

**Pastoral Counselor Preparation in Evangelical Seminary M.Div. Programs:  
Toward a Best Practice Statement of Purpose, Theology, Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Educator  
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**Abstract**

Survey research over the past three decades indicates that pastors trained in M.Div. programs believe that: a.) seminaries are responsible for training them in pastoral counseling—the personal ministry of the Word, b.) their seminary insufficiently trained them as pastoral counselors in the local church, and c.) they are unprepared to function in the role of a pastoral counseling “generalist” in a local church setting.

To address these issues, this paper will examine: a.) the *purpose* of seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs: how should the seminary training location and the local church ministry setting impact and impart a distinctive pastoral counseling identity? b.) the *theology* of seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs: what view of the Bible shapes the way pastoral counselors form their theology and methodology of pastoral counseling? c.) the *pedagogy* of seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs: how could Evangelical seminaries in M.Div. programs equip students for pastoral counseling formation so that they think Christianly (content) and counsel effectively (competence) out of growing personal maturity (character) in the context of local church ministry (community)? d.) the *curriculum* for seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs: given that the average seminary M.Div. curriculum allows for one course in pastoral counseling, and at most two in some select cases, what should be taught, why, and how? e.) the *educator* for seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs: given the purpose, theology, pedagogy, and curriculum of pastoral counselor preparation, what credentials best qualify the seminary professor to equip pastoral counseling students for the personal ministry of the Word in the local church?

**The Problem-Statement Related to Seminary Pastoral Counselor Preparation in M.Div. Programs**

The Association of Theological Seminaries (ATS), in their Master of Divinity (M.Div.) *Degree Program Standards* section states that the M.Div. “should educate students for a comprehensive range of pastoral responsibilities and skills...and for exercising the arts of ministry.”<sup>2</sup> Of those ministry arts, Gregory the Great, in his treatise on pastoral care, called shepherding souls “the art of arts.”<sup>3</sup>

Powlison noted that “during eras when church life has been vibrantly responsive to Scripture, pastors have counseled well and wisely. They have understood that their pastoral calling includes a significant ‘counseling’ component.”<sup>4</sup> Recognizing distinctions in calling and giftedness, Powlison further observed that, “Some pastors will do a great deal of hands-on cure of souls, some relatively little. But every pastor ought to dedicate some percentage of his ministry to the delicate art of intentional conversation...”<sup>5</sup>

These are not mere academic perceptions. Ellison, Vaaler, Flannelly, and Weaver reported that clergy are often viewed by those in their church and community as front-line “mental health workers.”<sup>6</sup> Additional studies validate these findings that clergy play a vital role as counselors and are frequently the professional of choice for relational and “mental health” concerns.<sup>7</sup> The desire for value-centered

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<sup>2</sup>Accessed online at <http://www.ats.edu/Accrediting/Documents/DegreeProgramStandards.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, trans. Henry Davis (New York: Newman Press, 1950; orig. 591), I:1, 21.

<sup>4</sup>David Powlison, “The Pastor as Counselor,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 26, no. 1 (2012): 23.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, 28.

<sup>6</sup>Christopher Ellison, et al, “The Clergy as a Source of Mental Health Assistance: What Americans Believe,” *Review of Religions Research* 48 (2006): 190-211.

<sup>7</sup>L. Dupree, M. Watson, and M. Schneider, “Preferences for Mental Health Care: A Comparison of Older African Americans and Older Caucasians,” *The Journal of Applied Gerontology* 24, no. 3 (2005): 196-210; A. Weaver, “Has There Been a Failure

counseling is particularly acute among Evangelical Christians.<sup>8</sup> Southern Baptists, for example, have shown a pronounced preference for receiving counseling within their churches as opposed to professional counseling from outside the church.<sup>9</sup>

Lunn reported that many conservative Evangelical seminaries, perceiving this increase demand on pastors to be counselors, overhauled their curricula in the 1970s to produce pastors who were trained to counsel.<sup>10</sup> However, Gillette noted that the majority of Baptist pastors still viewed their training to be inadequate.<sup>11</sup>

Firmin and Tedford indicated that “subsequent surveys over the past two decades have repeatedly suggested that pastors feel unprepared to function in the role of counselor.”<sup>12</sup> Buikema’s research revealed that eleven out of twelve (92%) pastors believe that seminaries are responsible for training them in counseling. However, these pastors cited insufficient seminary preparation as their primary reason for feeling inadequate in this role.<sup>13</sup> Loskot reported that pastors rated their preparation as inadequate for half of the counseling needs they face.<sup>14</sup> In a study of the effectiveness of seminarian versus master’s-level counseling students, Watson found that the single best predictor of counseling self-efficacy was the amount of counseling-related seminary coursework.<sup>15</sup>

In a study of pastors representing nineteen denominational affiliations, almost one third reported having no counseling training at all in seminary.<sup>16</sup> In Firmin and Tedford’s study of 31 Evangelical seminaries which have traditionally served Evangelical Baptist students, the data showed no seminaries requiring more than two counseling courses. Of the 31 examined, only two required two courses, seventeen required only one counseling course, and twelve had no counseling courses at all listed among their requirements for M.Div. students.<sup>17</sup> A 2012 survey of ATS member schools revealed that of the 228 institutions that had the M.Div. or equivalent programs, 32% required no specifically-identified counseling course, 55% required one counseling course, and 13% required two counseling courses.<sup>18</sup>

The problem is clear: 1.) ATS requires seminaries to equip M.Div. graduates in the art of arts. 2.) Parishioners anticipate that their pastors will be skillful pastoral counselors. 3.) Pastors expect seminary M.Div. programs to equip them for their role as pastoral counselors. 4.) The typical Evangelical seminary M.Div. program requires zero to two pastoral counseling courses. 5.) Typical seminary M.Div. graduates

to Prepare and Support Parish-Based Clergy in Their Role as Frontline Community Mental Health Workers: A Review,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 49, no. 2 (1995): 129-147.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Firmin and Mark Tedford, “An Assessment of Counseling Courses in Seminaries Serving Evangelical Baptist Students,” *Review of Religious Research* 48, no. 4 (2007): 420-427; David Watson, “Counseling Self-Efficacy and Counseling Competence: A Comparative Study of Clergy and Counselors-in-Training,” Doctoral Dissertation, Purdue University, *DAI-A*, 54 (03) (1992): 824.

<sup>9</sup>Mary Ann Conaway, “A Survey to Identify the Counseling Preferences of Members of the Missouri Baptist Convention,” Doctoral Dissertation, Saint Louis University, *DAI-A*, 52, (05) (1991): 1641; Firmin, 420.

<sup>10</sup>Harold Lunn, “A Survey of the Counseling Functions of Ministers’ Doctoral Dissertations,” *The Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary*, *DAI-A*, 41 (03) (1980): 1093.

<sup>11</sup>David Gillette, “Role Expectations of the Baptist Pastor as Pastoral Counselor as Viewed by Pastors, Pastoral Students, and Faculty in Selected Pastoral Training Institutions,” Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan, *DAI-A*, 42 (09) (1981): 3935.

<sup>12</sup>Firmin, 421.

<sup>13</sup>Jeffery Buikema, “The Preparation of Pastors in Premarital Counseling,” Doctoral Dissertation, Iowa State University, *DAI-B*, 62 (11) (2001): 5365.

<sup>14</sup>Donal Loskot, “Roman Catholic Priests as Counselors: Perceived Effectiveness and Actual Preparedness,” Doctoral Dissertation, University of San Francisco, *DAI-A*, (01) (1993): 47.

<sup>15</sup>Watson, 824.

<sup>16</sup>Lunn, 1093.

<sup>17</sup>Firmin, 422.

<sup>18</sup>Accessed at: <http://ats.edu/memberschools/pages/default.aspx>.

believe that their training leaves them inadequately prepared for the personal ministry of the Word—pastoral counseling.

Firmin and Tedford, in assessing their research, concluded that, “In light of the growing demand on pastors to function as counselors, we believe that seminaries should revisit their curricula and consider augmenting the amount of required counseling training for their M.Div. students.”<sup>19</sup> For this researcher-educator-practitioner, the research into seminary M.Div. counselor preparation suggests the need for seminary M.Div. programs to revisit the curricula to address:

- a.) The *purpose* of seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs: how should the seminary training location and the local church ministry setting impact and impart a distinctive pastoral counseling identity?
- b.) The *theology* of seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs: what view of the Bible shapes the way pastoral counselors form their theology and methodology of pastoral counseling?
- c.) The *pedagogy* of seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs: how could Evangelical seminaries in M.Div. programs equip students for pastoral counseling formation so that they think Christianly (content) and counsel effectively (competence) out of growing personal maturity (character) in the context of local church ministry (community)?
- d.) The *curriculum* for seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs: given that the average seminary M.Div. curriculum allows for one course in pastoral counseling, and at most two in some select cases, what should be taught, why, and how?
- e.) The *educator* for seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs: given the purpose, theology, pedagogy, and curriculum of pastoral counselor preparation, what credentials best qualify the professor to equip pastoral counseling students for the personal ministry of the Word in the local church?

Based upon insights raised from engagement with the preceding five questions, this paper proposes a way forward toward seminary M.Div. pedagogical best practice principles that could most effectively serve to equip the pastoral counseling generalist to be formed in the areas of counseling-related biblical content, Christ-like character, and counseling/equipping competence in the context of ministry in the local church community.

Notice the important *specific* nature of the issue being probed. This paper does *not* seek to address how best to train Christians as Licensed Professional Counselors in a seminary or Christian graduate school MA Program.<sup>20</sup> Instead, it seeks to address best practice principles for how seminaries in their M.Div. programs could train *pastoral generalists* for *local church* pastoral counseling.

According to the *ATS Graduating Student Questionnaire* (2010-2011), only 1.2% of M.Div. graduates expected to pursue a specialist position as a pastoral counselor. Only .07% anticipated work in the area of social services. Only .02% were looking for positions as spiritual directors. On the other hand, 53.9% of seminary M.Div. graduates anticipated placement in a local church pastoral generalist role (whether as Sr. Pastor, Executive Pastor, Worship Pastor, Youth Pastor, CE Pastor, etc.).<sup>21</sup> It is to this *majority* of seminary M.Div. graduates that we address the question of M.Div. best practice principles for equipping in pastoral counseling.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 426.

<sup>20</sup>For an initial proposal regarding this broader issues, see Sam Williams, “Secular Psychology, Christian Psychology, and Christian Counseling: Pedagogical Priorities for Teaching Distinctively Christian Counseling,” A Paper Presented to the Meeting of the *Society for Christian Psychology*, Nashville, 2007.

<sup>21</sup>Accessed at: <http://www.ats.edu/resources/student/pages/gsqonlineform.aspx>.

