

DISCIPLESHIP COUNSELING (SOUL CARE)¹

Introduction:

- ORIGIN & DEVELOPMENT

1. WHAT BIBLICAL COUNSELING IS

Deut 29:29; Ps 19; 119; Matt 28:18-20; Jn 17:17; Acts 20; Rom 12:1-2; 15:14; Eph 4; Phil 2:12-13; Col 1:28-29; 3; 1 Thess 2:7-12; 2 Pt 1

Biblical Counseling is ministering the Word of God to believers with humility, compassion and accountability—to bring about abiding hope, change, and usefulness, for the Glory of God.

- BCC Definition: Biblical Counseling occurs whenever and wherever God's people engage in conversation that are anchored in Scripture, centered on Christ and the gospel, grounded in sound theology, dependent upon the Holy Spirit and prayer, directed towards sanctification, rooted in the life of the church, founded in love, attentive to heart issues, comprehensive in understanding, thorough in care, practical and relevant, and oriented toward outreach.²

2. WHAT BIBLICAL COUNSELING Is NOT

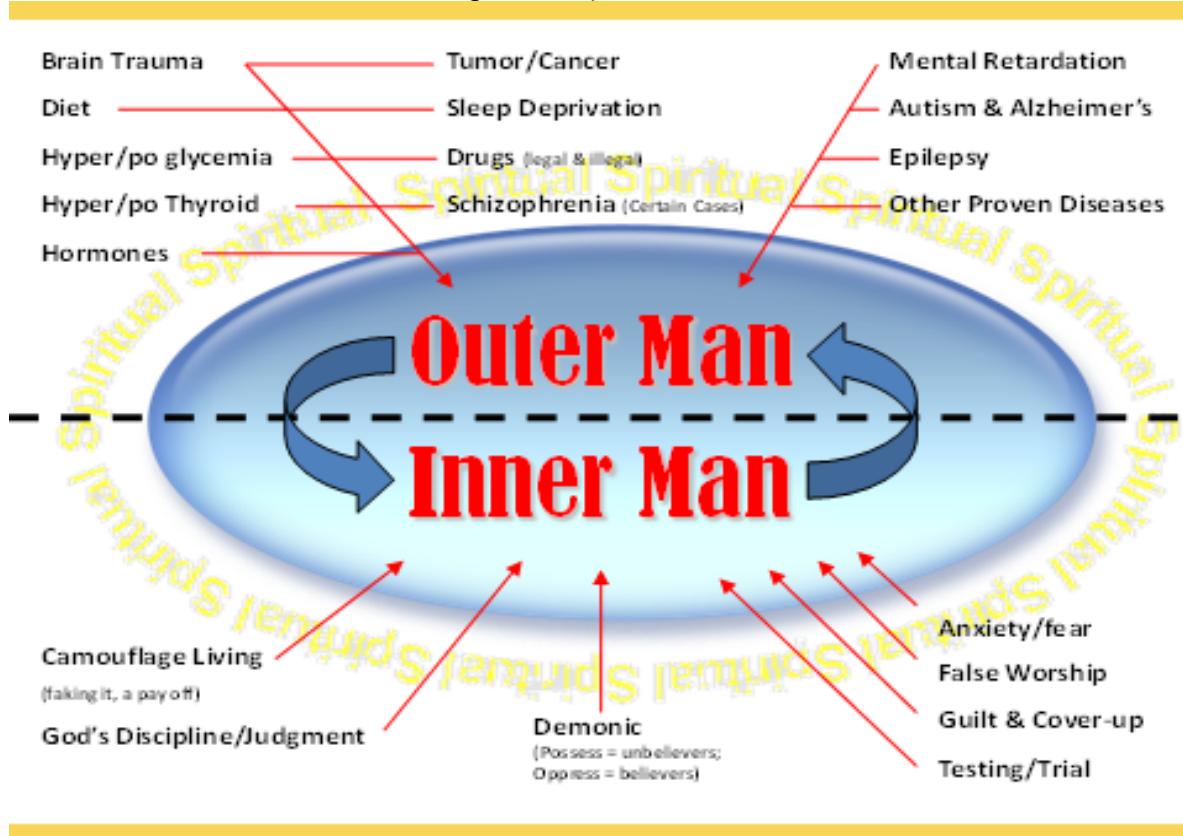
- a. Various Caricatures (untrue or abuses)
- b. Specifically Biblical Counseling...
 1. Is not counseling that is working from the premise: God's Word is insufficient to deal with matters of the heart and soul, eternal life (salvation) and godliness (living a Christ-honoring life in this world); Ps 19, 119; Jn 17:17; Rom 10:14-17; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pt 1:3-21
 2. Is not counseling that ignores or seeks to remedy (with Scripture) true and proven medical issues (Prv 4:23; 2 Cor 4:16-18; 1 Tim 5:23).
 - Biblical counseling understands there is a whole person, made up of the inner and outer man, and seeks to address both

¹ Some of this material has been borrowed from other ACBC members. I am very appreciative of all the men and women who have invested God's Word into my life and ministry (1 Cor 4:7)

² *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, 438.

