

CENTER FOR BIBLICAL LIVING

Guiding Statements of The Center for Biblical Living

The following Biblical Counseling Coalition statements have been adopted by The Center for Biblical Living as guiding doctrinal and confessional statements.

The Doctrinal Statement of The Center for Biblical Living

The following statement summarizes the core doctrinal beliefs of The Center for Biblical Living. It is not an exhaustive statement, but a theological framework concerning our core affirmations regarding the central doctrines of the Christian faith.

About the Bible: We believe that God has given the Bible as His inspired, infallible, inerrant, and living revelatory Word. We affirm the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible and are therefore committed to the complete trustworthiness and primacy of Scripture. The Bible is God's relevant, profound, deeply personal communication to us that invites us to intimate fellowship with Him. The Scriptures consist of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. They are the totally sufficient, authoritative, and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice, and doctrine, and are profitable for glorifying God through growth in likeness to Christ which is our life purpose.

The Bible is complete in its revelation of Who God is, His person, character, promises, commandments, and will for the salvation of a people for His own possession. The Bible reveals who we are: created in God's image, accountable to God, fallen into sin against God, judged and justly condemned by God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and transformed by the Holy Spirit. The Bible reveals the meaning of our total life situation in each and all its aspects—all the blessings of this life, the variety of sufferings and hardships, Satan, the influence of other human beings, etc. The Bible also reveals the nature of the Christian life and the ministries of the Church, showing the content, the functions, and the goals that express the image of Christ. *Gen. 1:27; 3:6-7; Num. 23:19; Ps. 119:105; Matt 16:13-20, 18:15-19; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:7-8; 4:11-16; Col. 1:13-14; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Titus 1:5-9, 2:1-3:11; Heb. 1:1-2; 4:12; 6:18*

About the Triune God: We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Who know, love, and glorify one another. They are forever equal in nature, attributes, and perfection, yet forever distinct in Their



relations to one another and distinct in Their particular relationships both to the creation and to the actions and processes of redemption. They are equally worthy of our worship, love, and obedience. This One true and living God is infinitely perfect both in His love and in His holiness. The Triune God, in affectionate sovereignty, sustains and rules over all things, providentially bringing about His eternal good purpose to redeem a people for Himself—to the praise of the glory of His grace. *Exod. 3:14; Deut. 6:4; Ps. 90:2; 115:3; Ps. 135:6; Prov. 16:4; Isa. 6:3; 46:10; Mal. 3:6; Matt. 28:19; John 1:1-3, 14; 14:11; 15:26; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 John 4:16*

About God the Father: We believe that God, as the Father, reigns over His entire universe with providential care, holy justice, and saving mercy, to His own glory. In His holy love, the Father is all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing, and all-wise. He is fatherly in attitude toward all men, but Father, indeed, to those who have been made children of God through salvation in Christ. *Psalms 103:13; 115:3; 139:4; 147:5; Is. 46:10; Jer. 32:17; John 1:12; Gal. 4:4-5; Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:28; 11:33-36; Heb. 12:5-6; 1 John 3:20*

About God the Son, Jesus Christ: We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, Who humbled Himself by taking on the form of a man by means of His virgin birth, becoming forever both fully human without ceasing to be fully God. We affirm that He lived a sinless life of active love and perfect wisdom. He died by crucifixion on the cross, by His shed blood and death making a vicarious, substitutionary atonement for our sins. After three days, He was resurrected bodily from the dead, unto an indestructible life. After appearing to His disciples and instructing them for forty days, He ascended to heaven. He is now seated at the

right hand of the Father, interceding for believers, reigning as King over all creation, and working in and through His Church. He will personally return in power and glory to judge the living and the dead, and to raise to immortality those who eagerly await Him, perfecting them in His image. *Is. 7:14; 53; Matt. 28:18; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 14:26; Acts 1:3; 2:36; Rom. 4:24-25; 1 Cor 15:3-4; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:15-21; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:23-28*

About God the Holy Spirit: We believe that God the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, has come into the world to reveal and glorify Christ, and to convict and draw sinners to Christ. From the moment of spiritual birth, He indwells believers, individually and corporately, as their Helper. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family. He imparts new life to believers, placing them into the Body of Christ, transforming and empowering them for Christlike living, and sealing them until the day of redemption. He is the source of power for all acceptable worship and ministry as He imparts a diversity of enabling gifts that equip God's people for service. He provides the power to understand and apply God's truth in love. *Gen. 1:2; Ezek. 36:22-27; John 16:13-14; Matt. 28:19; Rom. 8:9; 12:5-6; 15:13; 1 Cor. 2:10-13; 12:4-11, 13, 28; 2 Cor. 3:18; 13:14; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 1:13; 2:22; 4:11, 30*

About Humanity—Creation: We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, male and female, and declared them "very good," granting them all the capacities of image



bearers. God created them to reflect and to enjoy His glory. They were created material and immaterial, physical body and spiritual soul, these qualities united and inseparably interdependent. They were created with a conscience able to discern good and evil; with the capacity to relate, think, choose, and feel in all the fruitfulness of wisdom. They were designed and commissioned to love God and one another, living in holy and devoted fellowship with God, and in loving, complementary relationship with each other. They were designed and commissioned to care for and govern His creation, working in and ruling over all creation as God's faithful servants and stewards. ***Gen 1:26-28; 2:18; Pro. 14:29-30; Matt. 22:37-39; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 1 John 1:3***

