What is the Difference Between ACBC, CCEF, and ABC?

by Brad Hambrick









6 Topics We Will Briefly Explore

01 A History of Each Organization

02 The Evolution of Each Organization Based on Leadership Changes

03 Differences in Counseling Theory and Practice

04 Overview of Training Process

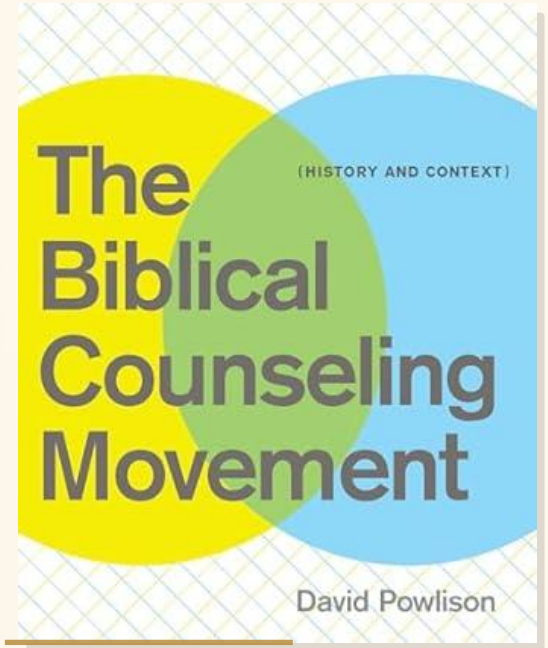
05 The Role of Each Organization within Evangelicalism

06 Implications for those Seeking Training or Certification

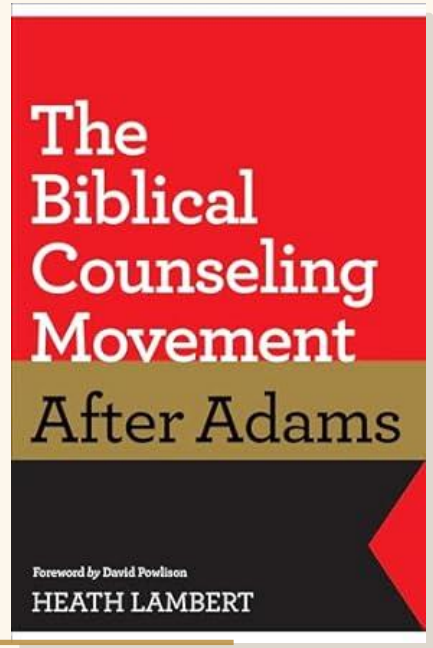
Why Brad?



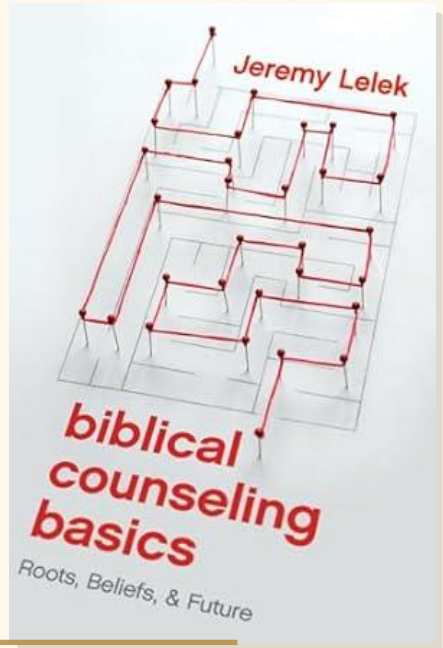
Biblical Counseling History Books



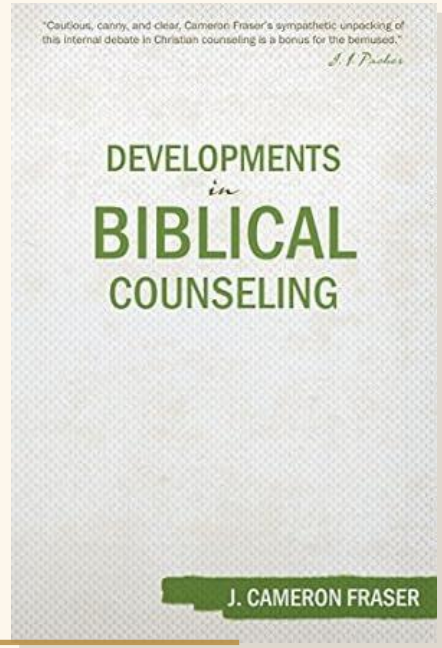
The Biblical Counseling Movement by **David Powlison** (2010)