## **The Purpose of Seminary Pastoral Counselor Preparation in M.Div. Programs**

I not only teach regularly in the M.Div. program at Capital Bible Seminary, but also teach as an adjunct in several other Evangelical seminary M.Div. departments. After one adjunct experience, during the class evaluation process, one student remarked to the class, “This was *not* our father’s seminary counseling class.” The student noted that in days past and to this day in many schools, the one counseling class in the M.Div. is often taught as an “eclectic smattering” of methods to use for various “common counseling issues.” The class might spend two hours on depression, two on anxiety, two on premarital counseling, etc., all with a quick overview of eclectic theory of causation and a list of possible intervention methods.

I have since come to call this all-too-common model (a review of Evangelical seminary catalogs indicates the frequent presence of this approach *to this day*) the “*give-a-person-a-fish-approach*.” Students are given a fish for counseling and depression, a fish for treating anxiety, a fish for premarital counseling. Some problems with this approach include: a.) there are more fishy-issues than a class could possibly address in a three-semester hour course, b.) each fishy-issue, to be fully addressed, would take much longer than the two-hour segment allotted to it.

In that same class, another student chuckled as he said, “Well, this is also *not* my *cousin’s* counseling class!” Sharing further, he noted that, “When I told friends from other seminaries that we were learning how to think biblically about life issues by building a Christian worldview of people, problems, and solutions, they were chagrined. By comparison they felt they were only taught how to think secularly about life issues and that they rarely opened their Bibles.” The problems here include: a.) students are not taught to “fish from the Fisherman,”—that is, they are not taught how to develop a Christ-centered philosophy of pastoral counseling that provides them with a lifelong process for growth as a pastoral counselor, and b.) they are taught like a “fish out of water”: the training they receive does not match either the location of their training—a seminary M.Div. program—nor the location and identity of their current or future ministry—pastoral counseling in the local church.

### **Old Questions, Novel Answers**

Given that pastoral counseling is the ancient art of arts, it should come as no surprise that these questions of location and identity are not new. However, the “give-the-student-a-fish-approach” and the “fish-out-of-water-approach” are both more recent developments. McNeil, Clebsch and Jaekle, and Oden all document the grand tradition of pastoral counseling *embedded in pastoral theology focused on Christ’s gospel of grace*—the “learning-to-fish-from-the-great-Fisherman-approach.”<sup>22</sup>

Speaking more specifically of pastoral counseling in the American context, Holifield identified a radical shift in American church history from pastoral care founded upon a biblical theology (up until the 1860s and the advent of modern secular psychology) to a redefinition of pastoral counseling as a special branch of pastoral care focused on the knowledge of the psychotherapeutic tradition.<sup>23</sup> Jones explained that:

The loss of a clear pastoral counseling identity was vividly illustrated in an article by Thomas Oden in 1980. Oden studied the frequency of references to the classical pastoral tradition in the works of seven nineteenth-century pastoral care writers, representing six denominations. He found over 150

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<sup>22</sup>John T. McNeil, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951); William Clebsch and Charles Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964); Thomas Oden, *Classical Pastoral Care*, Vol. 3: *Pastoral Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987).

<sup>23</sup>E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983).

references to ten classical pastoral writers: Cyprian, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Richard Baxter, George Herbert, and Jeremy Taylor. Turning to the twentieth century, Oden examined seven pastoral care writers. Not one of these authors referenced a single work from the classical pastoral care tradition. Where, then, were these writers turning for authoritative sources in pastoral care and counseling? Oden found 330 references in these modern writings to Freud, Jung, Rogers, Fromm, Sullivan, and Berne. Over 1,800 years of wisdom and instruction on pastoral care and counseling had disappeared.<sup>24</sup>

Whether we consider this shift a welcomed innovation or an uninvited intrusion depends upon how we define pastoral counseling (the identity issue) taught in the theological seminary for local church pastoral ministry (the location issue). For Powlison, the shift to a psychotherapeutic focus was an uninvited intrusion. “The psychotherapeutic conception of ‘counseling’ operates in a different universe from the pastoral conception.”<sup>25</sup>

Powlison lists numerous differences between these “two universes” including a.) private time-fixed appointments for a fee with a technical expert practicing therapeutic professionalism that avoids dual relationships *contrasted with* an ongoing shepherding relationship experienced in community through the give-and-take of candid, constructive spiritual conversations with a compassionate bed-side manner with multiple relational connections, b.) diagnosis in ostensibly morally-neutral categories (like the DSM model) *contrasted with* an understanding of people, problems, and solutions derived from God’s Word, c.) a psychotherapeutic faith rooted in the assumption of a positive core selfhood *contrasted with* an understanding of our universal fall from and need of grace, and d.) the belief that God has no objective significance or necessary relevance either in explanation or treatment of dysfunctional affections, thoughts, behaviors, or emotions *contrasted with* the conviction that every second in every way every person exists as an *in-relationship-to-God being*. Freud also understood the differences and the intrusion—though he welcomed it—as he viewed psychotherapists as secular pastoral workers.

In pondering these immense differences between a psychotherapeutic focus and a historical and biblical pastoral counseling focus, we are forced to ask, How does the seminary/local church setting impart a distinctive tone to pastoral counseling identity? What pastoral counseling identity are we aiming at in seminary M.Div. training? What is the distinctive purpose of pastoral counselor preparation in Evangelical seminary M.Div. programs?

### **Ministry Done in the Name of God, Founded on the Word of God, Focused on the Gospel of Christ, Rooted in the Body of Christ**

What might it look like for pastors to learn in seminary how to fish from the great Fishermen—to develop a way of thinking about pastoral counseling that equips them to be lifelong learners? This paper proposes that it would include: a.) ministry done in the name of God, b.) ministry founded on the Word of God, c.) ministry focused on the Gospel of Christ, and d.) ministry rooted in the Body of Christ. As Williams explained, we must help pastors to “recognize the radicality and the relevance of the Bible, the hope and life-changing power of the Gospel, and the unique relevance of the Church ... that grants a uniquely constitutive role to Scripture, Christ, and the Church” all done in the name of God.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Ian Jones, “Counselor Preparation in Evangelical Seminaries: Reclaiming the Pastoral Counseling Identity,” a Paper Prepared for the 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the *Evangelical Theological Seminary*, Milwaukee, 2012, 14; from Thomas Oden, “Recovering Lost Identity,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 34, no. 1 (March 1980): 4-19.

<sup>25</sup>Powlison, 2012, 25.

<sup>26</sup>Williams, 3.

### ***Ministry Done in the Name of God***

In *Educating Clergy*, the authors framed the question of seminary pastoral education by noting that consoling a mourning family is an activity regularly pursued by therapists. “But what kind of person, educated in which ways and formed under what circumstances, is *entitled* ... to offer consolation... in the name of God?”<sup>27</sup>

John Piper, writing specifically about pastoral counseling, further explained the idea of ministry done in the name of God.

All counseling issues involve the exaltation or the denigration of Jesus Christ. Either our attitudes and feelings and behaviors are making much or making little of Christ. We were created to make much of Christ. There is no true success in counseling if a person becomes socially (or morally) functional without conscious dependence on and delight in Jesus Christ. This is the means and goal of all health.<sup>28</sup>

Such a life commitment should not be a novel concept for the Evangelical Christian seminarian. This proposal urges that this bedrock commitment of Evangelical Christianity to the glory of God in Christ becomes once again the foundational goal and identity of the M.Div. pastoral counseling student.

### ***Ministry Founded on the Word of God***

Ministry *in* the name of God is ministry *of* the Word of God—speaking gospel truth in love so that the entire Body of Christ grows up into the Head—Christ (Ephesians 4:15-16). Much more will be said about the theology and meaning of “founded on the Word of God” in the next section. This current section seeks to highlight the pastoral identity formation purpose of seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling training.

The ATS M.Div. *Degree Program Standards* relate Word-based ministry directly to ministry practice. “The program shall provide *theological reflection on and education for the practice of ministry*” (emphasis in the original).<sup>29</sup> M.Div. pastoral counseling students are to be pastoral theologians. Seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling courses should be the best of the best in equipping student/pastors to be theologians of pastoral counseling.

In much of the M.Div. curriculum, this is assumed. The art of preaching the text (homiletics) is based upon the art of exegeting the text (hermeneutics). The art of applying truth to life from the pulpit—the public ministry of the Word—is based upon the robust Bible and theology courses in the curriculum.

Unfortunately, a sad divorce occurs at times related to the personal/private ministry of the Word—pastoral counseling. This divorce seems to take two common forms: a.) divorcing the pulpit ministry of the Word from the personal ministry of the Word, and b.) divorcing the Word of God from the ministry of pastoral counseling.

Scott and Lambert described the all-too-common assumption that pastors are called to do only one type of ministry of the Word—the pulpit ministry of the Word, neglecting the personal ministry of the Word—pastoral counseling. They noted that Jesus taught and modeled “not the primacy of preaching but instead the primacy of God and his Word in both sectors—public and personal—that every church should

<sup>27</sup>Charles Foster, Lisa Dahill, Lawrence Golemon, and Barbara Wang Tolentino, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), x-xi.

<sup>28</sup>John Piper, “Toward a Definition of the Essence of Biblical Counseling,” A paper presented to the people of Bethlehem Baptist Church on December 12, 2011. Accessed at <http://pt.desiringgod.org/resource-library/articles/toward-a-definition-of-the-essence-of-biblical-counseling?lang=en>.

<sup>29</sup>Accessed online at <http://www.ats.edu/Accrediting/Documents/DegreeProgramStandards.pdf>.



practice.”<sup>30</sup> In light of which, they asked, “Why do so many today think they are following Christ’s example when they only preach and won’t minister personally to their people?”<sup>31</sup> Powlison answered, “Unfortunately, ecclesiastical habit focuses on the ministry of the Word as if it is synonymous with ‘the pulpit.’”<sup>32</sup>

Seminary M.Div. graduates need the complete skill set of the public/pulpit *ministry of the Word* and the private/personal *ministry of the Word*. As the ATS M.Div. *Degree Program Standards* state, “the program shall provide for courses in the areas of ministry practice and shall ensure a constructive relationship among courses dealing primarily with the practice of ministry and courses dealing primarily with other subjects.”<sup>33</sup>

Ideally, Bible and theology courses are taught *with a view toward* application both to the pulpit ministry of the Word (preaching) *and to* the personal ministry of the Word (counseling). In this approach, Bible and theology professors understand that they have as much responsibility for shaping the Word-based identity and training of pastoral counselors as do the pastoral counseling professors.<sup>34</sup> Ideally, seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling professors also understand that their calling is to shape the Word-based pastoral identity and training of pastoral counselors.

### ***Ministry Focused on the Gospel of Christ***

What makes pastoral counseling truly pastoral? What makes Christian/biblical counseling truly Christian/biblical? M.Div. pastoral counseling students in Evangelical seminaries need to be equipped to understand that there is a distinctively Christian approach to counseling that is much more than simply being a Christian who counsels, or who prays, reads Scripture, or evangelizes during counseling meetings. Evangelical pastoral counseling is distinctive because of Christ. It bears the unique imprint of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition addresses this focus.