About Humanity—Fall: We believe that because of voluntary sin against God, Adam and Eve fell from the actively good, sinless, and innocent state in which they were first created. They became self-willed, perverse, and transgressive against God and each other. Immediately they died spiritually and also began to die physically. Consequently, for them and all their progeny, the image of God was distorted and their nature depraved and corrupted in every aspect of their being (spiritually, socially, mentally, volitionally, and emotionally). While human beings are corrupted in every aspect of their being and functioning, because of God's common grace the image of God has not been totally eradicated, and evil is not given full reign. God preserves and enables many common goods. All people have true dignity, a conscience in which clarity coexists with distortion, and many powers of mind, action, and feeling. All humanity is separated and alienated from God and thus spiritually dead—until God's own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to God; and the only hope of all human beings is to receive the undeserved grace of God in Christ. God alone can rescue us and restore sinners to Himself. ***Gen. 3:1-7; 9:6; Matt. 5:45; Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1-10***

About Salvation—Redemption: We believe that salvation is the gift of God by grace alone and is received through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is wholly conceived, accomplished, and applied by God's sovereign grace. It is not, in whole or in part, conceived or accomplished by human will or works. We believe that salvation refers comprehensively to the entire work of God that redeems His people from the penalty, power, and eventual presence of sin while imputing to His people the righteousness of Jesus Christ and all the benefits of adoption into His family. This salvation overthrows the dominion of darkness and creates a new people who enter Christ's Body of light, truth, and love. ***Is. 53:11-12; Rom. 4:1-8; 6:1-14; 8:29-30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:1-14; 2:1-10***

We affirm that salvation is only through Christ, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Christ voluntarily took upon Himself the form of a man, was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin in nature, word, or deed. He honored the Divine Law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins. Jesus, having risen bodily from the dead, is now enthroned in Heaven serving as the suitable, compassionate, all-sufficient Savior and the Mediator for His believer-priests. ***Acts 4:10-12; Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:23-28***



We believe that all the blessings of salvation are free gifts of God, and that each is a glorious facet of union with Christ. In Christ, persons once justly condemned are now forgiven and justified because Christ died bearing our sins, because He was raised for our justification, and because God imputes to His people the righteousness of Jesus Christ. In Christ, persons once dead in trespasses and sins are now made spiritually alive in the new birth, receive the Holy Spirit, and receive eternal life. In Christ, persons whose father and master was the devil are now adopted by God the Father into His family, and become citizens and servants in God's kingdom. In Christ, persons who were estranged from God are now reconciled forever. God gives all these gifts, and more, by the Holy Spirit, and we receive all these gifts by faith. ***John 3:16; Rom 4:22-25; 8:14-16; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:1-10, 12-13***

We believe that by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. On the cross He canceled sin, satisfied by His sacrifice the wrath of God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all who believe. We believe that by His resurrection, Christ Jesus was vindicated by His Father, broke the power of death, defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all His people. We believe that by His ascension, Jesus Christ has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with Him. We believe that at His return, Jesus Christ will wipe away all tears, will remove all sin and suffering, will establish forever His kingdom of love, joy and peace, and will perfect His holy Bride. We believe that all whom God regenerates are made at once children of God, justified in His sight through faith alone in Christ's atoning work, and brought into His family. We believe that believers are kept by the power of God through faith in a state of grace, and are eternally secure apart from any human works. We believe that we who are Christ's Body will see Him face to face, and that we will live with Him and with one another forever. ***John 10:28-29; Rom. 1:4; 3:21-26; 4:22-25; 5:12-21; 8:30; Phil 1:6; 2:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:14-15; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 21:3-4***

About Sanctification: We believe that sanctification is the process by which believers, each one and all together—as set apart from sin and united in Christ—are increasingly conformed to the image of Christ. Sanctification has past, present, and future aspects. First, believers are “chosen, holy and beloved” in Christ, set apart for God in union with Christ, and are actually made new by regeneration (positional or definitive sanctification). Second, believers begin to mature in their new life, set apart day-by-day through growth in grace into the likeness of Christ. This process (progressive sanctification) takes place by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, in the communion of the saints, by the continual use of God's appointed means of growth in grace, each member contributing to the growth of the whole unto maturity in Christ. Third, believers will be set apart from the very presence of sin when sanctification is completed (glorification) at the coming of Christ for the Church. Definitive sanctification in the past and glorification in the future provide anchors that sustain hope and bring encouragement amidst the failures and sufferings that make progressive sanctification a long and arduous pilgrimage. ***John 17:17; Acts 20:32;***



Rom. 6:5-6, 14; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Gal. 5:24; Eph. 3:16-19; 4:15-16; Col. 1:11; 1 Thess 5:21-23