The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams by **Heath Lambert** (2011)



Biblical Counseling Basics by **Jeremy Lelek** (2018)



Developments in Biblical Counseling by **Cameron Fraser** (2015)

History of Each Organization

NANC / ACBC

Began 1976 as NANC

Largest (est. 3000)

Focus: *Certifying* counselors

Name change to ACBC in 2013

Trademark: Sufficiency

CCEF

Oldest, began 1968

Focus: *Training* counselors

Certificate, different from certification

Trademark: Theology of the Heart

ABC

Began 2005

Size: (est. 2500)

Focus: *Certifying* counselors

Trademark: Partnering Model with Local Churches



* Other organizations like IABC, IBCD, IRBC, and others also exist.

Leadership Eras

ACBC	CCEF	ABC
Bob Smith	John Bettler	Darren Martin
Howard Eyrich	Tim Lane	Jeremy Lelek
Bill Goode	David Powlison	Shauna Van Dyke
Randy Patten	Alasdair Groves	
Heath Lambert	Jonathan Holmes	
Dale Johnson		

* Each new leader in any organization is going to bring their own points of emphasis.

Differences in Counseling Approach

ACBC	CCEF	ABC
Directive and Didactic	Insight and Process	Insight and Didactic
Moral Focus with Emphasis on Behavior	Motive Focus with Moral Emphasis	Motive Focus with Moral Emphasis
Emphasis: Sound Doctrine and Pastoral Oversight	**Emphasis:** Restoring Christ to Counseling…	**Emphasis:** Resourcing Churches
Bible Only, Less Clear on Other Resources [Link, Keith Evans minibook, 30 pages]	Bible-Based, Appreciates the Provocative Role of Common Grace	Bible-Based, Open to Common Grace (More Variance)

* The Biblical Counseling Coalition (BCC) is the "United Nations" for the BC movement.

Overview of Training Requirements

ACBC

Link Here

Phase 1: Lecture, Observation, Reading

Phase 2: Theology & Counseling Exams

Phase 3: 50 Hours of Supervision

CCEF

Link Here

6 Classes; 2 Certificates

1. *Dynamics of Biblical Change*
2. *Helping Relationships*
3. *Applied Theology of the Person*
4. *Scripture for Life & Ministry*
5. *Everyday Problems in Counseling*
6. *Counseling in the Local Church*

*** Certificate not Certification**

ABC

Link Here

Level 1: Knowledge

Lecture, Observe, Reading

Level 2: Experienced

* Theology & Counseling Exams

* 100 Hours Supervision

Level 3: Specialized

* 1 year process

*** Links provided because organization can change their requirements (Fall 2026).**

Evangelical Role of Each Organization

ACBC	CCEF	ABC
Conscience: Ensure Fidelity	**Thought Leaders: Expand & Deepen BC**	**Releases Oversight to Local Churches**
Border Emphasis: Emphasize Differences	**Bridge Builders: Warm Irenic, Nuanced Approach**	**Fresh Voice: Not Tied to "We've Always Done It That Way"**
Preserve / Defend the Historic Core of BC	**Asks, "How Can BC Grow & What's Next?" (Powlison JBC Articles)**	**Equip BC-minded Licensed Counselors**

*** Organizations may <u>not</u> embrace these descriptions… this is <u>only Brad's perspective</u>.**

Implications for those Seeking Training

1 Do you want to do counseling as a vocation (i.e., career) or as a ministry (i.e., volunteer)?

To counsel vocationally, a masters degree (seminary) is advisable. For vocational counselors, CCEF and ABC are CEU options.

2 Which organization fits the theology and culture of your church?

For those wanting to counsel pastorally or as a volunteer this is, in my opinion, the biggest initial consideration.

3 How will the culture of the organization (a) shape you and (b) influence your reputation with the people you desire to serve?

Five years after you've completed your training, this will have the most impact how you counsel.