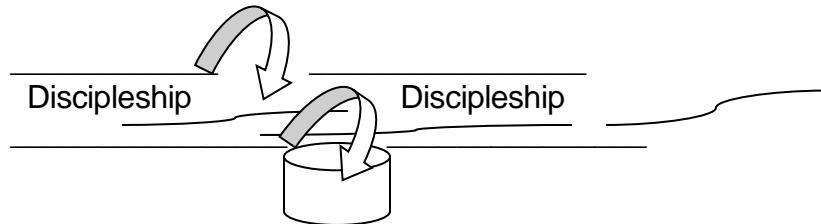
³ I'm thankful to Dr. Jay Adams on the initial distinction and to Dr. Ed Welch for his additions to this in *Blame it on the Blame*. I adapted it a little more.

appropriately, because they affect one another (2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 1 Kings 18-19).

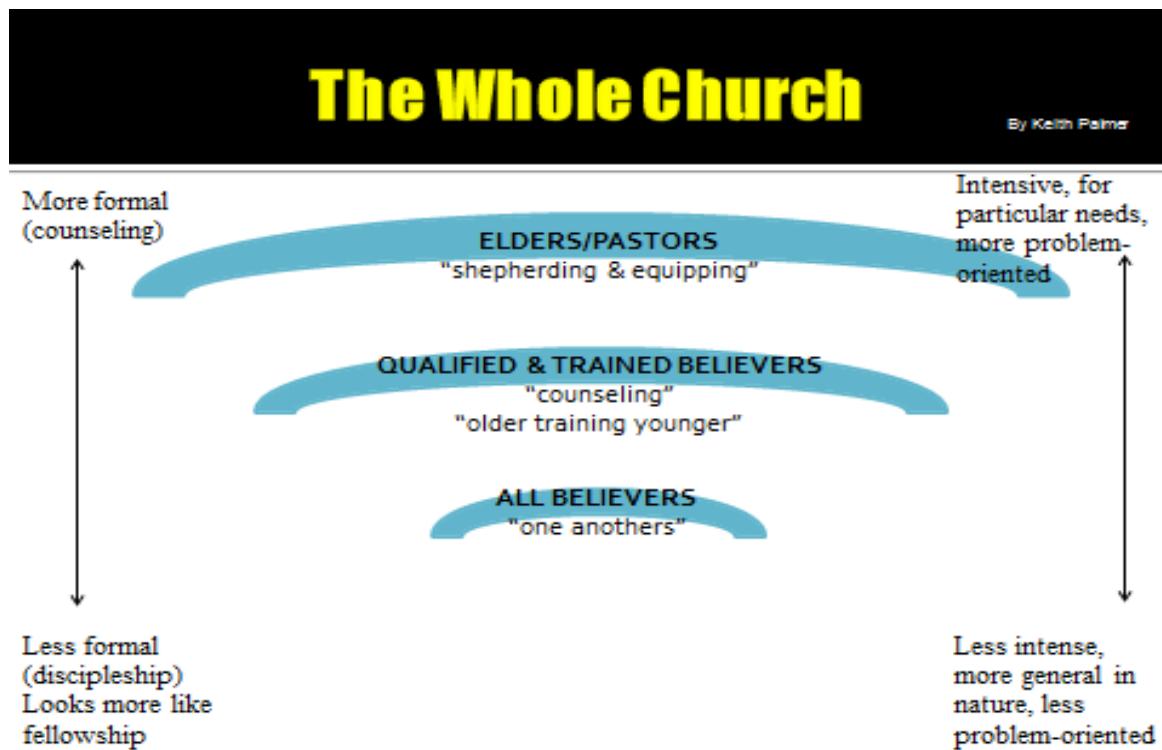
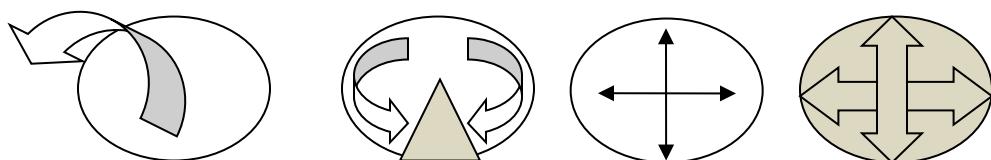