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

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<sup>30</sup>Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases: True Stories Illustrating the Sufficiency of God’s Resources in Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Academics, 2012), 304.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Powlison, 2012, 31.

<sup>33</sup>Accessed online at <http://www.ats.edu/Accrediting/Documents/DegreeProgramStandards.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup>Likewise, the hermeneutics professor could seek not only to teach hermeneutics for exegesis of the text for preaching, but also for counseling. For instance, classes could examine the application of the hermeneutical spiral for developing biblical approaches to life issues. This may require cross-disciplinary team-teaching (which is a good goal) with the pastoral counseling professor (assuming that professor has training in hermeneutics and the original languages) assisting in course teaching. For the hermeneutical spiral for counseling see, Robert Kellemen, “A Theologically-Informed Approach to Sexual Abuse Counseling: Implementing the Hermeneutical Spiral” A Paper Presented to 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the *Evangelical Theological Society*, San Francisco, 2011. The paper may be accessed online at: <http://www.rpmministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/A-Theologically-Informed-Approach-to-Sexual-Abuse-Counseling-PDF.pdf>.

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.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Ministry Rooted in the Body of Christ***

To be rooted in the Body of Christ should not be read to imply that the only legitimate location for counseling is the church—even for pastoral counseling. Truly Christian pastoral counseling is missional—seeking not only to counsel those outside the church, but also to impact how those who do not claim Christ think about counseling.

The Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition communicates this nuanced perspective:

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.<sup>36</sup>

Notice in this definition that “pastoral counseling” is not only what the pastor does. “Pastoral counseling” is part of the full-orbed ministry of the local church and thus part of the role of the pastor is to equip the congregation to speak the truth in love. The church must not give over the care and cure of troubled souls to other voices because the church’s DNA includes wise counseling in daily life by people who know and love Christ and one another.<sup>37</sup>

### **Pastoral Counseling Identity**

Historians of pastoral care, Clebsch and Jaekle, recognized the impact of modern secular psychology on historic pastoral care and sought to provide a historiographical definition of pastoral care and counseling that could help to shape pastoral identity along biblical and historical lines.

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<sup>35</sup>The Biblical Counseling Coalition (BCC), “The Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition,” Lafayette, Indiana, 2011. Accessed online at: <http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/about/confessional-statement/>.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Powlison, 2012, 25, 28-32, 34, 37.



The ministry of the cure of souls, or pastoral care, consists of helping acts, done by representative Christian persons, directed toward the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meaning and concern.<sup>38</sup>

Kenneth Leech asserted that Clebsch and Jaekle's definition had become the standard definition for pastoral care and counseling, supporting his contention with the observation that the Association for Pastoral Care and Counseling had adopted the definition into their constitution.<sup>39</sup> Kellemen outlined additional evidence for the wide-ranging acceptance and influence of Clebsch and Jaekle's definition.<sup>40</sup>

Building upon their works, in one of the two core M.Div. pastoral counseling classes that I teach, I offer students the following working definition of biblical pastoral counseling. It captures the four-fold identity of the pastoral counselor addressed thus far in this paper and it captures the sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding focus of historic pastoral counseling.

Christ-Centered [*focused on the Gospel of Christ*], church-based [*rooted in the Body of Christ*], comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally-informed pastoral counseling depends upon the Holy Spirit [*ministers in the name of God*] to relate God's inspired truth [*founded on the Word of God*] about people, problems, and solutions to human suffering (through the Christian soul care arts of sustaining and healing) and sin (through the Christian spiritual direction arts of reconciling and guiding) to equip people to exalt and enjoy God [*ministers in the name of God*] and to love others [*focused on the Gospel of Christ*] (Matthew 22:35-40) by cultivating conformity to Christ and communion with Christ [*focused on the Gospel of Christ*] and the Body of Christ leading to a community of one-another disciple-makers [*rooted in the Body of Christ*] (Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:11-16).

In what precedes we have a working response to the twin questions of the purpose of seminary pastoral counseling preparation in M.Div. programs and how the local church setting impacts and imparts a distinctive pastoral counseling identity:

M.Div. pastoral counseling courses purpose to equip students to form the identity of a pastoral counselor who ministers in the name of God, founded on the Word of God, focused on the Gospel of Christ, and rooted in the Body of Christ for the sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding of people seeking to live like Christ in the midst of suffering and sin.

### **The Theology of Seminary Pastoral Counselor Preparation in M.Div. Programs**

What theology or philosophy of seminary pastoral counselor preparation in M.Div. programs would best promote the formation of the pastoral counseling identity of ministering in the name of God, founded on the Word of God, focused on the Gospel of Christ, and rooted in the Body of Christ for the sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding of people? What view of the Bible shapes the way pastoral counselors with such an identity would form their theology and methodology of pastoral counseling?

Notice again the very specific focus of this question. We are *not* examining the philosophy and theology of Christian graduate school MA programs with 60-semester hours for training licensed counselors. We *are* examining the philosophy and theology of the seminary M.Div. program with one or

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<sup>38</sup>Clebsch and Jaekle, 4.

<sup>39</sup>Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friends* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), 92.

<sup>40</sup>Robert Kellemen, *Spiritual Friends: A Methodology of Soul Care and Spiritual Direction* (BMH Books: Winona Lake, IN, 2007), 39-46.

two specific courses for training pastoral counselors with a focus on local church ministry. That said, both programs (the MA and the M.Div.), to be truly Christian, must address the follow-up question concerning what *view* of the Bible shapes the way counselors (pastoral or licensed) form their theology and methodology of counseling.

To address this question, we must introduce matters that could require book-length discussions on issues related to what theologians have described as the characteristics or attributes of Scripture. Grudem categorizes four such characteristics: *authority, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency*.<sup>41</sup> Frame collates six such attributes: *authority, clarity (perspicuity), power, necessity, comprehensiveness, and sufficiency*, labeling the first three as qualities of Scripture and the latter three as the relevance of Scripture.<sup>42</sup> Kellemen lists the four qualities of *authority, sufficiency, profundity, and relevancy*.<sup>43</sup>

In this paper, we are seeking to relate these foundational bibliography doctrines specifically to the ministry of pastoral counseling. We can think of the question this way. “Is the Bible sufficient for a Christian to become a competent dentist?” While the Bible is sufficient for the Christian to develop a way of thinking about “ethical dentistry,” classic definitions of sufficiency never claim that the Bible is a *manual* on dentistry.

Or, we could think of it this way. “Is the Bible sufficient for a Christian to practice as a medical doctor?” “No. Not if we mean the Bible is a physician’s ‘manual.’”

The specific question for this paper is, “Is the Bible sufficient for the pastor to be equipped to become a competent pastoral counselor?” Here the answer is, “Yes.”

The classical definitions of the authority, clarity, power, necessity, comprehensiveness, and sufficiency of Scripture *do* indicate that the Bible is sufficient *both for* developing a way of thinking about ethical pastoral counseling *and for* developing a *theology and methodology* leading to the practice of competent pastoral counseling. This is especially true given the definition of pastoral counseling and the description of pastoral counseling identity developed in the preceding section.

As shown previously, throughout church history, until the advent of the modern secular “talking cures,” the church always assumed, taught, and practiced the authority, sufficiency, profundity, and relevancy of God’s Word for pastoral counseling. As Lambert noted, we do *not* believe that “the Scripture provide Christians with all of the information we *desire* but rather with the understanding we *need* to do *counseling ministry*.”<sup>44</sup>

Modern Evangelical seminaries, in their training of students for the *pulpit* ministry of the Word, assume the authority, sufficiency, profundity, and relevancy of God’s Word for pastoral *preaching*. The entire curriculum is built upon this assumption. Homiletics classes seek to “integrate” original language classes, hermeneutics classes, Bible classes, and systematic and biblical theology classes as the necessary foundation for equipping the pastor-preacher for the *pulpit* ministry of the Word.

The same could be true of seminary M.Div. preparation for the *personal* ministry of the Word—pastoral *counseling*. Seminaries could teach “integration”—the integration of original language classes, hermeneutics classes, Bible classes, and systematic and biblical theology classes as the necessary foundation for equipping the pastor-counselor for the *personal* ministry of the Word.

The rest of this section will address why that is true by relating the classic issues of the authority, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency of Scripture to the personal ministry of the Word. How does a view of

<sup>41</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 73.

<sup>42</sup>John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Vol. 4 in “A Theology of Lordship” (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 210.

<sup>43</sup>Robert Kellemen, “The Future of Biblical Counseling: Dreaming a Dozen Dreams,” A Paper Presented to the *Biblical Counseling and Spiritual Formation Network*, Nashville, 2008, 1-5.

<sup>44</sup>Scott and Lambert, 14.

the Bible that highlights its authority, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency shape the way a seminary M.Div. program equips pastoral counselors to form their theology and methodology of pastoral counseling?<sup>45</sup>

### Classic Bibliology and Pastoral Counseling Ministry

Frame helps us to understand the intersection of the attributes of Scripture with the ministry of pastoral counseling by addressing a “maximalistic” view of Scripture compared to a “minimalistic” view.

Some have supposed that Scripture has a narrowly redemptive content and purpose, and therefore that it should not be expected to give us revelation from God in matters of interest to science, history, psychology, philosophy, and so on.... However, the purpose of Scripture is redemptive, but not narrowly redemptive in this sense. Redemption itself is very broad, renewing every area of human life.<sup>46</sup>

Powlison (2002) connected this comprehensive (maximalistic) perspective of Scripture to the task of the pastoral counselor.

Scripture proclaims itself as that which makes us “wise unto salvation.” This is a comprehensive description of transforming human life from all that ails us. This same passage goes on to speak of the Spirit’s words as purposing to *teach* us. The utter simplicity and unsearchable complexity enlightens us about God, about ourselves, about good and evil, true and false, grace and judgment, about the world which surrounds us with its many forms of suffering and beguilement, with its opportunities to shed light into darkness. Through such teaching, riveted to particular people in particular situations, God exposes in specific detail what is wrong with human life. No deeper or truer or better analysis of the human condition can be concocted.<sup>47</sup>

Seeing Scripture as authoritative and sufficient to help us to change lives with Christ’s changeless truth is not simply “counsel-speak,” but “theologian-speak” as Frame and Grudem demonstrate.

- “Scripture is God’s sufficient revelation to us today, for all of life.”
- “God’s language is authoritative not only in telling us what to believe and do, but in directing our emotions, our preoccupations, our joys and sorrows.”
- “*Scripture is always clear enough for us to carry out our present responsibilities before God*” (emphasis in original).
- “I have added *comprehensiveness* to this pair, to stress that Scripture is necessary and sufficient not only to our life in general, but to every aspect of it” (emphasis in original).
- “Scripture addresses all of human life, as only God himself has a right to do. It applies to all the situations of our experience.”
- “My basic definition: Scripture contains all the divine words needed for any aspect of human life.”
- “Scripture doesn’t speak specifically to every detail of human life” however “in one sense Scripture speaks of everything, for its principles are broad enough to cover all human actions.”

