—and he about me!)

I graduated from Baptist Bible College in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania with my BA in Bible and Pastoral Ministry, from Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana with my Th.M. in Theology and Biblical Counseling, and from Kent State University in Kent, Ohio with my Ph.D. in Counselor Education. I have pastored three churches, one as a Sr. Pastor, and in all three churches a major emphasis of my ministry has been training lay Biblical Counselors. For the past dozen years, I have been chairman of the MA in Christian Counseling and Discipleship (MACCD) Department at Capital Bible Seminary in Lanham, Maryland. I am also the Director of the Biblical Counseling and Spiritual Formation Network (BCSFN), a division within the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC).

I have authored four books on Biblical Counseling. *Soul Physicians: A Theology of Soul Care and Spiritual Direction* (BMH Books, 2007), *Spiritual Friends: A Methodology of Soul Care and Spiritual Direction* (BMH Books, 2007), *Beyond the Suffering: Embracing the Legacy of African American Soul Care and Spiritual Direction* (Baker Books, 2007), and *Sacred Friendships: Listening to the Voices of Women Soul Care-Givers and Spiritual Directors* (BMH Books, 2009). From the subtitles, it is easy to tell that I am passionate about historic, Evangelical spiritual care—the pastor as soul physician, and God's people as spiritual friends to one another.

I am the Founder of RPM Ministries (www.rpmministries.org). Through RPM Ministries I speak around the country on comprehensive Biblical Counseling. I also provide consultation ministry for churches looking to start lay Biblical Counseling ministries.

My wife, Shirley, is an elementary kindergarten teacher and the most gracious encourager I have ever known. She and I have been married for twenty-eight years and live in Crown Point, Indiana. Our son, Josh, is a law student at Georgetown and married to his college sweetheart, Andi. Our daughter, Marie, is a college junior at Purdue majoring in Spanish and TESEL. For over two decades, I have loved coaching high school wrestling (in all my spare time).

As for my counseling heritage, as your readers can tell, I was weaned on Nouthetic Biblical Counseling. I also studied under Drs. Larry Crabb and Dan Allender at Grace Seminary. My own approach to counseling, to be honest, was developed during some "counseling wars" at Grace Seminary in the early 80s. I kept thinking, "Surely the Church has always been about the business of helping hurting and hardened people." So, I started devouring Church history. I wrote my Ph.D. dissertation on Martin Luther's pastoral counseling. I would say that people like Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards have shaped my understanding of the Bible's teaching on Biblical Counseling as much as or more than modern writers. Of course, like all Biblical counselors, I would like to think that the Scriptures themselves shape my thinking on Biblical Counseling.

BCH: Could you take a moment and explain the mission and function of the BCSFN? What unique niche is this network seeking to fulfill that is distinct from the National Association of Nouthetic Counseling

(NANC), the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation (CCEF), the Association of Biblical Counselors (ABC), the Society for Christian Psychology (SCP), or the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC)?

RWK: AACC President Tim Clinton asked Dr. Ron Hawkins and me to launch the BCSFN three years ago with this mission:

> "We birth the BCSFN out of the passionate desire to be a positive force for changing lives with Christ's changeless truth by uniting biblical counseling and spiritual formation to equip believers to use God's Word to disciple one another toward growth in Christlikeness. The BCSFN exists to equip lay spiritual friends, pastors, professional Christian counselors, students, and educators to relate God's truth to daily life. This goal requires the development of a comprehensive biblical theology of the spiritual life that provides the foundation for a relevant biblical methodology of spiritual growth. We are dedicated to encouraging the Christian community to address the needs of people meaningfully, powerfully, and confidently in the great tradition of biblical soul care and spiritual direction."

Since the BCSFN is a division within the AACC, we do not see ourselves as distinct from, but rather ministering to and for the AACC according to our mission statement. The SCP is a "sister division" of the BCSFN within the AACC. Their goal is to develop a comprehensive Christian approach to the field of psychology.

