LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

DISCIPLESHIP COUNSELING: DEVELOPING HEALTHY, GROWING, MULTIPLYING
FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

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BY

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To Julie, Harris, Anna Claire, Seth, Joel, and Adelyn
ABSTRACT

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT

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This project will look at how professional or lay counseling can increase the effectiveness of making and maturing followers of Jesus. An effective strategy for disciple-making that targets the whole person will be established to help followers of Jesus overcome the emotional pain due to past sin and hurts which have left them ineffective and stagnant in their growth as disciples. Research will be conducted through articles, websites, and books dealing with the subject as well as a survey of at least 50 pastors to determine whether a clear process of disciple-making exists in their church and if any form of counseling is included in the process. This project will produce a strategy for LifePoint Christian Fellowship as well as other local churches to be able to develop healthy, growing, multiplying followers of Jesus by including purposeful counseling as a part of the growth process.

Thesis Project topic length: 145
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INTRODUCTION

The church in America today has unfortunately earned a reputation of having a critical spirit toward those both inside and outside of the church. From those outside the church it is no surprise and nothing new. A few of the highlighted arguments from those outside the church continue to be criticism of being closed-minded, intolerant, and unloving. Those inside the church have become increasingly critical of the direction of the church. Some of those critics direct their argument toward the lack of deep Bible teaching and understanding or to the lack of growth among those who call themselves Christians. Others inside the church are critical of the lack of authenticity and transparency suggesting there is no true community within the church today. The state of the church would seem to echo the concerns of those who voice these criticisms. While a lack of depth or vulnerability may very well be a characteristic of the modern, American follower of Jesus, the cause of this stint in the shallow end of the pool may not solely result from the lack of strong teaching. What if it is more of a symptom of a personal struggle than a characteristic of the state of the American church?

Many people have an opinion on why the church seems immature in the overall faith and practice of its collective members, but the idea presented in this research will be to consider the possibility that it is a personal matter and requires personal responsibility to create a change in the church as a whole. Too many people who call themselves followers of Jesus do not act or react any differently than their worldly counterparts, leaving those outside the church to question

the validity of Jesus’ claims of being the Son of God. Unfortunately, many of those inside the church see the inappropriate behavior of fellow Christians and “write it off” as “just Joe being Joe.” Sometimes they even make excuses for the other person, claiming that if others knew all that he or she had experienced, then they would be given a pass for their bad behavior or bad attitude. All the while they are continuing to turn people away from Jesus because they present Him and His people as those without consideration of others or love for humanity.

Statement of the Problem

It is the opinion of the author that this problem stems at least in part from an ongoing issue of immaturity that is a result of emotional baggage that is carried far too long by followers of Jesus. The problem occurs when a person experiences some emotional distress which when not addressed will ultimately pull from others areas of his or her being, resulting in an unhealthy life. One of those areas is the spiritual area of a person’s life. If this area is negatively affected, it makes it extremely difficult and in some cases impossible for spiritual growth to take place.

Both Matthew and Mark, two of the men who recorded a story of Jesus’ life in the New Testament, included an event in the life of Jesus when He was asked which commandment was the greatest. The purpose of the question in the minds of the religious leaders was to trick Jesus so that they could discredit Him. Both Matthew and Mark refer to Jesus reminding the accusers of their Jewish heritage and what was known as the Sh’ma Yisrael or Shema for short: “Listen Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is One. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). It was understood that the Jews were to quote this every morning, so these experts of the law would have been fully aware of its

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2 Holman Christian Standard Bible (unless otherwise stated all Bible references will be from this translation).
importance. In Mark’s attempt to give an explanation of this phrase he used two words instead of one by including “with all your mind” so that his Greek audience would have a complete understanding of this Hebrew phrase.³

Luke took a similar approach to Mark when recording his version of Jesus’ life. He included a time when Jesus was asked how someone could inherit eternal life. As Jesus often did, He answered the question with a question by asking the expert in the law what it was that he understood the answer to be based on the law. Luke 10:27 states, “He answered: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” The overall idea is the same in each one of these passages: to love God with one’s whole being. Luke joined Mark in expanding his explanation by mentioning four parts instead of three. Part of the reason is because one of the elements needed two Greek words to describe one of the Hebrew words. Based on the Bible’s description, the whole being can then be understood in four parts: emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental.

God made these four parts to work together to make the human complete. Of the four parts of the human being, only one exists for eternity in the state in which it finds itself at the end of one’s earthly life. That area is the spiritual aspect, which makes it the highest priority. While it carries the highest priority, it does not exist to work independently from the other areas. Using the visual that each area is a bucket that is connected by a tube at the bottom of the bucket to one another it would be easy to see that when one bucket springs a leak it would pull from the other buckets. Since the human being has four parts that interact with one another, when one area is leaking, it pulls from the other areas. For example, if a person is in physical pain, it is

increasingly harder for that person to have a mental focus on anything or to maintain emotional stability because the physical part of the being immediately draws from the other “buckets” to help refill that “bucket.” Yet as this analogy shows, none of the buckets are filled, only level and continuing to be drained. In order to bring this person back to health the physical well-being must be addressed in order to bring stability to other areas so that the “buckets” can truly be refilled. If the physical is ignored and attention is given only to the other areas, then health will never truly be achieved.

This is easily understood when the physical area is in need of attention. No one would consider it a healthy move to send someone with a broken femur to a counselor to deal with the emotional outburst that happened at the time of the injury prior to sending the person to the doctor to have the leg repaired. If it is easy to understand this scenario from a physical perspective, why is it that this is not the approach taken when the need is emotional?

One of the primary reasons this is difficult is the dysfunctional relationship the church has had with the counseling community over the last 120 years. The church has dealt primarily with the spiritual aspect, which is the most important area, but to the detriment of the growth of the disciple, many in the church have turned their backs on counseling. The result is that modern day churches are filled with people who have damage to their emotional being and only the spiritual needs are being addressed. While churches pour into the spiritual “bucket,” the gaping hole in the emotional “bucket” continues to drain the believer, leaving him or her immature and unable to cope with life in a healthy manner or to grow as a disciple of Jesus. Since the church exists as a collection of individual followers of Jesus who have holes in their overall beings, it is no surprise that the whole body is suffering.
Statement of Limitations

In the church’s defense, the difficult relationship with the field of counseling is mostly due to so many in that field of study having taken a humanistic approach to helping people. In other words, many in the field of counseling teach that a person can get better by human effort alone, without the acknowledgement of any wrongdoing and in some cases without taking any responsibility for the emotional damage that has occurred. This approach ignores the fundamental, Christian belief of the sinful nature of humanity that requires one to accept and take personal responsibility for such behavior.

Counseling continues to have a negative stigma attached to it that often prevents followers of Jesus from seeking or recommending counseling. This neglect takes away the opportunity for many to address deeper issues and struggles, which if confronted, could bring victory over these problems resulting in significant spiritual growth. Not recognizing the connection allows people to wallow in their immaturity believing that this is as good as it gets for them. Through the help of the work that was begun by those like Jay Adams, the church will once again see the importance of accepting a proper view of counseling and of allowing this view to help them develop healthy, growing, multiplying followers of Jesus.

One of the limitations of this approach will be on churches and church leaders. Whether churches embrace the opportunity to develop as a part of their discipleship process a purposeful way to help people overcome some emotional struggles is also a decision that cannot be forced upon the leadership. They must decide for themselves whether to take advantage of opportunities through relationships with professional counselors, providing time to care for parishioners as well as equipping the church to care for one another or to develop small group strategies to allow
authenticity and vulnerability.

Over the last forty years, a variety of offerings within the field of counseling have helped contribute to the understanding of biblical counseling and Christian counseling. Much of that was begun by Jay Adams and continued with what Heath Lambert termed the “second generation” of biblical counselors like David Powlison.\(^4\) Two other groups who often identify themselves as Christian counselors are those identified as a part of the Society of Christian Psychology (SCP) and Integrationists.\(^5\) Beyond these four categories of Christian counselors are those considered secular counselors, who leave faith out of the counseling equation entirely.

Part of the challenge for church leaders will be to accept counseling as a viable option for parishioners and to decide which form of Christian counseling they would be willing to promote both formally and informally. These four areas mentioned in the previous paragraph will be discussed further in one of the following chapters so that a more educational decision can be made. In short, these areas line up on the Christian counseling spectrum in the following order. At one end of the spectrum is the group led by Jay Adams that will be referred to as the First Generation biblical counselors; next is the Second Generation biblical counselors; then SCP which is followed by Integrationists at the opposite end.

With humanity there is never a foolproof strategy and with God there is no formula in which He can be manipulated. Ultimately, God will reign and rule sovereignly without the need for approval from His creation; however, He has set principles in place that will give His followers an advantage in life. The limitations from the human perspective will come when


either humanity misunderstands or misinterprets God’s principles or simply continues to live in rebellion. While all humanity can benefit from the wisdom God has provided to His creation, it is also important to remember that He created humanity with the freedom to choose, in the same way people who are treated for a physical illness can choose to take appropriate medicine, opt for an alternative medicine, or simply not take anything. For the ones who seek to become healthy emotionally and spiritually cannot be forced to take the appropriate steps. So limitations occur within the individual will on whether a person chooses to take the necessary steps to seek counsel in order to overcome the emotional trauma they have faced.

Another limitation will be based on the ability to establish a small group strategy within the local church that will enable informal counseling to take place. For many churches this would require a re-evaluation of the model that is currently being used. Creating an environment where authenticity and transparency are celebrated and encouraged will be essential. This takes hard work and in many cases changes to what very well may be an historical approach to small group ministry.

Theoretical Basis

What if there was a way that the church who is willing could help lead these people out of their emotional bondage and toward more productive, effective lives as followers of Jesus? What if the church could help each follower identify a season of life that is causing stagnation or paralysis in their growth as a follower of Jesus? This research will seek to show that there is a way the church can help. Placing some additional emphasis on counseling as a part of the discipleship process may very well be a large part of the solution.

Without question the greatest teacher of all time was Jesus. One would expect that
sentiment coming from those who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus as the Savior of the world and who claim that during His existence on earth He was God in human form. However, even those who do not believe in that claim cannot argue against the greatness of Jesus’ teachings. One of the techniques that Jesus used to be able to bring understanding to His teaching was to attach a physical object or a common experience to a spiritual lesson. He often did this with occupations such as farming, shepherding, or fishing since those were jobs that many in the first century, Jewish culture understood. He did not just use occupations, though; He would also use objects such as trees to illuminate the deeper meaning to life. However, this technique did not originate with Jesus. Throughout the Old Testament of the Bible, the people of God were taught to know Him on a deeper level when He gave them images of the physical world to illustrate a spiritual lesson. It is as though God’s creation is simply a way of communicating and helping His people have a better understanding of how the spiritual life is supposed to exist.

As in previous eras, objects and circumstances in today’s world can also give an understanding of the spiritual life. In the same way that Jesus and the prophets before Him gave illustrations from everyday occurrences, the same opportunities exist today. So to better understand the crossroads of counseling and discipleship one should consider the object lesson of the human heart. From a physical, tangible aspect, it is a major organ of the body from which life exists. From an intangible aspect, it is also a major factor in the existence and quality of life.

In English as well as in Hebrew and Greek, the heart is often considered the center of human emotions. Phrases such as “put your heart into it,” “do it with all your heart,” “I give you my heart,” or “you broke my heart” are all phrases that connect to human emotion. When the

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human heart, the emotion of humanity, is doing well then life is full of joy and exciting anticipation. When that same intangible heart is hurting, then life becomes increasingly more difficult. While the intangible heart is the seat of emotion, troubles with the tangible heart continue to be a leading cause of death. Using the tangible or physical heart as an object lesson for the intangible or emotional heart gives a better understanding of how important it is to take serious consideration of the health of the heart and the impact it has on the rest of life.

Understanding the physical dynamics of the human heart can give people a better understanding of the human condition.

In the United States alone over 500,000 open heart surgeries are performed each year according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. The causes for heart surgery can generally be summed up in one of three categories: heart defect, heart disease, or heart damage. Some hearts have a defect from the beginning and as a rule without repair will never recover to proper or life-sustaining use. Others simply are diseased from years of abuse from poor health choices like smoking, lack of exercise, or bad eating habits. Still other hearts are damaged from some significant event such as a cardiac arrest. Each of these makes it difficult to have life without a surgical procedure as well as making a change in lifestyle.

In a physical sense, many defects are discovered in early childhood and can be dealt with immediately with great success. However, there are those who are unaware of the troubled state of their heart until they experience an often fatal attack at some point in early adulthood. No matter what good health choices are made, the defect makes it virtually impossible to experience a full life. In a spiritual sense, all of humanity is born with a heart defect. In the church world this

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heart defect is called sin. All of mankind is born into this world with this spiritual heart defect called sin, which directly affects the emotional state of a person. No amount of good choices or behavior will change that condition. Another layer of this condition is that sin creates a problem with relationships and life. From a physical standpoint, people who are born with a heart defect must receive a corrective procedure or life will be snuffed out quickly. Most of the time this happens in infancy, but occasionally it is not detected until a seemingly healthy young adult dies suddenly, and the family only later discovers that he or she had a heart defect all along. A physical heart defect rarely goes away on its own, although there are occasions where the body heals itself; however, the spiritual heart defect of sin will never go away on its own.

The second area of need for heart surgeries and procedures are due to diseased hearts. Physical hearts are generally diseased due to poor health choices. It is not generally one, single bad choice, but a series of poor choices that develop into patterns that lead to an unhealthy lifestyle. In a similar way the spiritual hearts are diseased because of poor choices. Mankind was created by God and was created for relationship with Him and with one another. All of life revolves around relationships, so when there is trouble within the relationships there is trouble with life. When the emotional heart becomes diseased it has an effect on all relationships. A person cannot carry on healthy relationships when there is a disease destroying their heart and as a result life is extraordinarily difficult. Anger, pornography, shame, gossip, abuse, bitterness, and envy are a short list of those things that multiply the disease within the heart. When these habitual behaviors define a life the ultimate result will at best be paralysis within relationships and at worst be death to those relationships.

The third major reason for a heart surgery is due to a damaged heart. A heart can be damaged from a significant event. A few ways a physical heart can be damaged is by way of a
cardiac arrest, high level of stress, or a result of an event that caused significant impact on the heart such as a car wreck. A spiritual heart can also be damaged in many ways: a ten-year-old boy being told by his music teacher to simply mouth the words because his singing is terrible and disruptive, a young girl being told she will never amount to anything significant by someone she considers meaningful, a child whose parent accepts nothing less than perfection before affection is given. Each of these is a story of someone who has experienced damage to the heart that has led to bitterness, resentment, and distorted views of a loving, gracious God. Without repair these events can be carried into future relationships and lead to unhealthy, unproductive relationships that become damaging to all parties involved.

The significance of the intangible heart is not simply a modern day analogy. The Bible is full of references to this emotional breeding ground and the importance of protecting it. Most references to the heart throughout the Bible do not refer to the vital organ inside the body, but rather to the core of the human emotion, will, and passion. Some have even referenced the heart as “the most important anthropological word in the Hebrew scriptures.”

Each of these images of the defected, diseased, and damaged emotional heart in which all humanity suffers cause obstacles for faith in Jesus as the Savior of the world. These are things that cannot be overcome alone. One of the gifts that God has given mankind is the opportunity to have a relationship with one another in order to provide support throughout life. It would make sense then, that inviting others into the chaos of one’s life would be an automatic response. However, showing any kind of weakness or uncertainty in decision making over anything that might be considered mundane has become somewhat taboo in the American culture.

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Independence has become such a desired character trait that asking for help has become discouraged. According to the Bible, though, to admit that support is needed is not a sign of weakness but a sign of wisdom.

Proverbs contains many statements as to how to leverage wisdom in life and how to best navigate through the difficult seasons of life. This includes using the relationship with God that He established to bring about victory over sin and also the relationship with others to offer help along the way. Proverbs 1:5 states, “A wise man will listen and increase his learning, and a discerning man will obtain guidance.” Also in Proverbs 11:14 it is taught, “Without guidance, people fall, but with many counselors there is deliverance.” These are only two of those statements that claim the importance of working together with those that God has put along the path of life’s journey to give direction and clarity.

The Hebrew word, חֶבֻּלוֹת (tāḥ-bū·lōṯ) that is translated “guidance” in this passage signifies advice giving, comforting, and guidance. Another definition given to this word is “giving a verbal direction.” This indicates that it is wise for a person to seek the verbal or written advice, comfort, and guidance from others to help in the journey of life. Attempting to make it through life without the help of others or intervention from God is like not accepting help from those in the medical field when dealing with a physical heart defect, disease, or damage. It is simply not wise and ultimately leaves a person lifeless.

This is so incredibly important because the wisdom in Proverbs 4:23 also tells us to

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“guard your heart above all else because it is the source of life.” That is to say that all of life has its beginning in the heart. The word “heart” in this passage means more than mental or emotional capacity, but it also encompasses one’s values.\textsuperscript{11} The values that a person possesses affect their decision making on a daily basis as they face various circumstances and issues in life. Because of this “the impulses, the choices, the decisions” that people make affect the nature of their existence. To give a complete understanding of this passage it is important to note that “in Hebrew psychology the heart is the center of moral consciousness and the seat of the affections.”\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, the inner person or the heart has to be right, because it is the source of all else.\textsuperscript{13} If the intangible heart is defective, diseased and/or damaged, then life not only will not but cannot be all it can be.

The reality is that all humanity deals with intangible heart issues. The problem occurs when the issues are left alone in hopes that the problems will resolve on their own. These problems do not resolve on their own, so people often walk through life carrying emotional or spiritual baggage, and this collective baggage results in a society full of emotionally and spiritually immature people. So many of these problems are a product of childhood events that leave people spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and in some cases physically stagnant or inept. Some suggest that dealing with only the spiritual issue will make all things fall into order, but that is not taking into account the full being that God created. Because of this truth, even those


who have made a decision to follow Jesus and received the forgiveness for their sins that He offers find themselves during various seasons of their lives unable to grow in one or more aspects.

In the New Testament book of Ephesians, followers of Jesus are encouraged not to let “the sun go down on their anger.”14 This does not necessarily mean a literal overnight period of time, but more of the intent of dealing with problems immediately so that they do not fester and give way to bitterness and resentment. So the problem arises when people carry with them hurts and resentment from one season of life to another, thus compiling more issues on top of the original problem to the point where they do not even know why their struggles in life seem so overwhelming. As a result, freedom in Christ becomes a “pie in the sky” idea that is not possible to attain. In this way, then, most people do not have adult problems, but rather problems and issues that began in childhood or adolescence that have never been addressed and have been allowed to become deeply rooted. This is why so many people cannot seem to get along in their relationships with one another and why those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior cannot seem to grow in their relationship with God.

**Statement of Methodology**

For many years there has been a scarlet letter15 placed on anyone who seeks professional counseling, particularly within the Christian community. This mindset toward professional counseling is based on the secular view that many believe exists within all of the counseling community. In many cases this belief is true because counseling without a Biblical understanding

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14 Eph. 4:26

15 In reference to the 1850 novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne in which a lady was caught in an adulterous relationship and forced to where a scarlet letter “A” on her clothing to signify her sinful behavior. This has become a reference to anything that may be thought to bring about shame upon a person.
of humanity makes the foundational mistake of viewing man as the “supreme being.” When man is viewed in this manner, then sin as the Christian understands it ceases to exist.\(^\text{16}\) Where sin does not exist, God is not needed, and everything can be fixed within the power of humanity. Secular counseling sets itself up for certain defeat with this as the foundation of help offered.

Not all professional counseling has this secular mindset, and one of the most effective group therapy organizations had its beginning within the Christian community. The group that has its origin as a disciple-making organization is Alcoholics Anonymous. The idea began in China while Sam Shoemaker was on a mission trip. While experiencing a powerful evening with a Christian fellowship that became known as the Oxford Group, he was confronted by its leader, Frank Buchman, about his life as a follower of Jesus. Buchman began to teach Shoemaker how to become more effective in sharing the story of Jesus with others. He based it on four principles he had been taught from Matthew 5-7 known as the Sermon on the Mount. These four principles are absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love. As Shoemaker began to grow in his faith in Jesus he brought this format of making disciples back to the United States and applied it to those he met. One of those he met was a man named Bill Wilson, a recovering alcoholic who was able to conquer this habit based on the process he was taught. Shoemaker and Wilson began to reach out to others who struggled with alcoholism, and Alcoholics Anonymous was born. Over time the specific cry to the God of the Bible was replaced with a cry out to a non-specific, higher being. The lack of acknowledgement of a specific higher being has left the program with a missing part, much like its secular counseling counterpart.\(^\text{17}\) Because of the neglect of this important aspect of the specific, one true God, other small group ministries to addicts like

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\(^{16}\) Douglass, “Do Christians Need Counseling?,” 79-81.

Overcomer’s Outreach and Celebrate Recovery have been started.

However, to lump all of counseling together is to miss the opportunity for followers of Christ to break free from the very things that are keeping them from growing in their relationship with Jesus. At least three different forms of counseling exist. Professional counseling involves those who are trained and educated within the field of psychology and/or counseling. It is important to know the foundation of any professional counselor, but many followers of Christ work within the profession and can be extremely helpful when navigating through the difficult situations in life. Lay counseling involves any nonprofessional acquaintance. This could be a close friend, pastor, teacher, or a coworker, just to name a few. Just as it is crucial with the professional counselor, it is important to know the foundation from which the layperson is speaking. The third kind is small group ministry or counseling. While there are small groups that meet outside the influence of Christ and His church, the argument that will be presented in this project will be from the perspective of small groups within the local church. Even though professional counseling has its detractors, other options are available. A vital aspect of the latter two counseling options is pastoral care. This is the extension of the work of the pastor or shepherd to those under his care. This does not have to be offered by the pastor himself but can also be a part of his equipping of the saints.

Throughout much of the history of the church, most parishioners sought help and guidance in life from their pastor. During the late 1800s and early 1900s this seemed to begin to change. When some of the church leaders began to be confronted with the “new” ideas presented in the 1800s by Charles Darwin in his theory of evolution, they became distracted by

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defending the church and allowed secular scholars to take over the role of counselors. With the onset of people like Sigmund Freud and Carl Rogers, who began to study human behavior, and the distraction of the current events of the day, the church began to fade into the background when it came to offering guidance. Some would say the church let go of the reigns of counseling and allowed their secular counterparts to lead the way into the 20th Century. Others claim the church never let go of the reigns but simply used the study and findings of the secular specialists to further their understanding of human behavior.

Some of the problems for pastors are that they feel ill equipped to handle many of the deeper issues that arise when counseling a parishioner. Alistair Ross suggests that there is a difference between what most pastors feel equipped to do and the role of a counselor by describing the pastor’s role as more of a caregiver than a counselor. He says “pastoral care (is) being the fence at the top of a cliff that prevents people from falling, rather than being the specialist rescue centre for the fallen victims.” This is true not only for the pastor, but also for fellow parishioners. As pastors are able to begin equipping other church members to become caregivers for one another, many of the troubles that people face can be handled not only by the pastor but also by small groups or a mentorship program within the local church.

Part of the danger of counseling or caregiving is that people can often become attached to the person giving counsel/care and will become somewhat addicted to the help. Part of the skill that the pastoral caregiver needs to learn is to help people determine the right kind of help at the right time and to know when is an appropriate time to terminate the discussion. The simple

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process for being a caregiver is the initial meeting with an opportunity to move forward during the intermediate time as well as a clear-cut closing. As part of the discipleship process, each individual must also be equipped to cope with trials and troubles in a healthy manner so that when they arise again they will have more tools to handle them quickly, without slipping back into a state of stagnation.

According to Ross the three most common areas in which parishioners seek counsel are conflicts with beliefs and values; power and sexuality; and guilt, shame, and forgiveness. It would seem that the church would be an ideal place for these things to be discussed. Unfortunately too often these “wounds are hidden and memories are forced underground at the cost of lessons that can be learnt from the conflict.” Sin has varying consequences as will be discussed. Some consequences are immediate and some require a lifelong struggle for healing. First Corinthians 6:18 states, “Run from sexual immorality! ‘Every sin a person commits is outside the body.’ On the contrary, the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.” Sexual sin seems to have a stickiness that other sins do not have. It seems to linger longer and therefore causes havoc on “the sinner and all those with whom he was related.” Warren Wiersbe writes, “When a man and woman join their bodies, the entire personality is involved. There is a much deeper experience, a ‘oneness’ that brings with it deep and lasting consequences.” Ross concludes, “The abuse of power and sexuality leave deep, subconscious

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21 Ross, *Counseling Skills*, 12.

22 Ibid, 124.


wounds, which may take a lifetime to explore and heal—even if healing is possible.”

Guilt, shame, and forgiveness all have a direct line to the heart. These can be traced to each area: heart defect, heart disease, and heart damage. Ross suggests guilt focuses more on what we have done whereas shame focuses on who we are and what has been done to us. Both of these have an impact on the health of the heart. Shame insists that others can see right through the victim and knows the hurt and damage that has settled in the heart. Forgiveness is the only real opportunity to return to a healthy state. This is not only true for the person involved but also for the future generations associated with that individual, as “hurt and shame get passed on from one generation to another, consciously and unconsciously.”