About the Church: We believe that the Church, the Body of Christ, is composed of all persons living and dead who have been joined to Christ and one another by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every true believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ and thus united in Christ to one another in unity and love across social, economic, and ethnic lines. We affirm that the local church is God's primary instrument and context for His work today; that every believer should be an active member in a local assembly; and that the Christian community is the context where believers are mutually encouraged, equipped, and empowered to conform to the image of Christ through worship, fellowship, discipleship, stewardship, and ambassadorship (evangelism). The sanctification of an individual is not a personal self-improvement project, but is the formation of a constructive, fruitful member of the Body of Christ. We believe it is every believer's privilege and obligation to be an instrument in the Redeemer's hands. This requires an intentional involvement in the lives of others: learning to speak and to live the truth in love, learning humility, and learning to forgive and to give, so that we all grow in unity and maturity into Christ Who is the Head. The true mission of the Church is to bring God glory, as believers (individually and corporately) live consistent with the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus Himself. They are our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of His return and of the consummation of all things. ***Matthew 18:15-20; 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; 1 Cor. 1:2; 11:26; 2 Cor. 9:13; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:11-16; 5:23, 26; Col. 1:18; 1 Thess 5:14; Heb. 10:24-25***

About the Eternal State and the Restoration of All Things: We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ when His kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of Him Who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the eternal home of righteousness. On that day, the Church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering, and triumph of Christ; all sin will be purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all, His people will be enthralled with Him, and everything will be done to the praise of His glorious grace. ***Job 19:26-27; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 2 Cor. 5:1; Phil. 3:20-21***



The Confessional Statement of The Center for Biblical Living

Preamble: Speaking the Truth in Love—A Vision for the Entire Church

We are a collection of Christians committed to promoting excellence and unity in biblical living. Our goal is to minister the gospel to ministers of the gospel. We desire to strengthen the local church's impact through Christ-centered biblical counseling that is loving and wise, pursuing the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

We pursue this purpose by organizing our thinking around one central question. "What does it mean to counsel in the grace and truth of Christ?" All that we do flows from our calling to remind ministers of the gospel of the truths of their identity in Christ (2 Peter 1:12).

We are dedicated to developing in the theology and practice of the personal ministry of the Word, whether described as biblical counseling, pastoral counseling, personal discipleship, one-another ministry, small group ministry, cure of souls, soul care, spiritual friendship, or spiritual direction. We seek to promote the strengthening of these ministries in churches, para-church organizations, and educational institutions by ministering to people who offer care, people who are seeking care, and people who train care-givers.

Introduction: In Christ Alone

The goal of biblical counseling is spiritual, relational, and personal maturity as evidenced in desires, thoughts, motives, actions, and emotions that increasingly reflect Jesus (Ephesians 4:17-5:2). We believe that such personal change must be centered on the person of Christ. We are convinced that personal ministry centered on Christ and anchored in Scripture offers the only lasting hope and loving help to a fallen and broken world.

We confess that we have not arrived. We comfort and counsel others only as we continue to receive ongoing comfort and counsel from Christ and the Body of Christ (2 Corinthians 1:3-11). We admit that we struggle to apply consistently all that we believe. We who counsel live in process, just like those we counsel, so we want to learn and grow in the wisdom and mercies of Christ.

All Christian ministry arises from and is anchored in God's revelation—which is both the written Word (Scripture) and the living Word (Christ). This is true for the personal ministry of the Word (conversational and relational ministry which our culture calls "counseling") and for the various public ministries of the Word. In light of this core



conviction about Christ-centered, Word-based ministry, we affirm the following central commitments as biblical counselors.

Biblical Counseling Must Be Anchored in Scripture

We believe that God's Word is authoritative, sufficient, and relevant (Isaiah 55:11; Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 4:12-13). The inspired and inerrant Scriptures, rightly interpreted and carefully applied, offer us God's comprehensive wisdom. We learn to understand who God is, who we are, the problems we face, how people change, and God's provision for that change in the Gospel (John 8:31-32; 10:10; 17:17). No other source of knowledge thoroughly equips us to counsel in ways that transform the human heart (Psalm 19:7-14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). Other systems of counseling aim for other goals and assume a different dynamic of change. The wisdom given by God in His Word is distinctive and robust. He comprehensively addresses the sin and suffering of all people in all situations.

Wise counseling is an insightful application of God's all-embracing truth to our complex lives (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6; Philippians 1:9-11). It does not merely collect proof-texts from the Bible. Wise counseling requires ongoing practical theological labor in order to understand Scripture, people, and situations (2 Timothy 2:15). We must continually develop our personal character, case-wise understanding of people, and pastoral skills (Romans 15:14; Colossians 1:28-29).