As far as the NANC, ABC, and CCEF, though we are not organizationally connected, I see all three organizations as companions on our journey. We are all committed to the sufficiency, supremacy, authority, profundity, and relevancy of Scripture for the process of progressive sanctification. While not speaking for these other organizations, I think the BCSFN focuses perhaps a little more on issues of suffering and sanctification—how to build a biblical theology of suffering that leads to a biblical methodology of bringing healing hope to our hurts. Historically, that has been called soul care. We live in a fallen world and often it falls on us. Not every issue a person brings to a pastors office is due to personal sin, but sometimes it is due to being sinned against or simply living in a sinful world (like Job).

To the soul care aspect of suffering, the BCSFN, like the NANC, ABC, and CCEF, focuses on issues of sin and sanctification. On these issues, I personally see great similarity, especially as all four groups move more and more to heart issues like idols and ungodly affections, and as all four groups emphasize how grace superabounds where sin abounds.

Fundamentally, our passion in the BCSFN is to provide **comprehensive** equipping in Biblical Counseling and Spiritual Formation. We pursue this mission by focusing on suffering **and** sin, grace **and** truth, soul care **and** spiritual direction, *parakaletic* comforting **and** *nouthetic* confronting.

You Have a Dream. For Who?

BCH: Even before you start sharing your twelve dreams, you discuss "Biblical Counseling." It is hard to even engage a conversation until we have defined our central term. In your article you define Biblical Counseling in terms of the role of the three members of the Trinity, the sufficiency of Scripture to address

both sin and suffering, involving the entire Body of Christ, and aimed at the glory of God. If it's okay, I'd like to tweak how you phrased your frequently asked question: "Who do you mean when you say Biblical Counseling—not name or organization, but target audience? How broadly or narrowly are you using that term? Are these (a) dreams for self-identified counselors who believe their counseling is biblical; (b) dreams for the entire Church because of the "one another" commands of New Testament given to all Christians; or (c) dreams for those who hold to a certain set of convictions regarding counseling?"

RWK: I'll start, Brad, by repeating and briefly expanding my working description of Biblical Counseling:

> *Biblical counseling depends upon the Holy Spirit to relate God's inspired truth about people, problems, and solutions to human suffering (through the Christian soul care arts of sustaining and healing) and sin (through the Christian spiritual direction arts of reconciling and guiding) to empower people to exalt and enjoy God and to love others (Matthew 22:35-40) by cultivating conformity to Christ and communion with Christ and the Body of Christ.*

As I pen this definition, and as I dream about the future of Biblical Counseling, my target audience includes several groups. Dream eleven, which we will discuss in more detail later, states that Biblical Counseling is universal—it is what lay people do as spiritual friends, what pastors do as soul physicians, and what professional Christian/Biblical counselors do as caregivers. So I write for those three groups, plus for educators.

First, I dream about the future of Biblical Counseling for *lay believers*. My passion is the local church. The holy of holies of my local church passion is the equipping of the saints to do the work of the ministry. I tell my graduate students that the *M* in MA stands for *Master* which means you master something so well that you *equip others to do it also*. My greatest joy is to see our graduate students equip their people for lay discipleship (which is what Biblical Counseling is—discipleship). For instance, Sister Ellen Barney is the "First Lady" (pastor's wife) in a large African American church in Maryland. In the past seven years she has equipped over 500 women as Lay Encouragers And Disciplers (LEADers). When I speak at their elaborate graduation ceremonies, she says, *"Dr. Kellemen, these are your grandbabies!"*

I dream of grandbabies and great-grandbabies in every local church. Lay people who are competent to counsel one another because they are full of goodness and complete in knowledge (Romans 15:14). Each of the twelve dreams are dreams I have for lay spiritual friends—that their ministries would be scriptural, theological, historical, positive, relational, relevant, transformative, holistic in theory, holistic in methodology, holistic in equipping, universal, and multi-cultural.

Second, I write and dream for *pastors as soul physicians*. Having pastored most of my adult life, and ministering to pastors for the rest of my adult life, I have a heart for pastors. I absolutely believe in the *pulpit* ministry of the Word. I believe most Evangelical seminaries train pastors well for the pulpit. I happen also to believe in the *personal* ministry of the Word. Unfortunately, I think most Evangelical seminaries drop the ball in training pastors as soul physicians. If they train them at all, it is one course and that one course often is more psychological than it is theological/Biblical.