Marvin Douglass takes a different angle and suggests that there are at least three reasons a follower of Christ needs counseling at different times during life: they are human, they are sinners, and they need to grow. This is not to suggest that it always needs to be professional counseling. Many times it is through lay counseling that people experience a life change. Because all followers of Christ are a part of the human race, they are subject to the same dangers that all humans face. Christians can be bipolar, can get depressed, and can struggle to get past hurts from their childhood. In essence, Christians are humans who require human maintenance. When humans are taxed beyond their ability to cope with issues of life, they can become mentally, emotionally, or physically ill. Family physicians state that anywhere from “40%-60% of physical complaints are a result of psychosomatic problems.” Many Christians believe that if they deal with the salvation issue then they should not have to deal with any other issues. However, they are still a part of the human race and are capable of facing the same challenges as

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25 Ross, Counseling Skills, 135.

26 Ibid, 159-163.
The second issue Douglass mentions is that followers of Christ are sinners. All human activity has consequences. The writer of much of the New Testament, Paul, taught the churches of Galatia this principle in Galatians 6:7-8: “Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows he will also reap, because the one who sows to his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.” People are the product of their consequences, both good and bad. All of the things that people have done or that have been done to them have results. Consequences always follow action, and when the action is in opposition to God’s design or desire, all must face the negative results. These things affect the heart and therefore are produced in a person’s thinking, feeling, and doing. The two doctrines within the teachings of Jesus that must rise to the top during this time are forgiveness and grace. This must be true for self and for others. Forgiveness and grace in Christ must be embraced by self and extended to anyone who has caused the damage in order for one to move forward in relationship with God and with others.28

The third observation made by Douglass is that a follower of Christ is to continue to grow in their faith in Jesus and their understanding of who He is calling them to become. This can only be done effectively when the slate is kept clean. Much of this work is hindered by false beliefs that followers of Christ have embraced as truth, resulting in destructive, self-defeating behavior.29 This area deals primarily with the thought patterns of people and how they must no longer “conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind,”

27 Douglass, “Do Christians Need Counseling?,” 76-78.

28 Ibid, 78-81.

as the New Testament writer Paul said to the church in Rome (Rom. 12:1). In Psalm 139:23-24, David recognized its importance by pleading to God to “search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.” These were both observations of the importance of recognizing the danger in negative patterns that can prevent proper growth among followers of God.

The observation is clear that followers of Christ are not exempt from the challenges and struggles of life. As a result, it is important for individuals to seek to understand themselves at a deeper level and not to remain satisfied with the notion that they cannot change who they are. Instead, each follower of Christ has the opportunity with the help of others to become a physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually healthy individual who will be capable of growing in relationships with God and others.

**Review of Literature**

A variety of resources will be used throughout this project. Books are an obvious choice, especially those that deal directly with the subject of counseling as well as those that cover the subject of discipleship. Articles are helpful as well and give great insight on specific aspects of the subject matter. Commentaries and Bible dictionaries are also good sources of discovery when searching for the original meaning of Bible passages and words that deal with counseling ideas and the discipleship process. The last type of resource that will be used is a self-discovery assessment, and the way it can be used to help develop disciples will also be explored.

In his book, *Competent to Counsel*,30 Jay Adams discusses the capability that each pastor has to counsel his congregation. Understanding this ability that God has given the leader of a

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30 Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Phillipsburg, NJ, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company,
local fellowship of believers, gives each church the potential to have a healthy process for
developing disciples of Jesus. This ultimately needs to be passed along to the rest of the
congregation so that there will be a culture of healing and acceptance among the church for all
who attend.

In another book by Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 31 he shares a simple
strategy of how the Bible is designed to bring about the change that each person needs in order to
be a healthy, growing follower of Jesus Christ. Using the basis of what Paul taught Timothy
about the sufficiency of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:15-17 we see the Bible as able to teach,
convict, correct, and discipline the follower of Jesus. Using this strategy as a part of the
discipleship process within the context of a counseling or small group setting will help
strengthen each individual Christian.

A third book by Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 32 is also used as a part
of the development of a theology for counseling. This is important for this research since the
church has at times rejected counseling due to the difficulty with the relationship between secular
counseling and the church. Adams develops a theological basis for the need for counseling
within the church, which helps counter the secular philosophy that so many in the counseling
profession have taken.

In *Strategic Pastoral Counseling: A Short-Term Structured Model*, 33 David Benner gives
a practical guide on how to develop a strategy for pastoral counseling. The development of this

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33 David Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling: A Short-Term Structured Model, (2nd ed)*. Grand
ministry requires some understanding of the dangers and benefits of counseling from avoiding dependency to appropriate length of meetings to types of action steps. This will be helpful in teaching leaders how to counsel and determining what is the best approach for each arena of counseling (small group or one-on-one).

The New International Version (NIV) Application Commentary series will be used to offer a deeper understanding of Scripture as it relates to subject matter that will be discussed. The unique aspect of these commentaries is the section that deals entirely with the modern day application based on the knowledge of the historical context of the passage. This is helpful in understanding how these passages join the spiritual health and the emotional health of the follower of Jesus.

The New American Commentary collection as well as the e-book commentaries from the Logo Software are a good resource for gaining insight on passages from the Bible. Various books from these collections will be used to add a different perspective to passages of Scripture in order to explore more fully the parts of the Bible that speak to the ideas that deal with discipleship, the importance of protecting the heart, and helping one another.

Ed Bulkley discusses the dangers of psychology and why Christians should avoid the use of any strategy offered by the psychology community in his book *Why Christians Can’t Trust Psychology*. In the realm of psychology, many of the elements of faith are neglected, which eliminates the need for God in the process of finding wholeness for the individual. This creates a problem in the overall worldview and continues to stifle any potential spiritual growth.

Bible Dictionaries help give an understanding of the original, cultural setting of the Bible, including specific information regarding people, customs, and use of language. Knowing the

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surroundings as well as the overall intent of a book or passage will provide a deeper meaning to the text, which will therefore support the findings of this research. A variety of dictionaries will be used to ensure a widespread understanding of the meaning behind the proposed passages.

Mels Carbonell offers a look into the personalities that exist among humanity in *How to Solve the People Puzzle: Understanding Personality Patterns*.\(^{35}\) The depth of insight given to the potential combinations within the personality assessment, which are defined by the four major personalities of Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness (DISC), helps to gain an understanding of how people respond to life. Personality exists partially as a God-given trait (nature) and partially as a life-experience trait (nurture). The nurture portion of the personality can be addressed to help determine what help can be offered to overcome some negative aspects due to past experiences. This will be helpful in developing a process of discipleship.

Several of the articles from the spring 1997 edition of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary journal, *The Theological Educator*, are helpful in the research of the subject matter. The article, “Do Christians Need Counseling?” by Marvin Douglass, is particularly helpful because he gives an argument as to why counseling is an appropriate for a Christian. Because Christians are human they face problems that all of humanity face including depression as well as other issues that often lead people to receive counseling. Douglass’ argument counters those arguments that are opposed to formal counseling for Christians.

As a part of establishing a discipleship process that includes counseling, an examination of the effective use of small groups will be conducted. In *Leading Small Groups with Purpose*,\(^ {36}\) Steve Gladen looks at a purposeful approach to leading small groups, which is useful in this


examination. This book gives some direction in the overall development of small group leaders to see their potential role as a change agent for congregants. When a small group leader can understand this role then the small group members have an immediate resource to gain wisdom from a group of close-knit, like-minded people who can help them walk through the difficulties of life.

So much emphasis is placed on the amount of knowledge and retention of that knowledge that a person can gain. This is certainly an important aspect of growing as a person, but Daniel Goleman touches on an equally important aspect when he talks about emotional intelligence in his book *Working with Emotional Intelligence*.37 People lead and function best when they operate from a healthy emotional state. This is just as true with being a disciple of Jesus as much as being a professional employee. The understanding gained from Goleman’s insight is an important feature in realizing the importance for a follower of Jesus to be emotionally healthy.

Kevin Harney shares the importance of the church leader examining themselves on the inside in *Leadership from the Inside Out: Examining the Inner Life of a Healthy Church Leader*.38 All leadership, whether leading oneself or others, is directly connected to and affected by what is happening in the inner sanctuary of the heart. The effectiveness not only of the church leader but also of every follower of Jesus is related to the state of the heart. This gives strength to the argument of the need for there to be emotional health for every follower of Jesus.

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Virginia Todd Holeman provides a theological case for counseling in *Theology for Better Counseling: Trinitarian Reflections for Healing and Formation*. Her study provides stability in the importance of counseling as a part of the discipleship process because it helps not only to create a healthier life but also to establish a pattern for continued health and growth. This work will help create a system particularly for LifePoint Christian Fellowship that will serve as a part of the overall discipleship process.

In *Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*, Heath Lambert wrote a brief history of the Biblical counseling movement and how it has continued beyond the attention that Jay Adams brought to it. Understanding the history of the counseling profession and the church in the twentieth century gives great insight into the view that many Christians have or have had in recent history of counseling. Many have pushed against counseling to the detriment of growing as a follower of Jesus. This is very important in addressing and reversing the trend that many followers of Jesus have experienced in their view of counseling.

So many of the issues related to emotional distress and bondage can be directly linked to trouble within past relationships. Whether a person is the accused or the accuser, a lack of forgiveness is generally the seed by which the distress has grown. In *Free Yourself to Love*, Jackie Kendall shares the importance of addressing the subject of forgiveness and how it is linked to bringing about healing. This text will be used in developing a process for helping people overcome their bondage due to unforgiveness.

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Several different personality assessments will be examined, including but not limited to Myers-Briggs, DISC, and Monvee. These assessments become avenues to identify patterns of behavior that may very well be associated to past life experiences. Those that are negative behavioral patterns can be traced back to damaged emotions and therefore be addressed in a counseling format. The various forms will be considered to determine which seems to be the best approach for the process of discipleship.

Fear is often an emotion tied to a hurt from a life experience. Fear also has the potential to paralyze a person and to prevent growth in all aspects of life. Ken Nichols takes a look at identifying and overcoming the particular fears that cause so much damage to a person’s well-being in his book Untie the Fear Knot of Your Heart. This resource will be useful in making people aware of the events that have caused so much trouble and how to directly address the fear so that healing can be accomplished.

John Ortberg has created a resource for self-examination in The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God’s Best Version of You. This in turn becomes a way to lead others to discover what areas of life are causing unwanted results. As a part of the examination, past hurts and emotional damage can be uncovered and handled appropriately in a formal or informal counseling session.

Alistair Ross has written a good resource for those within the church community in his book Counseling Skills for Church and Faith Community Workers. In this book he discusses

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42 Ken Nichols, Untie the Fear Knot of Your Heart, (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University Books, 2010).


how the community of faith can approach counseling opportunities through the natural relationships that stretch beyond the clergy/congregant relationship.

Peter Scazzero is a pastor who has, in fact, developed a strategy to help followers of Jesus work beyond their emotional troubles. He presents this strategy in *The Emotionally Healthy Church*.45 This is an important resource as it gives a foundation on which to build a more specific approach for counseling as a part of the discipleship process.

David Seamands has a background as a Methodist pastor and has also had a first-hand view of congregants who have found themselves stuck due to emotional bondage. Seamands along with Beth Funk share insight throughout *Healing for Damaged Emotions*46 of the harm that occurs due to the emotional struggles and show why there is a need for a strategy for churches to include counseling as a part of the discipleship process.

Andy Stanley offers good insight in his book *It Came from Within*47 about the importance of not allowing difficulties in life to become agents of bitterness. As a pastor and recipient of counseling he has seen the impact that emotional baggage can have on a follower of Christ. The tactics offered throughout this book will be helpful in developing a strategy to help followers of Christ release the bondage of emotional struggles.

Heather Zempel shares from her experience as the leader of the small group ministry at her church in the book that is fittingly named *Community Is Messy*.48 When authentic community is developed it will inevitably become messy. Life is challenging, but when there is a group of


people that can share the burdens and joys life is more enjoyable. Being a part of a community allows for an opportunity to share the hurts so that they can be dealt with directly and released so that no one will be held in emotional bondage. It is, however, important for leaders to be instructed on how to create an environment that is productively transparent. This book helps establish that part of the process.

In the Bible all three synoptic gospels, but particularly Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, and Luke 10:27, include a time when Jesus spoke of the most important commandment, which is to love God. Two of the three add an extra word to fully translate the idea from Hebrew to Greek. This additional word shows that people should love God with four parts of their being: all their heart, all their soul, all their mind, and all their strength. Taking this cue, the people of God should develop a love that has no bondage or barrier within these areas of life: emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical. This research will take the stance that the heart is the emotional part of the human being and therefore should be kept at a healthy place to join with the rest of the being in loving God.

Many parts of the Bible speak of the importance of the heart as well as that of discipleship. Proverbs 27:19 tells how the heart of a person can be identified by the life a person. How a person lives, responds, loves, forgives, copes, and so on can determine the condition of a person’s heart. This proverb helps lay the foundation of why it is important to monitor a person’s heart during the discipleship process.

Proverbs 4:23 is another passage that lays the foundation for the argument for protecting the source of life for the believer. That intangible heart of a person determines so much about life that if it is not protected, it can make life miserable. Those who walk through life with damage to the soul miss the opportunity for the abundant life promised to followers of Jesus.
Much like Proverbs 27:19, Proverbs 15:13 reminds the reader that the state of the heart is noticeable in most people. Those that struggle with issues of the heart have a hard time hiding the effects. They may be able to hide the specific issues, but there is most often evidence of a problem in the countenance and attitude. Training leaders to be made aware of this is helpful in creating a direct process for developing healthy, growing, multiplying followers of Jesus.

In Matthew 15:1-20, Jesus addresses the initial accusation from the Pharisees about the washing of hands by His disciples prior to meal time, focusing on the much deeper issue of what is already in the body and is working its way to the surface. Jesus argues that the real problem is the state of the heart because the heart is where sin originates. This continues to add to the importance of dealing with heart issues even for those who are already followers of Jesus.

As Samuel learned in the process of searching for the King of Israel, God is more concerned with the heart of man than He is with the outward appearance (1 Sam. 16:7). The truth that God designed mankind’s heart to be an indicator of the real person is foundational to dealing with the issues of the heart.

David passes along his wisdom, knowledge, and warning concerning the heart to his son, Solomon, in 1 Chronicles 28:9. Solomon is about to become the next king of Israel, and David knows that if impurities are allowed to fester then ineffectiveness and a lack of productivity will be the result. The importance of protecting and guarding the heart cannot be overstated.

Psalm 51 was written by David as a repentant response based on Nathan confronting him about his sinful actions toward Uriah and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12). David realized his wrongful behavior and in spite of being “a man after God’s own heart” found himself with a heart in need of repair by asking God to “create in me a clean heart.” This is one of the key passages that will be used to describe the heart damage that we receive when our heart is not kept in check.
David once again cries out to God to help in keeping his heart pure and set on God in Psalm 139:23-24. As a part of the process of being a disciple there are healthy patterns that need to replace the unhealthy behaviors that are associated with an impure heart. One of the keys to developing those healthy patterns is seeking guidance from God to make oneself aware of the destructive behaviors so that they can be addressed.

Proverbs 16:5 tells that God looks at the heart and is aware of the heart, so it is not surprising that negative consequences are a result of a defective, diseased, or damaged heart. This proverb helps address the need for a process that consists of a continuous heart evaluation so that pride does not disrupt what God desires to do.

When the heart is in a good place it not only makes life better for the individual but also for those that surround the individual according to Proverbs 17:22. It becomes like medicine for the ailments that life brings. All of life, the good and the bad, can be handled in a healthy manner when the heart is made right with God and kept pure in God.

In the New Testament a leader of the Jews, Nicodemus, is introduced in John 3. While the image of the heart is not used, it is clear that Jesus is teaching him about the necessity of a new beginning. This explains the idea that is used in this research that is identified as the heart defect. This will be explained in greater detail in the following chapter, but it certainly illustrates the need for a heart renewal for every person.

Both the story of the woman at the well in John 4 and the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19 illustrate what can happen when a pattern is developed that needs to be corrected in order to grow as a follower of Jesus. These are good examples of what happens when people experience heart disease due to continuous behavior that is contrary to the teachings of Jesus. Without addressing these head-on and even at the root, no significant life change will take place.
The account that John gives of the conversation that Jesus and Peter have on the shore of the Sea of Galilee after the resurrection is an example of what needs to happen for believers when heart damage has taken place. In John 21, Jesus confronts Peter by asking him one question three consecutive times, which is likely in relation to the three times that Peter denied Jesus during His arrest and trial. In order for Peter to be all that God intended him to be, then Peter would have to deal head-on with the damage that was done through his denial of Jesus.

James 5:16 instructs the congregation to confess sins to one another so that healing can take place. Taking this relational approach to church life is part of creating authentic, transparent relationships to allow for the development of healthy, growing, multiplying followers of Jesus. This is an essential element in establishing a small group ministry that leads toward emotionally and spiritually healthy people.
On December 15, 1968, a baby boy was born in the small city of Vicksburg, Mississippi, and by all accounts he was a healthy boy. He quickly became an active, adventurous, athletic boy. Like so many boys in the 1970s and 1980s, he played every sport at each changing season. If he had one that he loved more than any other, it was football. While he did not have the success that would make him a scholarship athlete at his beloved Mississippi State University, he chose to attend the school anyway. While there, he did not lose his love for adventure or sports. He participated regularly in various intramural sports, one of which was flag football. Each year he played with as much competitiveness as he did in his high school years with an added dose of maturity. While he still loved to win, he had learned there were more important things in life than sports and instead was looking forward to a future in accounting.

In his senior year he once again played flag football with the guys that had become like brothers to him. Each year they became more competitive as they learned some of the “tricks of the trade” when it came to flag football. Gone were the days of trying to land a big hit; instead more finesse and less brute strength were necessary now. On September 14, 1990, during one of his flag football games, this young man collapsed on the field. Attempts to revive him were unsuccessful and in his senior year of college, his life on this earth abruptly ended.

The family was left to pick up the pieces of a life that seemed to be cut far too short. In the ensuing days doctors discovered that the cause of death for this otherwise healthy twenty-one-
year-old was a condition called “hypertrophic cardiomyopathy,” which in layman’s terms is an enlarged heart. This young man had been unknowingly living with this heart defect since birth, and it continued to go undetected throughout his childhood. Even after having yearly physicals in order to participate in school sports, the problem remained under the radar of the medical personnel who could have provided much needed guidance in the matter.

A number of more recognizable names in the sporting world have had similar experiences. Some made it through an entire professional athletic career before succumbing to a heart defect. One of the most notable was Pete Maravich, who had earned the nickname “Pistol” Pete and who played wide open throughout his entire basketball career. From high school to his days in the National Basketball Association, he seemed to be the epitome of the high-energy game of basketball. Yet on January 5, 1988, just a few years after injuries forced him into retirement from basketball, he collapsed and died during a pick-up basketball game at the age of 40. He too suffered from an undetected congenital heart defect.¹

These are just two examples of people who have had their lives snuffed out at a young age due to an undetected heart defect. Had these heart defects been detected then, certain medical procedures could have taken place to ensure a healthier and longer life. Very few people would ever deny a loved one the necessary, life-preserving medical treatment. While physical heart defects only affect a small percentage of people, there is a spiritual heart defect that no one can escape.

**Spiritual Heart Defect**

Much like these two examples of a physical heart defect, the spiritual heart defect

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¹ Pistol Pete Maravich Official Site, Accessed April 8, 2015, [http://www.petemaravich.com](http://www.petemaravich.com)
assuredly takes away life from all who have it. The Bible identifies this heart defect as sin, present in the heart of every human being born into this world. As John MacArthur states, “Human sinfulness is a defect of the human heart itself. Evil commands the heart of man. People’s hearts are naturally attuned to wickedness.”

Just a few years ago this understanding would have been considered universal within the Christian community. However, today it seems like some of those who have found their way to national prominence as pastors or leaders of their respective churches or denominations have determined that sin does not possess its traditional meaning. Since this term has grown more ambiguous and not universal in its meaning, clarification is necessary to communicate the stance this research takes. Barbara Brown Taylor suggests that there has been an exchange for the language of sin for two alternative vocabularies: medical and legal. Medical terminology claims it is a sickness that a person cannot control, while legal terminology allows for a defense to be mounted and responsibility shirked. Both of these “new” vocabularies lessen the blow of sin.

Calling into question the meaning and result of sin also calls into question some of the most foundational beliefs of the church, including the need for Jesus, His execution, and His resurrection. For anyone who does not regard the significance of Jesus’ sacrifice no longer sees Him as necessary for a connection with God.

According to Steve Cable, senior vice president of Probe Ministries, “Young American born-again believers are moving away from a biblically-centered worldview, with only one in

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three affirming that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.”

Cable focused his research on young believers between the ages of 18-29 that he calls “emerging adults.” These emerging adults are adrift morally and lack a deep commitment to the tenets of the Christian faith. Some of those who have championed the quest of the emerging adults for spiritual answers have not helped secure their belief in Christ. Pastors like Rob Bell and Brian McLaren have both asked hard questions to the modern-day American church, but have not given biblically-centered answers. This has caused many to turn away from the idea of a spiritual heart defect and the need for the most basic level of healing.

Eric Metaxas shared some of his findings based on Larry Taunton’s research as to why college students walk away from their faith in Christ. The surprising result is that they sense a lack of commitment from those who claimed Christ. Those churches or ministers who exchange taking the Bible seriously for the sake of fun lose the respect of those students who are struggling with their faith. One of the students that responded to Taunton stated, “Christianity is something that if you really believed it, it would change your life and you would want to change [the lives] of others. I haven’t see too much of that.” This lack of commitment to the basic tenets seems to be pushing young people away from their faith.

One problem that pastors like Rob Bell create through their asking of difficult questions is that they often do so without offering any conclusions, leaving young followers of Jesus to

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determine that life is not truly found in God alone. Another problem is that Bell is a proponent of counseling, as he too sought counseling during some of his darkest times. The counseling he appears to have received; however, did not lead to any solution to his spiritual dilemma. In his book *Love Wins*, Bell presents his belief that mankind has no certainty of heaven and hell and even suggests that people who die without trusting in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus in this life will have another chance to accept the forgiveness offered through Jesus after death. His outspoken belief system sparked controversy within the Christian community. R. Albert Mohler Jr., President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, responded to Bell’s statements by stating, “When you adopt universalism and erase the distinction between the church and the world then you don't need the church, and you don't need Christ, and you don't need the cross. This is the tragedy of nonjudgmental mainline liberalism, and it's Rob Bell's tragedy in this book too.”

Since Bell is a person of influence, some people follow him even when he is leading them over a cliff. A better way to handle the scenario of asking difficult questions would be to follow the great songwriter/psalmist of the Old Testament, Asaph, who had the wisdom to hold on to his spiritual struggles until he gained more insight from God and others around him before sharing his questions with the people of Israel. In Psalm 73:15 Asaph stated, “If I had decided to say these things aloud, I would have betrayed Your people.” It was as if Asaph did not want to inflict his despair on the people of God until he had worked through it enough to understand there was a solution. In telling of his doubts and struggles, he also gave a solution that strengthened his faith.

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Certainly some questions simply cannot be answered satisfactorily, but when a spiritual leader begins to ask questions and lead people to a conclusion that since there is no satisfactory answer then faith as we know it should be abandoned, there is a problem. This is where Bell and others like him have begun to lead others astray. While Bell claims that Jesus’ sacrifice is still a matter of importance, it is not of utmost importance in this life. A person can choose Jesus now or can continue down his or her current path and choose Him after death. If one concludes a loving God will not send people to a place known as hell, then Jesus’ sacrifice becomes irrelevant in this life. If Jesus’ sacrifice is irrelevant in this life, then why would anyone see Him as relevant at all? This leads people to see Jesus as an option, at best, but certainly not the option.

Another problem that has arisen is the resistance to the idea of sin in itself. Many in society today, including those in the church, have avoided the term “sin” and replaced it with the term “mistake.” A big difference exists between these two terms and the subsequent actions that must be taken to rectify them. If a mistake is made, it is generally based on insufficient knowledge. The result is that an apology is needed and behavior should be corrected based on the new information. With that in mind, a mistake should be limited to a very small number of times, as the behavior is being adjusted so that the mistake does not continue to occur because knowledge about the issue has increased. If knowledge has increased yet behavior has not changed, then simple correction is no longer the solution. The problem runs deeper than a mere mistake and shows itself to be something greater and more troubling.

The alternative is to see the behavior not as a mistake, but as sin. In simplistic terms sin is

Closer Look, Psalm 73,” Logos Software.
either knowing what is right and not doing it or knowing what is wrong and doing it. Ignorance can no longer be used as an excuse because the action ceases to come from insufficient knowledge and instead comes from defiance. A sin does not require an apology by itself but rather a payment that is too steep for any human to afford. That is why humanity needed someone to pay the penalty for sin and why Jesus stepped out of heaven onto earth to pay the ultimate price.

**Counseling Approaches to the Heart Defect**

As long as people see their sins as mistakes, they will simply try to make corrections and do better the next time. This view also encourages people to avoid responsibility. They will not see themselves in need of anything other than a little correction. So much of secular counseling is based on this philosophy. Sigmund Freud thought that the circumstances and those who created the circumstances were the cause of problems, so blame was often shifted away from the counselee. Transference of responsibility became central to his method of counseling, thus freeing the counselee from blame. This creates a problem when the counselee does not accept any responsibility for the situation and eliminates the need for responsibility and in the case of this argument eliminates the idea of sinful behavior.