When we say that Scripture is comprehensive in wisdom, we mean that the Bible makes sense of all things, not that it contains all the information people could ever know about all topics. God's common grace brings many good things to human life. However, common grace cannot save us from our struggles with sin or from the troubles that beset us. Common grace cannot sanctify or cure the soul of all that ails the human condition. We affirm that numerous sources (such as scientific research, organized observations about human behavior, those we counsel, reflection on our own life experience, literature, film, and history) can contribute to our knowledge of people, and many sources can contribute some relief for the troubles of life. However, none can constitute a comprehensive system of counseling principles and practices. When systems of thought and practice claim to prescribe a cure for the human condition, they compete with Christ (Colossians 2:1-15). Scripture alone teaches a perspective and way of looking at life by which we can think biblically about and critically evaluate information and actions from any source (Colossians 2:2-10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Biblical Counseling Must Be Centered on Christ and the Gospel

We believe that wise counseling centers on Jesus Christ—His sinless life, death on the cross, burial, resurrection, present reign, and promised return. Through the Gospel, God reveals the depths of sin, the scope of suffering, and the breadth, length, height, and depth of grace. Wise counseling gets to the heart of personal and interpersonal problems by



bringing to bear the truth, mercy, and power of Christ's grace (John 1:14). There is no true restoration of the soul and there are no truly God-honoring relationships without understanding the desperate condition we are in without Christ and apart from experiencing the joy of progressive deliverance from that condition through God's mercies.

We point people to a person, Jesus our Redeemer, and not to a program, theory, or experience. We place our trust in the transforming power of the Redeemer as the only hope to change people's hearts, not in any human system of change. People need a personal and dynamic relationship with Jesus, not a system of self-salvation, self-management, or self-actualization (John 14:6). Wise counselors seek to lead struggling, hurting, sinning, and confused people to the hope, resources, strength, and life that are available only in Christ.

Biblical Counseling Must Be Grounded in Sound Theology

We believe that biblical counseling is fundamentally a practical theological discipline because every aspect of life is related to God. God intends that we care for one another in ways that relate human struggles to His person, purposes, promises, and will. Wise counseling arises from a theological way of looking at life—a mindset, a worldview—that informs how we understand people, problems, and solutions. The best biblical counselors are wise, balanced, caring, experienced practical theologians (Philippians 1:9-11).

Biblical counselors relate the Scriptures relevantly to people's lives (Hebrews 3:12-19). All wise counseling understands particular passages and a person's unique life experience within the context of the Bible's larger storyline: God's creation, our fall into sin, His redemptive plan, and the consummation of all things. Thus we engage in person-specific conversations that flow naturally out of a comprehensive biblical theology of life.

Biblical Counseling Must Be Dependent upon the Holy Spirit and Prayer

We believe that both genuine change of heart and transformation of lifestyle depend upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-16:16; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Biblical counselors know that it is impossible to speak wisely and lovingly to bring about true and lasting change apart from the decisive, compassionate, and convicting work of the Spirit in the counselor and the counselee. We acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the One who illuminates our understanding of the Word and empowers its application in everyday life.

Wise counselors serve in the truth that God reveals and by the strength that God supplies. By the Spirit's work, God receives glory in all the good that takes place in people's lives. Biblical counselors affirm the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to guide and empower the counselor, the counselee, and the counseling relationship. Dependent prayer is essential to the work of biblical counseling (Ephesians 6:18-20). Wise



counselors humbly request God’s intervention and direction, praise God for His work in people’s lives, and intercede for people that they would experience genuine life change to the glory of God (Philippians 4:6).

Biblical Counseling Must Be Directed toward Sanctification

We believe that wise counseling should be transformative, change-oriented, and grounded in the doctrine of sanctification (2 Corinthians 3:16-18; Philippians 2:12-13). The lifelong change process begins at salvation (justification, regeneration, redemption, reconciliation) and continues until we see Jesus face-to-face (1 John 3:1-3). The aim of wise counseling is intentional and intensive discipleship. The fruit of wise counseling is spiritually mature people who increasingly reflect Christ (relationally, rationally, volitionally, and emotionally) by enjoying and exalting God and by loving others well and wisely (Galatians 5:22-6:10).

Wise counseling seeks to embrace the Bible’s teaching regarding God’s role and human responsibility in spiritual growth. God’s strength and mercy call for our response of faith and obedience. A comprehensive theology of the spiritual life provides the basis for applying relevant biblical methods of spiritual growth. Biblical counseling helps believers to understand what it means to be in Christ (Romans 6:3-14). It equips them to apply the principles of progressive sanctification through renewing their minds and actions based on Scripture with a motive of love for God and others (Romans 12:1-2).

Biblical Counseling Must Be Rooted in the Life of the Church

We believe that we best reflect the Trinity as we live and grow in community (John 17; Ephesians 4). Sanctification is not a self-improvement project, but a process of learning to love and serve God and others. Wise counseling embeds personal change within God’s community—the church—with all God’s rich resources of corporate and interpersonal means of grace (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). We believe that the church should be both the center and the sender of Gospel-centered counseling (Romans 15:14).

By example and exhortation the New Testament commends the personal, face-to-face, one-another ministry of the Word—whether in one-to-one or small group relationships (Hebrews 3:12-19; 10:19-25). God calls the church to mutual wise counseling just as He calls the church to public ministries of the Word in preaching, teaching, worship, and observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. God desires His people to love and serve each other by speaking His truth in love to one another (Ephesians 4:15-16). The primary and fullest expression of counseling ministry is meant to occur in local church communities where pastors effectively shepherd souls while equipping and overseeing diverse forms of every-member ministry (Ephesians 4:11-14). Other likeminded counseling institutions and organizations are beneficial insofar as they serve alongside the church, encourage Christians to counsel biblically, and purpose to impact the world for Christ.