<sup>45</sup>Note that the purpose is not to argue for one “model” of pastoral counseling, whether described as “biblical counseling,” “Christian counseling,” “Christian psychology,” or some other approach—as important as those discussions are. The specific purpose is to consider the implications of an Evangelical theology of Scripture for the philosophy of equipping pastors in M.Div. programs for the personal ministry of God’s Word—pastoral counseling.

<sup>46</sup>Frame, 163.

<sup>47</sup>David Powlison, “Is the Adonis Complex in *Your Bible*?” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 22, no. 2 (2004): 43.

- “So we may formulate the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics as follows: Scripture is sufficient to provide all the ultimate norms, all the normative premises, that we need to make any ethical decisions. Scripture contains all the words of God that we need for any area of life, and all ultimate norms come from divine words.”<sup>48</sup>
- “The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will...”
- Based upon Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3; Deuteronomy 32:47; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Peter 1:23-25, Grudem notes that the Bible is “necessary for maintaining spiritual life and for growth in the Christian life.”
- “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contain all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.”
- “God considers what he has told us in the Bible to be enough for us, and that we should rejoice in the great revelation that he has given us and be content with it.”
- “Scripture claims that it is sufficient to instruct you for salvation” (2 Timothy 3:15; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23).
- “Other passages indicate that the Bible is sufficient to equip us for living the Christian life.”<sup>49</sup>

### Teaching to Fish with the Great Fisherman

In summarizing these attributes of Scripture, Frame explained that they point to “why Scripture is important to us, the ways in which Scripture is preeminent in our lives.”<sup>50</sup> His summary directs us toward an important question for seminary educators. *In how we teach pastoral counseling, do we support Scripture’s authority, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency so that pastoral counseling students see how God’s Word is preeminent in their lives and ministries?* Are students equipped to see the connection between the profundity (inexhaustible depth of wisdom and insight) of Scripture and the relevancy of Scripture to daily life and pastoral counseling ministry?

Welch (1997) elaborated on this connection as he described the breadth and depth of the types of comprehensive pastoral counseling issues the Bible addresses.

Given the degree to which God has revealed himself and ourselves, we can assume that the Bible’s counsel speaks with great breadth, addressing the gamut of problems in living. It is certainly able to speak to the common problems we all encounter, such as relationship conflicts, financial pressures, our responses to physical health or illness, parenting questions, or loneliness. But it also speaks to distinctively modern problems such as depression, anxiety, mania, schizophrenia, and attention deficit disorder, just to name a few. Of course, the Bible doesn’t speak to each of these problems as would an encyclopedia. It doesn’t offer techniques for change that look like they came out of a cookbook. But through prayerful meditation on Scripture and a willingness to receive theological guidance from each other, we find that the biblical teaching on creation, the fall, and redemption, provide specific, useful insight into all the issues of life.<sup>51</sup>

Welch is careful to note that the Bible is not encyclopedic. Lambert and Scott developed this insight further.

<sup>48</sup>Frame, 47, 54, 216, 207, 210, 216, 220, 224, 231.

<sup>49</sup>Grudem, 116, 118, 127, 127, 127, 127.

<sup>50</sup>Frame, 210.

<sup>51</sup>Ed Welch, “What Is Biblical Counseling Anyway?” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 1 (Fall 1997): 3.

- “Scripture does not contain every last bit of information that can be known. Scripture contains all things that bring the counseling task into focus like a pair of glasses. Scripture is relevant to the counseling task like a compass that reorients every problem. The grace of Christ is a master key that allows access to even the most difficult issues of life.”
- “Scripture has enduring and all-encompassing relevance—it is sufficient—precisely because it is not exhaustive but rather comprehensive.”
- “Only God understands the problems of humanity at the deepest level—and how to fix them.”<sup>52</sup>

Powlison added that “biblical truth is a corrective gaze”<sup>53</sup> which picks up on Calvin’s idea that we look at all of life through the spectacles of Scripture.<sup>54</sup> Powlison also noted that, “Our Father teaches us the common themes threading through all of life. Wisdom. A feel for how life breaks, a skilled engagement....” Then, addressing 2 Corinthians 1 and our God of all comfort, Powlison explained, “This dynamic of the living and omni-adaptable Word creates one of the many deep joys of Christian faith. It also makes you game to tackle any problem however unfamiliar, dark, and contorted.”<sup>55</sup>

The Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition, in “Article Two: Biblical Counseling Must Be Anchored in Scripture,” also seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the application of the Bible’s sufficiency to the personal ministry of the Word.

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

<sup>52</sup>Scott and Lambert, 21, 23, 301.

<sup>53</sup>David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 279.

<sup>54</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), I.6.I.

<sup>55</sup>Powlison, 2004, 24-34.

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).<sup>56</sup>

Scripture's comprehensive authority and sufficiency provide the philosophy—the pastoral theology—that shapes the way pastoral counselors form their theology and methodology of pastoral counseling. With this view of Scripture, Evangelical seminary M.Div. programs cast and implement a vision of equipping students to be *theologian-practitioners of pastoral care and counseling*. They help students to catch the vision of the primacy of the Word in public *and* personal, pulpit *and* private ministry. Equipped with this vision, students graduate with confidence, conviction, and competence that the Bible richly and robustly informs how they speak the truth in love for all of life issues—from the pulpit *and* in the pastoral counseling office.

This is where the image of “fishing with the great Fisherman” comes into play. Professors need to develop a bridge between the theological concept of Scripture's authority and sufficiency and the pastoral counseling ministry of speaking truth in love—the personal ministry of the Word.

But how is this accomplished? While this question will be addressed in more detail under the subsequent headers of the pedagogy and curriculum of seminary pastoral counselor preparation, now is an appropriate time to introduce the concept of educating pastoral counselors to explore comprehensive biblical life categories.

Mutter, in his study of seminary-based pastoral counseling education for ministry generalists, reported that such students benefit from instruction that provides *a framework for understanding pastoral counseling*.<sup>57</sup> To give a student a fish would be to provide students with a specific model, or school of counseling, or with a specific intervention method. On the other hand, to teach a student to fish with the great Fisherman would be to apply Mutter's findings by equipping students to read a biblical map outlining the compass points that every pastoral counselor must ponder. Comprehensive biblical life categories provide the “eye glasses” or “scriptural lenses” that equip students to “fish the Scriptures” and thus to develop *their own* comprehensive understanding of the personal ministry of the Word.

As *one example*, the syllabus course description for one of my two introductory courses in pastoral counseling reads:

This course explores the theology of biblical pastoral counseling in the local church (pastors and members). It assists church leaders to develop a Christ-centered, church-based, comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally-informed model of pastoral counseling that embraces life issues in a biblical and relational way. In seeking to discern what makes biblical pastoral counseling ministry biblical, the course will help students to explore the seven biblical categories of: *God's Word* (“What is truth?” “Where do I find answers?”), *the Trinity* (“Who is God?” “How can I know Him personally?”), *Creation* (“Who am I?” “What makes people tick?”), *Fall* (“What went wrong?” “Why do we do the things we do?”), *Redemption* (“Can I change?” “How do people change?”), *Sanctification* (“How does God change lives?” “How can I help others to grow in grace?”), and *Consummation* (“Where am I headed?” “How does our future destiny impact our present reality?”).

These “seven ultimate life questions” draw upon a view of the Bible's authority/sufficiency related to pastoral counseling ministry. They are one way to seek to capture or collate the types of areas that must be considered by everyone wanting to think through the art of arts. These comprehensive life categories become a grid, framework, or foundation that allows students to become life-long learners sitting at the feet of the great Fishermen.

<sup>56</sup>BCC, accessed online at: <http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/about/confessional-statement/>.

<sup>57</sup>Mutter, 74-75.



Pastoral counseling educators teach students “to fish” by equipping them to explore and exegete these master categories. Pastoral counseling students learn how to apply the comprehensive teaching of the grand narrative of the Bible to the context of pastoral counseling. They learn how to develop a comprehensive biblical worldview of people, problems, and solutions—the “stuff” of pastoral counseling. Students learn to appreciate, celebrate, and apply the profundity and relevancy of God’s Word to change lives with Christ’s changeless truth.

Using life’s seven ultimate issues (or some such overview) provides *a* way to implement practically an M.Div. pastoral counseling education model based upon the view of Scripture outlined in this section. The next two sections demonstrate how this approach has been and could be applied in a variety of M.Div. settings so students are equipped to derive truth for life from the Word of Life.

### **The Pedagogy of Seminary Pastoral Counselor Preparation in M.Div. Programs**

Having clarity about the purpose and theology of seminary pastoral education in M.Div. programs provides the necessary foundation for examining the pedagogical pattern of such preparation.

- The *purpose* of M.Div. pastoral counseling courses is to equip students to form the identity of a pastoral counselor who ministers in the name of God, founded on the Word of God, focused on the Gospel of Christ, and rooted in the Body of Christ for the sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding of people seeking to live like Christ in the midst of suffering and sin.
- The *theology* of M.Div. pastoral counseling courses focuses on equipping students to be theologian-practitioners of pastoral counseling who are able to relate Scripture’s comprehensive authority, clarity, necessity, sufficiency, profundity, and relevancy to the process of developing a comprehensive biblical worldview of the issues they will face in the personal ministry of the Word and to develop competency in addressing those issues in pastoral counseling by applying the profundity and relevancy of God’s Word to change lives with Christ’s changeless truth.

What pedagogical goals and objectives would seminary M.Div. pastoral educators seek to fulfill if they pursued the preceding purpose and theology? To address that question, it helps to begin with the broader perspective of the pedagogy, goals, and objectives of all seminary education. Foster, Dahill, Golemon, and Tolentino, in their research on educating clergy, addressed two overarching questions:

- How do seminaries prepare students for their roles and responsibilities as clergy?
- How do seminary educators foster among their students a pastoral imagination that integrates knowledge and skill, moral integrity, and religious commitment in the roles, relationships, and responsibilities they will be assuming in clergy practice?<sup>58</sup>

In seeking to answer these questions, their best practice research outlined four pedagogical categories:

- *Pedagogies of Interpretation*: Instruction in the disciplined analysis of sacred texts.
- *Pedagogies of Formation*: Instruction in the formation of their pastoral identity, disposition, and values.
- *Pedagogies of Performance*: Instruction in the skills of preacher, counselor, liturgist, and leader through which they exercise their pastoral responsibilities.
- *Pedagogies of Contextualization*: Instruction in the understanding of the complex social, political, personal, and congregational conditions that surround them.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Foster, 13.