Carl Rogers was also a leader in the counseling field in the twentieth century and continues to have influence today. He viewed humanity as inherently good, so the goal of the counselor was to help counselees to find correction and return to their internal goodness, which would be sufficient to better their life. Unfortunately, many in the church embraced Rogers approach in the mid-twentieth century, and the original meaning of sin began to drift. Today it is challenging to get anyone to see themselves as a sinner. Instead people look at themselves as merely making a
mistake and in need of someone to give them the appropriate information so that they can correct themselves to a better life. However, there is much more to it than that.

The Rogerian System, counseling based on Carl Rogers approach, is and has been an attractive option for many pastors. Even some of the most effective lay counseling teaching tools like Freedom in Christ Ministries and Stephen Ministries have utilized some form of a Rogerian style of counseling and include active-listening, cognitive therapy, inner healing, or a mix of these. This system is client centered in which the counselor often serves only as a sounding board. To offer advice would break up the flow of the process, so the counselor typically just listens until the client talks through the problem enough that they begin to realize the changes they need to make. While this approach has seen some success in helping people, it blocks the opportunity for a counselor to speak into the lives of others and bring about lasting change by identifying not just behavior modification but the potential for a change in heart.

Jay Adams was clear in his approach to counseling, as he believed that the root of every problem was not an inability to get along with others but an inability to get along with God. Without developing a relationship with God through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus, there was no real hope for a lasting effect in counseling. Any help that a counselor gives apart from the root solution of correcting the relationship with God only appears to be good and will not last. Adams believes and rightly so that the goal of any counselor is life change. Where he began to question the process of secular counseling is his belief that change must begin with regeneration, a change from within or a change of heart, and not simply reformation, a change on

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9 Adams, Competent to Counsel, 77-90.

the outside or a change in behavior.\textsuperscript{11} This is also consistent with a more traditional view of salvation and its necessity, a view which conflicts with those who do not believe in the need for such a sacrifice.

Although Freud seemed to realize man’s depression was caused by guilt, he believed it was unfounded guilt and therefore pursued a remedy apart from the grace provided by God through Jesus.\textsuperscript{12} Because the guilt is misplaced, sin is not recognized and forgiveness is not sought, so there is no real opportunity to be reconciled to God. From a Rogerian perspective, this does not happen because the assumption is that humanity is good at its most basic level, so sin is once again not acknowledged and no need for reconciliation exists.

**Biblical Approach to the Heart Defect**

Both of these perspectives are in contrast to the teachings of Jesus as well as what is taught throughout the Bible. From the earliest teachings of Jesus and His followers, the understanding of a new heart, new beginning, or a filling of the heart was clear and essential to this life in order to have abundant and eternal life. One of the ways Jesus communicated the problem sin caused was in John 7:37-38. John reports, “\textsuperscript{37}On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink!' \textsuperscript{38}The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.’” The Greek term, κοιλίας (koilias) is a description of the inner most being (“heart” or in some cases “belly”) and in this passage is translated “deep within” him. The term literally means open space or cavity. Jesus used these words to communicate that the emptiness that humanity

\textsuperscript{11} Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 3-8.

experiences is caused by sin and can only be remedied by belief in Him as Savior and Lord. Those who do believe will experience a constant flow of life in that once empty space.\textsuperscript{13}

The New Testament writer and early Christian missionary, Paul, wrote to the church in Rome about the basic tenets of the faith. He spent many of his years with a passion to make a difference in the most influential city of his day. Through a series of events that can only be explained as the providence of God, Paul landed in Rome by way of prison. As a result of his interactions with the followers of Jesus from Rome, Paul felt it necessary to write a treatise on Christianity for the church to read and discuss.

In Paul’s writing to the Romans, he included what many in the church today call the “Roman Road,” verses which explain the important need for mankind to be reunited with God. This “road” begins in Romans 3:23, where Paul writes, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Paul uses the Greek word πᾶς (pas) that is translated as “all.” The reason it is translated “all” is because that is exactly what it means. Paul clearly writes that every person has sinned and not simply made mistakes. The term for sinned, ἁμαρτόν (hemarton), in this passage is in the aorist tense and therefore refers to a past event carrying with it the idea that this is a problem that has existed throughout time.\textsuperscript{14} Humans are not good at their most basic level as Rogers insisted, but instead all of humanity has a sinful nature. As a result, mankind is indebted to a Holy God. Paul later writes in Romans 6:23 that death is required to cover the sins of humanity in order to re-establish a right relationship with God.

\footnote{13 Larry Crabb, \textit{Understanding People: Why We Long for Relationship}. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 104-105.}
evident that the writer was heavily influenced by Paul and continues this teaching. The writer explains in chapter nine the importance of the sacrificial system that was set in motion by their Jewish ancestors. The system was based on the understanding that sacrifice was essential for forgiveness and purity to take place. The leaders of the tabernacle and later the Temple used the blood of the sacrifice to ceremonially cleanse the items in the Temple and required that people bring their own sacrifice in order to have their sins forgiven. To solidify the point, in Hebrews 9:22 the writer states, “According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Therefore, in order for the sins of humanity to be forgiven, the shedding of blood had to take place.

The writer of Hebrews goes on to explain that the sacrificial system known in the historic days of the Old Testament was no longer necessary. The reason it was no longer necessary is because a more complete sacrifice had been made. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be the ultimate blood sacrifice so that all who would believe in Him would receive forgiveness for their sins. According to both the writer of Hebrews and to Paul, this seems clearly to be the first step for anyone who desires to have healing in this life.

John, the disciple of Jesus, begins his account of Jesus’ life by including the confession of Jesus’ cousin, John the Baptist, in John 1:29 that Jesus is in fact the Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world. Jesus Himself proclaimed that His sacrificial death was inevitable and that it would be the ultimate sacrifice. While His followers did not understand that in the moment of His teaching, they later were able to look back on His words and identify their meaning. Even as John the Apostle speaks of the closing hours of Jesus’ earthly ministry, he remembers the Passover celebration in which Jesus claimed a different type of meaning to the ceremony: that it was His body that would be broken and His blood that would be spilled for the
forgiveness of sin and that His followers should remember that each time they celebrated the Passover. The Apostle John introduces Jesus as the Lamb of God and identifies the clear picture of what Jesus will be doing on the cross. It is not until after the resurrection of Jesus that it began to make sense to Jesus’ disciples.

Mark McMinn refers to three dimensions of sin in relation to the idea that all have sinned. The three dimensions are sinfulness, sins, and the consequences of sin. The sinfulness dimension refers to the original state where all humans find themselves. The dimension of sins considers the present decision to choose to disobey. The consequences speak of the results of sinful behavior. McMinn also suggests that sin’s often “weighty consequences extend into future generations.”

While this is not a statement endorsing a Freudian approach, it does signify that consequences and patterns can be extended to children and grandchildren if personal responsibility is not taken. This idea will be discussed in future chapters.

Once there is an understanding that all are guilty of sin, it is important to determine what it actually means to sin. The Bible typically uses three descriptions of sin: rebellion, trespassing, and missing the mark. Rebellion is direct defiance against a holy God and His standards. It would seem to make sense that this type of shortfall would result in the most severe of consequences. Trespassing is also often a known offense, although there are times that people could claim that they did not know where the boundaries were located. In that sense, they may have unknowingly crossed over the boundary to become a trespasser, but the guilt remains on the person as having overstepped the boundary. The final picture for this discussion that the Bible uses is that of missing the mark. It is a description of someone shooting at a target and simply

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missing the mark. Missing the mark has a level of innocence as opposed to a purposeful defiance of the standards of God. It indicates that the person simply does not have the ability to hit the mark. Regardless of intent, however, the fact that the mark was missed and unattained is irrefutable. So each one of these terms indicates the variety of ways that sin may creep into people’s lives.16

Some may argue that they have no need for salvation because they do not sin. However, these three descriptions cover such a wide understanding of sin that its presence in people’s lives cannot effectively be denied. Whether intentional or not, “all have sinned,” and the standard God desires has not been met. This is not a difficult concept to grasp, although it is a leading argument for those who deny the need for salvation. The truth is that humans cannot even live up to their own standards, much less the standards of a holy God. For example, people often create a standard for dieting. Inevitably even the most committed nutritionist will find themselves cheating on a diet, which is frequently followed by regret over the decision. Now if it is easy to recognize how people do not live up to their own standards, it should not be much harder to recognize falling short of the standards of God.

The interesting thing about sin is that regardless of which category of sin is committed, the penalty for each of them is the same: death. Paul continued with another stop on the Roman Road in Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death.” Another way to consider the penalty of sin is to view it as separation from God. This means that regardless of people’s intentions, their sins separate them from God, and the separation is an eternal one. In order for anyone to begin the path of healing he or she must first realize the dire need they have to be saved from the

eternal separation that has been caused by their sin. The only hope is through the sacrificial provision that God made through the death and resurrection of His one and only Son, Jesus. To deny or neglect this factor is to remove the foundational teaching of Jesus and any opportunity for healing that exists for humanity.

Matthew records a teaching that Jesus gave through a parable that gives great insight into the origin of individual sin that exists within each human being. The content of this lesson even brought some confusion to His closest followers and needed some clarification. It is important to know what led to this teachable moment, so in Matthew 15, Jesus is recorded as answering a question that some Pharisees and Scribes asked while attempting to once again discredit Him. The Pharisees question Jesus about his disciples not following a common Jewish tradition of a ceremonial washing before eating a meal. Their intent, of course, is to trap Jesus based not on the Law of Moses but rather on the law according to their tradition. Jesus changes the focus to a deeper issue. As He often did, He responds by asking a question of His own that was directed toward another tradition that the Pharisees themselves had conveniently overlooked so that they could excuse themselves from following their own law. The revised tradition the Pharisees established, called the Corban laws, involved the dismissal of the responsibility for a Jew to care for his aging parent(s) by dedicating money to the Temple upon death. This money could not be transferred but could be used for one’s own benefit prior to death. In His response in Matthew 15:9-10, Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13: “These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men.”

At this moment those who were seeking to put Jesus in a “no win” situation found

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themselves caught in their own web of deception. They could not respond to His accusations due to their own guilt. Even through the prophecy of Isaiah, which they knew well, the understanding of the state of the heart is clear. Even those who claim close proximity to God, like the Pharisees in this passage, yet do not have a change of heart are violators of the standards that God desires. The result is sin whether it is acknowledged or not.

As Jesus’ followers begin to question the meaning of the response He gives the Pharisees and Scribes, Jesus takes advantage of a teachable moment in Matthew 15:17–20:

Don’t you realize that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is eliminated? But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a man. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man, but eating with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”

His statement further explains what Isaiah had prophesied about the sinful nature of humanity. Sin originates in the heart, and anyone who refuses to acknowledge their defective heart where sin resides will live separated from God. Jesus made mention of a variety of sins with which man struggles, which at face value would not clearly be understood as having come from the heart. Evil thoughts would seem to come from a deranged, corrupted mind, but Jesus says they originate in the heart because the heart is defective. Sexual immoralities would seem to come from physical attraction or felt needs, but Jesus says they originate from the heart. Thefts would seem to come from either a desire for more or from a lack of a basic need, but Jesus says they come from the heart. Similar arguments can be made for each of these categories of sins mentioned as far as where they originate, but with each one Jesus would say that they all begin within the heart because the heart is defective due to our sin nature.

Here Jesus shows that whatever tradition has been set in place by man has nothing to do
with spiritual purity. The issue that mankind faces runs deeper than the traditions that were or are in place. The implication that Jesus teaches here is that the spiritual heart is naturally opposed to God and needs to be replaced in order for a relationship to be restored and righteousness to be apparent. Michael J. Wilkins says, “Righteousness is an inside-out transformation that begins with the heart and works throughout the process of the disciple’s life to produce external righteousness.”

Where there is a heart defect there must be a procedure that takes place to create an opportunity for healing.

This idea can be traced back to the Old Testament teachings, too. From the very beginning of time as we know it, man’s separation from God began with a sinful act, which started the ball rolling for a heart defect for all of humanity. The oral history of mankind that Moses eventually put in writing to preserve for all who came after him tells of the events that took place in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve, the first created male and female, both sinned and disrupted the peaceful relationship between God and man. Throughout the history of God’s people, others wrote about sin from the vantage point of an impure heart. Solomon in particular wrote throughout Proverbs of the importance of the heart and how even the purest of human thoughts are disturbingly filthy compared to the holiness of God. It was a common understanding that mankind’s sin required forgiveness from God.

One of the most frequently used Hebrew words for forgiveness in the Old Testament is transliterated as “salach.” This term carries with it the meaning “to lighten by lifting” and always refers to God’s relationship to man. Salach’s equivalent in Greek, used in the Septuagint, or the Greek translation of the Old Testament, is transliterated “aphiemi,” meaning “to let go,

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19 Michael J. Wilkins, The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 538.

20 Adams, A Theology of Christian Counseling, 186-189.
release, or remit.” In order to use these terms appropriately, one must understand that forgiveness is always free to the receiver yet costly for the giver. This truth is evident in the necessity of payment for sin to ensure forgiveness and to restore the relationship between God and man. Since this Hebrew term is used exclusively and specifically to show how God initiates the act of forgiveness, it is apparent that Jesus’ sacrifice is to be understood in the same manner. God initiated the act of forgiveness through the death of His Son, Jesus. Paul continued the Roman Road in Romans 5:8 by writing, “But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!” Jesus became the way for us to be reunited with God.

**Biblical Example of Heart Defect**

Jesus and Paul both addressed this need. Arguably the most famous verse in the Bible comes from the story of Jesus’ life according to one of Jesus’ most beloved disciples named John. John recounts a story of a leader among the Pharisees named Nicodemus, who came to see Jesus at night in order to have an honest conversation that could provide some clarity for him as he sought to understand Jesus’ teaching. Nicodemus was a part of the Sanhedrin, so to come to Jesus with questions was not necessarily unusual, but to do so at night with the intent of gaining an understanding of His teaching to the point of following was different. Whether Nicodemus actually came in an hour that would be depicted as nighttime or in a state of spiritual darkness and unbelief is uncertain, but he has an important question that has been nagging at him possibly since he first heard Jesus teach. John 3:1-21 tells of the encounter in which Nicodemus seeks to find the answer to attaining eternal life.

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In the ensuing counseling session, Jesus gives Nicodemus an answer that seems complicated to Nicodemus. Jesus tells him that in order for him to have eternal life he must be born again. As a Jew, Nicodemus’ belief in how to be connected with God was directly related to his physical birth as a part of the Jewish race. Because of his high intelligence and pedigree, and because Nicodemus understood that a connection with God was tied to his birth, he takes Jesus literally and recognizes the impossibility of being born again. It is easy to be rather harsh toward Nicodemus’ response, but the statement that Jesus makes in conjunction with Nicodemus’ understanding and upbringing make it a little easier to comprehend.

Jesus begins to explain to Nicodemus that the way to be connected to God is no longer simply to be born into the right family or the right nation but instead to have a spiritual birth. This birth is the understanding this research takes to mean all people have a heart defect, and the only answer is to have heart surgery. In essence Jesus describes to Nicodemus that all people are born into sin and have defective hearts. The only option is that a spiritual procedure must take place to correct the defective heart so that a new life can begin.

The process of salvation begins in the heart by the believing reception of the testimony of God, while the rejection of that testimony hardens the heart. If counseling does not begin with the understanding that salvation is a prerequisite for healing, then it will ultimately prove to be a short-lived remedy that will leave the recipient with a stronger barrier around his or her heart. Most Christian counselors recognize this as an important step in the healing process, although in varying degrees.

For secular psychologists who do not buy into the idea of sin, they see only two options:

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stifling moralism from a religious, more specifically Christian, perspective or liberating psychological science. Ironically, when the Biblical view of humanity is rejected, then the hope of answering the “What is wrong?” question is ultimately lost.\textsuperscript{23} Unfortunately, some of the Christian counselors who apply and rely heavily on the science of psychology lean in the wrong direction and do not take the gospel into account.\textsuperscript{24} Of those who call themselves Christian counselors, the Integrationists are most susceptible to this failure.

With sin as the spiritual equivalent to a physical heart defect, it needs to be addressed in order for true healing to take place. As Howard Clinebell states, “It (salvation) is the healing that makes Spirit-centered wholeness possible.”\textsuperscript{25} Much like the physical heart defect, this spiritual defect must be dealt with first in order for anyone to really experience life. While dealing with a heart defect is an obvious step in the physical sense, some within the counseling world have missed this vital spiritual step, causing a cycle of personal problems to continue to exist.

\begin{itemize}
\item Howard Clinebell, \textit{Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling} (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 61.
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CHAPTER 3

HEART DISEASE

James Ernest “Ernie” Albritton, Jr., was born to James Ernest, Sr., and Cleota Albritton on August 24, 1934. Cleota almost did not survive the birth of her first born who was 12 pounds at birth. In 1934 there were no special precautions taken for babies of this size who were most certainly delivered naturally. She did pull through with the help of her doctor and began the journey of motherhood.

Ernie was considered a healthy baby and, as he was at his birth, continued to be a larger than average boy. Being reared in the 1930s and 1940s as well as being the oldest of four children, he was given a lot of responsibility early in his life. While sandlot baseball or playground basketball were more prevalent than any formalized sports league, he spent as much of his time helping the family make ends meet as he did playing with friends. Being the son of a preacher often required all of the family to take part in earning money, so throughout his early to mid-teenage years he worked various jobs while earning his high school diploma a year early from Murphy High School in Mobile, AL.

Maybe it was the lack of opportunity to truly experience a childhood or leaving home at such a young age, but when Ernie arrived at Mississippi College, his eyes were opened to a world he had never even dreamed he would experience. He joined the football and track teams, which were the first organized teams he ever had the opportunity to join. Forty-five years later, he would find himself a member of the Mississippi College Sports Hall of Fame, after also
having had the opportunity to play professional football for the Toronto Argonauts. It also exposed him to a variety of habitual behaviors that would eventually lead him on a path toward health struggles.

It was at this time that he was introduced to cigarettes, the need to eat to stay “big and healthy,” and enough down time to seek the attention of young women. To give him the benefit of the doubt, the understanding of the damage that smoking and overeating caused were not yet fully discovered. Instead, they were simply a past time of those who were walking in the same circles he was walking. While he quickly settled on one young woman who rose above the rest, he did not see the need to quit cigarettes or change his eating habits.

Over the next fifteen years, he discovered that the habits he began in relation to his desire to have the attention of young women never left him. He chose to leave his first wife to pursue other women until a few years later when he married his second wife. Each of these bad habits came to a head in the mid-1970s when he had his first heart attack. It did not take long for the doctors to discover the cause of his ailment. The three major causes that were mentioned to him were his smoking, his weight and lack of exercise, and the stress caused by his lifestyle.

The only opportunity for survival for him was surgery and significant changes in lifestyle. While the quadruple bypass surgery was a success, it took many years to actually change his lifestyle. In those years of learning what needed to be changed and actually making those changes, he developed congestive heart failure, which eventually claimed his life. The years of bad habits shortened Ernie’s life and took away some of his most productive years.

In the same way, it will often take years of changing lifestyle habits in order to truly live the kind of life followers of Jesus are offered. Jay Adams acknowledged that “God gave man a
marvelous capacity that we call habit,” which is helpful in establishing healthy behaviors.¹ The problem is that humanity’s sinful nature also takes those habits and creates patterns of destruction. These habits are a lot like the ruts in a road, particularly in the early pioneer years. There are some ruts that are still visible today in the mountain west that were a result of those covered wagons that made the trip to populate the ever expanding country of the newly formed United States in the 1800s. The number of wagons and the sheer weight of those wagons that traveled those roads were such that the ruts became deeper and deeper until they were virtually impossible to travel. This same concept can be seen on some modern interstates where large trucks have traveled consistently in the same lane so that ruts are created. When a car settles into those ruts, it requires a little extra pull and strength to get out of that lane because of the depth of the path that was created. The simplest thing to do is to stay in the ruts.

At Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi, an ingenious idea was put into practice nearly 100 years ago. Before paving sidewalks around the campus the school decided to wait and let the students establish the patterns where people would be walking. Once grass was trampled and paths were established, the grounds crew knew where the sidewalks needed to be laid. So even today on the modern campus of Mississippi College, sidewalks are still in the place where paths and ruts were established due to the consistent behavior of the students. Humans are creatures of habit, which is why life is filled with worn-down paths and ruts.

The habits created by man follow a similar path. Experts say that it takes anywhere from twenty-one days to five weeks to develop a habit. Once the habit is developed, it becomes like second nature. It is important to note that not all habits are negative. As mentioned, it is actually a gift from God to humanity to be able to develop habits that will lead to healthy, enhancing

¹ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 241.
lifestyle. This is what allows athletes and musicians to become so accomplished at their respective field that when they do even the most difficult of tasks they are able to make it look easy. For example, martial arts are heavily dependent on the idea of habitual behavior or what many call muscle-memory. If the Sensei (instructor) can teach a student the most basic moves to the point that they become second nature, then he or she is able to teach them to do far greater things. Once the muscles memorize the proper placement and movement, many more things can be added to the basic moves so that the ceiling of accomplishment can be raised considerably higher. These simple habits have an enormous impact on future possibilities, whether good or bad.

**Spiritual and Emotional Heart Disease**

It becomes problematic when habits become harmful and lead to unhealthy patterns. A few factors make habits hard to break: the length of time the habit has been in place, the “weight” of the behavior, and the truth that these patterns are often difficult to see in oneself. Some patterns have been around so long that they are perceived as normal, so there is no comprehension that things could be or should be different. Other behaviors have an addictive quality that makes them harder to break. These are often ones that carry more severe consequences for all involved, directly and indirectly. Probably the most challenging part is that patterns are very difficult to see in the mirror. Most people are not adept at observing themselves and reflecting honestly on what they see. Unfortunately, there is also a common resistance to true self-examination that pervades Christian communities.²

It is important to note that what God begins at the moment of salvation is not completed in

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² Crabb, *Understanding People*, 99-100.
that moment. So serious consideration must be made concerning habitual behaviors that are established. Our future is a reflection of past and present choices, unless we accept the reality of our painful past and make the choice to live beyond it. In this way, we can take responsibility for future choices. If this is not done, then people will inevitably remain frozen at a lower maturity level. Simply put, people who believe accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior is all there is to the life of a follower of Jesus are sadly mistaken and will remain at a state of immaturity until changes are made.

These habits and patterns come in a variety of forms. They almost always show themselves outwardly through actions, although some are hidden in the mind. Patterns of behavior are easier to identify, but the patterns of thought are more difficult to bring into the open, especially if the person has carried that thought pattern throughout life. This process is even more difficult if it is a thought pattern that has been passed down through generations.

**Creatures of Habit**

This gift that God has given humanity can even be explained through scientific means and evidence that support the forming of habits as part of the human make-up. Dr. Caroline Leaf explains the body’s process in decision making and forming habits in the second chapter of her book, *Who Switched off My Brain?* The ensuing paragraphs are a summary of her explanation of the formation of memories in the brain as she describes it.

Memories are stored in what looks like trees; the more branches that extend from the trunk, the clearer the memories and more intelligent the thought. Each person can have “100 trillion

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magic trees… capable of growing up to 70,000 branches… (which) means humans have approximately 3 million years’ worth of storage space for information.”⁵ These “magic” memory trees are called neurons and the memory branches are called dendrites.

Dendrites receive information from all five senses and translate that information into electrical impulses that are transported between neurons or trees forming a neural circuit. The two hemispheres of the brain take the information from the neural circuits and produce two different views of the information. The left side of the brain sees the data as a big picture, while the right side of the brain sees the details. The more a person embraces both sides of the brain and the full process of memory making, the deeper the thought and understanding becomes. When used together, the memory system can be advantageous in developing intelligence and wisdom for current and future thoughts and decision making. The details that are not embraced are eliminated by glial cells, which help to clean the unwanted details from the memories to keep the path clear for the development of desired thoughts and memories. When a person pays little attention to the content of the memory, many of the details will be taken by the glial cells, making growth in intelligence and wisdom difficult.

While the human brain has 100 trillion neurons, it has five times as many glial cells to clean the unwanted thoughts and memories. When the dendrites and glial cells are functioning properly, they develop a clear path for growth in wise decision making. When they are not working properly, important details for growth are erased and those thoughts that are not helpful or toxic are stored. In essence these two paths lead to one of two types of emotions: positive faith-based emotions or negative fear-based emotions. These ultimately determine personal attitude and action because positive attitudes are developed from faith, while negative attitudes

⁵ Caroline Leaf, *Who Switched off My Brain?* (Dallas: Switch on Your Brain USA Inc., 2008), 16.
are developed from fear.

As a general rule, our emotions flow out of our thoughts, so the way we live will inevitably be a reflection of the way we think. Emotions are always attached to thoughts and result in attitudes and actions. In the body, they are represented by electrochemical reaction. This reaction is based on the two systems that make up the human body: the chemical (endocrine system) and the electrical (nervous system). Inside the endocrine system is the limbic system, which is the emotional center of the brain. The hypothalamus gland is the principle gland within the limbic system and is located near the back of the brain, which is why tension headaches find relief by rubbing the back of the neck. The hypothalamus sends chemical secretions to your body in response to a thought or external source, which is received by way of the five senses. Having “butterflies” in your stomach or having a “gut” feeling is also a result of chemical secretions to your body. These ideas allude to a previously mentioned Greek term, κοιλίας (koilias), which modern scientists refer to as a human “reptile brain”—a “brain in the gut”—which is “neurons in the digestive system that produce feelings of well-being or threat deeper than we can put into words.”

This is in essence the beginning of the emotional response.