Biblical Counseling Must Be Founded in Love

We believe that Christ's incarnation is not just the basis for care, but also the model for how we care (Hebrews 4:14-16; John 13:34-35). We seek to enter into a person's story, listening well, expressing thoughtful love, and engaging the person with compassion (1 Thessalonians 2:8). The wise and loving personal ministry of the Word takes many appropriate forms, from caring comfort to loving rebuke, from careful listening to relevant scriptural exploration, all while building trusting, authentic relationships (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15; 1 John 4:7-21).

Wise counseling takes into account all that people experience (desires, thoughts, goals, actions, words, emotions, struggles, situational pressure, physical suffering, abuse, injustice, etc.) All of human experience is the context for understanding how God's Word relates to life. Such awareness not only shapes the content of counseling, but also shapes the way counselors interact so that everything said is constructive, according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to the hearer (Ephesians 4:29).

Biblical Counseling Must Be Attentive to Heart Issues

We believe that human behavior is tied to thoughts, intentions, and affections of the heart. All our actions arise from hearts that are worshipping either God or something else, therefore we emphasize the importance of the heart and address the inner person. God fully understands and rightly weighs who we are, what we do, and why we do it. While we cannot completely understand a person's heart (even our own), God's Word reveals and penetrates the heart's core beliefs and intentions (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Wise counseling seeks to address both the inward and outward aspects of human life to bring thorough and lasting change into the image of Christ. The Bible is clear that human behavior is not mechanical, but grows out of a heart that desires, longs, thinks, chooses, and feels in ways that are oriented either toward or against Christ. Wise counsel appropriately focuses on the vertical and the horizontal dimensions, on the inner and the outer person, on observable behavior and underlying issues of the heart (Matthew 23:23-28). Biblical counselors work to help struggling people to learn wisdom; to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength; to love one's neighbor as oneself; and to endure suffering in hope.

Biblical Counseling Must Be Comprehensive in Understanding

We believe that biblical counseling should focus on the full range of human nature created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). A comprehensive biblical understanding sees human beings as relational (spiritual and social), rational, volitional, emotional, and physical. Wise counseling takes the whole person seriously in his or her whole life context.



It helps people to embrace all of life face-to-face with Christ so they become more like Christ in their relationships, thoughts, motivations, behaviors, and emotions.

We recognize the complexity of the relationship between the body and soul (Genesis 2:7). Because of this, we seek to remain sensitive to physical factors and organic issues that affect people's lives. In our desire to help people comprehensively, we seek to apply God's Word to people's lives amid bodily strengths and weaknesses. We encourage a thorough assessment and sound treatment for any suspected physical problems.

We recognize the complexity of the connection between people and their social environment. Thus we seek to remain sensitive to the impact of suffering and of the great variety of significant social-cultural factors (1 Peter 3:8-22). In our desire to help people comprehensively, we seek to apply God's Word to people's lives amid both positive and negative social experiences. We encourage people to seek appropriate practical aid when their problems have a component that involves education, work life, finances, legal matters, criminality (either as a victim or a perpetrator), and other social matters.

Biblical Counseling Must Be Thorough in Care

We believe that God's Word is profitable for dealing thoroughly with the evils we suffer as well as with the sins we commit. Since struggling people usually experience some combination of besetting sin and personal suffering, wise counselors seek to discern the differences and connections between sin and suffering, and to minister appropriately to both (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

Biblical counseling addresses suffering and engages sufferers in many compassionate ways. It offers God's encouragement, comfort, and hope for the hurting (Romans 8:17-18; 2 Corinthians 1:3-8). It encourages mercy ministry (Acts 6:1-7) and seeks to promote justice. **Biblical counseling** addresses sin and engages sinners in numerous caring ways. It offers God's confrontation of sins, encourages repentance of sins, presents God's gracious forgiveness in Christ, and shares God's powerful path for progressive victory over sin (1 John 1:8-2:2; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; Colossians 3:1-17; 2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Biblical Counseling Must Be Practical and Relevant

We believe that a commitment to the sufficiency of God's Word results in counseling that demonstrates the relevancy of God's Word. **Biblical counseling** offers a practical approach to daily life that is uniquely effective in the real world where people live and relate (1 John 3:11-24). By instruction and example, the Bible teaches foundational methodological principles for wise interaction and intervention (Acts 20:26-37; Galatians 6:1-5; Colossians 1:24-2:1).



Within the Bible's overall guidelines for the personal ministry of the Word, there is room for a variety of practical methods of change, all anchored in applying scriptural truth to people's lives and relationships. The Bible calls us to use wise methods that minister in Christ-centered ways to the unique life situations of specific people (Proverbs 15:23; 25:11). We are to speak what is helpful for building others up according to the need of the moment, that it may benefit those who listen (Ephesians 4:29).

Biblical Counseling Must Be Oriented toward Outreach

We believe that Christianity is missionary-minded by its very nature. Biblical counseling should be a powerful evangelistic and apologetic force in our world. We want to bring the good news of Jesus and His Word to the world that only God can redeem. We seek to speak in relevant ways to Christians and non-Christians, to draw them to the Savior and the distinctive wisdom that comes only from His Word (Titus 2:10-15).