3. Is not counseling that has a pristine outlook on science and "research" (Rom 1:18; 8:7; 1 Cor 2:6-16; Col 1:21). It is not without the realization or acknowledgement that psychology is largely a *soft* science, that it is largely based on research by the unsaved observing the unsaved and theorizing about it, and that it begins with faulty, anti-scriptural presuppositions.
4. Is not counseling that leaves out Jesus Christ and application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, nor does it deal with only one aspect of that Gospel. For example: emphasizing only Gospel facts and obligations (2 Cor 5:21), emphasizing only one's union/position with Christ (Eph 1-3), or emphasizing one's communion/walk/behavior with Christ (Eph 4-6).
5. Is not counseling that is *always* addressing and dealing with sin issues, nor is it one who ignores, redefines or excuses personal sin (Job's three friends, Adam and Eve in Gen 3).

6. Is not counseling purposing to deal with outward behavior and present circumstances alone, leaving out the heart or the past (Prv 4:23; Mark 7:21ff; Ps 32:5-1, Ps 119: 45, 55; Ps 43:1-5).
7. Is not counseling that sees itself as an entity separate from discipleship (Mt 28:18-20; Col 1:28).⁴



8. Is not counseling that is an autonomous (impersonal or separatistic) ministry (Eph 4:14-16). There is not a professional, superior separation between counselor and counselee, or with the local church body.



⁴ I'm thankful to Dr. Steve Viars who elaborated on this in a JBC article.

9. Is not counseling that is angry, lacking compassion, or legalistic (Mt 9:36; Acts 20:31; 1 Thess 2:7-12).

3. WHAT PEOPLE ARE RELYING ON WHEN IT COMES TO “TRUTH”

- A. What is their (counselor’s) Epistemology
 1. How does he/she propose to know what he/she knows? What is his/her source of knowledge?
 2. There are four basic levels of knowledge (about the facts): They all come at descending levels of certainty and authority.
 - a. Revelation
 1. General (Creation, Providence, Conscience)⁵
 2. Special (God’s written revelation to His children)
 - b. Empiricism (“hard science”)
 - c. Reason and Observations (“soft science”), traditions
 - d. Intuition (feelings and senses)

* One’s own experience (or observing other’s experiences) is put into each of these to one degree or another. Usually the further one proceeds away from the objective facts, the more one relies on their own subjectivity for the origin of “truth” and/or the validation of “truth.” Experience should not authenticate or validate but illustrate. Nothing should rise above God and His Word (2 Pt 1:16-21).

- B. What is their Anthropology?
- C. How is the problem defined?
- D. How is the problem solved?
- E. What is the goal of counseling?
- F. What is the role of the counselor?
- G. Etc.

Similarity of Methods⁷

Apparent similarities between biblical counseling and other methods does not mean they are alike, nor does it justify the use of those other methods as biblical.

⁵ A very helpful article on truth comes to us in descending levels of authority and certainty is “General Revelation and Hermeneutics,” Dr. Robert Thomas, TMS Journal, Spring, 1998.

⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 158-160

⁷ David Powlison, A psychology proposes a system of truth and ministry, and it must be evaluated as such (Syllabus “Theology and Secular Psychology”). He says, they all have a way of salvation, a way of sanctification, a support system, and all tend to spar (a form of apologetics)

- Medical causes of behavior can be proven in a laboratory. If not proven by tests, organic basis is only theory.

What Is So Different about Biblical Counseling?⁸

- It Is Not Working From The Premise Of a Psychologized Gospel.