Applying their best practice questions to pastoral counseling, leads to the following two overarching questions:

- How should Evangelical seminaries prepare M.Div. pastoral ministry students for their roles and responsibilities as pastoral counselors—for the personal ministry of the Word?
- How do Evangelical seminary educators foster among their M.Div. pastoral ministry students a pastoral imagination that assimilates biblical content, Christlike character, and counseling/relational competence in the context of Christian/church community in their roles, relationships, and responsibilities they will be assuming as pastoral counselors—in the personal ministry of the Word?

Applying their best practice focus to pastoral counseling leads to the following four pedagogical categories:

- *Biblical Content: Pedagogies of Interpretation:* Equipping in a way of viewing and using the Scriptures (*think Christianly*) to develop a theology and methodology of pastoral counseling grounded in the Word of God.
- *Christlike Character: Pedagogies of Formation:* Equipping in the formation of Christlike character (*out of growing personal maturity*) worthy of being emulated and that imparts credibility to their pastoral counseling ministry done in the name of God.
- *Counseling/Relational Competence: Pedagogies of Performance:* Equipping in the historic pastoral counseling relational competencies (*counsel effectively*) associated with sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding that are focused on the Gospel of Christ.
- *Christian/Church Community: Pedagogies of Contextualization:* Equipping in the cultivation of individual and corporate communion with Christ and the Body of Christ (*in the context of local church ministry*) so that their pastoral counseling ministry is rooted in the Body of Christ.

### **The Divine Counselor's Résumé Qualifications: God's Four-Dimensional Map**

These four pedagogical categories align with a four-fold pattern of equipping pastoral counselors that is as ancient as Romans 15:14. "I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another" (Romans 15:14). In this verse, the surrounding context, and other biblical passages we discover the four résumé qualifications of a nurtured graduate of an M.Div. pastoral counseling program of study. They supply a four-dimensional pattern of comprehensive pastoral counseling equipping *goals and objectives*:

- |                       |                                     |         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| • Content/Conviction: | "Complete in Knowledge"             | Knowing |
| • Character:          | "Full of Goodness"                  | Being   |
| • Competence:         | "Competent to Instruct One Another" | Doing   |
| • Community:          | "Brothers/One Another"              | Loving  |

The chart on the next page develops these pastoral counseling goals and objective in further detail with a focus upon departmental-wide goals.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., chapters 3-6, 67-186.

<sup>60</sup>For further development concerning how these "4Cs" relate to biblical pastoral counseling, see chapter 7 of Robert Kelleman, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2011), 179-200.

### **Pastoral Counseling Program/Departmental Equipping Goals**

Best practice seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling equipping follows Christ's disciple-making model of intentionally equipping the whole person: the heart (being: Christlike character), the head (knowing: biblical content), and the hands (doing: counseling competence), in the context of God's home (loving: Christian community) (Romans 15:14).

#### **1. Biblical Content/Conviction: "Complete in Knowledge"—Head/Knowing**

Educational Goal: Truth—Equipped to Know (Educating the Head to Apply God's Truth)

- Christlike Thinking
- A Sharp Mind for Biblical Truth: Biblical Wisdom
- Spiritual Foundation: Changing Lives with Christ's Changeless Truth
- Since powerful ministry requires biblical wisdom, Christ-like pastoral counselors must be educated to know and apply God's Word deeply ("complete in knowledge")—to think more like Jesus (*renewed* in Christ).

#### **2. Christlike Character: "Full of Goodness"—Heart/Being**

Spiritual Goal: Love—Equipped to Be (Enriching the Heart to Manifest Godly Love)

- Christlike Love
- A Soft Heart for Godliness: Spiritual Fruitfulness
- Spiritual Formation: Spiritual Maturity through Intimacy with Christ
- Since personal maturity is the foundation for powerful ministry, Christlike pastoral counselors must be enriched to be "full of goodness"—to love more like Jesus (*reflecting* Christ).

#### **3. Counseling Competence: "Competent to Instruct One Another"—Hands/Doing**

Ministry Goal: Service—Equipped to Do (Empowering the Hands to Serve God's People)

- Christlike Ministry
- Serving Hands That Impact Lives: Relational Skillfulness
- Spiritual Friendship: Relating God's Truth to Human Relationships
- Since relational ministry requires relating Christ's grace to human hurts, Christlike pastoral counselors must be empowered to skillfully do ("competent to instruct")—to serve more like Jesus (*reproducing* Christ in others).

#### **4. Christian Community: "Brothers/One Another"—Home/Loving**

Relational Goal: Connecting—Equipped to Connect (Encouraging God's House to Become a Home)

- Christlike Relationships
- A Sensitive Home That Connects People: Biblical Community
- Spiritual Fellowship: Relational Maturity through Intimacy with Christians
- Since effective ministry requires Christian community, Christlike pastoral counselors must be equipped to encourage the Christian community to address meaningfully the needs of people in the great tradition of soul care and spiritual direction where discipleship, counseling, and Christian community are united ("brothers")—to build community in Jesus (*reconnected* through Christ).

## Pastoral Counseling Student-Oriented Goals and Objectives

Foster, in researching clergy education, sought to identify how such education emphasizes and synthesizes pedagogies of interpretation, formation, performance, and contextualization.<sup>61</sup> Applying these concepts to this study, we consider how pastoral counseling education emphasizes and synthesizes biblical content, Christlike character, counseling competence, and church community. We do so by asking, “Given the purpose, theology, and pedagogical pattern of seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling courses, what might specific course descriptions and course goals/objectives ‘look like’?”

The next section outlines and explains a proposal for:

- A seminary-wide M.Div. process for fulfilling the purpose, theology, and pedagogical goals and objectives of pastoral counseling equipping that places specific pastoral counseling courses within the broader context of interdepartmental learning.
- A two-course sequence for specific pastoral counseling classes.

The rest of this current section outlines proposed course descriptions, goals, and objectives based upon the purpose, theology, and pedagogical pattern of seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling courses developed thus far. As a proposal, these courses are not suggested as *the* way, but as *a* way. Just as professors would be wise to teach students to fish rather than to give students a fish, this proposal is less about two “fishy” courses, and more about engaging the readers’ minds and encouraging readers to consider these “straw men” courses as samplers that prompt thoughts about application in their educational settings.

In this two course sequence, one course (Pastoral Counseling I—Pastoral Counseling Theology) is more of a “lecture-interaction” course focusing on exploring a comprehensive theology of life categories. The other course (Pastoral Counseling II: Pastoral Counseling Methodology) is more of a lab-experiential course focusing on developing a comprehensive practical approach to addressing suffering and sin through pastoral counseling.

### ***Pastoral Counseling I: Pastoral Counseling Theology***

#### *Course Description*

This course explores the nature of spirituality (spiritual theology) and its impact on pastoral counseling and equipping (spiritual formation through soul care and spiritual direction). A spiritual theology of life is presented and serves as a basis for pastoral counseling and equipping. Also studied is an in-depth theology of the soul as originally designed by God (biblical anthropology—understanding people), as deformed by sin (biblical hamartiology—how problems develop), and as renewed by Christ (biblical soteriology—the process of maturity in Christlikeness). Students are assisted to develop a coherent, comprehensive, and workable model of pastoral counseling that embraces life issues in a biblical, relational, and effective way using a historic Christian model of soul care (sustaining/healing) and spiritual direction (reconciling/guiding).

The course syllabus adds this additional description:

Further, this course explores the theology of biblical pastoral counseling in the local church (pastors and members). It assists church leaders to develop a Christ-centered, church-based, comprehensive,

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<sup>61</sup>Foster, 67-69.

compassionate, and culturally-informed model of pastoral counseling that embraces life issues in a biblical and relational way. In seeking to discern what makes biblical pastoral counseling ministry biblical, the course will help students to explore the seven biblical categories of: *God's Word* ("What is truth?" "Where do I find answers?"), *the Trinity* ("Who is God?" "How can I know Him personally?"), *Creation* ("Who am I?" "What makes people tick?"), *Fall* ("What went wrong?" "Why do we do the things we do?"), *Redemption* ("Can I change?" "How do people change?"), *Glorification/Consummation* ("Where am I headed?" "How does our future destiny impact our present reality?"), and *Sanctification* ("How does God change lives?" "How can I help others to grow in grace?").

*Course Objectives: Student-Oriented Learning Objectives*

- A. *Content/Conviction Goals:* As a result of successful participation in this learning experience, nurtured pastoral counseling students will be able to:
1. Conceptualize life's seven ultimate questions from a thoroughly biblical perspective.
  2. Use a theological model to understand and explain the issues people face in life from a biblical perspective.
  3. Develop a biblical and historical theology of humanity (anthropology), sin (hamartiology), and salvation (soteriology).
  4. Exegete the soul by conceptualizing four aspects of the soul's design, four aspects of the fallen soul, and four aspects of the redeemed soul.
  5. Create a plan for assessing their own areas of expertise and own limits, assessing the resources within their own congregation, and assessing the counseling approaches of others in their community in order to make wise "referrals" when "necessary."
- B. *Character Goals:* As a result of successful participation in this learning experience, nurtured pastoral counseling students will be able to:
1. Apply God's truth to their lives to grow in Christ in similar ways that they will apply truth to other people's lives in pastoral counseling.
  2. Develop a personal spiritual growth plan for becoming the type of person whose love for God, Christlike character, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit are worthy of being emulated and whose integrity imparts credibility to their ministry.
- C. *Competence Goals:* As a result of successful participation in this learning experience, nurtured pastoral counseling students will be able to:
1. Enter into people's lives with the truth and power of God's Word and the Gospel of Christ's grace in order to help people to mature and to resolve spiritual, relational, mental, motivational, behavioral, and emotional issues.
  2. Identify with people in pain and redirect them to Christ's grace and the Body of Christ through sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding (pastoral counseling).
  3. Develop a model for implementing one-another ministry in the local church through envisioning, enlisting, equipping, and empowering one-another ministers.

D. *Community Goals*: As a result of successful participation in this learning experience, nurtured pastoral counseling students will be able to:

1. Connect safely, honestly, respectfully, humbly, and deeply with fellow class members as a model for such connection in their local church relationships and ministries.
2. Strategize ways to encourage their congregation to develop the type of Christian community that exemplifies “speaking Gospel truth in love so the Body grows up into the Head—Christ.”

## ***Pastoral Counseling II: Pastoral Counseling Methodology—Lab***

### *Course Description*

In the context of a nurturing small group lab experience, pastoral counseling students will discover how to apply theology to the personal ministry of the Word. Students will learn how to think biblically (diagnosis through biblical wisdom), relate deeply (treatment through Christlike care), and communicate skillfully (intervention through interaction—speaking the truth in love) in the context of Christian community. Interpersonal interaction and dynamics, reading, lecture, role-play, live counseling, evaluation of taped and live counseling, and observation of live counseling will be used to facilitate personal and ministerial growth.