Other parts of the brain that take part in the formation of a thought, memory, and an emotional and physiological response are the limbic lobe, hippocampus, amygdala, and thalamus. Each has a specific role that develops and sends an electromagnetic charge throughout the body in the form of information molecules that has an effect on mental and physical health. The body has a system of electrochemical feedback loops called cybernetics, which are the communication lines between cells, and they help determine how much of the chemicals need to

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6 Ortberg, The Me I Want to Be, 36.

7 Leaf, Who Switched off My Brain?, 24-25.
be released by the hypothalamus. It works best and proves more intelligent when the feedback is fast and unhindered. If the feedback loops are interrupted, toxic thoughts are allowed to invade the system causing trouble.

When a person experiences any kind of event, the information is sent through the thalamus to the memory trees to prepare the brain for the impending process. It is at this early point in the process that an attitude is formed. Whether positive or negative, the initial memory returns to the thalamus then to the hypothalamus where a chemical is released corresponding to the memory. From here the memory is stored with its emotional response in the amygdala, which serves as a library of all memories and emotional perceptions and allows for a quick retrieval, particularly the more it recurs. The formation of the emotional perceptions and memories is so strong that it often will override reason within the thought process. When these parts are functioning properly, the release of the chemicals becomes a guide that brings focus to the information, but it is not intended to be the time a decision is made. The problem comes when thoughts are completed or decisions are made solely on the feelings when the chemicals are released. The problems intensify and become habit forming if this is understood to be the end of the process when in fact it is just the beginning.

Ideally, the information then travels to the hippocampus, where it waits momentarily until the person can accept or reject it. This begins to create a pattern of thought, attitude, and action, which makes up a unique, personal response. This response in conjunction with a genetic code establishes how a person will react within environments. If the person allows negativity to persist within the process, then all of the positive or faith-based information that is passed through the hippocampus will disappear within 3 days. Whatever is perceived in a negative light releases toxic chemicals throughout the body and ceases to allow positive, intellectual, and often rational
thoughts to enter into the mix. This creates disastrous patterns that do not necessarily go away when faith takes root. It takes cognitive awareness to create new thought patterns. These patterns must contain both the intellectual and emotional aspect of the information.

Another part of the process involves the information molecules that serve as a part of the communication between cells that ultimately will directly impact the mental and physical health of the person. The only thing that seems to create more problems than the toxic emotions is the suppression of these emotions. It is evident that emotions are the language of the inner sanctum of man, and to neglect them is to lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. Because of this, emotions create more strain on the body both physically and mentally. While this research does not discuss the physical ramifications of this process, there is certainly a direct link to disease and ailments when fear is the driving force. This physical detriment of negative habit-forming thoughts and behaviors is not unlike the spiritual struggles that take place due to this fear-based emotional foundation.

Different types of stress are created through the emotional development process: eustress, distress, and hyperstress. Eustress is like playing a favorite, energetic song to build excitement for an impending athletic event, while distress is a negative form of stress and is the way most people typically understand the term “stress.” Hyperstress is a large amount of whichever stress is currently active. The impact that stress has on attitude and action is that the biochemical stress parameters are more affected by psychological stressors than by physical stressors. That is to say that emotional and mental challenges will often leave a person more exhausted than physical challenges or events. When this happens it lessens the ability to make rational decisions and

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8 Leaf, Who Switched off My Brain?, 13-34.

opens up the opportunity for negative patterns to develop.\textsuperscript{10}

In essence, memories are stored in the brain and a chemical is released to the rest of the body that helps determine whether this memory produced positive or negative effects. This is meant to only be an alert to the system that the process of thoughts is about to begin. For too many people this becomes not just a warning, but instead the time to make a decision or complete a thought and direct an action. They develop a pattern of responding to thoughts and events emotionally without taking the time to involve the intellect or even faith to make a cognitive decision. Researchers call this knee-jerk reaction “an amygdala hijack.”\textsuperscript{11} The person reacts emotionally, which causes “cognitive incapacitation.” Rational thought no longer seems to be an option. These impulses have even been measured during neurosurgery and it is stated that it takes one-quarter of a second for an impulse to make it from the brain to the part of the body in which it is directed. That one-quarter second is when someone has to be able to capture that negative impulse.

Once this becomes the normal way of thought or decision making, an attitude and action are connected, much like the way muscle memory works. Biologically, the connection of attitude and action determines a response pattern and habits are formed. The only way to begin to reverse this pattern is to recognize the direction of the thought at the very beginning and to change what is retrieved in the library. This is one of the areas where the Bible shows itself to be not simply a collection of ancient documents but one of continuous relevance to modern day living. In a letter from the great missionary, Paul, to the church in Corinth, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 10:5 that followers of Jesus should “take every thought captive.” Understanding it from a biological


\textsuperscript{11} Ortberg, \textit{The Me I Want to Be}, 208.
perspective gives the spiritual meaning of this truth even more importance: “The mind can be a
glorious place of hope, dreams, joy, and vision. It can also be a prison of lust, anxiety, and fear…
The mind is a battlefield. If the enemy can dominate here, he can infiltrate, poison, and destroy
every area of our lives.”\footnote{12}{David C. Olsen, \textit{Integrative Family Therapy} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 29.}
Without taking each thought captive, the door is open for fear and negativity to take root in the mind and emotions, thus also stifling any spiritual growth. The spiritual life is greatly determined and influenced by how well people pay attention to their thoughts.

Thoughts have such a strong pull on humans that experts believe athletes can improve by
simply performing their tasks mentally. The more a thought pattern is traveled the deeper and
stronger it becomes and the opposite is also true: the less it is traveled the quicker it goes “out of
business.” Humans have the capacity for what might be called “directed mental force.” When the
neurons wire together they fire together. In order to break longstanding habits, the thought
pattern must be put out of business and the direct mental force should be geared toward godly
thoughts and actions.\footnote{13}{Ortberg, \textit{The Me I Want to Be}, 96-99.} So while one habit is being shut down, another habit must be put into
action. In Philippians 4:8 Paul reminds the readers to shift thoughts toward these godly traits:
“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think on
these things” (New International Version). Much like the benefit to the athlete, Paul knew the
follower of Jesus would benefit greatly from flooding the mind with these thoughts that would
soon turn into action.
Counseling Approaches to Heart Disease

If thoughts are allowed to develop freely, then the connected emotion will have great influence of the determining action and attitude. However, if the thoughts can be captured in the sense that there is cognitive awareness of the connection, then a more balanced decision can be made. The 2 Corinthians 10 passage even states the connection with the spiritual aspect of living by bringing into focus the battle that is waged over the issue. Paul spent so much of his life imprisoned and in close proximity to soldiers that he frequently used analogies based on the military. Here is no exception, as he calls out the battlefield that is spiritual in nature and states that the attacks against followers of Jesus are most often on the mind and emotions. He refers to those patterns of negativity and toxicity as strongholds that need to be demolished.

In his letter known as 2 Corinthians, he writes to those in Corinth before an upcoming visit, addressing those within the assembly who are questioning his methods, teachings, and even integrity. His counterargument is that although he may need to confront these people in the church, they are not the real problem. The problem is spiritual and it includes the strongholds that have taken residence in the minds of these people. His response in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 states, “3 For though we live in the body, we do not wage war in an unspiritual way, 4 since the weapons of our warfare are not worldly, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments 5 and every high-minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to obey Christ.”

Anything that raises itself up against God must be resisted and counterattacked at its core. For every follower of Jesus at some level, the attack is at the core of the decision-making, habit-forming process. Within the Corinthian church there was a group that had stirred themselves into
a frenzy over Paul and his colleagues. Some event or events happened in the past that created a negative, fear-based response that had become so emotional and irrational that people were responding “in the heat of the moment” over issues that did not even connect with the original event. Knowing the biological evidence of what happens within the brain, it is evident that those that were involved in the prior event had chemicals released, which initiated the adoption of a similar attitude and action. Paul noticed this and issued the instructions that began in 2 Corinthians 10.

Paul noticed that it truly was a spiritual stronghold that the enemy had established. The picture Paul paints is one of entrenching oneself in a particular mindset. This mindset must be torn down, but it is one that can only be demolished with the strength and power of God. Paul continues the war imagery by showing thoughts as prisoners of war being led into captivity after the stronghold has been ambushed and torn down. The thoughts are to be held captive in order to be redirected into a God-honoring mindset instead of the damaging one that causes a variety of problems. This can be advantageous not only to the person directly involved but also to all of those who come behind him or her. The same is true on the negative side, however; if things are not changed, it will become a detriment to those who come later.

The New American Standard Bible translates Proverbs 23:7 as, “For as he thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, ‘Eat and drink!’ But his heart is not with you.” The wisdom writer recognizes the connection between the thoughts, emotions, and actions. The writer is warning against accepting gifts from those with ulterior motives. A person’s thoughts cannot be separated from their actions, so while some may attempt to cover their motives with a false sense of gratitude and acceptance, they will ultimately be exposed for their deception. Interestingly, the

writer also shows how the “heart” is skewed as a result of the toxic, sinful thought pattern.

Sigmund Freud believed that situations or circumstances were to blame for the trouble that people face. Freud believed humans had a conscious self that he called “das Ich” or “I,” in which there was personal responsibility, and an unconscious self that he called “das Es” or “it,” in which there was no personal responsibility.\textsuperscript{15} The things that involved the unconscious self must be sought in the past where blame can be shifted. Jay Adams states, “Freudian psychoanalysis is an archeological expedition into the past in search of someone or something to blame for a patient’s behavior.”\textsuperscript{16} This is why many pastors through the years have rejected the idea of searching through past experiences. This Freudian idea has led many to believe that the only reason to search the past is to seek someone else to hold responsible for the trouble a person is facing. This takes any responsibility away from the client and rejects the idea of sin all together. However, to ignore the past to enact the proverbial “throwing the baby out with the bath water.” Therefore, understanding the problem as a personal, sinful response pattern puts the responsibility squarely on the client where it belongs.

In order to truly get a sense of the lifestyle and thought patterns we develop, it is important to know not only the biological place but also the environmental place where these patterns or habits begin. Alistair Ross quotes George Mueller-Fahrenholz when he writes, “Hurt and shame get passed on from one generation to another, consciously and unconsciously.”\textsuperscript{17} While searching for someone to blame is not a healthy approach, searching for the root of the trouble carries with it the possibility of freedom from the emotional damage that continues to be done. If

\textsuperscript{15} Crabb, \textit{Understanding People}, 145.
\textsuperscript{16} Adams, \textit{Competent to Counsel}, 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Alistair Ross, \textit{Counseling Skills}, 163.
not addressed, this damage will ultimately be passed to the next generation. So many of the behavioral and thought patterns that are a part of the dysfunction of modern families have their origin in emotional development.

Larry Crabb suggests that behavioral patterns are a collection of choices made toward a particular goal. Some of those goals are recognized and some are unrecognized, but behind every behavior is a goal. When this positive or negative goal is recognizable, it is easy to explain and understand the behavior. If the goal is a certain career, then behaviors will mimic those necessary to get into that field. If the goal is sexual fulfillment, then behaviors will reflect those necessary to find fulfillment regardless of morality. However, when the goal is unrecognized, then it no longer feels like a choice or a behavioral pattern; instead it just seems like how the person is made. For instance, a little girl was sexually abused by her stepfather and developed disdain and distrust for men. As she entered adulthood she chose homosexual behaviors that would help accomplish her unrecognized goal, which was to keep distance from men, particularly those who may be harmful. This unrecognized goal led to sinful behavior patterns, but because the goal was unrecognized, the behavior felt like it was not a choice.\(^\text{18}\)

Another view developed by Michael Mangis is called “signature sin” and is based on certain patterns, relationships, temperaments, and gifts that are unique to each person.\(^\text{19}\) He suggests that sin takes a consistent and predictable course in a person’s life. Some may consider it this way, that certain people may be more susceptible to certain sins or that some people have a propensity toward particular sinful behavior. Sin patterns are so characteristic that they can become an identifying factor. Ironically, they most often are connected to gifts or strengths. They

\(^{18}\) Crabb, *Understanding People*, 163-164.

\(^{19}\) Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 147-148.
become like what Greek mythology wrote as a nemesis. The nemesis is like the hero in almost every way, except that it is the ruined version. In this way people become their own worst enemy because a bottom has to be hit before change will take place. After all, people will generally only change behavior when the pain of staying the same becomes greater than the pain of changing.  

Part of the importance of addressing this issue is because of how contagious these patterns are between generations. Multigenerational transmission is the transference of marital patterns, ways of being in relationship, and even psychopathology over several generations in a family. For example, one can usually trace alcoholism and incest over at least three generations. The New Testament writer, Paul, saw marriage as more than just a commitment and covenant between a man and a woman. He also saw family as more than a momentary, private relationship. Marriage is a picture of God’s relationship with those who follow Him, and family is crucial in the development of a proper view of God. So he wrote of the importance of both marriage and family because he understood the impact to be far greater than what happens in the moment.

Since much of children’s views of God are based on their experience with parents, it is not surprising that there is an emphasis on this relationship in the Bible. When someone has a healthy view of their parents, they often have a healthy view of God as well. The reverse is also true. The overall impact of this relationship shapes future attitudes and actions as “people tend to duplicate, throughout their lives, the relationship patterns they experienced in their early years.” It is no wonder, then, why the enemy of God would want to disrupt marriages and

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families. The domino effect comes into play here as well because as the family goes, so goes society.

Several examples are given in the Bible of habits or patterns that were not addressed and were passed along to children. One of the first and most prominent is with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These three are considered the fathers of Judaism and Christianity, yet sinful habits existed in them that were repeated by each generation. David Olsen recognizes some of these problems as the “three generations each having triangulation, sibling rivalry, covert parental coalitions, parental division, scapegoating, and one child being played against another.”

Triangulation is pitting one parent and child against the other parent.Sibling rivalry is the choice of siblings to be in competition against one another, yet when parents stir the pot of rivalry it is more of one child being played against another. Other unhealthy parental roles include covert parent coalitions and being in stark, open opposition to the other parent. Scapegoating is in essence shirking responsibility of problematic attitudes and actions. Because these problems were not fully addressed with each family, the door for heart disease was opened.

This generational pattern is also mentioned by God to Moses and the newly formed nation of Israel when the Ten Commandments were being issued. While some parts of the presentation of the Ten Commandments have varying points of view, it could be that God’s statement to Moses in Exodus 20:5 about “punishing the children for the father’s sin, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me” could be the natural consequence of developing toxic habits or patterns. God also follows by stating He will show “faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commands” in Exodus 20:6. This too could fall into the positive, faith-based, habit-forming lifestyle and its consequences. This passage seems to

indicate “that the influence of past generations continues to be felt in successive generations.”

This is a difficult concept to understand without the basis of the biological understanding of how this impacts an individual. The Old Testament references the sins of the father being laid on his children, which led to the enduring belief that any time someone had hardship it was connected to someone else. While Freud was not a follower of Jesus and his approach was incomplete, he unknowingly used this as his basis for how to approach problems people had.

When a similar situation presented itself to Jesus, He responded with a statement that once again on the surface would give modern-day pastors who are opponents to formal counseling the ammunition they need. Digging a little deeper, however, shows there is more to this. At the beginning of John 9, Jesus passes by a blind beggar. His followers have a burning question that they need to have answered so they ask Jesus in John 9:2, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” The disciples ask this question because many of them had been brought up to believe that hardship was a direct result of disobedience to God. Jesus’ response assured them that neither the man nor his parents were at fault but that God was going to use the situation to display His great work.

In the disciples’ minds, Jesus gave an unsatisfactory response that still did not answer their deeper question. Their question most certainly related to physical ailments that people have prior to having the ability to sin their way to that end. Jesus and later Paul both acknowledged that there are times people suffer from the consequences of sin, but this particular case did not warrant that perspective. In this case Jesus planned to use the ailment to bring glory to Himself in

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the healing of the man. While physical ailments are often easily recognized and in modern times the medical profession now has the ability to explain what deficiencies a child has at birth which cause those particular ailments, emotional deficiencies often go unnoticed until later in life. The emotional ailments are often the ones that tend to cause more widespread damage. It is important to recognize these ailments in order for the person to take responsibility for those ailments and for steps to be taken to find healing for those ailments. While the pattern may have begun in a past generation, the responsibility still lies on the person dealing with the ailment.

The beginning is to admit the problem is a personal decision of disobedience and to forsake the sinful, destructive behavior. Forsaking sin is letting go of sin. If attempts are made to remove sin or the things that bring about sin without the willingness to forsake a behavior or pattern, then very little progress can be made. Jesus presents a similar idea to his disciples in Matthew 12:43-45:

When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it roams through waterless places looking for rest but doesn’t find any. Then it says, ‘I’ll go back to my house that I came from.’ And returning, it finds the house vacant, swept, and put in order. Then off it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself. As a result, that man’s last condition is worse than the first. That’s how it will also be with this evil generation.

While there is a difference between being possessed and being manipulated, the tactics are very much the same. In essence, if the person freed from demonic control (or in the case of this research, sinful patterns) does not replace the vacancy with a godlier, healthier pattern, then even more demons will settle and the person will be worse than he or she was previously.


This is often how generational patterns are developed. People who struggle with an area of sin but never truly forsake the sin pass along the struggle to their children and in many cases create an even greater struggle. This is true with anger, homosexuality, infidelity, and a host of other habitual sinful behavior. As Mark McMinn recognizes, “Sin has weighty consequences that extend into future generations.”27 This is one very important reason to investigate the past of an individual and his or her family so that sinful patterns can be addressed. When toxic, sinful patterns are ignored or not replaced they become more complex and bind themselves even tighter over time. This is true whether a person has placed their trust in Jesus or whether they are far from Him. It is in the nature or biology of humanity.

In the Bible the term “phusis” is used to describe those patterns that are inherited.28 It refers to the genetic make-up of individuals that have a natural result rather than a learned behavior. Many people are born with a propensity for a particular sin, and the more it is neglected the stronger the hold gets. Some sins have an immediate impact that needs to be confessed and laid to rest. Others, however, have lingering effects and ongoing consequences, so they need to be addressed through confession and repentance. These are the sins that have lasting consequences that continue to make an impact into the generations that follow. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter as a part of a single act or event that carries with it an indefinite expiration date.

Addressing a sinful pattern must include a two-factored process.29 “Putting off” must be accompanied with “putting on” and vice versa which the New Testament writer, Paul,

27 McMinn, Sin and Grace, 159.


29 Tripp, Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands, 223-231.
encourages his readers to do in Colossians 3:8-10. It is actually God’s grace accompanied by structure and discipline that ultimately will bring about the necessary change. The Methodists use a term called “prevenient grace” to describe the ever-present grace of God that prepares for life change. Paul issues a reminder to followers of Jesus in Romans 2:4 not to take advantage of God’s kindness but to realize His “kindness is intended to lead you to repentance” or life change. Life change cannot truly happen without acceptance of His grace. The structure and discipline bring about freedom under this prevenient grace. A good visual of the importance of structure and discipline is that of a train. When is a train free? In a wide open field or on train tracks? In order for the train to truly experience freedom it must be put on the tracks. Otherwise it is useless. In the same way, structure actually brings about liberty.

Additionally, there is a difference between short-term change and long-term change. To discontinue a habit is an important part of the process and is encouraged by the forgiveness and grace offered by God through Jesus. However, to discontinue alone provides only short-term success. If someone decides to stop eating junk food in an effort to develop a healthier body yet does not replace junk food with a healthy alternative, the victory will only be short-lived. However, if carrots replace Snickers for a snack, and exercise replaces time spent on social media, then long-term change is on the horizon. As Jay Adams puts it, “DEhabituation + REhabituation = long term change.” It is important to note once again that the positive replacement pattern must be centered on the grace of God or even the positive replacement will ultimately fail. Paul writes to the church in Ephesus about this idea in Ephesians 4:22-24: “You

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took off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires; you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; you put on the new self, the one created according to God’s likeness in righteousness and purity of truth.” Some call this the Gumnazo (disciple) Principle, which is the biblical discipline that involves “correcting wrong behavior by practicing right behavior, with the right attitude, for the right reason, until the right behavior becomes habitual.”33 The old self with all of its sinful habits must be progressively replaced by the new self.

“Putting off” and “putting on” involves those two very important aspects that move people toward change: confession and repentance. All of counseling desires to move people toward change, but from a biblical counseling perspective it involves “helping people to put off old patterns which grew out of rebellion toward God and helping them to put on new practices which grow out of obedience to God.”34 These two important counseling concepts are found throughout the Bible, but particularly in the New Testament, where the word most often translated as confession is transliterated as “homologeo” and simply means “to say the same thing or be in agreement.” The two words often found in the New Testament that are translated as repentance are transliterated as “metanoia” and “metamelomai.”35 Respectively, they mean “a change of mind or rethinking” and “to be sorry about.” When these two concepts are joined it makes for fertile ground for life change to happen: “Confession—the way God designed confession to be applied—breaks the cycle of sin and guilt.”36

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34 Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 77.
36 Stanley, *It Came from Within*, 117.
The resistance comes from the lack of vulnerability created in modern-day, American churches. This makes it increasingly difficult to carry out the actions that James, the half-brother of Jesus, commanded of the early church in James 5:16: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.” If people could understand that the consequences of confession are far less severe than the consequences of concealment, then much of the burden that continues to be carried could be relieved.37

Biblical Examples of Heart Disease

The goals of this aspect of counseling and discipleship are to help identify the unhealthy behavioral patterns that have caused this spiritual heart disease and to begin mapping out a plan to replace unhealthy patterns with healthy ones. Counseling has to help people put off old patterns which grow out of rebellion toward God and help them to put on new practices which grow out of obedience to God. There is plentiful evidence of this type of spiritual heart disease in the Bible. For the sake of this research, only three will be mentioned: Joseph in Genesis, the woman at the well in John 4, and Zacchaeus in Luke 19.

Joseph was a part of several generations of unhealthy behavioral patterns. Even though he was the son of the third installment of the Fathers of Judaism, there were still sinful patterns that had defined this family. Abraham was the recipient of the promise of God that he would be made into a great nation. In spite of that promise, there were times of uncertainty in which Abraham began to use the sin of deception when he lacked faith. He and his wife, Sarah, also found themselves at a place where they used triangulation and sibling rivalry within their familial

37 Stanley, It Came from Within, 127-128.
relationships. Abraham loved his son, Ishmael, whom he had with Sarah’s maidservant, Hagar. When Isaac was born, Sarah desired Ishmael’s dismissal and pushed for Abraham to send him away from them. This example of triangulation and sibling rivalry along with other deceptions led to unhealthy patterns that were passed to future generations.

One instance where Abraham uses deception that almost costs his marriage and his life is documented in Genesis 12:10-20. Abraham leaves the land where God has led him due to a drought and moves to Egypt. While in Egypt he deceives Pharaoh by saying Sarah is his sister. God spares his life and marriage through this event, but Abraham does not learn his lesson. In Genesis 20:1-18 Abraham once again uses the same sin of deception without much creativity by deceiving King Abimelech in the same manner. Sarah is taken as a part of Abimelech’s harem because Abraham claims her as his sister. God once again spares Abraham’s life and marriage to keep things intact for God’s promise to be fulfilled.

Like so many unhealthy patterns, this one began with fear. The initial situation found Abraham in fear for his life, so he claimed Sarah as his sister. The second situation began to show a pattern was being established and would be passed along to children and grandchildren. His behavior was “deceit, deliberate, and premeditated—there was no sudden pressure upon him,” and it was based on inferiority, fear of the people, and distrust of God.38

These responses create a cycle that is repetitive and predictable. Sometimes referred to as “Saul Syndrome,” this is a pattern that is seen in men and women throughout the Bible and also is evident in today’s society. It can actually start anywhere in the cycle, but the pattern is predictable regardless. When a person feels inferior, he or she tends to move toward

independence to hide insecurities. Independence will inevitably lead toward pride. Because pride refuses to let anyone see any flaws, it leads to the fear of man. No prideful person wants to risk the chance of anyone seeing a flaw, and the fear of that happening will lead to disobedience. The guilt and shame of disobedience will move a person back to inferiority and insecurity. This cycle is difficult to see in oneself and nearly impossible to break without the intervention of others. This is a similar cycle that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob developed.\textsuperscript{39}

As this pattern of deception was passed along to Abraham’s son, Isaac, it is learned in Genesis 26:7-11 that Abimelech is once again deceived, this time by Isaac and once again in the same manner. Isaac claims his wife, Rebekah, is his sister in order to save his own life. God once again intervenes, but the pattern is in place. Even before Isaac’s boys are born, there is sibling rivalry happening. When Rebekah is pregnant with twin sons, Esau and Jacob, they are battling in the womb. Jacob comes into the world grasping his twin brother Esau’s heel, which is how he receives his name. The name Jacob literally means “to grasp the heel” and figuratively can be used to refers to a trusted friend’s deception.\textsuperscript{40} Even his name itself identifies him as a deceiver. His life is filled with deception both by him and to him. Jacob deceives his brother in order to get the birth rite, deceives his father to get the blessing, and is deceived by his uncle to receive Rachel as his bride.

It is also evident that the idea of triangulation and favoritism is passed along as well. Abraham understood he had jumped ahead of what God was doing in his life by taking matters into his own hands and getting Sarah’s maidservant, Hagar, pregnant. Even though Sarah was a


part of this scheme with Hagar, when God fulfilled His promise of giving Abraham a son with Sarah all sympathies toward Hagar and her son, Ishmael, disappeared. Everyone knew that Isaac was the favored son, so it is really no surprise “that Isaac and Rebekah governed their home in the same way – choosing favorites. At least, for Isaac’s part, there is little doubt he learned this from his own parents.”41 Rebekah sides with Jacob and Isaac favors Esau, which creates the triangulation and ongoing sibling rivalry within their family.