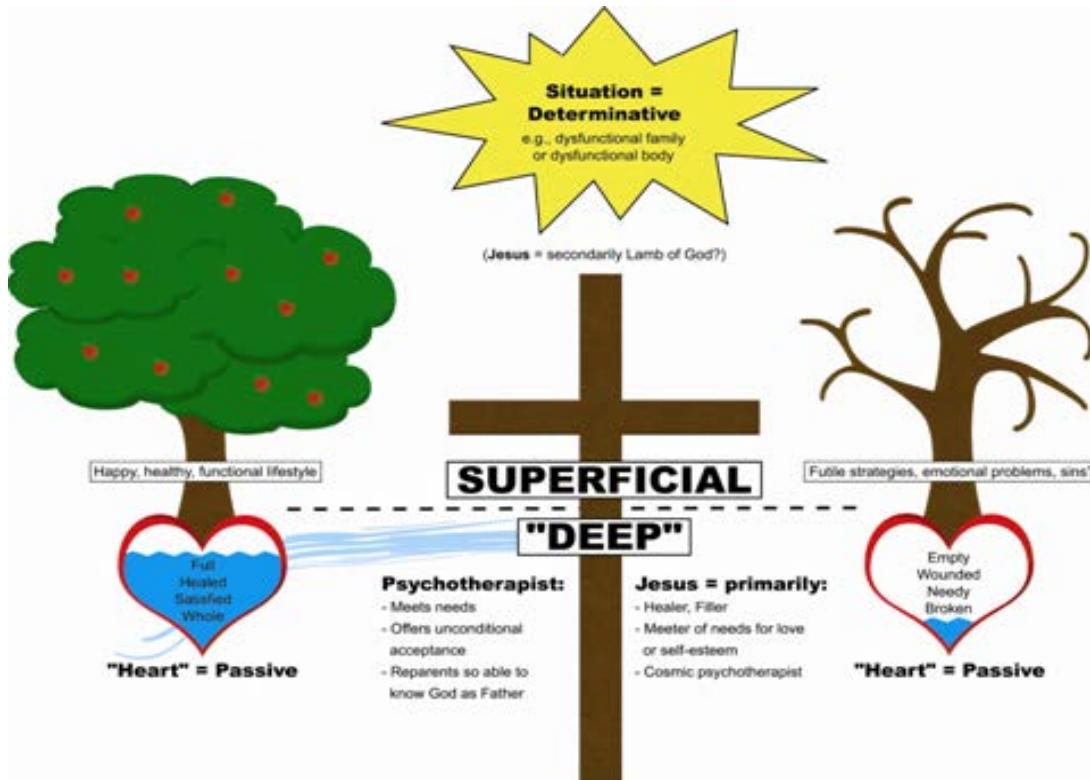


Fig 1. The Psychological “Gospel”

- Different view of person
- Different view of situation
- Different view of resources
- Different view of change process
- Different view of God

4. PRESUPPOSITIONS/THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

A. The Process of Developing Our Theology

1. Level One - We must begin with the canonical Scriptures.

⁸ Used by permission from David Powlison, C.C.E.F.

2. Level Two - We then seek to understand the canonical Scripture through the literal, grammatical-historical method of exegesis.
3. Level Three - From the exegesis of a canonical text we engage in the discipline of biblical theology by formulating propositional doctrinal statements and the theme of Creation, Fall, Redemption and Consummation.
4. Level Four - The propositions of biblical theology are correlated topically to produce a systematic theology.
5. Level Five - Building upon a thorough systematic theology we may arrive at practical theological conclusions about life.

* Biblical Counseling falls within the discipline of practical theology.

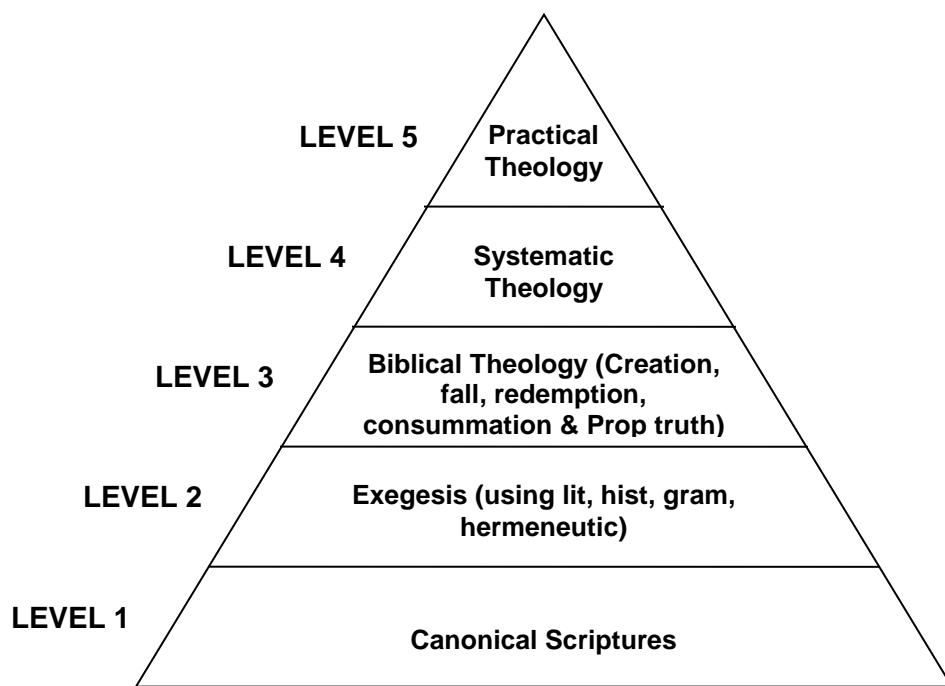


Fig. 3. The Theological Pyramid.

B. Implications from “The Theological Pyramid” – Fig. 3

- a. Level 5 without Levels 1-4 is not *biblical* counseling.
- b) Levels 1-4 without Level 5 is incomplete and ineffective (it is biblical as far as it goes).