### *Course Objectives: Student-Oriented Learning Objectives*

A. *Content/Conviction Goals*: As a result of successful participation in this learning experience, nurtured pastoral counseling students will be able to:

1. Conceptualize a comprehensive historical pastoral counseling approach for dealing with suffering through sustaining and healing and for dealing with struggles with sin through reconciling and guiding.
2. Discern how to enter deeply into people’s lives with the truth and power of God’s Word and the Gospel of Christ’s grace in order to help people to mature and to resolve spiritual, relational, mental, motivational, behavioral, and emotional issues.
3. Understand spiritual dynamics and discern root causes of spiritual conflicts.
4. Create a plan for assessing their own areas of expertise and own limits, assessing the resources within their own congregation, and assessing the counseling approaches of others in their community in order to make wise “referrals” when “necessary.”

B. *Character Goals*: As a result of successful participation in this learning experience, nurtured pastoral counseling students will be able to:

1. Develop a personal spiritual growth plan for evidencing an increasing likeness to Christ as manifested by love for Christ, Christians, and those who do not know Christ.
2. Develop a personal spiritual growth plan for manifesting a maturing and Spirit-filled character of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.



C. *Competence Goals*: As a result of successful participation in this learning experience, nurtured pastoral counseling students will be able to:

1. Compassionately identify with people in pain and redirect them to Christ's grace and the Body of Christ to sustain and heal their faith so they experience communion with Christ and conformity to Christ even in the midst of suffering.
2. Provide loving wisdom that reconciles and guides souls struggling against sin so they experience communion with Christ and conformity to Christ.
3. Develop twenty-two practical pastoral counseling competencies within the areas of assessment and diagnosis, treatment planning and intervention, and techniques and skills.

D. *Community Goals*: As a result of successful participation in this learning experience, nurtured pastoral counseling students will be able to:

1. Experience interdependency and community with their fellow lab members.
2. Connect safely, honestly, respectfully, humbly, and deeply with fellow lab members as a model for such connection in their local church relationships and ministries.
3. Strategize ways to encourage their congregation to develop the type of Christian community that exemplifies "speaking Gospel truth in love so the Body grows up into the Head—Christ."

### **The Curriculum for Seminary Pastoral Counselor Preparation in M.Div. Programs**

In researching for this paper, one pastor-professor expressed the conviction that, "It is malpractice to have only one course in pastoral counseling in an M.Div. program." I would include some additions and caveats to that statement. It is malpractice to have only one course in pastoral counseling, especially if that one course is "eclectic" (giving a fish) and/or focused on providing a secular worldview of counseling (not learning to fish from the Fisherman), and/or is disconnected from the rest of the M.Div. curriculum.

While I would like to argue for a plethora of pastoral counseling courses in M.Div. programs, the reality of time constraints, competing educational needs, and statistics about the current average number of courses (reported earlier in this paper) would suggest that two M.Div. pastoral counseling courses may be the maximum realistic threshold. Therefore, this section proposes:

- A seminary-wide M.Div. process for fulfilling the purpose, theology, and pedagogical goals and objectives for pastoral counseling equipping that places specific pastoral counseling courses within the broader context of interdepartmental learning.
- A two-course sequence for specific pastoral counseling classes.

### **Interdisciplinary M.Div. Pastoral Counseling Equipping**

The ATS M.Div. *Degree Program Standards* require that "the program shall provide for courses in the areas of ministry practice and shall ensure constructive relationship among courses dealing primarily with the practice of ministry and courses dealing primarily with other subjects." They also require that "faculty shall relate the insights of their disciplines to the practice of ministry and shall be attentive to students' spiritual and professional growth."<sup>62</sup>

It is common for Evangelical seminaries purposely to align their original language courses, Bible courses, theology courses, and hermeneutics courses with their *homiletics* courses. Professors, at least in

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<sup>62</sup>Accessed online at <http://www.ats.edu/Accrediting/Documents/DegreeProgramStandards.pdf>.

theory, consciously see themselves as assisting in the preparation of future graduates for the pulpit ministry of the Word. There is an “integration” of learning so that these non-homiletic courses equip the preacher of the Word to understand, exegete, communicate, and apply God’s Word to God’s people from the pulpit.

The fact that M.Div. graduates feel inadequately prepared for pastoral counseling<sup>63</sup> may not simply indicate a failure in the one or two pastoral counseling courses, *but also* a failure of the entire faculty consciously to design their courses to “relate the insights of their disciplines to the practice of ministry.”<sup>64</sup> It may also indicate a failure of the entire curriculum to ensure a “constructive relationship among courses dealing primarily with the practice of ministry and courses dealing with other subjects.”<sup>65</sup>

The conscious blending of learning that takes place more frequently in seminaries with the pulpit ministry of the Word (homiletics) needs increasingly to take place with the personal ministry of the Word (pastoral counseling). Suggestions for improvement in this area include the following.

***The Pastoral Counseling Professor(s) Casts an Initial Vision and Champions an Ongoing Vision for Constructive Relationships***

By way of example, during my hiring process at Capital Bible Seminary (CBS) as Chair of the Master of Arts in Christian Counseling and Discipleship department (MACCD), I requested permission for a half-day meeting with the full faculty. During this time, I led an interaction as we explored the relevance of several passages, especially 2 Samuel 13, for addressing issues of sexual assault and sexual abuse.

We were able to experience together in collegial fashion the authority, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency of God’s Word for pastoral counseling issues. All faculty members were able to observe my foundational commitment to building an approach to pastoral counseling founded on the Word of God. I was able to cast a vision for interdisciplinary work in which every class in the M.Div. curriculum consciously seeks to prepare students not only for the pulpit ministry of the Word, but also for the personal ministry of the Word.

We were also able to talk candidly about the potential divisions that have occurred on other campuses between the counseling department and other departments. This paved the way for our future relationships. For example, on occasions when an M.Div. student would share with our theology chair the opinion that he did not need a pastoral counseling class; the theology chair expressed the unified commitment of the counseling department and the theology department to ground all ministry on the Word of God. In turn, on occasions when an entering counseling student would wonder why so many Bible and theology classes were required for his counseling training, our department would explain that the personal ministry of the Word must be grounded on God’s Word.

***The Pastoral Counseling Professor(s) Provides Resources for All Professors That Relate Their Courses to Pastoral Counseling Courses***

Because many Bible and theology professors in seminaries were trained “in their father’s pastoral counseling model,” there may be a need to assist them in seeing ways to connect their courses to the personal ministry of the Word. Offering to teach a section of an Old Testament course that addresses the “Texts of Terror” and exegetically relating those texts to abuse, would be one example. Offering to teach a section of a New Testament course that addresses Philippians and a comprehensive, Christ-centered

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<sup>63</sup>Firmin, 420.

<sup>64</sup>ATS M.Div. Degree Program Standards accessed online at <http://www.ats.edu/Accrediting/Documents/DegreeProgramStandards.pdf>.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

approach to anxiety and trust, would be another example. Teaching a segment of a hermeneutics course on how the hermeneutical spiral can be used for developing an approach to specific pastoral counseling issues would be a third example.<sup>66</sup> Another example would be to lead a seminary Pastoral Lecture Series on Colossians and how it provides a foundation for relating the sufficiency of Scripture to the daily life issues, suffering, sin, and sanctification of God's people.

## **A Two-Course Sequence for Specific Pastoral Counseling Classes**

As noted, Firmin found that of 31 Evangelical seminaries that traditionally served Baptist students, twelve required no counseling courses, seventeen required just one, and two required two courses (Capital Bible Seminary being one of those) in their M.Div. program.<sup>67</sup> When I arrived at CBS, there was one required pastoral counseling course and it was taught from the traditional "eclectic" approach. By the fifth year of my tenure (2003-2004), we began requiring two courses—those outlined in the previous section—Pastoral Counseling I (PC I) and Pastoral Counseling II (PC II) (we called them Discipleship Counseling I and Discipleship Counseling II).

Other counseling professors have asked how we were able to accomplish this when so many other Evangelical seminaries have zero or only one class in pastoral counseling course in their M.Div. program. Had we not developed a strong collegial relationship and had we not established interdisciplinary respect and assistance, it never would have occurred. Additionally, the positive testimony of M.Div. and Th.M. students who were taking the core counseling classes as electives had a powerful influence.

This section of the paper asks, "Given that the average seminary M.Div. curriculum allows for one course in pastoral counseling, and at most two in some select cases, what should be taught, why, and how?" The two sections on the purpose and theology of M.Div. pastoral counseling equipping addressed the *why*. The previous section on the pedagogical pattern of M.Div. pastoral counseling equipping addressed the *what*—providing course names, course descriptions, and course student-oriented learning objectives/goals for PC I and PC II. This section introduces the *how*—some of the practical, nuts-and-bolts pedagogical considerations.

### ***Ideas for Implementing the One-Class Approach***

To be truly practical, another question needs to be pondered first. "How should a course be shaped if *only one* course is required?" In my adjunct teaching, that is often the case. I have attempted to combine elements of PC I and PC II into a hybrid course. We cover the same "seven ultimate life questions" but not in the same detail, breadth, or depth ("something has to give"). We then add "lab elements" to the class. As outlined below, the labs include substantial actual counseling both in the lab and as outside assignments. The hybrid course has to limit that to a large extent. However, the course adds one-to-one interaction times during class where students apply aspects of the "seven ultimate life questions" to each other's lives. It includes live counseling demonstrations in the classroom, with some students reporting that even a few hours of observing live counseling "was the most powerful aspect of their entire M.Div. training."

Based upon class evaluations in these adjunct settings, "it" can be done in one class, even if the rest of the M.Div. program is not consciously focused on equipping pastoral counselors. Obviously, this is not ideal. However, if the "it" equals equipping students to form the identity of a pastoral counselor who ministers in the name of God, founded on the Word of God, focused on the Gospel of Christ, and rooted

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<sup>66</sup>Kellemen, 2011.

<sup>67</sup>Firmin, 422.

in the Body of Christ for the sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding of people, then a start toward that goal can be accomplished with one hybrid course.

### *Ideas for Implementing the Two-Class Approach: Transformational Equipping Strategies and Methods*

Mutter found that the curriculum taught in seminaries frequently leads to the separation of knowledge domains—theological studies/practical studies, as well as a separation between scholarship (classroom) and practice (experiential learning).<sup>68</sup> The “blended” learning of PC I with its “lecture-interaction-theology-applied-to-life-approach” and PC II with its “lab-practice-experiential-learning-approach” seeks to address this concern.