I dream of the day when pastors are not only equipped to counsel Biblically, but they are equipped to equip others. The church, as my friend Pastor Steve Viars points out, should not simply *have* Biblical Counseling, it should be a church that *is* a Biblical Counseling discipleship ministry. The sufficiency and

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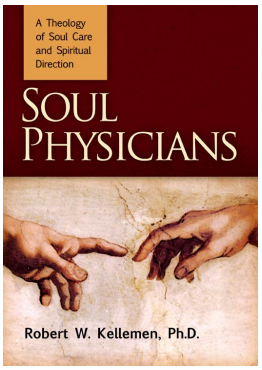
relevancy of Scripture and the art of helping people to grow in grace (progressive sanctification) should be central to what every pastor equips his church to be.

Third, I write and dream for *professional Christian counselors as caregivers*. Perhaps your audience has a smaller percentage of readers who are in this category. In the AACC, about one-third of its members are professional Christian counselors. These are dear people, committed people, godly men and women. Some of them will tell you that they have more training in secular psychology than they do in Biblical Counseling. But frankly, even when we have a seminary-level knowledge of the Bible, we need equipping to learn how to relate the Biblical text to people's lives. While I was at seminary, I worked for four years on a psychiatric inpatient unit. I worked hard to relate God's truth to human relationships in a way that made a lasting difference. My passion is to help professional Christian counselors to use Christ's changeless truth (Scripture) to change lives (soul) in our changing times (society) through a comprehensive approach to Biblical Counseling and spiritual formation.

Fourth, I write and dream for *professors, educators, and equippers*. We equip the equippers who equip others also. I pray and dream that as professors equip men and women for Biblical Counseling that they are equipping lay, pastoral, and professional counselors for Biblical Counseling that is scriptural, theological, historical, positive, relational, relevant, transformative, holistic in theory, holistic in methodology, holistic in equipping, universal, and multi-cultural.

BCH: I appreciate that your dream penetrates different levels of the church and Christian ministry. The needs of a fallen, hurting world will not be met by any given piece (lay, pastoral, or professional counselors). Your levels include degrees of training and experience both with people and with Scripture/theology. Neglecting a thorough understanding of either is dangerous. It is clearer and more common to question the "counselor" credential of those who lack education or experience with people than it is to question the "Biblical" credential of those who lack formal theological training. In protecting the "Biblical" in Biblical Counseling, how do you account for this?

RWK: Perhaps the key here is what we mean by "formal" theological training. If we get too "formal" and mean "seminary trained" then most people in most places throughout most of Church history would never be seen as qualified to be a Biblical counselor.



I wrote *Soul Physicians: A Theology of Soul Care and Spiritual Direction* out of my experience of training lay people in local churches to be Biblical counselors. I have found that when you take people in a good church that teaches and preaches the Word, that teaches people how to study God's Word on their own, and you add to that a year of intensive training specifically related to a Biblical theology of Biblical Counseling, then you can have great confidence that the label "Biblical" is legitimate.

Frankly, some lay people trained like this have more theology and Bible than some professional Christian counselors. I think that is where the real issue may be. That's why at Capital Bible Seminary, our counseling students are required to take 30 semester hours of Bible, theology, and hermeneutics, along with 30 semester hours of Biblical Counseling. There are no short cuts. If we want to claim the title Biblical counselor, especially at the Masters level

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where we will be training others, then we must commit ourselves to being students who rightly divide the Word of truth.

What is Sufficient?

Dream Number One:
Biblical Counseling Will Be Scriptural

Biblical Counseling will cling tenaciously to the supremacy, sufficiency, and profundity (depth of wisdom) of the Scriptures. God has provided us with all that we need for godly living (2 Peter 1:3). The Scriptures, rightly interpreted and carefully applied, offer us all-encompassing insight for life.

The Bible provides us with the interpretive categories for making sense of life experiences from God's perspective. By building our counseling models on Christ's gospel of grace, we obtain wisdom for bringing people healing hope, the stimulus for change (God's glory), and the understanding of human motivation that energizes these God-honoring changes.