Later in his life Jacob is deceived by his uncle, Laban, when instead of receiving the promise of Rachel as his wife he is surprised to find her sister, Leah, under the veil. The pattern of deception is then picked up by Jacob’s sons when they deceive him by saying that Jacob’s favorite son, Joseph, had been killed by a wild animal when in fact they had sold him into slavery. This deception is a result of triangulation and sibling rivalry that has taken place within Jacob’s family due to his favoring of Joseph, who was his first son with Rachel. The jealousy of the other sons sets them against Joseph.

This long pattern of deception, triangulation, and sibling rivalry was finally broken when God had caused the deception that was meant for harm to become a pathway for salvation. Joseph experienced a series of deceptive events that actually began to give him opportunities to trust God through honesty and integrity. His brothers sold him into slavery that took him to Egypt and a part of the slave population. His hard work and honesty put him in a position where he was the head servant in Potiphar’s house. As the chief servant, he caught the eye of Potiphar’s wife and when he had the opportunity to be deceptive toward Potiphar by engaging in sexual activities with Potiphar’s wife, he chose integrity over deception. In the accusation he picked

honesty over deception and was sent to prison.

While in prison he had the opportunity to interpret dreams of some fellow servants with the notion that the surviving servant would remember him when he was released. He was once again deceived, but chose to continue to trust God with integrity. Joseph was eventually remembered and brought out of prison to interpret Pharaoh’s dream. Soon he no longer found himself a prisoner or a slave but in a place of authority and influence.

Through his interpretation of the dream and recognition of what God was about to do with the weather, he was now second in command in Egypt. When a major drought hit the land, his family was forced to come to Egypt for help. When Joseph saw his brothers coming for help, those chemicals in his brain were released and the emotions came rushing back. His initial act of deception toward his brothers was soon changed to one of reconciliation and redemption. Joseph’s ability to capture that thought and hold it captive gave him the opportunity to experience life change, and it gave his family that chance as well. By the power of God at work in Joseph, he was able to change the unhealthy pattern and bring about healing to his family.

The New Testament also speaks to toxic patterns. Jesus often did things unexpected during His earthly ministry. The story known by many as the “woman at the well” in John 4 was no exception. Jesus stopped by Jacob’s well in Samaria while on a journey with His disciples. He sent the disciples into the town for food while He waited by the well. Soon a lady of bad reputation came at an unlikely time of day to collect water, most likely to avoid other women and their ridicule. Jesus surprised her when He began speaking to her, which was controversial since she was a Samaritan woman, and this whole exchange would have been offensive to Jewish men. Samaritans were considered half-breeds, sellouts by the Jews, and women in general were lower
class. The combination of the two made her invisible and of the lowest importance. That is why when Jesus spoke to her it was shocking. Yet His love for people did not allow Him to see her as other people did. He saw His creation and He hurt for her because her desire to find fulfillment and acceptance led her to a series of dead ends.

She had developed an unhealthy pattern that had left her completely empty. Jesus knew her struggle and could see her desperation. In the brief conversation, He made her aware of the pattern that she had developed that was leading her nowhere fast. His conversation was pointed not solely at her immoral lifestyle but the mess of her life that consisted of a broken series of false beginnings and shattered hopes. He asked about her husband, to which she responded that she did not have one. To her surprise, Jesus already knew she had been married five different times and that the one she was with now was not even her husband. While there is some debate on the translation being “husband” or simply “man,” the intent is fully understood that her reputation was as a serial fornicator. Jesus helped her recognize a toxic pattern in her life that needed to be changed. The only way to overcome the pattern is by the grace of God and power of the Living Water, which He offered her right there by Jacob’s Well. Once she began to experience the change inside of her, she told others in the town about Jesus. Jesus stayed for two more days in the town, and many placed their faith in Him because of what they heard and saw in the “woman at the well.”

Another person who had developed an unhealthy pattern in his life that needed to be addressed is Zacchaeus. Luke 19 records an encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus had a bad reputation and was not respected among the Jews because of his role as a tax collector.

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He was not only a tax collector, but also a chief tax collector. That means he likely had exclusive rights to collect revenue in the region in and around Jericho, or he worked as a subcontractor for another affluent official. Either way he had become extremely wealthy at the expense of the Jewish people, and they had no legal protection against his exploits.\(^\text{44}\)

Zacchaeus was intrigued by Jesus, to the point that he wanted to see Jesus as He came into town. Zacchaeus was short in stature and was unable to see over the crowd. Possibly because of his reputation, no one was interested in helping him get to a place where he could see, so he was forced to climb into a tree in order to see Jesus. When Jesus passed by that place, He saw Zacchaeus in the tree and initiated a conversation with him. The result was that Zacchaeus climbed down from the tree and hosted Jesus at his house that day. During the encounter Jesus made Zacchaeus aware of an unhealthy pattern in his life that had also become his way of making a living. Jesus knew the culture enough and had been around tax collectors enough that they could not resist the opportunity to make more money for themselves than they should. Zacchaeus was no different. He had a diseased heart, but Jesus had the cure.\(^\text{45}\) During that encounter Zacchaeus not only noticed what was unhealthy about his life but also realized it needed to be replaced by something healthy. He had taken money from the people illegitimately and wanted to replace that stingy pattern with a pattern of giving. He volunteered to give back four times what he had taken. In order for him to truly “put off” his old self he had to “put on” something new.

These are just three instances where spiritual heart disease was causing trouble for people in their relationships with God. All three were coming from a different perspective: Joseph from


a position of having an existing relationship with God, Zacchaeus from a place of high interest in Jesus, and the woman at the well having been caught by surprise by Jesus. One was already in a relationship with God through Abraham, while two had personal exchanges with Jesus but no prior connection with Him. The encounters and subsequent changes that broke the patterns of behavior brought about necessary adjustments that opened avenues of spiritual growth for each person. The patterns of deception, triangulation, and sibling rivalry were broken in Joseph’s life and it drew him closer to God and ultimately his whole family. The woman at the well helped bring about a change in her Samaritan town, and Zacchaeus’ pattern of greed changed into a pattern of giving. Each of these has become a testimony that has stood the test of time of the difference that Jesus can make in an individual.

The struggle of each of these three were different from one another, but the result was the same. Each found themselves stuck in a pattern that was causing problems in multiple areas of their lives, including their spiritual growth. Areas that seem prominent in today’s society are homosexuality, pornography, adultery, gluttony, substance abuse, and addiction. These are only a few of the toxic patterns that plague not only our society but also our churches.

While change is the goal of all counseling, a change toward God is the goal of counseling with a Christ-centered worldview. Change in itself is not enough. It is change toward God that makes a person a new creation. Most of the habits that cause spiritual heart disease are caused by sin, so this is not normally a controversial subject among pastors. It does, however, require time and effort to provide counseling opportunities, whether professional or not, to experience healing from this type of heart disease so that people can overcome their toxic patterns and have spiritual growth as followers of Jesus. Otherwise, people remain stuck in patterns of destruction that wreak havoc on themselves as a whole: spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally.
Taking on the role of stepfather is challenging regardless of the circumstances, but it is particularly difficult when a teenage girl is involved. One young stepfather embraced the challenge and sought to win over the heart of his stepdaughter in the same way he had won the heart of her mother. While he had a life in his early adulthood that he would rather forget, he had experienced a big life change through his relationship with Jesus and was now pursuing a life pleasing to God. This was much of his focus as he began to spend more time with his stepdaughter.

As he got his family back in church, he soon found the walls erected around the heart of his stepdaughter to begin to fall one piece at a time. Before long the step-daughter was embracing the new man in her life even to the point of including videos of the two of them singing in the car or being silly in the family room of their home on her social media pages. By all accounts it had appeared he had won the favor of his stepdaughter, and they were moving forward as one family.

That made the event that happened just over a year after the marriage even harder to accept. One evening while at home the step-dad experienced a ruptured aorta, which quickly turned into a life-threatening situation. His aorta had inexplicably torn and was causing him to bleed internally at a rapid pace. No previous problems, no previous diagnosis, and no recognized cause was ever determined. By the time he made it to the hospital, the situation had become even more grave. Alert when taken into the hospital, he assured his family of his love for them and of his commitment to Christ. He was wheeled immediately back to surgery, but efforts to heal his
broken heart were unsuccessful.

It is always difficult to experience a loss of a loved one, but for this teenage girl it was especially hard. The disappointment she had with her biological father leaving had been softened by her acceptance of the new man in her mom’s life and subsequently in her life. The devastation this event caused was impressive and would take some focused effort to overcome. Ironically, the physical death of this stepfather that was caused by a damaged heart became one of the catalysts for this young stepdaughter’s emotional heart damage, which would have an equally devastating impact on her.

**Emotional Heart Damage**

Emotional heart damage is caused by those single events that have such enormous influence on our lives that they can lead to a lifetime of suffering if unaddressed. This aspect of heart damage is probably the most controversial among pastors in that it does not necessarily deal with sin and even when it does, it is not easily dismissed. For those in the First Generation of biblical counselors, these events were initially ignored at some level. For this group every need of counseling was traced back to sin that should be confessed and forgiveness that should be offered in order for life to return to “normal.” Yet those individuals who were suffering because of a life event or because of a complicated matter were not finding relief by simply addressing their sin. The Second Generation became aware of this and sought to rectify that area by including suffering as an area in need of being addressed. They even suggested addressing the suffering prior to addressing the sin, which is the opposite of Job’s friends approach to the subject matter.¹ Job’s friends sought to address his suffering by addressing his sin, but because

he already had a relationship with God, this only caused more frustration.

Five possible causes of suffering are mentioned by Lane and Tripp: being sinned against by others, sinning on one’s own, living in a fallen world, experiencing spiritual warfare, and God’s allowing pain in an individual for the purpose of His own glory. Tripp also states, “Suffering is not only the common ground of human relationships, but one of God’s most useful workrooms.”

This is not too much different from C. S. Lewis’ quote, “Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” Suffering is a part of life and therefore should be addressed and not simply dismissed as a side effect of sin.

As the above list indicates, suffering may very well include a sinful act, but it is not the best description for all possibilities. Those cases that do include a sinful act do not necessarily mean that the one suffering was the guilty party in the act. That person could be the victim. Some examples of the kind of suffering that would be a result of sin are rape, abortion, and divorce. Those that are not necessarily a result of sin are the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, or a move to a new area. Even some things that are seemingly positive, like a remarriage or a new job, have the potential to cause such havoc on emotions that it could very well cause stagnation in emotional growth and therefore hurt the possibility of spiritual growth. From the perspective of the victim, the past not only explains behavior; it justifies it. While the past event might explain the behavior, it does not excuse it. Victims often find ways to excuse or write-off any

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behavior. Excusing behavior is a product of secular counseling.⁴

Suffering creates opportunity for humility and honesty, which have the potential to lead to restoration and redemption. When things are going well it is often hard to grasp the reality of life’s difficulties and to find much need for dependence on God. It is when things go amiss that dependence on God becomes highly valued. Those who experience suffering will often find an appropriate view of themselves and therefore have no reason to hide in their pride. Ultimately, it is important to share these experiences of suffering and redemption in community with others so that they too can find hope.

The struggle that people eventually find with suffering is that they will linger in the emotional and mental state of suffering far longer than they will remain in the physical and spiritual state. Whether the suffering is caused by a sinful act committed, by a sinful act committed against the person, or just by life in a broken world, if it is not dealt with directly, then it has the potential to stay far past the actual event and even become the focal point of life itself. Ricky Texada shares his story of struggle in My Breaking Point, God’s Turning Point. He states how easy it is to make those significant wounds the focus when he says, “It’s tempting to make the wound the center of our story instead of one chapter.”⁵ When this is the case, then everything centers on that event and people find it hard to find movement in this emotionally paralyzing state. Not only do they get stuck emotionally, but they also experience problems in other areas of their lives. While the ramifications of the spiritual aspect are weightier, the other critical parts that make up man should not be neglected. It is not possible for a Christian to be

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⁴ Stanley, It Came from within, 133.

⁵ Ricky Texada, My Breaking Point, God’s Turning Point, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014), 152.
spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.⁶

The time when this becomes a problem with the development of a disciple is when people live so long with an emotional wound or offense in their hearts that they or the people around them just assume that is who they are. The person’s identity is now defined not by the saving grace of Jesus but by their own grievance story. That familiar prison of captivity seems safer than the freedom offered in Christ.⁷ It is very much like those who spend much of their adult life in a state penitentiary and do not think they could make it in the free world, so they desire to stay behind bars. They have become institutionalized. The same is true for being in an emotional prison: “Anytime you allow one event or season of life to define you, your life, for all intents and purposes, is over. It stops at that event.”⁸ Many people will just linger emotionally in the state they found themselves in when the traumatic event occurred.

Often instead of confronting the emotions and dealing with them before God, people will self-medicate the pain. This creates a barrier to healing because it is necessary to do the difficult task of taking a deep, hard look at the events of the pain in order to gain victory over it. It is this neglect that caused Pastor Peter Scazzero to say, “My greatest concern with the call to a ‘deep, hard look inside’ is that most people already believe they are doing so.”⁹ When people carry with them the heavy baggage of anger, resentment, bitterness, hatred, and unforgiveness, there is no space for God’s peace to take residence. The best place to start the redemption and restoration


⁹ Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, 74.
part of the story is to stop being defined by the pain. An old Hebrew phrase that is transliterated as “Ha’al Shemaays eyes qumin” means “God wastes nothing.” God has given us the gospel to create a safe environment to look beneath the surface and see beauty come from the ashes of life. Even in the suffering there is restoration and redemption in Christ when the pain and wound cease to be the centerpiece.

Forgiveness

As far as the sinful portion of suffering, in the New Testament Greek there are typically two types of verbs to describe sin. One type of verb is used in the aorist tense, which is sometimes called the punctiliar tense. This word references a simple occurrence or summarizes an occurrence and is viewed as a “one-point-in-time” action. Although the event could have taken place over a period of time, it is often translated into English as past tense. When used to describe sin it indicates an action in which the consequences are somewhat immediate, so the confession is commanded, forgiveness is issued, and life continues with a clean slate. Many sins including those that are habitual in nature can fall into this category, and although they are repeated, the consequences are still immediate.

The second type of verb used is the Greek perfect tense, which is quite different from the English perfect tense. This Greek tense involves events in a present state that are a result of a past action. This tense describes an action that is fully completed yet has present-day consequences. When sin is described by this type of verb, it is evident that these sins do not have

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10 Texada, My Breaking Point, 132.


12 Ibid, 218.
as clean a point of closure as others. In fact, some sins linger long past the action that has been completed.

Most sins that cause heart damage fall into this second category, which is why forgiveness must be both instantaneous and continuous. When sins are written and therefore described in the Greek perfect tense, it is not always a simple case of being forgiven or forgiving someone and continuing with life as is. It cannot only be instantaneous but also has to be continuous. The consequences are greater and extend further, so this needs to be considered when dealing with these types of sins. Forgiveness is certainly a part of what needs to take place, both forgiveness for self and forgiveness for another. It is such an important part of the process because trauma in a person’s life in conjunction with the inability to work through the forgiveness process impedes the spiritual growth of the soul.\textsuperscript{13} However, forgiveness is often seen as a one moment in time event, but in the case of these types of sin, there is more to it than the one-time decision to forgive. There is a big difference between decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness.\textsuperscript{14}

Decisional forgiveness is knowing that forgiveness is the right decision to make although it does not really go much further than the words that roll off the lips. That is to say some know that forgiveness is what needs to happen and think if they say “I forgive you,” then everything is fine. The reality is that everything is not fine. This brings about the part of decisional forgiveness that is deceptive, counterfeit forgiveness. There are quite a few forms of counterfeit forgiveness that are floating around among humanity: stoic numbness, minimalization, analyzing the

\textsuperscript{13} Kendall, \textit{Free Yourself to Love}, 86-100.

\textsuperscript{14} Holeman, \textit{Theology for Better Counseling}, 145.
offender, holding one’s breath (suck it up), and being an overachiever.15

Those who practice stoic numbness act as though nothing really happened. They think they are showing themselves to be strong by acting as if the event had no impact on them. This only pushes the wound under the surface and creates a prime opportunity for bitterness to take root: “The submerged emotions rise up and express themselves in feelings of deep depression, rage, uncontrollable lust, inferiority, fear, loneliness, and rejections.”16 Once this happens it has the potential to be carried into multiple seasons of life, which creates layers upon layers on top of this hurt and makes it incredibly hard to uncover the real hurt. If you act as though nothing happened, then you bury the hurt. When you bury the hurt, you bury the hate and the possibility of being healed. Healing comes only when we dig it out and let the Holy Spirit show us how to handle the offense.17

The second counterfeit approach is minimalizing the sin. One of the reasons this does not work is because the sin has not been acknowledged as sin. Ignoring the sin or reducing the sin to a minor inconvenience does not extend true forgiveness. It is “swept under the rug,” making one think the dirt is gone when it is actually only hidden. The wrongs must be identified so that a person will know what to forgive.18 Forgiveness never ignores sin or tolerates it. Sin needs to be acknowledged and labeled as such. The penalty should be recognized, the consequences realized, and then forgiveness can be offered or embraced.19

15 Kendall, Free Yourself to Love, 7-21.


17 Kendall, Free Yourself to Love, 15.


19 Adams, A Theology of Christian Counseling, 194.
The description of analyzing the offender is in essence making excuses for the offending party. It is looking for ways to excuse the behavior, therefore taking away any responsibility for the sinful act. It is definitely healthy for someone to know why a person has a propensity to a certain sin, but to let someone off the hook for poor behavior is allowing them to live a consequence-free life, which sets them up for disaster. While analyzing is necessary in the counseling and discipleship phase, it leads to counterfeit forgiveness for the offended party.

Holding one’s breath is the equivalent of the phrase “suck it up” or “tough it out.” Many parents communicate this regularly to their children, and in many areas of life this is a good philosophy. When associated with forgiveness it is counterfeit. When anyone holds their breath long enough there will be an explosion of air in the end. In many cases during this aspect of counterfeit forgiveness the words, “I forgive you” are spoken, but the forgiveness is not sincere. Even though some people say the words of forgiveness, they also think the guilty party should still have to suffer. In their eyes the sin that has been committed has great consequences, so the guilty party should experience pain in the same way or better yet, worse than the victim. Instead of glossing over the sinful act there is an added emphasis on the act so that forgiveness is not given until the full weight of consequences is experienced. This is not true forgiveness, either. In fact, this is also a type of neglect that leads to deep-rooted bitterness: “To pretend one is not hurt or angry in an attempt to accomplish forgiveness and restore a relationship quickly will only give opportunity to anger to turn into a smoldering bitterness.”

Forgiveness happens when the offended party gives up the right to hurt someone for hurting them. For some types of sin, this is often a slow process and much more easily said than done.

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20 Kendall, Free Yourself to Love, 35.
The counterfeit forgiveness technique that is the hardest to recognize is the overachiever. Most of the time this is associated more with shame than unforgiveness. Whether from shame or unforgiveness, overachieving occurs because the offended party overcompensates from the hurt or wound and presents himself or herself as the “perfect” person. They seem unnaturally happy, extremely driven, and are rarely seem unprepared or “unmade.” If a flaw is noticed, then people might become aware of the inner struggles that are actually taking place. When associated with shame it is often based on the inability to forgive oneself. Learning to forgive oneself, however, is effective at dissolving insecurities, fears, and self-deprecation. It allows a person to let go of who they were in order to focus on who they are and who they are becoming in Christ.\(^1\)

In order for people to be emotionally and spiritually healthy and strong they will have to learn how to truly forgive. Part of the problem is that when people hit these emotional and spiritual crossroads, a decision has to be made to walk the way of forgiveness or to allow hearts to grow cold and take a “never again” posture.\(^2\) This is particularly dangerous with heart damage because it can cause problems that extend far beyond just the perpetrator. If trust is broken between two or more people, it will inevitably cause problems with future relationships, including growing in a healthy, trusting relationship with a loving God.

Since humans were created as relational beings, it only makes sense that the enemy of God would want to attack relationships to cause as much damage as possible. That is likely why most emotional damage is directly related to relationships in some form or fashion. Usually people will have one of three reactions to emotional damage by relationships: they will cut themselves

\(^{1}\) John Loren Sanford, Paula Sanford, and Lee Bowman, *Choosing Forgiveness*, (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2007), 51.

off, they will cut the other person off, or they will maintain identity within the relationship while keeping it intact.\textsuperscript{23} Both of the first two reactions create more problems because they establish isolation and break fellowship. One of the reasons the first two options seem so enticing is that they have the appearance of immediate freedom at no real cost. That is a result of not truly understanding the importance and complexity of relationships. Although forgiveness has a hefty price tag for the giver and is free to the receiver, it ultimately is a much better investment than the alternative.\textsuperscript{24}

The third option is the desired direction for anyone with an emotional wound resulting from being sinned against. In light of relationships forgiveness can be defined in terms of three components: a hunger for restoration, bold love, and revoked revenge.\textsuperscript{25} Recognizing the importance of relationships helps to create a hunger to restore the relationship even if it means that the relationship will never again be at the previous level of trust. The fact that the relationship is saved opens the opportunity to continue growth not only in that relationship but also in other relationships. Because forgiveness is costly it requires a bold, strong love. This love has its foundation in a loving, forgiving God and leads to the beautiful picture of revoked revenge.

In this day and age people in American culture demand their rights and are willing to go to court at almost any cost to make sure their rights are recognized and received. In that line of thinking when a person is wronged or sinned against they then have a right at revenge; however, forgiveness calls for that revenge to be revoked. When a person can reach the point of giving up

\textsuperscript{23} Holeman, \textit{Theology for Better Counseling}, 88-89.

\textsuperscript{24} Adams, \textit{A Theology of Christian Counseling}, 189.

\textsuperscript{25} Dan B. Allender, \textit{The Wounded Heart (Revised Ed.)}, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1995), 239-245.
the right or opportunity to hurt someone for hurting them then they can begin moving to a level of emotional forgiveness. As Jackie Kendall said, “Being offended is inevitable; staying offended is (a) choice.” It is imperative that the church help people make the choice of forgiveness rather than staying offended. Any time memories stir the same negative, toxic emotions, it may very well be that the person has worked hard at trying to forget but have not truly practiced forgiveness. The enemy of God, Satan, has a scheme to derail relationships that involves keeping people in a state of unforgiveness or counterfeit forgiveness.

In 2 Corinthians 2:10-11 Paul writes, “If you forgive anyone, I do too. For what I have forgiven – if I have forgiven anything – it is for you in the presence of Christ. I have done this so that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his schemes.” Paul tells the church in Corinth that he is willing to forgive because he knows that if he does not then Satan will be able to gain an advantage over each of them. He goes on to identify that creating a heart or life of unforgiveness is the scheme or game plan of the enemy. If he can get followers of Christ to ignore the call to forgiveness or to believe in counterfeit forgiveness, then he will be able to throw them into a tailspin that will prevent future growth and usefulness for the Kingdom of God. Too often people see their pain as a trophy to put on display, which has great potential to poison the entire being. Any time people are unwilling to forgive, they are most likely evaluating that decision based on what has been done to them instead of what has done for them by Jesus.

26 Kendall, Free Yourself to Love, 22.
27 Sanford, Choosing Forgiveness, 42.
29 Stanley, It Came from Within, 141-144.
It is more than simply saying the words. It involves digging to a deeper level of understanding so the depth of the problem can be grasped and so that healing can also reach to those depths. There is more to the process of gaining freedom from the results of the sin, but the first and most important factor is reaching to the deepest part of the wound so that a true and more permanent healing can take place.

Another layer that adds complication to the situation is when the perpetrator is a family member, particularly a parent. When heart damage occurs as a result of a family member the stakes are increased because there is a special bond that God created within families. This is especially true when it is between a parent and child. A person’s introduction to God is through the relationship between a child and a parent. When that relationship is damaged due to sin there is added stress and damage that extends into the marriage and family relationships of the victim. When heart damage is done at the hands of family, it is more difficult to be forgiving, and it is easier to carry the hurt into other relationships. This is what those in the professional realm call the “Object Relations Theory.”

This theory is based on the idea that people will be wounded from past relationships but will make their present-day relationships the object of their ire and frustration. It is as if a person internalizes early, primary relationships and self-images based on an event involving a family member (usually a parent) and keeps the event somewhat hidden, but the effects become public. When this person enters into a relationship and an event stirs a negative memory, this person

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31 Sanford, *Choosing Forgiveness*, 27.
32 Olsen, *Integrative Family Therapy*, 32.
then takes things out on a spouse even though the spouse is not the real object. Dan Allender calls the person who becomes the object the “abuser-surrogate.” The abuser-surrogate is the one who gets the anger of past events, which brings about great confusion in the relationship.33

An example of this would be a father who sought to control his daughter even to the point of determining who she could and could not talk to on the phone. Through the years she grew to resent this aspect of her father. A few years into marriage her husband comes home from work to find her on the phone with a friend. After she gets off the phone the husband asks what he thinks is an innocent question: “Who was that?” The buried anger and frustration in her damaged heart boils over with accusations of her husband being too controlling, which leaves him dumbfounded. This has the potential to spiral into what seems to be irreconcilable differences when in fact a little research into past hurts could have resolved the issue at the very beginning.