Mutter also found that in-class discussions, verbatim assignments, observation of counseling, practice counseling, role-plays, and number of direct contact hours correlate highly to pastoral counseling student learning. The pedagogical examples below demonstrate a blending of all those means of instruction and more. They seek to accomplish what Mutter describes as “the goal in teaching Practical Theology is praxis, the skillful embodiment of knowledge in the practice of ministry.”<sup>69</sup>

Foster, in researching clergy education, sought to identify whether clergy education has a “signature” classroom pedagogy, distinctive to it among the professions.<sup>70</sup> What follows is one example of some “signature” classroom pedagogy related to M.Div. pastoral counseling education. Consider the following outline “the *Readers’ Digest* version.”<sup>71</sup> The outline first explores transformational equipping strategies for the more “lecture-interaction-oriented PC I class, then explores transformational equipping strategies for the lab-focused PC II class.

#### *1. PC I: Transformational Teaching-Oriented Equipping*

Pastoral counseling classes can follow transformational teaching principles that involve creative, interactive, engaging joint-exploration and two-way communication of truth (content) related to life (character) and ministry (competence) in the context of relationship (community). Some of the “signature methods” could include:

- *Lecture*: Done well—with class notes, PowerPoint, illustrations, audio/CDs/music, video/DVDs, teaching to the right brain and left brain, personal sharing, interaction, application, and passion—the lecture method is one of the most efficient ways to communicate core biblical content areas in PC I.
- *Student Interactions, Ministry Implications, and Personal Applications*: PC I uses Richards’<sup>72</sup> *Hook, Book, Look, Took* model, such as opening *hook* discussions, *book* explorations relating God’s Word to life’s seven ultimate questions, interspersed *look* Prompting Discussion Questions, and lesson ending *took* personal implication and ministry application questions and in-class projects. PC I groups students in pairs, in small groups, or has the entire class interact. PC I also uses prepared questions and allots time for spontaneous Q/A.

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<sup>68</sup>Mutter, 68.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>70</sup>Foster, xi, 32-34, 68, 97.

<sup>71</sup>For an extended presentation of the “how tos” of equipping counselors in the church—that can easily be modified for equipping pastoral counselors in seminary classes—see chapters 7-10 of Kellemen (2012) (*Equipping Counselors for Your Church*.)

<sup>72</sup>Larry Richards and Gary Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1998).

- *Student Teaching*: We learn best what we teach, so PC I assigns students parts of lessons to study, prepare, and present—using various creative methods including debates, panels, etc.
- *Student and Teacher Sharing*: In PC I, personal examples, stories, and illustrations enhance acquisition of knowledge, skill, and character.
- *Case Studies, Role Play and Counseling Observation*: While sometimes reserved for “lab learning,” PC I also incorporates these methods into the teaching-oriented equipping.
- *Fellowship and Worship*: PC I includes prayer/praise, cheers/tears, worship CDs and DVDs, and testimony times to cultivate community—both horizontal and vertical.
- *Outside Assignments*: Required reading, research projects, personal application projects, ministry implication projects, and written papers are all effective methods used in PC I to enhance lifelong learning—including the final project where students develop their “embryonic” model of pastoral counseling.
- *Pedagogically Robust Assessments*: Quizzes and exams keep students accountable and stretch their learning, especially when questions go beyond mere rote learning to depth of concept understanding and application.

## 2. PC II: Transformational Small Group Lab-Oriented Equipping

Some “signature methods” in labs are best used in conjunction with a training manual or book. PC II uses *Spiritual Friends*.<sup>73</sup>

- *Content Interactions*: In PC II, students come to class having read assigned content sections of *Spiritual Friends*. The professor facilitates discussions and responds to questions about principles and methods of biblical pastoral counseling. Often these quickly “morph” into real life counseling situations.
- *Character Development*: Before class, students complete a series of character development questions. PC II uses this section of *Spiritual Friends* in several ways. Sometimes students pair up with their “lab encouragement partners” to share. Other times the entire class starts with a particular question, and the discussion soon morphs into a real life counseling situation. Still other times the professor simply invites people to share, “Is there a particular question that raised something in your heart and life that you want us to help you with?” Again, these often shift spontaneously into actual counseling interactions.
- *Competency Development*: Before class, students complete questions related to competency development. Some of these require the students to share how they might respond to a person with a particular issue. Others ask students to evaluate or discuss a case study. Still others suggest role-plays that they can practice with their encouragement partner or that we can practice in the group. Additional lab competency training methods can be categorized by thinking through increasing levels of “on-the-job-training.”
  - *Discuss Case Studies*: PC II facilitates discussions of case studies with background information and presenting problems and has the group explore relevant biblical principles (theory/theology) and how they would intervene and interact (methods).
  - *Practice “Meta-skills”*: PC II gives students specific, brief assignments to practice specific skills such as theory-guided listening or spiritual conversations. Often it is helpful to do these in triads: one person is the counselor, one person is the counselee, and the other person provides feedback. Then they rotate so that each person has occupied each role.

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<sup>73</sup>Kellemen, 2007.

- *Use Triad Role-Play Counseling:* This combines and goes beyond case studies and meta-skills. The professor shares a prepared case study, then one student plays the counselee, another student plays the counselor, and a third student provides feedback.
- *Use Group Observation Role-Play Counseling:* Here, instead of just one person observing, the entire class observes one student role-play counseling another, and then they all provide feedback.
- *Use Observation of Live Counseling by the Professor:* Either a class member or a member of the community is counseled live by the professor while the class observes. After the session ends, the professor/counselor, the counselee, and the class interact about what they observed and learned, and ask questions for clarification and instruction.
- *Use Live Counseling by the Student with the Professor Sitting In:* The class observes while a student counsels either another class member or a member of the community. The professor/supervisor is in the room and periodically offers feedback, shares probing questions, and occasionally and briefly counsels and then hands things back to the trainee. Everyone interacts about the counseling afterwards.
- *Use Live Counseling by the Student without the Professor Sitting In:* The professor and the class observe the student counseling someone live and all interact at the end of the session.
- *Use Transformational Meetings with a Paul, a Barnabas, and a Timothy:* PC II uses the time-honored, biblical three-fold equipping model in which lab students meet with a mentor (a Paul) for supervision and personal counseling, with a lab encouragement partner/spiritual friend (Barnabas) for one-another counseling and spiritual friendship, and with a protégée/counselee (a Timothy) to provide taped/supervised pastoral counseling.
- In using *Spiritual Friends* in PC II, the important principle to remember, as with any book or training manual, is that it is your servant, not your master. It is a guide to prompt discussion, not a list of questions you must cover in an allotted amount of time. Allow the material to prime the pump and get the discussion going, then use your biblical pastoral counseling skills to invite students to go deeper.

### Assessing Pastoral Counseling Pedagogical Approaches

The vital question is, “What impact do these pedagogical approaches have upon student learning?” To assess this question, *quantitatively*, a pre-test/post-test study was used comparing:

- The ATS Graduate Questionnaire of M.Div. students before and after the implementation of PC I and PC II at CBS.
- And the CBS M.Div. Graduate Exit Interview before and after the implementation of PC I and PC II at CBS.<sup>74</sup>

The ATS Graduate Questionnaire asked M.Div. graduates at CBS to assess their “ability in pastoral counseling.” On a five-point rating scale, the self-assessment showed a significant growth of over 1 full point (+ 1.1) after the implementation of PC I and PC II as required M.Div. courses. In fact, the ATS School Profile for the most recent year listed “ability in pastoral counseling” as one of the top five areas of graduate satisfaction in terms of “progress in skills related to their future work.”

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<sup>74</sup>PC I and PC II were first required in the 2003-2004 academic year. Since students who entered the seminary before those years would not have been required to take those courses, but may have graduated from 2003-2007, the pre-test/post-test examined the years 2000-2004 as pre-test and 2008-2012 as post-test.



Another relevant ATS Graduate Questionnaire category for pastoral counseling is “insight into the troubles of others.” The post-test self-assessment again indicated significant growth of + .70 in the years after the implementation of PC I and PC II compared to the four years before the implementation.

Capital Bible Seminary also uses an M.Div. Graduate Exit Interview for assessment. The year directly prior to the implementation of PC I and PC II, the lowest score for the seminary was for “preparation in practical ministry.” In 2008-2012, that score rose + .47 on a five-point scale. Also measured was “my confidence level for beginning service in a ministry position” which rose + .48 on the five-point scale. Since PC I and PC II also address growth in Christ-like character as course goals, another relevant assessment question relates to “contribution of CBS toward my spiritual growth.” The pre-test/post-test showed a positive gain of + .42.

Numerous factors, not simply the addition of PC I and PC II in the M.Div. curriculum, contributed to growth in these five areas from the ATS assessment and the CBS assessment that most closely correlate to this paper. Still, these are significant measures of significant growth measured *quantitatively*.

To add to those *quantitative* measures, two dozen M.Div. graduates from 2008-2012 who took both PC I and PC II were randomly selected to respond to a *qualitative* survey that sought to ascertain the potential impact of those two courses on their life and ministry. A response/return rate of 75% was obtained from a wide cross-section of African American, Asian American, Caucasian, and International senior pastors, associate pastors, youth pastors, and church-planting pastors ranging in age from late 20s to early 60s, and ministering in urban, suburban, and rural churches ranging in size from “mega-church” (over 2,000) to churches under 100 in attendance.<sup>75</sup>

Sample representative responses are included below. Notice that the impact of the courses included not only equipping for pastoral counseling, but also personal impact plus impacting overall ministry philosophy.

- “The PCI class helped solidify the all-sufficiency of Scripture for all issues of the soul. Previously I had to work hard to develop a framework to deal with various problems that people have and PCI provided a guide for me to do just that.”
- “The PCI class completely reshaped and defined my entire ministry—it defined biblical relational ministry as nothing else had. It gave me a framework in which to live, work, and minister.”
- “The PCII lab assisted in developing my use of God’s Word as the regular resource in ministering to the everyday ordinary, as well as extraordinary, issues I am confronted with in pastoral counseling.”
- “Through the impact of both classes, my relationship with Christ has become much more personal and not just cerebral. As a result, I am becoming more Christlike in my walk.”
- “Through PCI and PCII, I am far better equipped to hear, understand, discern, and speak to issues of depression, anger, anxiety, sexual addictions, marital discord, parent-child problems, etc. People in my ministry are amazed that a pastor is as well-equipped as I am to help them.”
- “As a youth pastor, PCI plays a critical role every day in how I minister to and counsel my students. I face so many different circumstances and brokenness in ministry and the training and theology has grounded me biblically to help them.”
- “The biblical content in PCI truly gave me the big picture through which I now walk with every broken person to give them hope in the midst of their greatest sorrow and pain and struggle with sin.”

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<sup>75</sup>A copy with the full responses to the five-question survey is available online at <http://www.rpmministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/ETS-CBS-MDiv-Qualitative-Survey.pdf>.