BCH: In dream number one (*Biblical Counseling Will Be Scriptural*), you talk about "building our counseling model on Christ's Gospel of grace." I will ask a question that makes an admittedly artificial distinction, but hopefully for a practical purpose. Is it your opinion that Biblical Counseling is more set apart by its advocacy for the conceptual richness, breadth, and sufficiency of Scripture for understanding people, problems, and solutions; or by its advocacy for necessity of the substitionary atonement of Jesus Christ in order to perform a heart and nature transplant for meaningful and lasting change to occur? The Gospel is, in many ways, more offensive than the Bible. Many counselors (secular, integrated, Christian Psychologist, Biblical) can find parallels between aspects of their theory/practice and aspects of Biblical content. A fair-minded view of general revelation and the brilliance of Jesus (even if He were not divine) would concede this. Am I over-interpreting your statement to draw from it that a core distinction between counseling with-the-Bible-as-proof-texting and Biblical Counseling is that the latter is a model rooted in and emerging from the Gospel—as revealed in God's inerrant Word, the Bible?

You also say, "[Biblical Counselors] often counsel Christians as if they are still unsaved." Does the question above cut both ways? How do your discussions of counseling that emerges from the Gospel contribute to or further explain your concern about Biblical Counselors over-emphasizing human depravity over the changes that occur as a result of the Gospel?

RWK: Brad, those are fascinating, thought-provoking questions. I'm not much of an *either/or* person. I'm more of a *both/and* thinker. That certainly would be true with your first question. Biblical Counseling is set apart *both* by its commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture for understanding people, problems, and solutions, *and* by its commitment to the substitutionary atonement of Christ to change us both now and forever.

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I think your profound question, Brad, is getting at the implication of these *twin truths*. When separated, I do think some caricatures of "Biblical Counseling" have shrunk to the place of "take two verses and call me in the morning." No serious, truly Biblical counselor would act that way, of course.

Here's the point: we must combine *the sufficiency of Scripture with our all-sufficient salvation through our all-sufficient Savior*. That's why in *Soul Physicians* I spent over 100 pages discussing the implication of our salvation for our sanctification. In Evangelical circles, when we talk about salvation, we tend to highlight only justification, while spending less time on regeneration, reconciliation, and redemption. That is a horrible mistake—all four aspects of our salvation (which I think encompass many other aspects) are vital for Biblical Counseling. What does it mean to be a saint in Christ? What does it mean to be a son/daughter of God the Father? What does it mean that we have power over sin? What does Paul mean when he says that where sin abounds, grace superabounds?

In 1979, Jay Adams wrote *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption*. He said on the first page that it was a first attempt and that it needed others to continue the work. First attempt or not, it was and is a great book. I wrote *Soul Physicians* as a way to heed Dr. Adams' plea for further work in this area. We still need to do more work exploring what difference our *all-sufficient Scriptures, our all-sufficient salvation, and our all-sufficient Savior make in how we help others to grow in grace*.

In no way do I demean the importance of human depravity in building our counseling models. I spent scores of pages in *Soul Physicians* describing the impact of the fall. But I fear that some Christian counselors have "accidentally" demeaned the importance of our salvation. Yes, we must study the *fall* (human depravity), and even before that we must study *creation* (God's original design), but by all means we must study *redemption*—and we must build our models of Biblical Counseling on *all three*.

BCH: From your experience as a pastor, educator, counselor, and influential figure in the larger world of Evangelical Christian Counseling (ECC), do you find that those whose counseling theory and practice diverge from a Biblical model do so primarily because of failure to begin with Scripture or because they failed to begin with a model of change rooted in the Gospel? I apologize for framing the question in an either/or format again, but as we seek to be apologists for Biblical Counseling I would be interested to know which side of the coin you have found to be more common origin of error?

RWK: Well, I won't apologize for dodging the either/or and going with the both/and (smiling). I think all non-Biblical models *start* with a failure to begin with Scripture. As I've said, without that, we learn about human nature from fallen image bearers. That's hardly a healthy, wise place to start.