Without someone to help guide people to these places of true forgiveness and awareness they will be stuck at an emotional state that continues to drain their spiritual, physical, and mental strength. Learning from the past becomes mandatory for a healthy future, both for the individual and for the church as a whole.34 When it is possible, followers of Jesus are encouraged to live at peace with all people. This includes reconciling when possible, even if the relationship is not returned to its complete state prior to the wound.

In the same way forgiveness can be counterfeit, so can an apology. When sincere, however, a confession and an apology have the power to open doors toward healing. Mark McMinn reports, “Social scientists who study forgiveness speak of the importance of repentance and

33 Allender, The Wounded Heart, 279.
34 Harney, Leadership from the Inside Out, 89.
apology. ‘I’m sorry, I was wrong’ are powerful, wound-cleansing words.”35 Jay Adams suggests three elements of reconciliation. The first is a confession, which includes a sincere apology associated with the confession. True forgiveness is the next element. A sincere apology with sincere forgiveness sets the stage for a new beginning to the relationship.36

Shame

A different aspect of forgiveness is learning to forgive oneself. Forgiving others has its challenges, but learning to deal with personal guilt and shame takes a different set of skills. For the sake of this research, guilt is the focus on what a person has done whereas shame is the focus on who a person is. Guilt can take place over a sinful act, but when forgiveness has been issued or the consequences have been realized, the guilt exits. Shame stays long after guilt has been relieved. To be shamed is to experience an attack by self or by others on the very being of a person.37

People are adept at hiding their emotions to create the illusion of a happier, carefree life. The consequence of this illusion is that people live with deep reserves of destructive shame. Even though Jesus came to heal our heart wounds, it is shame that keeps us prisoners to the original offense.38 While others may not be fully aware of the specifics of the shame that exists under the outer layer of the person, to the person the shame increasingly becomes the identifying factor of his or her being. To have shame as one’s identity is to believe that one’s being is

35 McMinn, Why Sin Matters, 161.
37 Ross, Counseling Skills, 159.
38 Kendall, Free Yourself to Love, 26-27.
flawed, that one is defective as a human being.\textsuperscript{39}

The problem that stems from shame being attached to the identity of a person is that it builds an unhealthy view of oneself. Recognizing the guilt of sin that leads to repentance involves a healthy form of momentary shame, but to allow shame to become an identity creates trouble for all aspects of one’s being. Shame as the primary identity will arrest passion and close down desire, which among other things will shut down opportunities for growth and advancement in life.\textsuperscript{40}

The signposts that shame has become a part of the identity of a person are self-deprecation, hiding, and emotional or physical violence against self or others. When “I’m such an idiot” or “I’m so dumb” become a regular part of a person’s vernacular, it very well could be something more than innocent remarks. People will make these remarks at times as an attempt to show humility, but there is a big difference between humility and shame. Humility is not thinking lowly of oneself, but instead is not thinking too highly of oneself. Shame is dwelling in low thinking. Shame also ironically shows itself by hiding. The response to shame for Adam and Even was to hide, and people today still do the same thing. An even more dangerous response to shame is violence, which is a blood offering of sorts to the dark demons of shame.\textsuperscript{41} People who are controlled by their shame turn to violence to attempt to find relief from the pain of shame. Even those who should find their identity in Christ still struggle with finding freedom from shame.

\textsuperscript{39} John Bradshaw, *Healing the Shame that Binds You*, (Deerfield Beach, IL: Health Communications, 1988), vii.

\textsuperscript{40} Allender, *The Cry of the Soul*, 203.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 192-195.
One area of sin that is particularly sticky when it comes to shame is sexual sin. Henri Nouwen notes, “brokenness is often most painfully experienced with respect to our sexuality.” While emotional upheaval is a part of every sinful act at some level, whether small or great, the shame associated with sexual sin is especially secretive and internally dangerous. Therefore, this shame causes even greater emotional turmoil, which in turn has an impact on a person’s spiritual relationship with God. Every emotion, though horizontally provoked, nevertheless reflects something about the vertical dimension: our relationship with God. Our emotions link our internal and external worlds, particularly as it relates to sexual sin.

Shame leads to deep levels of insecurity, inferiority, and low self-esteem. While most shame is a direct result of personal or sexual sin, it also can come from attacks on the personhood. When someone has received constant criticism in a place they should be receiving shelter from life’s storms and encouragement through life’s struggles, then shame can also become a part of a person’s identity and life.

Since these events happen in places that are expected to be safe, it is harder to let go of the criticism. For instance, a music teacher at an elementary school scolds a young ten year-old boy for singing off key and suggests it would be better for him to mouth the words. As this young boy grows, he has insecurities about his singing, which are supported physically by the negative chemicals that are released in his brain from this childhood memory. He either has an emotionally charged response to anyone who criticizes his singing, or more likely he will withdraw from any musical arena so that no one will ever have the chance to hurt him again.

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44 Seamands and Funk, Healing for Damaged Emotions, 48.
the pain is harsh enough then this will spill into other arenas of life. Without outside encouragement or acknowledgment about the truth of the statement there is no way for the thoughts to be reversed.

David Seamands suggests that Satan uses this as an emotional and psychological weapon to defeat and destroy people, particularly those who claim Jesus as their Savior. The follower of Jesus is not at all immune to this, although he or she does have a distinct advantage by having forgiveness and hope. Regardless of this advantage, all are still attacked through shame. Shame and low self-esteem ultimately paralyze potential, destroy dreams, ruin relationships, and sabotage Christian service.\(^{45}\)

Like habitual sins, shame and the effects of shame have the potential to be passed from generation to generation and even to be experienced within community. Shame is released by forgiving self and by embracing the Truth. True forgiveness of self is agreeing with God’s assessment of sin in one’s life. The understanding of the depravity of sin is necessary, but once forgiveness has been issued by God it should be fully embraced. Forgiveness, guilt, shame, and healing are bound together in a way that makes it possible for victims and perpetrators, whether first, second, or third generations or at collective, tribal, societal, or national levels, to encounter “new and constructive alliances.”\(^{46}\)

Ultimately sin must be confessed so that healing can run its course. While it does not have to be confessed to everyone, it is a difficult task to make oneself vulnerable even to a few. King David experienced this first hand. As he recorded one of these experiences in Psalm 51, he


\(^{46}\) Ross, *Counseling Skills*, 163.
realized that “to be broken is the beginning of revival. It is painful, it is humiliating, but it is the only way.”47 When James, the half-brother of Jesus, led the early church he talked about the critical aspect of confessing sins to one another so that healing could be found. In James 5:16 he writes, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.” This passage has great relevance in relation to “heart disease” and “heart damage.”

**Fear**

Some wounds that cause heart damage are not the result of direct sin but instead are the result of life in a broken world. These wounds can be a result of anything from “foot in mouth” syndrome to the death of a loved one. Typically, these wounds result in the development of fear in one’s life that eventually will draw strength from the faith of a follower of Jesus. Even though faith exists, the fear will begin to detract from faith, leaving a person unable to grow.

Generally, there are two types of fear that exists: motivating fear and manipulating fear.48 Motivating fear is the type that causes us to move out of the way of a speeding car. It is a rational, healthy type of fear. Manipulating fear, on the other hand, is an irrational, unhealthy kind of fear. It causes a distortion of thought so that reasonable concerns are expanded into irrational terror. This fear will wrap itself around the heart and trigger a chain reaction of major emotions. It is at this point that fear is no longer motivating and protective, but it instead becomes a prison and skews any sense of reality.49 The desire of Satan is like the thief that Jesus

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mentions in John 10:10 who comes to steal, kill, and destroy: to take away hope and replace it with fear that leaves people frozen in time.

Hopeless is one of the bleakest words in the English language. Without hope fear invades the soul and leaves it in despair. People tend to give up and become victims. The negative conclusion of the events that are feared begin to usher in despair even though the events have not even happened yet. Worry and anxiety cause the small event to cast a large shadow.\textsuperscript{50} This can easily lead to depression. The process of digging out the fear-induced depression must begin by examining the root fears.\textsuperscript{51} One of the benefits of getting to the root is that it reveals how fear also can distort our view of God. This then can give way to hope which comes by recognizing the utter hopelessness of our condition and the necessity of divine intervention so that true joy can be experienced.\textsuperscript{52}

Getting to the root of fear is true not only for the areas of personal sin and sexual sin that result in shame, but it is also true for life experiences that put people in a state of fear. Fear of death, fear of losing a loved one, fear of a broken relationship, fear of starting a new relationship, and fear of losing a job are all fears that can quickly move toward manipulating fear. When fear is allowed to run unhindered then faith is undermined even in the life of a follower of Jesus. The important step for the person with heart damage that has led to fear and shame is to identify and take responsibility for the lies accepted from Satan, the father of lies, and to replace them with

\textsuperscript{50} Carol Kent, \textit{Tame Your Fears: And Transform Them into Faith, Confidence, and Action}, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2003), 55.

\textsuperscript{51} Nichols, \textit{Untie the Fear Knot}, 10, 59,108.

\textsuperscript{52} Allender, \textit{The Wounded Heart}, 113.
the Truth of God’s word. This replacement does not happen immediately, but instead takes time to change that pattern of thinking that has been deeply established. For those that have been followers of Jesus for a long period of time it may very well be that they have known about Jesus, but in the process of gaining facts they ceased to really know Him. Henri Nouwen recognized this in his own life when he said, “I often wonder if my knowledge about God has not become my greatest stumbling block to my knowledge of God.”

Revisiting the past helps to determine where the unhealthy mindset was established so that progress can be made to change the negative emotions that are currently ruling. Dan Allender, who focuses much of his counseling on struggles that are sexual in nature, says, “The past does not exonerate our rebellion, but it does put our unique rebellion in a context as to why we have found God hard to trust.” This has the potential to bring obstacles to light that have caused problems with fear, shame, and unforgiveness that could lead to spiritual breakthroughs for followers of Jesus.

The challenge with memories is that it is natural for a person to repress some thoughts or forget some parts of a significant event. However, at times it is more than a natural repression of thoughts but instead a willful suppression of thoughts. There are some wounds that are so difficult that parts of the story are purposefully locked in an internal memory vault. When there are gaps in our memories, whether repressed or suppressed, the tendency is to fill those gaps when retelling or reliving those events with fabrications. In time this makes it difficult to

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determine what memories are real and which are fabricated. It is easy to assume all memories are real unless time is given to truly examine the wounds from the past.57

When time and attention are given to regain those memories three things have potential to happen: denial of the events is removed, the new creation in Christ can be reclaimed, and movement can be made toward real change. Redeeming the past is not essential to begin the process of healing, but it is an important factor in completing the process and creating an opportunity for the kind of healing and growth that is desired for all followers of Jesus. The present does not serve the past, but the past does serve the present state of an individual and his or her future growth. A decision to stop the rebellion that has its roots in the past will help pave the way for redeeming the past.58

Part of the stronghold fear has over people is the pain of suffering. No one enjoys suffering, so any time pain is experienced there is a natural pushback. The problem with this state, however, is that fear not only impacts how suffering is viewed and experienced but also how blessings are received: “Whatever controls my heart will control my responses to people and situations. . . what rules our hearts will control the way we respond to both suffering and blessing.”59 The interesting thing about this statement is that those who have a damaged heart have as hard a time accepting a compliment as they do accepting criticism. It is extremely challenging to have a healthy relationship with a person who has this mindset. When a person is damaged to the point that they cannot function properly when suffering, they will likely not be able to function properly when they are blessed by God.

57 McMinn, Why Sin Matters, 125.


59 Tripp, Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands, 71.
All of the fear-based issues must be confronted and addressed so that healing can take place. Once the healing is in motion then growth is on the horizon. This is important not just for the individual’s sake but also for the sake of the church. Jesus understood this better than anyone, which is why He did not allow much time to go by without confronting and/or addressing events that caused heart damage so that His followers could experience wholeness once again and their usefulness for the Kingdom of God could be realized.

**Biblical Example of Heart Damage**

The most notable event happened with Peter during the arrest and illegal trial of Jesus. Even though Peter was warned of the impending events he still found himself at the wrong end of obedience. Jesus warns Peter that he will deny Jesus three times before the rooster crows. Peter cannot accept that this will happen because he believes himself to be much stronger in his convictions and not nearly so fickle as to deny his Rabbi. Much to Peter’s surprise, he finds Jesus’ prediction to be right which leads to a downward spiral for Peter to a devastating low.

After Jesus has resurrected, appeared to His followers, and even begun to give instruction one might think that things have fallen back into place for Peter and the rest of the disciples to go tell the world the good news. This was not the case for Peter, although he must have certainly felt excited to have Jesus alive again and to even have a deeper understanding of who Jesus really was. He certainly had a greater understanding of why Jesus had to die and the significance of how that event paid the price for sin, allowing forgiveness be offered to all who will believe. For Peter, though, something was still lingering over him.

That is why during one encounter after the resurrection Jesus understood the importance of revisiting an event that caused such heart damage in Peter. Unless the wound was exposed, Peter
would be of little use to the mission. John 21:15-17 is the record of the conversation Jesus has with Peter concerning the event. Jesus probes until He exposes Peter’s wounded heart so that He can bring about healing to Peter’s soul and make him useful once again.

Jesus asked Peter a simple question three consecutive times: “Do you love me?”

Theologians draw the connection with the three questions to the three denials by Peter. Three is also the number of completion in Jewish culture, and many times in the Bible repetition three times does signify completion. Some say this is the point of the three questions, to show Peter complete forgiveness. Others point simply to the number of denials in the original incident. Some even point to the fact that Jesus and Peter use two separate verbs in this interchange, “agapēn” and “philein” for the term “love,” and spend time focusing on the terminology. The conversation does have a turning point when Jesus uses the term Peter uses for love, but the focal point is Jesus bringing about healing to Peter’s damaged heart.

After the third question by Jesus, John writes that Peter was “elupethe” at the question. Some translate that term as “hurt,” although “grieved” is a more appropriate translation due to the angst of the term. Many interpret this as though Peter was grieved that Jesus persisted in His questioning and that it had to do with Jesus changing verbs in the last question. However, when examined further it would appear these two terms are most often “used interchangeably in the Gospel.” If this is the case, then it would make sense that Peter’s grief was not over the question or either term for love but instead was over the heart damage. Peter was facing his traumatic experience so that he could experience healing. Even though forgiveness had been

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issued and Peter’s slate was wiped clean, it was shame that became an obstacle for his effectiveness as a follower of Jesus. There were still memories of the event that caused the heart damage that needed to be confronted and addressed before he could operate at maximum efficiency once more.⁶²

The same is true today for people who are dealing with heart damage. They experience an event that causes fear, shame, or suffering, and their lives seem to be put on hold, or they have been tricked into counterfeit forgiveness that has left bitterness to grow inside their damaged hearts. Without a healthy approach to dealing with this damaged heart, life will be snuffed out one day at a time, and the abundant life in Christ will never fully be realized this side of heaven. Acknowledging and acting on this need of counseling at some level for all followers of Christ may very well be the difference between struggling through each day and living victoriously.

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CHAPTER 5
HEART EXAM AND TREATMENT

Each of the three heart issues mentioned in this research has its detractors. The least pushback is with heart defect. A vast majority of Christians still understand that sin is a barrier between God and man, although there are many people who see Jesus as the best option but not the only option to connect with God. Heart disease is generally accepted by all, although there is some difficulty in seeing a generational pattern in sin. Some confuse generational pattern with generational curse, and since they do not believe in generational curses, they resist the need to search for root causes to habitual sin. In addition, admitting to a pattern gets mixed with searching for blame, so it is never really addressed at the root. Because of this many do not necessarily see this as a counseling need. Heart damage causes the most question among pastors as to the need for counseling. Heart damage, like heart disease, requires investigation into the past to look for the root issue, but because of the secular approaches that only seek to place blame in the past many pastors also reject counseling for heart damage.

Seeing the emotional and spiritual state of a person in the parallel struggles with physical heart health brings to light the real need for attention to be given to the defect, disease, and damage done to what the Bible calls the “wellspring of life.” When any of these becomes the defining condition of the emotional heart, there is trouble. The problem has been that many modern churches have not directly addressed all of these issues, leaving followers of Christ in emotional bondage and spiritually stagnant.

As Paul David Tripp shares of his experience in teaching at seminary, it seems the problem
in some if not many cases is that even those studying to lead congregations do not see counseling as a part of ministry. One attitude that appears to be recurring among seminary students was a desire to gloss over counseling so that they can “get back to the work of the ministry.”¹ This attitude extends beyond just seminary students, however, because the idea prevails in many churches that biblical knowledge brings maturity. This is not necessarily the case. A mature follower of Jesus has knowledge, but all knowledgeable followers of Jesus are not mature. Some may just get so lost in the theology that they miss the practicality of the broader view of ministry.

Spiritual maturity involves not only knowledge but also self-awareness of the continuous need for the gospel in one’s life. Tripp lists some dangers that theological knowledge alone can bring which includes the lack of personal gospel neediness.² Understanding this broader view of the development of a disciple would most certainly encompass counseling at some level. In fact, Tripp made a shift in teaching to create a community atmosphere within his classroom so that as his students became aware of their own personal struggles and hindrances, there was an outlet for them to work out their salvation. After the shift in his approach it became apparent to those in his class that not only was counseling a vital part of ministry, but it also was necessary for those who were studying to lead people into a deeper understanding of God.

Survey

To better understand how the current American church was dealing with this issue a research was conducted of fifty-one pastors to gain insight as to how today’s leaders of churches addressed these issues, not only for the congregations under their care, but also for themselves as leaders of congregations. Pastors still have great influence over those in their care, so it is

¹ Paul David Tripp, Dangerous Calling, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 44.
² Ibid, 54-55.
imperative that they consider these things to shape the direction and health of the 21st century local church. Ten questions were asked of these pastors to gain insight into their understanding and approach toward counseling as a part of the discipleship process for their local church and their own individual growth (a list of the survey questions can be found in Appendix A and the results in Appendix B).

One of the fifty-one pastors that completed the survey is not currently serving in a church setting but instead is working for a parachurch organization. He did answer some of the questions based on his past experience. Of the other fifty pastors, they were evenly split between those serving in churches with under 500 in attendance and those serving in churches with over 500 in attendance, as Question 1 (Q1) indicates. Of the five categories of church size, the largest percentage of churches represented are those in churches with over 1000 in attendance.

In Question 3 (Q3) a large majority of those surveyed (82.35%) described their background as being “traditional.” Of these forty-two who grew up in a “traditional” setting, thirty-one (73%) additionally described their background as having a “Sunday School model.” This group had a slightly higher percentage (30.95%) of people who had “never sought formal counseling” than those who had sought “professional counseling” (28.57%). Both numbers indicate a hesitation toward professional counseling among pastors with a “traditional” background. This is likely due to the trouble that existed between pastors and counselors for the last few decades of the 1900s.

Of the fifty-one pastors that were surveyed, fourteen responded (27.45%) that they had “never sought formal counseling” in Question 10 (Q10). As with all surveys, there are variables that exist with interpretation of the answers, as thirteen of the fourteen respondents answered only with “never sought formal counseling.” The additional respondent also answered that they
received “pastoral” and “lay” counseling. Interestingly, though, thirteen said that they were brought up in a traditional setting and the other described their upbringing to be in a Sunday school setting. Only two of these fourteen no longer serve in a traditional, Sunday school setting. This would also fit the mold that those who have come from a traditional setting were either not taught the significance of counseling or were groomed to believe counseling had a negative stigma. The size of the church seemed irrelevant to this group, as all sizes were represented in this group.

The percentage of pastors who said they had sought professional counseling was slightly higher than those who had never sought counseling in any form, as seventeen of the fifty-one (33.3%) surveyed said they have pursued professional counsel. Fourteen of the seventeen currently describe their church as being “modern” and no longer identify as a “traditional” church. Twelve of the seventeen respondents have a personal church history they described as “traditional” but have now shifted to a “modern” setting. This indicates these pastors no longer identify with the mindset of the “traditional” approach to ministry and at least in part shows their willingness to seek professional counsel.

While many churches have an easily identifiable strategy for worship, evangelism, service, and fellowship, when it comes to the process of making disciples the waters get a little muddy. Ten percent of the respondents answered that the church where they serve does not have a defined discipleship process. Most churches tend to offer a variety of classes and programs that are in place in hopes that growth will happen, although making a disciple is not defined solely by intellectual growth or increased biblical knowledge. While most pastors (if not all pastors) would agree that the spiritual maturity of a person is not purely based on Bible knowledge, the results of Question 4 (Q4) seem to indicate a heavy emphasis on classes. There must be efforts to help
people learn how to implement the knowledge they have and be able to navigate through life in a healthy, biblical way.

Of those surveyed only eleven (22%) said that they have counseling as a part of the discipleship process at the church in which they serve. Of those eleven only three did not include professional counseling as an option, so 16% have professional counseling as a part of their process. While professional counseling received only a small percentage, churches are much more inclined to an organic approach to counseling like mentorship. However, it is not intentional counseling, as the pastors do not recognize mentorship as a form of lay counseling. (There is a difference of twenty percentage points between those who responded as having counseling and those who responded as having mentoring as a part of the process.) In contrast 73% include a Bible study as a part of the process, and 40% include a doctrinal study.

While most do not have counseling in the process of discipleship, churches do recognize an occasional need for counseling. However, Question 6 (Q6) reveals that less than half of the counseling needs are addressed by those within the church that are not a part of the pastoral ministry team. Twenty-three (46%) suggest they offer lay counsel while twenty-four (48%) address the needs through small groups. Thirty-four (68%) say they will recommend professional counseling and forty-seven out of fifty respondents (94%) encourage pastoral counseling to meet the needs of the congregation. This is not too surprising in at least there is a recognition of the need for counsel. The trouble with these percentages is that pastors do not seem to rely on the church to counsel one another. This view puts a lot of stress on pastoral staff and does not seem to follow the command to equip the saints for the ministry. One of the churches surveyed is a small group church that depends heavily on lay counseling and small group counseling within their community. This has proven to be helpful, as the lead pastor has had to step away due to
health concerns and the ministry of the church continues to be active in their community, as they are able to continue to meet the needs of one another.

Some of the resistance by pastoral staff may be uncertainty regarding the quality of counsel might be given by fellow congregants or possibly a “savior complex” where the pastor may think he is the only ones that can help. While the determination as to why the role of counselor is not shared with the congregation is speculative, it has potential to add a great deal of unnecessary weight to an already heavy load for those on pastoral staff. Adding training for lay leadership to the mix can not only make a healthier environment but also can relieve some of the stress on the pastoral staff.

All of those surveyed agreed that simply because a person is “in Christ” does not mean that they need counseling. Question 7 (Q7) also shows that more than half (52.94%) believe counseling will be necessary at some point for most people with another 29.41% believing it will be necessary for all. So with approximately 83% seeing that counseling will be necessary for most in the church, it would seem the church should take more initiative to create a plan for meeting those needs. If professional counseling is a barrier, then more effort should be made to enhance pastoral counseling and, even more importantly, to create a strong lay counseling ministry. However, Question 9 (Q9) indicates that professional counseling is not necessarily a barrier.

Ultimately, the biggest barrier is the lack of knowledge or attention given to counseling as a part of the discipleship process. When pastors seriously consider the needs of the church and even themselves then it becomes evident that there is a need. It is more a matter of giving time and energy to develop a necessary process to get people on the right track toward health. As
Question 8 indicates, counseling is helpful in every arena of life. Even within the physical being, over half of those surveyed (52.94%) believe counseling to be beneficial. All other categories received even higher marks: spiritual (94.12%), emotional (94.12%), relational (84.31%), and mental (74.51%).

Question 10 (Q10) reveals how pastors have truly looked at counseling in their past. As mentioned earlier, those who have sought professional counsel is only slightly higher than those who have never sought any form of counsel. Embracing the idea of adding counseling as a part of the process does not necessarily mean that professional counseling has to be the outlet for churches, but it does mean that various forms have to be considered. If a pastor himself is unwilling to pursue any form of help, then it is highly unlikely that the church will decide on its own to do that. In order for the church to start the process, it must begin with the pastor himself.

Heart Treatment

If a church is to offer any form of counseling, most would see that as the pastor’s duty and as the survey indicated most pastor’s see that as their duty too. In a larger congregation the people may understand that as the role of a staff specialist. So to differentiate between the role of the pastoral staff and the congregation another role will be introduced, that of pastoral care. This will help resolve the issue discovered in the survey to involve more than just the pastoral staff in the counseling process. As a part of expanding the counseling/caring reach, three areas were determined to be the best option for involving the congregation as a well as trusted professionals to offer life-giving advice: small group ministry, lay caregivers, and professional counselors.

The Greek word in the New Testament that best describes the role of the caregiver, the one
who brings relief to hurting people, is “poimen.”” This term is translated as shepherd, which was an occupation commonly understood in the first century. Shepherding became synonymous with pastoral care in the early church. While it typically related to either Jesus as the Great Shepherd or the pastor as the leader of the flock, it is a good picture of the role given not just to the pastor or staff but also to the congregation. Overall, three progressive steps should be provided by a church in order to get people to a healthy place: small group ministry, lay counseling or care ministry, and professional counseling. Each of these will be discussed with the conclusion of which direction LifePoint Christian Fellowship will take on the matter.

A benefit of the congregation in this role is a built-in support system that includes keeping one another accountable as well as offering counsel and encouragement during difficult days. Since this is a primary role not just of the pastor but of the congregation then it is appropriate to learn how to train “the saints for the ministry,” as Paul instructed in Ephesians 4:11-15:

And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ.

The ultimate purpose of care ministry is to bring one another to maturity in Christ. Involving the whole congregation is a very practical idea for the modern, American church in that it utilizes everyone, promotes unity, and protects the church from the deception of Satan.