We want to present the claims, mercies, hope, and relevance of Christ in a positive, loving, Christ-like spirit (1 Peter 3:15). We seek to engage the broad spectrum of counseling models and approaches. We want to affirm what is biblical and wise. Where we believe models and methods fall short of Christ's call, we want to critique clearly and charitably. When interacting with people with whom we differ, we want to communicate in ways that are respectful, firm, gracious, fair-minded, and clear. When we perceive error, we want to humbly point people forward toward the way of truth so that we all become truer, wiser, more loving counselors. We want to listen well to those who disagree with us, and learn from their critiques. Our mission to spread the truth and fame of Jesus Christ includes a desire that all counselors appreciate and embrace the beauty of a Christ-centered and Word-based approach to people, problems, and solutions.

Conclusion: Unity in Truth and Love

We are committed to generating a unified effort among God's people to glorify Christ and multiply disciples through the personal ministry of the Word (Matthew 28:18-20). We trust in Jesus Christ in whom grace and truth are perfectly joined (John 1:14). We cling to His Word, in which truth and love live in perfect union (Ephesians 4:15; Philippians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:8). We love His Church—living and speaking the truth in love, growing up in Him who is the Head, and building itself up in love as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:15-16).

We desire to encourage this unity in truth and love through a fresh vision for biblical counseling. When people ask, "What makes biblical counseling truly biblical?" we unite to affirm:

Biblical counseling occurs whenever and wherever God's people engage in conversations that are anchored in Scripture, centered on Christ and the Gospel, grounded in sound theology, dependent upon the Holy Spirit and prayer, directed



toward sanctification, rooted in the life of the church, founded in love, attentive to heart issues, comprehensive in understanding, thorough in care, practical and relevant, and oriented toward outreach.

We invite you to join us on this journey of promoting excellence and unity in biblical counseling. Join us as we seek to equip one another to promote personal change, centered on the person of Christ through the personal ministry of the Word.



Statement of belief on Sexuality:

1. Marriage: We affirm that marriage is to be between one man and one woman ([Gen. 2:18-25](#); [Matt. 19:4-6](#); *WCF* 24.1).

Sexual intimacy is a gift from God to be cherished and is reserved for the marriage relationship between one man and one woman ([Prov. 5:18-19](#)). Marriage was instituted by God for the mutual help and blessing of husband and wife, for procreation and the raising together of godly children, and to prevent sexual immorality ([Gen. 1:28; 2:18](#); [Mal. 2:14-15](#); [1 Cor. 7:2, 9](#); *WCF* 24.2). Marriage is also a God-ordained picture of the differentiated relationship between Christ and the church ([Eph. 5:22-33](#); [Rev. 19:6-10](#)). All other forms of sexual intimacy, including all forms of lust and same-sex sexual activity of any kind, are sinful ([Lev. 18:22; 20:13](#); [Rom. 1:18-32](#); [1 Cor. 6:9](#); [1 Tim. 1:10](#); [Jude 7](#); *WLC* 139).

Nevertheless, we do not believe that sexual intimacy in marriage automatically eliminates unwanted sexual desires, nor that all sex within marriage is sinless (*WCF* 6.5).

We all stand in need of God's grace for sexual sin and temptation, whether married or not. Moreover, sexual immorality is not an unpardonable sin. There is no sin so small it does not deserve damnation, and no sin so big it cannot be forgiven (*WCF* 15.4). There is hope and forgiveness for all who repent of their sin and put their trust in Christ ([Matt. 11:28-30](#); [John 6:35, 37](#); [Acts 2:37-38; 16:30-31](#)).

2. Image of God: We affirm that God created human beings in his image as male and female ([Gen. 1:26-27](#)).



Likewise, we recognize the goodness of the human body ([Gen. 1:31](#); [John 1:14](#)) and the call to glorify God with our bodies ([1 Cor. 6:12-20](#)). As a God of order and design, God opposes the confusion of man as woman and woman as man ([1 Cor. 11:14-15](#)). While situations involving such confusion can be heartbreaking and complex, men and women should be helped to live in accordance with their biological sex.

Nevertheless, we ought to minister compassionately to those who are sincerely confused and disturbed by their internal sense of gender identity ([Gal. 3:1](#); [2 Tim. 2:24-26](#)).

We recognize that the effects of the Fall extend to the corruption of our whole nature (*WSC* 18), which may include how we think of our own gender and sexuality. Moreover, some persons, in rare instances, may possess an objective medical condition in which their anatomical development may be ambiguous or does not match their genetic chromosomal sex. Such persons are also made in the image of God and should live out their biological sex, insofar as it can be known.

3. Original Sin: We affirm that from the sin of our first parents we have received an inherited guilt and an inherited depravity ([Rom. 5:12-19](#); [Eph. 2:1-3](#)).