I think people fail to begin with Scriptures because they truly are not confident that the Bible has answers, plus they do not feel competent to find those answers in the Scriptures even if they thought the Scriptures had them. That's why training in Biblical Counseling must include training in hermeneutics—how do we go to the Scriptures to discern how to apply truth to real life in the specifics of life?

However, I think that even some who go to the Scriptures as their foundation, as I have indicated, get stuck at the fall/depravity. I fear that some models of Biblical Counseling have forgotten Romans 5:20 which tells us that where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. I am greatly encouraged by the work of the ABC, CCEF, and NANC folks who are spending so much time in Romans 6-12, Colossians 3-4,

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Ephesians 4-6, etc. Here's where we find how to put off the old and put on the new. Here's where we learn that we are new creatures in Christ. Truly Biblical models of counseling are Christ-focused, Cross-centered, and grace-oriented.

What is "It" that Belongs to the Church?

Dream Number Two:
Biblical Counseling Will Be Theological

Too often, current models of Biblical Counseling start and end at the Fall—focusing almost exclusively on human depravity. As a result, they often counsel Christians as if they are still unsaved—apart from the justifying, redeeming, regenerating, and reconciling work of Christ.

Biblical Counseling will unite Creation, Fall, and Redemption. In studying a Biblical theology of *Creation*, Biblical Counseling will examine *people*—God's original design for the soul (anthropology). In probing the *Fall*, Biblical Counseling will examine *problems*—how sin brought personal depravity and suffering (hamartiology). In investigating the Bible's teaching on *Redemption*, Biblical Counseling will examine *solutions*—the gospel of Christ's grace which offers eternal salvation and provides us with daily victory in our ongoing battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil (soteriology).

Creation, Fall, and Redemption also have *psychological* correlates. Creation is Biblical psychology—the Biblical study of the soul. The Fall is Biblical psychopathology—the Biblical study of the sickness of sin. Redemption is Biblical psychotherapy—the Biblical study of God's healing of the soul through Christ.

In the minds of some, the use of these psychological terms is invalid. How sad that we have allowed the world to steal these solidly Biblical/theological/historical terms. It is time that we take back our heritage and redefine these terms. Franz Delitzsch, writing in 1861 (before the advent of modern secular psychology), noted that "biblical psychology is no science of yesterday. It is one of the oldest sciences of the church."

Psychology is native to our faith. Not secular psychology, but Biblical psychology—understanding and ministering to the soul designed by God, disordered by sin, and redeemed by grace.

BCH: In dream number two (*Biblical Counseling Will Be Theological*), you note that "[Psychology] is one of the oldest sciences of the church (quoting Franz Delitzsch)" and "Psychology is native to our faith." I greatly appreciate your clarity and conviction on these points. Too often, however, "psychology" is used as a term with a single meaning or reference. In actuality, it is a term with many references: the fact that we are people with souls, observations about human action and motives, a philosophical theory of what makes life work, models of counseling and practice, educational and institutional structures, and the mass ethos of "common sense" about people (see David Powlison in *Psychology & Christianity: Four Views,* pages

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198-217). Sometimes in advocating for the sufficiency of Scripture there is a lack of clarity about which aspect(s) of psychology the Bible is sufficient to create or how the Bible ought to be utilized to sufficiently create/change each aspect. If you agree with this assessment, how would you see Biblical Counseling most effectively addressing this issue internally (within ECC) and externally (with the culture evangelistically and secular counseling as "salt and light")?

RWK: I appreciate your encouragement and engagement, Brad. You are right, there are a great many definitions of "psychology" and I think sometimes in Christian/Biblical Counseling circles we fight each other simply because we misunderstand how people use these terms. I'm not naïve. Simply using the term "psychology" as I do in dreams two and three leaves me open to charges of being an "integrationist" or a "secularist." So I do appreciate the opportunity to elaborate and to explain that I am definitely neither an integrationist nor a secularist.