Pastoral care is the task of the whole congregation functioning as a caring, healing, growth-
enabling community. Utilizing the entire church enables women to be engaged in helping other women, which can help protect the pastor from compromising situations.\textsuperscript{5} It also encourages counseling through a small group ministry. Group caring and counseling methods constitute the single most useful resource for broadening and deepening a church’s ministry of healing and growth.\textsuperscript{6} Getting people into small groups so that community can be developed where deep-seeded caring can actually take place is the first step in the process of creating a lay caregiving environment within a church. When problems or tensions are too sophisticated to solve or resolve at the small group level, then the next step would be to meet with a pastor or trained lay caregiver. Pastors and lay caregivers will need to be trained in such a way as to recognize their own limitations so they will know when to refer the person to a professional counselor. Overall, “One of the skills of pastoral care is to enable people to seek the right kind of help at the right time.”\textsuperscript{7}

This kind of care among a congregation can be seen as “the support and restoration of the well-being of a person in his or her depth and totality with particular concern for the inner life.” Within a community there are potentially five forms in which this can take place: friendship, ministry, care, counseling, and spiritual direction.\textsuperscript{8} Dividing the church into smaller communities makes it possible for these five forms to happen in a single place. In this context God uses people, who themselves are in need of change, to be instruments of the same kind of change in

\textsuperscript{5} Prime and Begg, \textit{On Being a Pastor}, 154.
\textsuperscript{6} Clinebell, \textit{Basic Types}, 34.
\textsuperscript{7} Ross, \textit{Counseling Skills}, 12.
\textsuperscript{8} Benner, \textit{Strategic Pastoral Counseling}, 14-16.
Connecting with one another in community becomes the significant agent of change the Holy Spirit uses. This deep sense of connection occurs when the life of Christ in one touches the life of Christ in another.\(^9\)

**Small Group Ministry**

Small groups, LifeGroups, Sunday School, Affinity groups, or any other name given to these groups that meet outside the large worship gathering of a church is a great way to grow in community. Apart from studying the Bible, evangelism, serving, and having fellowship, it is also a great way to relieve the stress of counseling and/or equip those in the church to counsel one another. Without organization and guidance these groups will naturally turn inward and focus only on fellowship. There must be a purposeful attempt to maintain a study of God’s Word, an expressed attempt at sharing the gospel, serving together, and growing in authentic community where trust is evident and vulnerability is encouraged. This will pave the way for life-giving care for one another.

Paul David Tripp suggests that helping people has four parts in order to be effective. First a community of believers must be defined by love for one another. As Jesus said in John 13:34-35, \(^34\)“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. \(^35\)By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The community must also allow for close-knit relationships. Those in the group must know one another so that trust can be developed. In this way, trust creates freedom to speak honestly with one another. Finally, the group should be described by action. When godly advice

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\(^9\) Tripp, *Instruments*, xi.

and wisdom is given, action must also be taken.\textsuperscript{11} In order for small groups to be most effective, the trusting relationships must lead to life change.

Unfortunately, many of the modern-day, American churches have become places where masks are worn and barriers are erected upon entering the fellowship. Some have even found themselves surrounded by what should be a support system but instead is a system that thrives on looking as though life is good while inside things are falling apart. While this has become a staple of the American church, there is also a trend of those who specialize in breaking the church down to a manageable size through a small group ministry. The desire is to create environments where masks can be discarded and barriers can be destroyed. It is imperative for the church to reach those who “live on the verge of giving up because [they are] tired from carrying the mess.”\textsuperscript{12}

Ideally the church should be a safe place for sin to be exposed and dealt with and its attendant wounds to be bathed in compassion.\textsuperscript{13} This is why it is imperative to pick the best type of safe and focused environment for a small group where genuine community can develop so that relationships can go deeper than surface level.\textsuperscript{14} As previously stated, confession is a critical element in the process of change. Without it, there can be no forgiveness or reconciliation. There must be a willingness to clear away the rubble of past sins and hurts to make room for an adequate foundation.\textsuperscript{15} However, it is rarely practical for these kind of moments to take place

\textsuperscript{11} Tripp, \textit{Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands}, 110-112.

\textsuperscript{12} Zempel, \textit{Community Is Messy}, 43.

\textsuperscript{13} Ross, \textit{Counseling Skills}, 127.


\textsuperscript{15} Adams, \textit{How to Help}, 150.
within a large gathering, so the best system for caring is found in small groups which allows for healthy exchange to take place.\textsuperscript{16}

Because humans were created as relational beings, the church must make it a priority to establish opportunities that encourage intimacy with God and community with one another. It should not come as a surprise, then, to learn that according to Stephen Macchia, the three things all humans need are to be loved, to be under authority, and to belong to a group. As Macchia researched healthy churches to find what made them healthy, he discovered the characteristic that was the most consistent was the intentional focus on the issue of unconditional love and acceptance. This was done almost exclusively through small group ministry. Virtually everything we accomplish in ministry is the direct result of the quality of our relationships.\textsuperscript{17}

Developing community gives people a place to belong, which is what most people are seeking to find. Giving people a place to belong opens the door for transformation in Christ to happen, as there are basically two principles of human community: support and sanctification.\textsuperscript{18} These principles are best discovered in that order. Give people a place to belong and they will be more open to what they should believe and how they should behave. Create a place where people can find support, and they will become more open to experience the process of sanctification.

Small groups must provide a place where grace abounds yet truth is taught and accountability is expected. Jesus embodied the fullness of grace and truth. People who found their sins exposed before Jesus also found an ample amount of grace. However, Jesus never left

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\textsuperscript{16} Stephen A. Macchia, \textit{Becoming a Healthy Church}, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 108.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 84-100.
\textsuperscript{18} McMinn, \textit{Sin and Grace}, 175.
\end{flushright}
people to wallow in their sin. He spoke truth into their lives with the expectation that there would be a behavioral change in conjunction with the change of heart. If Jesus is full of grace (the refusal to condemn) and truth (the refusal to condone), then maybe it is possible to form communities more full of grace and truth.\textsuperscript{19} This is challenging because it is more natural to lean more in one direction, focusing either solely on the truth, where legalism becomes prominent, or on grace, where everyone does what is right in their own eyes. Grace has the power to bring people out of hiding into places of discovery and recovery, but truth must be taught during that time.\textsuperscript{20} Paul reminds followers of Jesus in Roman 2:4 that God’s “kindness is intended to lead to repentance” and since change is the ultimate goal then it can be understood that God’s grace is always grace leading to change.\textsuperscript{21}

Sanctification, the process of change, is rarely easy. Churches must be willing to enter the struggles of life with people because change requires is a “desire for more, a taste of what life and love could be if freed from the dark memories and deep shame.”\textsuperscript{22} Jesus did not command His followers to go find disciples but to make disciples. This means it is work that requires the church to embrace and enter the mess of life in order to make disciples.\textsuperscript{23} Getting into the messes necessitates grace, but it also means the truth must not be ignored. The most consistent form of truth involves biblical instruction because lasting transformation happens when God’s Word is brought to people.

\textsuperscript{19} Powlison, \textit{Seeing with New Eyes}, 256.

\textsuperscript{20} McMinn, \textit{Sin and Grace}, 54.

\textsuperscript{21} Tripp, \textit{Instruments}, 159.

\textsuperscript{22} Allender, \textit{The Wounded Heart}, 45.

\textsuperscript{23} Zempel, \textit{Community Is Messy}, 43-44.
The church has unfortunately earned a reputation of having a critical spirit to those both inside and outside of the church. When little or no grace is shown there is no intimacy, vulnerability, or authenticity. This is a reputation that must be addressed in order for a small group ministry to gain the traction necessary to bring healing to its participants. One of the benefits for creating a small group ministry as opposed to a Sunday school format is that many people arrive on Sunday morning with a wall already constructed to keep people in the dark about their struggles.

Although Dan Allender works almost exclusively with those dealing with sexual wounds, he has discovered that community must be created so that change can occur. Within the church context a small group ministry can help with this by creating environments where conversations are horizontal with other believers and vertical with God in prayer. Community was meant to be provided in the context of normal and daily intimate and prophetic conversation that is mutual, equal, and free. The best way to experience the kind of community that exists in the context of normal, daily conversation would be in a small group environment apart from a Sunday morning format. After all, teaching in the milieu is God’s method of teaching, from His instructions to His people in Deuteronomy 6 to Jesus’ example of teaching during daily life.

Most often Jesus appeared as a healer of souls by conversationally engaging male and female disciples, public leaders, and social outcasts. Paul also did this by frequently providing practical and very personal guidance to congregations and individual church leaders. Small group gatherings separate from the Sunday morning experience happen in the middle of the

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26 Townsend, Introduction to Pastoral Counseling, 4.
mess, which seems to be the best time for these types of interactions. Those in a traditional Sunday school environment are less likely to include the confrontation and conversations that people desire.

Two benefits of this type of community that seem to be absent in many small group ministries are proper confrontation and confession. Confrontation is something that is missing among many discipleship models because Christians like to hide behind the misconception that others are not to judge them. This is a bit of a misnomer in that Christians are supposed to hold each other accountable. Small group communities provide an avenue for a healthy dose of accountability to take place. The fundamental purpose of confronting a fellow believer in a biblical fashion is to affect personality and behavioral change.27

The story of David and his encounter with the wife of Uriah, Bathsheba, is recorded in 2 Samuel 11. King David made a series of devastating decisions that were costly at a number of levels. First he watched from his palace as Bathsheba took a bath on the roof of her house as was customary. This led to his decision to act on his lust and pride and to have her brought to him. While she was in his presence he had a sexual encounter with her that left her pregnant. In an attempt to cover his sinful behavior, he sent for her husband, Uriah, to come home from the battle, hoping that Uriah would stay at his house and be intimate with his wife. When that plan did not work, King David sent Uriah back into battle with secret instructions for the commander to have Uriah at the front of the line to ensure his death in battle.

In 2 Samuel 12 there is a record of a confrontation that takes place in order to bring healing to David through confession and repentance. Nathan, a prophet and friend of David, confronts

27 Adams, Competent to Counsel, 45.
David about the previous series of attitude and actions. It is important to note that there is a trust between them that existed prior to confrontation. This happens when there is a close relationship and openness to correction. The confrontation is subtle at first, as Nathan tells a story of a poor man whose one lamb is taken by a rich man who has a whole flock of sheep. Once the comparison is made to the real-life situation with David and Bathsheba, the confrontation becomes more direct and intense. While the confrontation is initiated by Nathan, he makes the confrontation a dialogue and not a monologue or lecture. Each step is intentional and a good pattern for confrontation today: trusted relationship, soft confrontation, direct confrontation, and the maintaining of dialogue as opposed to the giving of a lecture. It was important for to maintain a willingness to be corrected.28 These are the kind of relationships that small groups have the potential to develop.

On the other hand, Eli the priest demonstrates an unwillingness to confront in Scripture. In 1 Samuel 3:13 Eli is recorded as refusing to confront his sons, which ultimately brings judgment on Eli and his family: “I (God) told him (Eli) that I am going to judge his family forever because of the iniquity he knows about: his sons are defiling the sanctuary, and he has not stopped them.” The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) uses the term “enouthetei” to translate what Eli has failed to do. He has failed to biblically confront or discipline his sons. This is the same term used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:14, when he writes to the church in Corinth about certain issues “not to shame you but warn you,” and in 2 Thessalonians 3:15 to instruct the church in Thessalonica to treat those disobedient in the church not as “an enemy, but warn him as a brother,” and in Ephesians 6:4 when he refers to the role of parents in training their children. Each of these speaks of the importance of confrontation as a part of making disciples, which

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happens most effectively within trusting relationships.

The small group format is the best place to build these trusting relationships so that others will be invited into the mess so that life change becomes possible. Relationships demand involvement, so tears will be shed, feelings will be hurt, and conflict will take place from time to time. If left unattended, conflict is cancerous to relationships, so there must be an openness to deal with conflicts quickly and directly to limit the spread of hurts even within the community. Resolving conflict is a life-changing skill in itself that needs to be developed within the small group. The result should not be to run and hide but to take responsibility, admit of guilt, confess of sin, and seek forgiveness in Christ. Confrontation must be rooted in love and be part of the community lifestyle and not an unusual event. It should not pit a person against another person but rather put a person before God. However, when it comes to the benefits of being a part of community that offers grace and truth, a person can only be loved to the extent that they allow themselves to be known.

In modern-day America, likely the biggest obstacle to investing in a community is the pull toward a lifestyle of busyness. Pain is a call to focus, but the modern-day American society opposes focus by making busyness a valued characteristic. Healing is needed, but there is no time given to what is necessary because everything is seen as urgent and the important is neglected. Margin is understood as the space between a person’s load and a person’s limit, and relationships ultimately require margin in order to be healthy. Healing also takes time, so without


30 Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 51.


32 Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 199.
margin there is no time for healing.

While the current American culture has made incredible strides in productivity and progress, the relational and emotional aspect of culture has been beaten mercilessly with little time for healing. This is also true for the American church. Instead of making margin a priority, society has made margin a gap to fill. Simply practicing the idea that God put in place known as the Sabbath would bring a lot of margin back into play today. Ignoring the gift of the Sabbath has been much of the problem for the lack of margin. Creating margin subsequently creates time for investing in community through a small group ministry.\(^{33}\)

Creating margin not only helps with time management but also with emotional and relational health. Lack of emotional margin causes emotional overload, which saps strength, paralyzes resolve, and maximizes vulnerability, leaving the door open for even further erosion. When a person gets stuck in survival mode, there never seems to be enough strength for relationships. In America, the land of progress, one thing that seems to be thriving as much as anything is mental illness. Each year “between 22-28 percent of Americans suffer from a mental disorder.” For each person suffering from mental or emotional distress, at least three other people are significantly affected, so the resulting damage is multi-faceted. Reconciling relationships and being a part of a community of belonging that serves, laughs, and cries together are ways to increase emotional margin.\(^{34}\)

Establishing a purposeful small group ministry could make huge strides in the health of its participants. Connecting with others and sharing in the joys and struggles of life can allow for that needed support and encouragement to come out of hiding behind the image of perfection.


\(^{34}\) Ibid, 79-90.
While not all issues can be addressed or cured in this setting, it will certainly eliminate some of the annoying irritants that tend to linger. If the small group leader deems that the struggle a participant is experiencing needs more one-on-one attention, then it will be helpful to have a trained lay ministry available.

**Lay Techniques and Training**

At least two different approaches can be taken to develop a caregiving lay ministry. One approach would be an informal teaching of techniques and the other would be a formalized in-depth training that would require more time. As a part of this ministry, it is important not to make this a counseling center within the church without a licensed practitioner involved. This opens the door to a variety of legal issues and without the proper, licensed training this should be avoided. The lay training merely provides an extra step offered by the church prior to seeking professional help.

The full process for discipleship is regeneration, conversion, justification, sanctification, and glorification. The sanctification process is in essence what is referred to in this research to be the making of a disciple. The problem with the counseling aspect of the process is the failure of churches to do this immediately at conversion. Instead churches that do offer counseling too often wait until a problem arises before sending people in that direction.³⁵

It is important to note that becoming healthy, whole, and complete is a journey and not an arrival at a fixed goal.³⁶ With that understanding, then, counseling must not stop at relief. Instead, people should be led to a dependence on God and the Bible and not a particular


counselor so they can ultimately find relief in God alone. People who are taught biblical problem solving on their own cannot only teach themselves but can also teach others.\textsuperscript{37} This takes time, but the end result will be a much healthier person and eventually a much healthier church.

Learning and understanding the Bible and putting it into practical use cannot be overstated. In his book, \textit{Eat this Book}, Eugene Peterson shares the importance of internalizing the Holy Scripture:

> What I want to call attention to is that the Bible, all of it, is livable; it is the text for living our lives. . .Christians don’t simply learn or study or use Scripture; we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water, missions into all the world, healing and evangelism and justice in Jesus’ name, hands raised in adoration of the Father, feet washed in company with the Son.\textsuperscript{38}

When followers of Jesus take seriously the commands and truths of the Bible, it helps guide them not only to eternal life in God’s presence but also to the abundant life that Jesus said was available.

A passage that is popular among biblical counselors is 2 Timothy 3:14-17. This passage talks explicably of the benefits of the Bible as a counseling tool. It mentions four aspects of usefulness:

> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing those from whom you learned, and that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

This is the primary passage that leads those who operate as biblical counselors to believe that Scripture is all you need for the work of counseling. One benefit of the Bible as a counseling

\textsuperscript{37} Adams, \textit{How to Help}, 74.

\textsuperscript{38} Eugene Peterson, \textit{Eat This Book}, (Grand Rapids, MI, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 18.
guide is that, unlike secular approaches, it is consistent and universal in its approach. It does not fluctuate with changing times.\(^{39}\) It can be applied to people throughout the world and any stage in life. The one hindrance is the potential lack of consistency in interpretation.

Teaching people to read and study Psalms and Proverbs is also a helpful place to begin because these are both popular stops for biblical counselors and pastors to encourage people to find comfort and hope through the Bible. Walter Brueggemann sees the Psalms as divided into three types: orientation (enjoying God), disorientation (seasons of hurt, suffering, or dislocation), and reorientation (when God steps in and brings relief to pain). Those Psalms of orientation celebrate the greatness of God and emphasize simply enjoying the relationship. The Psalms of disorientation are the ones that seem a little more realistic to the daily grind. In a strange way, these are somewhat comforting because they show that others have experienced difficulty and questioned the presence of God from time to time. The Psalms of reorientation are those that are truly hopeful in the midst of suffering. They help to see life come full circle from the enjoyment of God to the pain and suffering and back to the loving arms of a caring God.\(^{40}\)

Beyond the initial look at certain passages, there are several techniques that can help those with no real counseling experience or education to counsel someone else in a one-on-one setting. A few of those that are more easily remembered will be introduced. The first is counseling people toward forgiveness, a technique developed by Everett Worthington. It can be remembered by the acrostic REACH: Recall the hurt, Empathize with the offender, Altruistic gift of forgiveness, Commit publicly to forgive, Hold on to forgiveness. As previously discussed, forgiveness needs to be specific. If there is a particular hurt associated with a sinful act, then the


act needs to be identified as sin. Recalling the hurt is not done in an effort to relive the hurt but to call it out so that appropriate action can take place. Empathizing with the offender helps bring grace into the formula. Offering the altruistic gift of forgiveness is the biggest step toward healing. It must be done with no expectation of anything in return and a commitment to be true to that decision with no intent of bringing the act back to the forefront.\textsuperscript{41}

Another training model is the ABCD model: Achieving a relationship, Boiling down the problem, Challenging the individual to take constructive action, and Developing an ongoing growth plan. As all models suggest, creating a trusting relationship is imperative. Once the relationship has been established, then getting to the root of the problem is the next step. Taking appropriate action is the next part of this model. Taking it one step further would be to teach the person a helpful process to continue to grow beyond this counseling encounter.\textsuperscript{42}

Jeffrey Watson shares some helpful tips regarding not only which skills are most beneficial but also how to teach people to present themselves in the situation. The skills include listening closely as the person tells their story, knowing that the story is merely the tip of the iceberg. Learning to ask good questions is another skill to develop in order to understand more fully and be able to help choose a goal. Another skill which is true for small group ministry as well as one-on-one counseling is creating a comfortable, trusting environment where the walls erected around a person’s heart can be broken. The acrostic that is a reminder about the actual tips for the meeting itself is POLER: Physically present, Open posture, Leaning in/out, Eye contact, Relaxed style. Each of these will help a lay minister to connect with a person in need and be able

\textsuperscript{41} Holeman, \textit{Theology for Better Counseling}, 146-147.

\textsuperscript{42} Clinebell, \textit{Basic Types}, 205.
to better lead the person toward health.\textsuperscript{43}

Another lay ministry model is Reconciliation-Focused Counseling, which focuses on a three-part reconciliation for a person—to God, to others, and to self. The counselor’s role is one of a relationship builder and a facilitator of the correct relational experience for a person with God, with others, and with himself/herself. This is a biblical approach in that it initially deals with the heart defect (sin) in reconciling a person to God. Heart disease and heart damage are caused by guilt and shame over past events or a lack of forgiveness for these same events, which also need to be addressed by encouraging reconciliation to others and self. For the lay counselor or caregiver it requires good listening and observation skills to really determine what deeper issues are present.\textsuperscript{44}

One last informal training technique for a lay counseling ministry is based on three stages as described by David Benner: Encounter, Engagement, Disengagement.\textsuperscript{45} In the Encounter stage, the relationship is established, boundaries and focus are determined, and a diagnosis is made. In building this relationship, it is good to remember that counseling is not something to do to one another but with one another. The Engagement stage allows time for exploration for care and a cure for the hurt, pain, and struggle. Because this is so relationally heavy, there will often be tears shed from both parties. The final stage of Disengagement is crucial in developing disciples because it helps them become less dependent on a person and more dependent on the work God is doing in them. This stage involves evaluation, termination, and if necessary, a referral.


\textsuperscript{44}Sphar and Smith, \textit{Helping Hurting People}, 2-69.

\textsuperscript{45}Benner, \textit{Strategic Pastoral Counseling}, 73f.
The formalized training has had its critics from the theological side as to whether a proper use of the Bible is in effect and from the psychology side as to whether a proper study has been conducted over its effectiveness. In 2009, a study was conducted on the effectiveness of more formalized lay counseling within the church. Included in those specific programs that were studied were Stephen Ministries, Christian Healing Ministries (CHM), Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM), Eclectic with an Integrative Cognitive Behavior Component (E-ICB), and Freedom in Christ Ministries (FCM). The study determined that although not complete, the early indications were that both TPM and FCM showed signs of effectiveness. This was particularly helpful for TPM as it had quite a few opponents in the earlier stages. Created by a Southern Baptist pastoral counselor, Ed Smith, in 1995, it experienced opposition from the theological world because of questionable tactics that were viewed as heretical by suggesting new revelation from God to individuals. From the science world, he received opposition because of statistics that were given without proper documentation of studies conducted.

FCM was created by Neil Anderson and is based on an understanding of the attacks on followers of Jesus by Satan, personal sin, and the lies that followers of Jesus believe about themselves and God. Healing is brought about in a seven step process: Counterfeit versus Real (confession and repentance with occult and/or cult/other religious involvement), Self-deception and Self-defenses (denial of sin, rationalizing behavior), Bitterness versus Forgiveness, Rebellion versus Submission (confession of rebellion), Pride versus Humility, Bondage versus

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Freedom (habitual sin), and Acquiescence versus Renunciation (generational sin and patterns).⁴⁸

Kenneth Haugk is a pastor and clinical psychologist who developed a lay counseling course to teach pastors and lay leaders the basics of pastoral care. He designed it to be a one-on-one lay caring ministry in order for the congregation to provide support for those that are hurting. He is careful not to identify the program as developing counselors, as their instruction does not cover the breadth or depth of the material that would make a professional counselor. They are seen as care ministers who carry out the task of listening, praying, and offering biblical instruction.

Each of these three formalized trainings offer courses that lay leaders can attend or participate in via internet or video instruction. While each has its own detractors, there is also evidence of the success of this technique. The main goal is to get a person’s life back on track so that spiritual growth is possible. The essence is to help troubled people bring their wounds, struggles, doubts, and anxieties into dynamic healing contact with the God who is known by His people as the Great Counselor.⁴⁹ In that light, pastors and lay leaders must also be able to recognize their own limitations and determine when professional counseling is needed. Pastors helping God’s people opens the door so that the good work God has begun in people’s lives can be continued until the day of Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ This is an important part of the process so that those who have deeper issues can get trained assistance in a timely manner. One standard rule is that counseling lasting more than five sessions should automatically be referred.

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⁴⁹ Benner, Strategic Pastoral Counseling, 35-54.

⁵⁰ Prime and Begg, On Being a Pastor, 168-169.
Professional Counselors

One of the steps for churches to incorporate counseling as a part of the growth strategy for followers of Jesus is to determine what type of professional counselors are preferred when the circumstances call for a professional counselor. It would be safe to say that those pastors who are in favor of professional counseling desire a counselor who shares a Christian worldview. Of those counselors who share a Christian worldview, they typically fall into one of four categories.

The four categories of professional counselors that would be considered Christian counselors are identified in this research as First Generation biblical counselors, Second Generation biblical counselors, the Society for Christian Psychology, and Integrationists. The term “Christian” is used because not all of these four categories would be considered biblical counselors. “Biblical” counselors seek direct guidance and explanation from the Bible. Since one of these in particular leans more heavily on science, all of these would not be considered “Biblical” counselors.

First Generation counselors are led by Jay Adams. Their base understanding is that all human emotional issues are directly related to sin. In most cases, the issues are not only directly related to sin but are connected to personal sin. This fits perfectly with what has been presented as heart defect. All counseling begins with addressing personal sin and the need for a personal relationship with Jesus. Without embracing Jesus as Lord, nothing else can be done to bring about relief from the emotional pain. Heart disease is also addressed within this approach. Habitual sin must be confronted, but it is not always addressed at its core. The area that this method has the greatest challenge is with sin that is generational and with heart damage from those single events that create long-lasting effects.
Second Generation counselors recognized a gaping hole in the approach by Jay Adams and those who followed him. David Powlison has become one of the key leaders of this approach. They embrace most of the First Generation approach to counseling with the exception of addressing suffering apart from personal sin. Once this area is settled then other issues can be discussed. Like the First Generation counselors, heart defect and heart disease have a natural flow although they additionally address suffering. This group at least approaches heart damage and makes an attempt to deal with these challenging issues that have had such a significant impact.