From this original corruption—which is itself sinful and for which we are culpable—proceed all actual transgressions. All the outworkings of our corrupted nature (a corruption which remains, in part, even after regeneration) are truly and properly called sin (*WCF* 6.1-5). Every sin, original and actual, deserves death and renders us liable to the wrath of God ([Rom. 3:23](#); [James 2:10](#); *WCF* 6.6). We must repent of our sin in general and our particular sins, particularly (*WCF* 15.5). That is, we ought to grieve for our sin, hate our sin, turn from our sin unto God, and endeavor to walk with God in obedience to his commandments (*WCF* 15.2).

Nevertheless, God does not wish for believers to live in perpetual misery for their sins, each of which are pardoned and mortified in Christ (*WCF* 6.5).

By the Spirit of Christ, we are able to make spiritual progress and to do good works, not perfectly, but truly (*WCF* 16.3). Even our imperfect works are made acceptable through Christ, and God is pleased to accept and reward them as pleasing in his sight (*WCF* 16.6).

4. Desire: We affirm not only that our inclination toward sin is a result of the Fall, but that our fallen desires are in themselves sinful ([Rom 6:11-12](#); [1 Peter 1:14](#); [2:11](#)).

The desire for an illicit end—whether in sexual desire for a person of the same sex or in sexual desire disconnected from the context of Biblical marriage—is itself an illicit desire. Therefore, the experience of same-sex attraction is not morally neutral; the attraction is an expression of original or indwelling sin that must be repented of and put to death ([Rom. 8:13](#)).

Nevertheless, we must celebrate that, despite the continuing presence of sinful desires (and even, at times, egregious sinful behavior), repentant, justified, and adopted believers are free from condemnation through the imputed righteousness of Christ ([Rom. 8:1](#); [2 Cor. 5:21](#)) and are able to please God by walking in the Spirit ([Rom. 8:3-6](#)).



5. Concupiscence: We affirm that impure thoughts and desires arising in us prior to and apart from a conscious act of the will are still sin.

We reject the Roman Catholic understanding of concupiscence whereby disordered desires that afflict us due to the Fall do not become sin without a consenting act of the will. These desires within us are not mere weaknesses or inclinations to sin but are themselves idolatrous and sinful.

Nevertheless, we recognize that many persons who experience same-sex attraction describe their desires as arising in them unbidden and unwanted.

We also recognize that the presence of same-sex attraction is often owing to many factors, which always include our own sin nature and may include being sinned against in the past. As with any sinful pattern or propensity—which may include disordered desires, extramarital lust, pornographic addictions, and all abusive sexual behavior—the actions of others, though never finally determinative, can be significant and influential. This should move us to compassion and understanding. Moreover, it is true for all of us that sin can be both unchosen bondage and idolatrous rebellion at the same time. We all experience sin, at times, as a kind of voluntary servitude ([Rom. 7:13-20](#)).

6. Temptation: We affirm that Scripture speaks of temptation in different ways.

There are some temptations God gives us in the form of morally neutral trials, and other temptations God never gives us because they arise from within as morally illicit desires ([James 1:2, 13-14](#)). When temptations come from without, the temptation itself is not sin, unless we enter into the temptation. But when the temptation arises from within, it is our own act and is rightly called sin.

Nevertheless, there is an important degree of moral difference between temptation to sin and giving in to sin, even when the temptation is itself an expressing of indwelling sin.

While our goal is the weakening and lessening of internal temptations to sin, Christians should feel their greatest responsibility not for the fact that such temptations occur but for thoroughly and immediately fleeing and resisting the temptations when they arise. We can avoid “entering into” temptation by refusing to internally ponder and entertain the proposal and desire to actual sin. Without some distinction between (1) the illicit temptations that arise in us due to original sin and (2) the willful giving over to actual sin, Christians will be too discouraged to “make every effort” at growth in godliness and will feel like failures in their necessary efforts to be holy as God is holy ([2 Peter 1:5-7](#); [1 Peter 1:14-16](#)). God is pleased with our sincere obedience, even though it may be accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections (*WCF* 16.6).

7. Sanctification: We affirm that Christians should flee immoral behavior and not yield to temptation.

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through the ordinary means of grace, Christians should seek to wither, weaken, and put to death the underlying idolatries and sinful desires that lead to sinful behavior. The goal is not just consistent fleeing from, and regular resistance to, temptation, but the diminishment and even the end of the occurrences of sinful desires through the reordering of the loves of one’s heart



toward Christ. Through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, we can make substantial progress in the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ([Rom. 6:14-19](#); [Heb. 12:14](#); [1 John 4:4](#); *WCF* 13.1).

Nevertheless, this process of sanctification—even when the Christian is diligent and fervent in the application of the means of grace—will always be accompanied by many weaknesses and imperfections (*WCF* 16.5, 6), with the Spirit and the flesh warring against one another until final glorification (*WCF* 13.2).

The believer who struggles with same-sex attraction should expect to see the regenerate nature increasingly overcome the remaining corruption of the flesh, but this progress will often be slow and uneven. Moreover, the process of mortification and vivification involves the whole person, not simply unwanted sexual desires. The aim of sanctification in one's sexual life cannot be reduced to attraction to persons of the opposite sex (though some persons may experience movement in this direction), but rather involves growing in grace and perfecting holiness in the fear of God (*WCF* 13.3).