The way I used "psychology" in dreams two and three is for *theoretical or theological* psychology. That is—psychology as the study of *people, problems,* and *solutions*. There are two main theoretical ways to study the soul: *Coram Deo* or *Coram Anthorpos*. In *Coram Deo* Biblical psychology we build our theory/theology of the soul (of people, problems, and solutions) from the Creator—face to face with God, in the presence of God, under submission to God, based upon the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Under *Coram Anthropos* secular psychology we build our theory of the soul from the creature—face to face with humanity, in our own strength, submitted to no one but self, based upon human reason, or experience, or experimentation. How do we know what we know—through Divine revelation or through human reason? That's the true dividing line between Biblical psychology and secular psychology.

So, when I advocate for the sufficiency, relevancy, and profundity of Scripture, I am advocating for theory building that is theology building. In fact, I just finished a presentation at the Society of Christian Psychologists on using the hermeneutic spiral to build our counseling models. This is not just theory for me. It is real life. It is not enough for us to say, "I don't like that secular model." We need to say, "Here is a Biblically-based, theologically-grounded model."

That said, do I think there is *any* legitimate role for psychology other than theory building? That goes back to definitions. I do think there is a place for "research psychology." I would love to see more committed Christians doing research psychology. For instance, let's study the typical ways that people respond to grief, to death and dying. That *descriptive* work, especially when done with as little bias as humanly possible, especially when done by redeemed scientists, is a legitimate part of the Creation Mandate God gives us in Genesis 1. The problem I have is when the research psychologist moves from *descriptive* work and starts offering *prescriptive* interpretations and solutions. Then they are treading on the territory and domain of the Biblical psychologist.

So how do we best address the issue(s) internally—with one another? First, we do so with a good deal of humility, with a good deal of love, and with a good deal of listening. As I said, some of our counseling wars are due to not listening to one another, to not being humble and loving. Yes, we have to speak the truth, but we should do so in love—maybe even using some of the great Biblical Counseling skills we teach!

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How do we interact with our culture as salt and light? Again, why are there so few Christian research psychologists? Let's encourage a whole generation of our best and brightest to do excellent research on issues like spirituality and health, on outcome results of Biblical Counseling, on grieving, etc. When the world sees that our *descriptive* work is done with excellence and that our *prescriptive* theories really change lives, then they will at least have to stop and take notice.

BCH: In my role as editor, one of the repeated calls I hear is for Biblical Counseling to do more work in the area of research or, as you call it, *descriptive* work. The history of Biblical Counseling has been as a primarily directive counseling model, therefore, emphasizing the *prescriptive* aspect of counseling. Are there some incipient works that begin to capture your dream for this aspect of Biblical Counseling? Also, how can Biblical Counseling be more excellent at its descriptive skills in writing and practice so that this common critique will be less common?

RWK: I think the work led by Dr. Eric Johnson and the SCP is heading in exactly this direction. They are committed to doing the outcome-based studies on approaches to counseling. They are already doing work on forgiveness. They are doing work on emotional/spiritual intelligence.

I think there is such a thing as "descriptive research" which is what the SCP is doing. I also think there is such a thing as "descriptive theory/theology" which is part of the calling of the BCSFN. For example, when I teach on dealing with grief due to loss, suffering, or death, I present a study of Scripture and compare and contrast it to the five typical stages the world outlines. I then describe eight stages that I see the Bible suggesting as common to the work of Christ in suffering and sanctification. I base these descriptive stages upon a systematic and Biblical theology of what the Bible teaches about suffering. I then try to move from description to Biblical prescription—how does the Bible suggest that we help one another to move through hurt to hope in Christ? So, I think we need more theological work that describes the Bible's teaching on the great issues of life lived in a fallen world.

What's In a Category?

BCH: Also in dream number two (*Biblical Counseling Will Be Theological*), you say that "Biblical Counseling will unite Creation, Fall, and Redemption" In your discussion of counseling and theology, you make two types of parallel statements with the creation-fall-redemption paradigm that I have tried to represent in the table below.

Theological Categories	Biblical Counseling	Psychological Correlates
Creation	Anthropology (Doctrine of Man)	Biblical Psychology
Fall	Hamartiology (Doctrine of Sin & Suffering)	Biblical Psychopathology
Redemptions	Soteriology (Doctrine of Salvation & Redemption)	Biblical Psychotherapy

My initial interest is caught by the parallel of the Fall and "Biblical Psychopathology." As you dream about that category being more robustly developed in Biblical Counseling, how much do you expect it to mirror

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secular psychopathology? Can the same diagnostic vocabulary be used and reframed within a Christian world-view or should we work towards a distinctively theological DSM with categories from more overt Biblical references? Are there particular classes of psychopathology diagnoses where you believe the categories more directly distract from or compete against a Biblical model of counseling?