The third group is simply identified as a formalized group, known as Society for Christian Psychology, and those in this group understand counseling through the eyes of Scripture and seek to help others navigate the difficulties of life. While they see the need for salvation, they also see the weight of what living in a fallen world causes humanity to bear. Evangelism seems an important factor, but the emotional struggles can be addressed alongside the salvation issue. Throughout the story of God in the Bible, there are examples that are given of how people were helped by the Counselor by way of counselors that helped draw them to God. They pick up on these stories and use them as a guide for helping people with emotional problems, while pointing them to Christ in the process. This group is more open to address the generational struggles and certainly the apparent single events that cause so much trouble emotionally even for followers of Jesus. Some of the leading scholars and counselors that fall under this category and have been used extensively in this research are Dan Allender, Larry Crabb, and Edward Welch.

The final group is identified as Integrationists and is considered Christian counseling primarily because their overall outlook is based on a Christian worldview. They approach counseling more as a science and depend much more heavily on psychology than any of the
other three. Mark McMinn is a leading voice for this group, which tends to divide the Christian community into only two counseling camps: Biblical counselors and Integrationists. Biblical counselors focus more on sin, while Integrationists focus more on grace. For most Integrationists, salvation is a necessity for eternal life, but that is not the purpose of counseling as they see it. Evangelism is not approached during counseling, as they see these as completely separate issues. Even though they consider themselves Christian counselors, there is little spiritual formation taught, and what is taught is inconsistent at best.\textsuperscript{51}

The First Generation biblical counselors believe it is imperative that every client first receive the salvation that is offered through Jesus. According to Adams, a proper concept of biblical counseling “must have deeply embedded in it the premise that man cannot be helped in any fundamental sense apart from the gospel of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, without salvation there is no help that can be given that will amount to any real life change. External changes that do not follow an internal change of heart toward God will most often move a person further away from the Lord. For the First Generation, every problem that exists is due to sin in the life of the client. If salvation and sin are not addressed, then there is no cure because those are the source of all issues that a client faces. This includes any suffering that is a part of a client’s life. If he or she is suffering, it is connected to sin that has not been addressed. This group will not continue or make an attempt to solve the minor problem until the major problem of sin has been addressed and rectified.

The Second Generation biblical counselors agree in large part with the First Generation, although they so see suffering as a real problem faced by clients that is not necessarily directly

\textsuperscript{51} Holeman, \textit{Theology for Better Counseling}, 15.

\textsuperscript{52} Adams, \textit{Competent to Counsel}, 68.
connected to consequences of their own sinful behavior. They consider suffering to be a legitimate problem for their clients, and simple confession of sin is not the only fix they need. In their view the suffering could be due to sin in the lives of those in close contact with them or at times simply from difficulties that are a part of life. Neither First nor Second Generation biblical counselors give any credence to the science of psychology, so salvation through Jesus plays the biggest role in counseling. Salvation is understood not only as essential but also as the only imperative step. Because of this there is an aggressive attempt at evangelism prior to any help being offered on the emotional front. In an interview with *Psychology Today* David Powlison spoke of how he begins his meeting with a client: “First, I want to know, ‘Who is the God that you feel far from?’”53 This opens the door to discuss the issue of salvation while leading to the emotional help that is sought.

The Society of Christian Psychology (SCP) and the Integrationists would not likely be considered as biblical counselors due to their use of the psychological science, theory, or technique.54 A better description for these two groups would be as Christian counselors. Both operate with an understanding of salvation, but with their dependence on the science of psychology they would likely view salvation as necessary for ultimate healing although not necessarily for initial emotional healing. The SCP considers seriously what the Bible has to say about counseling others and even interpret many of the life stories in the Bible to be examples of how counseling was used throughout Scriptures. They would not necessarily see salvation as the imperative first step the two generations of biblical counselors suggest, although they would look for future opportunities to lead the counselee toward salvation.


The Integrationists would probably not go that far in their interpretation of the Bible, but they too see the world through their understanding of salvation. However, they have a great dependence on what they believe science has proven through the years about human behavior. So they would likely not first move toward salvation and may not use their counseling influence to direct their client toward salvation at all, but instead they would begin determining what steps need to be taken to take care of the immediate issue, which they would consider to emotional. While they may see salvation as necessary for eternal life, they would claim that counseling is not always the best place for this type of evangelism to take place. Psychology Today also interviewed Mark McMinn about his approach to counseling, in which he said, “My job is not to convert them, but to sit with them, to be a voice of hope and grace.”

This is what has created the biggest divide between the Integrationists and the other biblical or Christian counselors. In the Integrationists’ attempt to offer hope they create a void in personal responsibility for sin by trying to raise self-esteem apart from responsibility. On one side, there is the understanding that there must be an appreciation of the creation of God that is oneself and to develop a good self-esteem. Jesus even says to “love one another as you love yourself” and to “treat one another as you would like to be treated. In the end your beliefs about yourself affect how you treat and talk to others.

The other side of the argument is an attempt to incorporate the science of psychology with theology. This partnership often leads to a “self-esteem” theology in an attempt to bring about a change. Psychology and self-esteem theology will then feed off one another. Those who become


56 Burley-Allen, Listening the Forgotten Skill, 39.
concerned primarily with self-esteem are hardly in a position to deal with human transgressions as sin against God or to inform people already comfortable in self-love and self-righteousness that they are sinners in need of spiritual salvation. The doctrine of total depravity of mankind means that evil has contaminated every aspect of humanity, so people are first in need of salvation from their sin that they have no ability to provide on their own. Humans feel guilty because they are guilty, and to take that truth away means that healing cannot truly begin.\(^{57}\)

For those who fall into the category of Integrationists, a problem arises with working with those of other faiths. Some of the criticism of both them and their secular counterparts is that not enough study is required about religions, specifically Christianity, to effectively help their clients.\(^{58}\) The opposing criticism has been stated about those who fall under the Biblical counselor category. They are said to have not received enough training in the science of psychology, so there is a dilemma for these two groups. Even when the secular mindset is removed, there is still the conflict between the one side, which believes that “using psychology for soul-care is like dressing cancer with a band-aid”\(^{59}\) and the other side, which states that “collaborative efforts between the biblical counselors and psychologists is highly unlikely.”\(^{60}\)

Integrationists find it problematic when religious issues get in the way of therapeutic needs.\(^{61}\) In this sense they tend to subscribe to what Larry Crabb identifies as the “Two Book” view. The belief with this view is that God reveals things in two ways: general and special. Some


\(^{59}\) MacArthur, *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, 44.


things God reveals (special), and some He allows mankind to uncover (general). The special revelations are found in the Bible through faith and lead to a particular theology. The general revelations are uncovered through nature and science and point to psychology. This approach typically results in a weak view of biblical authority.\textsuperscript{62} With this in mind, it is important to recognize the direction a counselor is coming from and where he or she is headed.

It is very likely that part of the problem between the church and psychology is the decreased awareness of God and a decline in church attendance among those studying in the profession. In a 1990 study, only 40\% of clinical psychologists believed in a personal transcendent God as opposed to 90\% of the public.\textsuperscript{63} Even in those schools that attempt to include spiritual formation as a part of the study find students less than enthusiastic to partake in that portion of the degree.\textsuperscript{64} In 2005 the Southern Baptist Convention established their firm stance on the issue of counseling by distancing itself from Pastoral Counseling in favor of Biblical Counseling. They referred to Pastoral Counseling as that which was established by one of their own, Wayne Oats, in the 1960s when he began to integrate biblical values with psychotherapy. As the description indicates, it was more in line with Integrationists, so the shift was made to incorporate what the denomination considered a more biblical approach due to the “failed attempt” by Oats and his followers.\textsuperscript{65} Among those prior to the decision of the Southern Baptist Convention to distance themselves from an Integrationist mindset was Ed Bulkley. He

\textsuperscript{62} Crabb, \textit{Understanding People}, 21.


stated, “Psychology does not merit the trust that Christians have put into it… the integrationist position is scientifically invalid, theologically confused, and biblically inconsistent.”

David Powlison contends that the only commonality among the various psychological approaches is that God is left out of the equation. Loren Townsend disagrees with this notion and instead sees two major flaws with Biblical counseling: first, that the varied interpretation of the Bible among Biblical counselors is no different than the lack of continuity among psychological approaches and second, that Biblical counseling heaps greater spiritual pressure on the client, making them failures on the emotional and spiritual fronts. This observation seems to only solidify the argument that personal responsibility of sin is ignored among psychologists.

As is evident, these four approaches have their unique strengths and potential weaknesses. It is therefore imperative for a pastor to know to whom he will be referring people and what kind of approach and outcome the professional counselor desires. Recognizing biblical standards and expectations is crucial when it comes to making disciples, but the study of human behavior can also be helpful in knowing how to best “set the stage” for change to take place. Part of the role of the pastor is to point his people in the right direction for professional counseling, so serious consideration must be made in determining to whom to refer his congregation.

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66 Bulkley, Why Christians Can’t Trust Psychology, 33.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The pastor’s main task in counseling is to assist Christians to understand their own condition and God’s purpose in it and then to recognize what their right behavior should be, however, in order for a pastor to truly be helpful he must not neglect his own soul’s well-being.\(^1\) It is possible to preach, hold board meetings, lead an organization, and appear very much alive long after we have gone through spiritual cardiac arrest. Everyone in leadership should have learned that a person can go through the motions of leadership with a diseased and damaged heart.\(^2\) That is why it is so important for leaders to examine their own hearts so that they can become healthy, which will enable them to grow and multiply. Looking at the past is not done simply for the sake of looking at the past but in order to help answer the question of why there is no forward movement.\(^3\)

**The Heart of the Pastor**

The emotional and mental well-being of a pastor does more to enhance or limit the helpfulness of counseling than any other single factor associated with either the counselor or the counseling process. It is difficult to lead others to places one has never been.\(^4\) As leaders learn to

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\(^1\) Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 151-153.


\(^3\) Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, 112.

\(^4\) Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 27.
share their own weaknesses and struggles, permission can either be taught to the people or caught by the people to do the same and establish the expectation of authenticity and transparency.5

It has become increasingly more clear that intelligence and work experience do not tell of the story when it comes to competence. People within the secular working world are discovering how the emotional health of a person plays a vital role in their ability to perform tasks. This is more than just “being nice” or “letting it all hang out,” it requires the ability to handle oneself in a mature manner. Much of that is based on the emotional health of a person. Throughout the latter part of the 20th Century it was discovered in studies led by Dr. Thomas Achenbach that students who were tested had rising Intelligent Quotient and declining Emotional Quotient. Even young people were beginning to experience rising levels of depression and loneliness. These students soon transitioned into the workforce creating a larger number of emotionally immature employees.6

The same seems to be true both with clergy and with congregations. That makes it even more important for pastors to become emotionally healthy in order to lead effectively. In learning to work with others, leaders should develop thick skin and a tender heart. This is especially true for those in ministry. Too often pastors and leaders have soft skin and hard hearts. Criticism, whether constructive and helpful or damaging and hurtful, is permitted to pierce the heart and leave wounds. Then the tendency is to harden hearts as a defense mechanism, which leaves pastors and leaders wounded on the outside and hard on the inside. Thus they are rendered

5 Gladen, Leading Small Groups, 90.

6 Goleman, Working with Emotional Intelligence, 6-12.
unable to minister, lead, or relate to others effectively.\(^7\)

Pastors are not immune to the pitfall of thinking they have looked deeply when in fact they hover on the surface. One of the ways to help bring about an honest look at oneself is to take some personal inventory. While it may not be practical to take an entire congregation through a variety of personality and/or temperamental assessments, it is worth the time for the pastor to do so. A few will be discussed in the following paragraphs, and the pastor can decide which would be best suited for the congregation. The benefit of these assessments is that it initiates at least the possibility of delving into behavioral patterns, personality traits, and emotional wounds that have been in place for a long time that could very well be associated to a toxic root. Exposing this could very well bring about the spiritual breakthrough that could be of benefit not only to the pastor but also to the church. When the leadership becomes unhindered then the Holy Spirit has more freedom to do amazing things.

In addition to addressing those hidden barriers, it is also important for the pastor to develop a personal growth plan. This will not only aid the pastor personally, but it will also help establish a personal approach to making a disciple. One of the elements of this growth plan will need to include actively participating in the small group ministry, not merely as a teacher but as a member of the group. The pastor’s willingness to share struggles at some level could go a long way in introducing authenticity and vulnerability not just to the small group, but to the church. It will also be important for the pastor to be involved in an accountability group where he has the opportunity to be completely open and vulnerable. This group must be a tightly knit where trust and confidentiality is crucial. It is likely in this setting that much of the necessary counseling will take place.

\(^7\) Zempel, *Community Is Messy*, 82.
A final part of this for the pastor is that he must model a life with margin. Relationships take time and health requires rest. These two alone mean that a Sabbath and a schedule is necessary. Family time should be scheduled as well as down time. Vacations should be taken, opportunities for others to preach/lead should be given, and exercise should be consistent. Some have suggested the best gift a pastor can give his congregation is a healthy body and a healthy marriage. These are not developed without margin in one’s life.

**Personal Assessment**

Getting to know oneself is a big step in developing an environment to move toward healing. So much of the problem in receiving healing is that many people either think they do not need healing or think they have already done an in-depth look at themselves and need no further evaluation. The reality is that most people do not look as closely or deeply as is necessary to get to the root of the issues that cause lingering problems. There have been multiple programs that have been established to help people understand more about their own personality in an attempt to help people better understand themselves. These programs do not necessarily get to the root of issues, but they do help gain some understanding as to behavioral and thought patterns. While looking at multiple assessments is enlightening it is simply not as practical when it comes to developing a church wide program.

One of the programs to be considered is Monvee and is presented by John Ortberg in his book *The Me I Want to Be*. One benefit of this assessment is that it does have a version that is easily adaptable to a church. The assessment takes into consideration a person’s sacred pathway, learning style, and signature sin. Sacred Pathways is based on Gary Thomas’ book, *Sacred Pathways*, which suggests people have a particular way they best commune. Understanding this
gives people a better way they can deepen their relationship with God. They can also discover how they learn best to make the best use of their time. Maybe the most significant aspect toward healing is the awareness of learning the area in which they are most vulnerable, called signature sin. This is especially helpful in relation to heart disease or habitual sin. Ortberg suggests people have a quadrant perspective of self: aware, unaware, competent, incompetent. People operate in one of the four quadrants: aware/competent, aware/incompetent, unaware/incompetent, unaware/competent.8

One of the more expansive assessments is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. This assessment actually takes into account a person’s temperament as opposed to a person’s personality. A person’s temperament is what a person has from birth, whereas a personality can be adjusted with time. It is a slightly more complicated process for determining temperament tendencies, although it is quite accurate and more well-rounded in its findings.9

Dr. John Trent and Dr. Gary Smalley also helped develop a personality assessment called Performax that defined human personality by four animals: Lion, Otter, Golden Retriever, and Beaver. The Lion is defined by strong decision making, domineering, and often abrasiveness. The Otter is more fun-loving, outgoing, and outspoken, but struggles with administration and responsibility. The Golden Retriever is loyal and loving, but many times is more interested in pleasing people, which causes unnecessary difficulties. The Beaver is the organized perfectionist that is much more task-oriented than people-oriented.10

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8 Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 45-75.
The DISC personality assessment is very similar to Perfomax and is based on the four temperaments that were believed to be a part of the components that make-up the blood of individuals. Around 400 B.C. Hippocrates recognized that a person’s consistent pattern of thoughts, feelings, and actions could be linked to four body fluids called humors: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. In the second century the Greek physician, Galen, took this a step further by identifying a temperament associated with each humor: sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholic and choleric. This became a standard understanding of human temperament and in 1928 William Marston introduced the DISC Model of Human Behavior in his book, The Emotions of Normal People. Marston changed the terminology to form the acrostic DISC: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. In 1977, Dr. John Geier wrote the first assessment on the DISC Model from a business and personal perspective.

After studying under Dr. Geier, Mels Carbonell took the research of those before him and combined the four personality types with faith-based profiles and compiled this research in his book How to Solve the People Puzzle: Understanding Personality Patterns. This has expanded the use of the DISC Model not only for business and personal use, but also to faith-based organizations. Carbonell realized that healthy relationships required people to understand one another better and at a deeper level. For the church to reach its potential and accomplish the mission given to them they must be able to work alongside each other in an effective manner. His stated purpose in the book is to help the reader realize “understanding personality patterns is one of the keys to improving your relationships and solving the people puzzle!”

The decision that needs to be made by the pastor is to determine based on his experience and his knowledge of his congregation which of these assessments would be most helpful in

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11 Mels Carbonell, How to Solve the People Puzzle: Understanding Personality Patterns, (Blue Ridge, GA: Uniquely You Resources, 2008).
allowing the congregation to do more self-evaluation. The idea behind it would not simply be to get to know themselves better, but to open the door to the opportunity to do a deeper investigation on their person. This is where the door could be opened to determine where healing needs to happen.

**LifePoint’s Plan**

After considering the legitimacy of the need for counseling and how it should be applied, the conclusion for LifePoint Christian Fellowship is that an avenue will be implemented into the discipleship process to enable people to have the opportunity to receive counseling. This has multiple layers since people come from different stages in life and come into the church at different times of the calendar year. Creating the process also needs to take into account the need to address this sooner than later in the life of a disciple. There will be a concerted effort to create avenues early and also develop a general growth plan to address needs on a small group and personal level on an ongoing basis.

Of those different assessments that help to gain a better understanding of oneself there is one that is most familiar and included in two programs designed to integrate people into the ministry of the church. Body Life and PLACE Ministries both use the DISC assessment as a part of their program. Of these two PLACE Ministries is organized in the best way to move people in a direction more suitable for addressing potential counseling needs. Another aspect of a program like this is that it creates a process for all to examine their current state when they first unite with the church. It is also something helpful for those already involved as they could be reintroduced to this process that leads to examining themselves through a personality assessment.

PLACE Ministries developed five parts of taking a closer look into the make-up of a
place: Personality assessment, Learning spiritual gifts, Ability awareness, Connecting passion, Experience in life. PLACE starts by using the DISC assessment to discover personality traits. This is the introduction to self and the beginning of recognizing who one is. Second, PLACE looks at spiritual giftedness. This is a look at some of the special giftedness that God has given individuals that when matched with personalities can provide a unique role within the body of believers. PLACE next takes into consideration the natural abilities and talents a person has.

The fourth and fifth steps offer a lot of insight into what areas are in need of examining at a deeper level. The fourth part takes into account the passion an individual has toward a particular ministry area or people group. Unknowingly this has close ties to the fifth part, which opens the door to share even more significant experiences. The fifth part actually encourages the individual to write down key moments (highlights or lowlights) in a person’s life. While some are uncomfortable writing down their experiences, it was discovered in the initial attempt to take LifePoint members through this program that a direct link was discovered between passion and experience. For example, those that had a desire to minister to children of divorce had divorce somewhere in their background. Those who had a desire to work with the Crisis Pregnancy Center had an abortion at some point in their past. This became a recognizable pattern even among those who were unwilling to write about their experiences.

This has shown itself to be a good place (no pun intended) to implement a care ministry to discuss in greater detail the experiences people have had. Many of these experiences may very well be the ones that have caused spiritual stagnation for years, especially for those that have been unwilling to address the experiences. Using this as a platform to get people talking, LifePoint will be able to take people through an informal time of counseling in order to get them to a healthier place so spiritual growth can begin to happen. With that in mind this is the part of
the process where a lay caregiving ministry can be best implemented.

Some helpful steps in beginning a lay counseling ministry include identifying a specific model, gaining united consent from leadership, determining who will be trained in the lay caregiving ministry, developing adequate training programs and procedures, and implementing the plan. While three particular, formal, lay training programs were mentioned, the one that seems best suited for LifePoint will be Stephen Ministries. With training seminars and conferences within driving distance as well as the method of lay counseling/caregiving ministry being accessible, this will fit the placement and process of this type of ministry.

LifePoint is led by an elder board that is called the Vision Team. The Vision Team will work together to determine a select number of leaders to attend the 5-hour introductory workshop in Richmond, VA, to help gain better insight into the ministry. From the workshop a decision will be made as to whom will attend one of the Leadership Training Courses (LTC) offered by Stephen Ministries. This will build the foundation for caregiving ministry among the leadership at LifePoint and will infuse caregiving into the DNA of LifePoint. Once this is established PLACE Ministry will be reinstated and the cycle of healing will be in position to bring about healthy, growing, multiplying followers of Jesus.

In addition to the implementation of Stephen Ministries and PLACE Ministries will be leadership training among small group leaders in some common techniques of helping counsel people. The simple techniques that have been discussed will be taught to help them learn how to address some of these issues within the small group setting. This will enable the small group to address any issues that arise or come to the surface during their community time. Most of these

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12 Worthington, Johnson, Hook and Aten (eds.), *Evidence-Based Practices*, 49-51.
can be covered through Bible study and prayer to ease the pressure of the staff from having to provide counseling to the whole congregation for all levels.

Beyond what is provided by the church itself is to determine when and where professional counsel will be referred. The simplest formula is based on any issue that requires more than five meetings will be referred to a professional counselor. The more important task is determining to whom the person will be referred. The pastor must decide which of the four professional counseling types best suits his philosophy. Once that decision is made, then it will require some interviewing with local counselors or counseling centers. It is best for a church to identify individual counselors whom the pastor can trust as opposed to linking with a particular group because individual counselors do not necessarily follow the group’s mindset. With this being such a crucial issue it is best for the pastor or someone of his choosing to interview counselors to determine which one or ones are best aligned with his philosophy.

With care ministry and counseling being instituted as a part of the process to make disciples, it will result in healthier followers of Jesus. When followers become healthy they are then on the path for growth. As God intended, the natural response to healthy, growing things is multiplication. In that sense, the local church can be a place where an individual can once again become a healthy, growing, multiplying follower of Jesus who is connected in community to other healthy, growing, multiplying followers of Jesus who make up a healthy, growing, multiplying church.
APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

1. Which one best describes your church:
   _____ Under 100 in attendance
   _____ 100-250 in attendance
   _____ 250-500 in attendance
   _____ 500-1000 in attendance
   _____ Over 1000 in attendance

2. What best describes your church (check all that apply):
   _____ Traditional
   _____ Modern
   _____ Sunday School model
   _____ Home groups
   _____ Formal
   _____ Casual
   _____ Charismatic

3. What best describes your church background (check all that apply):
   _____ Traditional
   _____ Modern
   _____ Sunday School model
   _____ Home groups
   _____ Formal
   _____ Casual
   _____ Charismatic

4. Does your church have a formal discipleship process? Yes _____ or No _____
   If yes, what does your process include (check all that apply):
   _____ Baptism
   _____ Doctrinal class
   _____ Counseling
   _____ Mentorship
   _____ Spiritual gifts/personality assessments
   _____ Bible study class
   _____ Other __________________
5. How does your church handle members’ counseling needs:
   _____ Refer to outside sources
   _____ Handle within the church
   _____ Combination of both

6. What kind of counseling does your church offer or recommend:
   _____ Pastoral counseling
   _____ Professional counseling
   _____ Lay counseling
   _____ Small group counseling
   _____ Other ___________________

7. What best describes your church’s view of counseling:
   _____ Unnecessary for those truly in Christ
   _____ Only necessary for those in crisis
   _____ Only necessary for impacting relationships
   _____ Necessary at some point for most
   _____ Necessary at some point for all

8. What type of need does your church view counseling as meeting (check all that apply):
   _____ A spiritual need
   _____ A mental need
   _____ An emotional need
   _____ A relational need
   _____ A physical need

9. Which best describes your view of professional counseling:
   _____ Helpful for all
   _____ Helpful only if the counselor shares a Christian worldview
   _____ Proceed with caution
   _____ Dangerous
   _____ Should be avoided

10. Have you ever sought formal counseling (check all that apply)?
    _____ Professional
      _____ Pastoral
      _____ Lay
      _____ Small group
      _____ Other
APPENDIX B

Survey Results

Q1 Which best describes your church:
Answered: 50  Skipped: 1

Q2 What best describes your church (check all that apply):
Answered: 51  Skipped: 0
Q5 How does your church handle members’ counseling needs:
Answered: 51  Skipped: 0

- Refer to outside sources: [chart showing percentage]
- Handle within the church: [chart showing percentage]
- Combination of both: [chart showing the highest percentage]

Q6 What kind of counseling does your church offer or recommend (check all that apply):
Answered: 50  Skipped: 1

- Pastoral counseling: [chart showing the highest percentage]
- Professional counseling: [chart showing an intermediate percentage]
- Lay counseling: [chart showing a moderate percentage]
- Small group counseling: [chart showing the lowest percentage]
Q7 What best describes your church’s view of counseling:

Answered: 51  Skipped: 0

- Unnecessary for those tr...
- Only necessary for those in...
- Only necessary when impact...
- Necessary at some point f...
- Necessary at some point f...

Q8 What type of need does your church view counseling as meeting (check all that apply):

Answered: 51  Skipped: 0

- A spiritual need
- A mental need
- An emotional need
- A relational need
- A physical need
Q9 Which best describes your view of professional counseling:

Answered: 51  Skipped: 0

Q10 Have you ever sought formal counseling (check all that apply)?

Answered: 51  Skipped: 0
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January 6, 2015

Jay Albritton
IRB Exemption 2055.010615: Counseling as a Part of the Discipleship Process

Dear Jay,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
   (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon,
Psy.D. Professor, IRB
Chair Counseling

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