8. Impeccability: We affirm the impeccability of Christ.

The incarnate Son of God neither sinned (in thought, word, deed, or desire) nor had the possibility of sinning. Christ experienced temptation passively, in the form of trials and the devil's entreaties, not actively, in the form of disordered desires. Christ had only the suffering part of temptation, where we also have the sinning part. Christ had no inward disposition or inclination unto the least evil, being perfect in all graces and all their operations at all times.

Nevertheless, Christ endured, from without, real soul-wrenching temptations which qualified him to be our sympathetic high priest ([Heb. 2:18](#); [4:15](#)).

Christ assumed a human nature that was susceptible to suffering and death. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ([Isa. 53:3](#)).

9. Identity: We affirm that the believer's most important identity is found in Christ ([Rom. 8:38-39](#); [Eph. 1:4, 7](#)).

Christians ought to understand themselves, define themselves, and describe themselves in light of their union with Christ and their identity as regenerate, justified, holy children of God ([Rom. 6:5-11](#); [1 Cor. 6:15-20](#); [Eph. 2:1-10](#)). To juxtapose identities rooted in sinful desires alongside the term "Christian" is inconsistent with Biblical language and undermines the spiritual reality that we are new creations in Christ ([2 Cor. 5:17](#)).

Nevertheless, being honest about our sin struggles is important.

While Christians should not identify with their sin so as to embrace it or seek to base their identity on it, Christians ought to acknowledge their sin in an effort to overcome it. There is a difference between speaking about a phenomenological facet of a person's sin-stained reality and employing the language of sinful desires as a personal identity marker. That is, we name our sins, but are not named by them.



Moreover, we recognize that there are some secondary identities, when not rooted in sinful desires or struggles against the flesh, that can be legitimately affirmed along with our primary identity as Christians. For example, the distinctions between male and female, or between various nationalities and people groups, are not eradicated in becoming Christians, but serve to magnify the glory of God in his plan of salvation ([Gen. 1:27](#); [1 Peter 3:7](#); [Rev. 5:9; 7:9-10](#)).

10. Language: We affirm that those in our churches would be wise to avoid the term “gay Christian.”

Although the term “gay” may refer to more than being attracted to persons of the same sex, the term does not communicate less than that. For many people in our culture, to self-identify as “gay” suggests that one is engaged in homosexual practice. At the very least, the term normally communicates the presence and approval of same-sex sexual attraction as morally neutral or morally praiseworthy. Even if “gay,” for some Christians, simply means “same-sex attraction,” it is still inappropriate to juxtapose this sinful desire, or any other sinful desire, as an identity marker alongside our identity as new creations in Christ.

Nevertheless, we recognize that some Christians may use the term “gay” in an effort to be more readily understood by non-Christians.

The word “gay” is common in our culture, and we do not think it wise for churches to police every use of the term. Our burden is that we do not justify our sin struggles by affixing them to our identity as Christians. Churches should be gentle, patient, and intentional with believers who call themselves “gay Christians,” encouraging them, as part of the process of sanctification, to leave behind identification language rooted in sinful desires, to live chaste lives, to refrain from entering into temptation, and to mortify their sinful desires.

11. Friendship: We affirm that our contemporary ecclesiastical culture has an underdeveloped understanding of friendship and often does not honor singleness as it should.

The church must work to see that all members, including believers who struggle with same-sex attraction, are valued members of the body of Christ and engaged in meaningful relationships through the blessings of the family of God. Likewise we affirm the value of Christians who share common struggles gathering together for mutual accountability, exhortation, and encouragement.

Nevertheless, we do not support the formation of exclusive, contractual marriage-like friendships, nor do we support same-sex romantic behavior or the assumption that certain sensibilities and interests are necessarily aspects of a gay identity.

We do not consider same-sex attraction a gift in itself, nor do we think this sin struggle, or any sin struggle, should be celebrated in the church.

12. Repentance and Hope: We affirm that the entire life of the believer is one of repentance.

Where we have mistreated those who struggle with same-sex attraction, or with any other sinful desires, we call ourselves to repentance. Where we have nurtured or made peace with sinful thoughts, desires,



words, or deeds, we call ourselves to repentance. Where we have heaped upon others misplaced shame or have not dealt well with necessary God-given shame, we call ourselves to repentance.

Nevertheless, as we call ourselves to the evangelical grace of repentance (*WCF* 15.1), we see many reasons for rejoicing ([Phil. 4:1](#)).

We give thanks for penitent believers who, though they continue to struggle with same-sex attraction, are living lives of chastity and obedience. These brothers and sisters can serve as courageous examples of faith and faithfulness, as they pursue Christ with a long obedience in gospel dependence. We also give thanks for ministries and churches within our denomination that minister to sexual strugglers (of all kinds) with Biblical truth and grace. Most importantly, we give thanks for the gospel that can save and transform the worst of sinners—older brothers and younger brothers, tax collectors and Pharisees, insiders and outsiders. We rejoice in ten thousand spiritual blessings that are ours when we turn from sin by the power of the Spirit, trust in the promises of God, and rest upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life (*WCF* 14.2).