RWK: Brad, this is one of those sections that I cringed at even as I wrote it. I sent early drafts of this piece to many of my friends in Nouthetic Biblical Counseling. Everyone said, "I understand what you are saying and where you are coming from, but some folks who don't know you will freak out just because you used terms like 'psychopathology'!" Well, I used the term(s) anyway. And here's why. I think the world has stolen good terms from us. They are trying to steal the word "counselor," too. I want us to take back the words that are rightly ours! Long before the world was "into psychology" the church was doing soul work.

Back to your question, "How much do I expect Biblical psychopathology to mirror secular psychopathology?" *Very little to none.* Perhaps because of common grace, some secular psychopathology theories will stumble across some things that seem similar to Biblical concepts. But if we want to understand sin in its purest evil, then we have to see sin through the eyes of our sinless Creator.

That doesn't mean that I feel called to go on an anti-secular-psychology crusade. That's just not my calling. I am called to focus on Biblical psychology. When I interact with unbelievers doing psychological work and when I see some semblance of similar concepts to sin, I engage them and build bridges. I'm not on a witch hunt. But rather than spending much of my time either looking for similarities or criticizing weaknesses, I am spending my time with the Scriptures and with hurting, hardened people.

You also ask the perceptive question, "Can the same diagnostic vocabulary be used and reframed within a Christian world-view or should we work towards a distinctively theological DSM with categories from more overt Biblical references?" My study of Church history has resulted in perhaps a surprising historical answer. Christians have rarely created their own language. They often borrowed the language of the day, so that they could communicate, and then gave those categories Biblical content and meaning.

I'll be honest, that's not my tendency. My students always accuse me of "Kellemenisms." I make up my own words and categories! And I often tell my students that we need a *SDM: Spiritual Diagnostic Manual*. So, since Church history did it one way, and I tend to do it another way, I won't quibble over which way is right or best. I do know that in Church history we do find the equivalent of spiritual diagnostic manuals that listed core sins and core virtues, core processes of depravity and core processes of sanctification. And these were raw, real-life categories with practical implications based upon theological interpretations. That's what I want to see us develop, that's what I dream of in dream number two. We need Biblical ways of conceptualizing how to help hurting and hardened people (2 Corinthians 1:3-11; Philippians 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; 2 Peter 1:3).

BCH: I must admit, my tendency is to coin my own words when necessary. I just have not taken it to the level of naming my own language, although I like the idea. The benefit of coining our own terms is that we get a "baggage free vocabulary." The problem is that it can cloud the Truth from those who need it most, but understand it least because of our language. If I were to follow the example of Church history by breaking the habit of making my own words, what lessons from your reading of Church history should I

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follow to make the "psychological language of the masses" a conduit for truth rather than a smorgasbord of confusion?

RWK: Brad, it sounds like you and I share the same struggle with words. I'm glad to know I'm not alone.

In Church history they seemed to keep a "balance." On the one hand, they avoided creating "Christian terms" that no one in the culture could understand or relate to. It kept them relevant, "missional" (to use a current phrase), practical, and evangelistic. On the other hand, they avoided a "whole hog graft" of the secular by taking terms and concepts current in the world *but* examining, evaluating, understanding, and re-defining them from a theological perspective.

How could they do it? They had manuals of pastoral care. From generation to generation they passed down a legacy of insights about life. They could easily "update" these manuals. That is what we had been lacking in Evangelical Christian Counseling until about the 1970s. We now have more than a generation of work that can help us to think through issues without having to start from scratch each generation.

I dream of the day when the world is forced to look to the Church. When the world says, "Tell me the reason for the Biblical Counseling hope that is within you?" And we can answer with gentleness and respect, "Christ and His Word are the only hope. Any 'success' we have in helping hurting and hardened people is because we trust our loving Creator."