- “The sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding framework from PCII is foundational to every counseling session I have.”
- “Through PCI and PCII, I am (at least I think I am) a better husband today because of these classes. I don’t talk as much and I listen more attentively. I am quicker to understand my wife. I know that I have been immensely impacted, by PCI/II. I wouldn’t be close to the same man I am today if I not for these classes.”
- “The PCI approach to ministry completely changed my approach to pastoral ministry and pastoral counseling. My involvement in the PCII lab had a foundational impact on my ministry and on my life.”
- “PCI gave words and structure to the heart of pastoring. Observing pastors who were removed from the people they were shepherding and who had fallen into a CEO model of ‘doing church’ had left my heart desiring more. PCI recaptured the personal ‘life on life’ role of a shepherd who administers God’s timeless truth to aching, soul-sick souls in an incarnational way. The classic M.Div. gives the pastor the tools necessary to study and accurately handle the Word of God. PCI adds the foundational, relational structure and philosophy to undergird the ministry of making disciples.”
- “The strength and attractiveness of PCI for me came from the wonderful balance of sound theology expressed from the perspective of a practiced pastor who understands the human soul in the context of a personal God and an incredible story.”
- “PCI/II thoroughly equipped me to view counseling first and foremost through a spiritual lens.”
- “From PCI, I have grown tremendously in my ability to ask probing questions that get to the heart of the issue in others. I also have a greater level of courage, knowing that God wants to use me to be an instrument of change in another believer’s life.”
- “PCI has provided our caring ministry a firm biblical and theological foundation and guidelines to follow. As our ministry co-workers walk through God’s greatest story together, it transforms our lives together.”

### **The Educator for Seminary Pastoral Counselor Preparation in M.Div. Programs**

Who should teach M.Div. pastoral counseling students the art of arts? Raising this question is not intended to critique any person or school. It is simply the logical, practical follow-up to what has gone before.

### **Questions Growing Out of the Purpose, Theology, Pedagogy, and Curriculum of Seminary M.Div. Pastoral Counseling Preparation**

We are now prepared to ask the following questions:

- 1) Given the purpose, theology, pedagogy, and curriculum of seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling preparation what “credentials” best qualify the seminary educator to equip the pastoral counseling students for the personal ministry of the Word in the local church setting?
- 2) Given the purpose, theology, pedagogy, and curriculum of seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling preparation what past education location and past and present experience (work/ministry) location best prepare the pastoral counseling professor to teach in the seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling department equipping students to be local church pastoral counselors?

- 3) Given the purpose, theology, pedagogy, and curriculum of seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling preparation what past education and past and current work/ministry experience best prepare the seminary professor of pastoral counseling to fulfill:
- a) The *purpose* of M.Div. pastoral counseling courses which is to equip students to form the identity of a pastoral counselor who ministers in the name of God, founded on the Word of God, focused on the Gospel of Christ, and rooted in the Body of Christ for the sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding of people seeking to live like Christ in the midst of suffering and sin?
  - b) The *theology* of M.Div. pastoral counseling courses which focuses on equipping students to be theologian-practitioners of pastoral counseling who are able to relate Scripture's comprehensive authority, clarity, necessity, sufficiency, profundity, and relevancy to the process of developing a comprehensive biblical worldview of the issues they will face in the personal ministry of the Word and to develop competency in addressing those issues in the personal ministry of the Word by applying the profundity and relevancy of God's Word to change lives with Christ's changeless truth?
  - c) The *pedagogy* of M.Div. pastoral counseling courses which focuses on equipping students in a.) biblical *content* that develops a biblical theology and methodology of pastoral counseling grounded in the Word of God, b.) Christ-like *character* that imparts credibility to their pastoral counseling ministry in the name of God, c.) counseling *competence* to sustain, heal, reconcile, and guide people with a focus on the Gospel of Christ, and d.) church *community* that cultivates individual and corporate communion with Christ and the Body of Christ so that their pastoral ministry is rooted in the Body of Christ?
  - d) The *curriculum* of M.Div. pastoral counseling courses which is designed to cast a comprehensive vision that unites the full faculty in interdisciplinary equipping of students for the personal ministry of the Word and to equip students through transformational teaching-oriented equipping and through transformational small group lab-oriented equipping?

### ***Sample Purpose Questions***

- How might the professor having the identity of a pastoral counselor assist in equipping M.Div. students to form the identity of pastoral counselor?
- How might the professor having an educational background including Bible and theology help in equipping M.Div. students to become pastoral counselors who minister in the name of God and founded on the Word of God?
- How might the professor having past or current local church pastoral counseling ministry experience aid in equipping M.Div. students to become pastoral counselors rooted in the Body of Christ?

### ***Sample Theology/Philosophy Questions***

- How might the professor being a theologian-practitioner contribute to equipping M.Div. students to be theologian-practitioners?
- How might the professor having advance Bible, original language, and theological studies enable the professor to equip M.Div. students to relate Scripture's comprehensive authority, clarity, necessity, sufficiency, profundity, and relevancy to the process of developing a comprehensive biblical worldview of the issues they will face in the personal ministry of the Word in the local church?

- How might the professor having advanced theological training assist in equipping M.Div. students to explore core biblical life categories and relate them to pastoral counseling in the local church?

### ***Sample Pedagogy Questions***

- How might the professor being equipped with depth of biblical content assist in equipping M.Div. students to develop a biblical theology and methodology of pastoral counseling grounded in God's Word?
- How might the professor having education in church history support the equipping of M.Div. students in the appreciation for and the application of the historic pastoral counseling competencies of sustaining, healing, reconciling, and guiding?
- How might the professor having past or current local church ministry experience aid in cultivating in M.Div. students' individual and corporate communion with Christ and the Body of Christ so that their pastoral ministry is rooted in the Body of Christ?

### ***Sample Curriculum Questions***

- How might having similar theological education assist the professor to cast a comprehensive vision that unites the full seminary faculty in interdisciplinary equipping of M.Div. students for the personal ministry of the Word?
- How might the professor having theological training/M.Div. training aid the professor to equip M.Div. students through transformational teaching-oriented equipping and through transformational small group lab-oriented equipping?

### **Questions Growing Out of the Location of the Primary Professor's Education and Experience**

Picture this scenario at "Christian Evangelical Seminary." The two or three homiletics courses and all elective courses in that department are taught by the chair who earned his BA in Speech Therapy at Ohio State, his MA in Rhetoric's at Brown, and his Ph.D. in Public Speaking at Indiana University. His first vocational position was as a speech therapist for a five-county speech therapy center, his second position was training debaters for a political organization in Indiana, and his last position before his seminary role was as a speech teacher at Ball State. He is a committed Christian, but he has never taken a homiletics course at a Bible college or seminary, has never received any Christian higher education, and has never taught or preached regularly to adults in the local church setting. Now he is hired as the primary homiletics professor to fulfill the calling of equipping M.Div. students to learn how to preach in the local church.

Or, imagine this scenario, also at "Christian Evangelical Seminary. The two or three hermeneutics and principles of Bible study courses and all elective courses in that department are taught by the chair who earned her BA in English at a Christian liberal arts college, her MA in English Literature at a state university, and her Ph.D. in Literary History at a state university. Her first position was as an English teacher at a public high school. Her second position was teaching English literature at a community college. She also has experience teaching TESEL. She is a committed Christian, however, she only took one principles of Bible study class her sophomore year of college. She does not know the original biblical languages. She loves her Bible and as a lay person has taught classes for the young adults in her church for several years. Now she is hired as the primary hermeneutics professor to fulfill the calling of equipping M.Div. students to learn hermeneutics and principles of Bible study.

Would we consider the education and experience of these two primary professors to be a “fit” or “match” for those positions? While these professors might be considered by some to be qualified to teach one course or a part of a course as an adjunct, would most consider them qualified to be the chair and/or primary professor in the homiletics or hermeneutics department in an Evangelical seminary M.Div. department?

Of course, these are outlier examples. Or are they? Are they that extreme compared to the current realities in some seminary pastoral counseling education?

In light of those hypothetical questions about a hypothetical Evangelical seminary with hypothetical chairs of the non-hypothetical homiletics and hermeneutics department, what location and type of education might be considered a good match for the chair or primary professor in the M.Div. pastoral counseling department? We are not asking who might be qualified as an adjunct to teach one elective course or one section of one course. We are asking what educational background best equips the chair or primary professor in the M.Div. pastoral counseling department. We are asking what work/ministry experience (the location of experience) best equips the chair or primary professor in the M.Div. pastoral counseling department to equip students for the local church personal ministry of the Word?

Would a person whose educational background is exclusively or predominantly outside the seminary setting and whose course of study is exclusively or predominantly outside the realm of Bible, theology, languages, hermeneutics, and pastoral ministry/theology be the best fit or match for equipping seminary M.Div. students for local church ministry in pastoral counseling? Would a person whose work experience has been exclusively or predominantly outside the local church be the best match or fit for equipping students to be local church pastoral counselors involved in the personal ministry of God’s Word?<sup>76</sup>

The preceding questions are more than rhetorical. They deserve an honest answer. It would appear to this researcher that the primary professor assigned to equip the M.Div. pastoral counseling student would have qualifications such as:

- The ministry self-identity of a pastoral counselor;
- Past or current local church pastoral ministry experience including local church pastoral counseling experience;
- An educational background including advanced Bible, theology, hermeneutics, homiletics, pastoral theology, and original language studies, perhaps including the M.Div. degree;
- Being a theologian-practitioner with a biblically/theologically-informed view of the Bible that grounds pastoral counseling education in the Scripture’s authority, clarity, necessity, and sufficiency;
- A vision of pastoral counseling in the local church as ministry done in the name of God, founded on the Word of God, focused on the Gospel of Christ, and rooted in the Body of Christ; and
- The pedagogical training and experience to develop and teach pastoral counseling courses that creatively relate truth to life so students grow in biblical content, Christlike character, pastoral counseling competence, and Christian community.

### **A Proposal Toward...**

The somewhat controversial question of the best qualification for equipping seminary M.Div. pastoral counseling students should not dominate the discussion of the five overarching issues:

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<sup>76</sup>Mutter’s research into seminary-based pastoral counseling education for ministry generalists found that a professor’s ability to draw upon *ministry experience* was vital to successful pastoral counseling education, 71.

- What is the purpose of M.Div. pastoral counseling courses?
- What is the theology/philosophy of M.Div. pastoral counseling courses?
- What is the pedagogy of M.Div. pastoral counseling courses?
- What is the curriculum for M.Div. pastoral counseling courses?
- Who is the educator for M.Div. pastoral counseling courses?

We have been asking, what best practice statements of purpose, theology, pedagogy, curriculum, and educator lead to the most effective pastoral counselor preparation in Evangelical seminary M.Div. programs?

This paper is a proposal *toward* answers to these questions. As such:

- It invites thorough discussion and in-depth conversation about each of the five questions.
- It invites further biblical, theological, and historical research into best practices for the purpose, theology, pedagogy, curriculum, and educator of/for M.Div. pastoral counseling courses.
- It invites further, more detailed, quantitative and qualitative research into best practices in pastoral counselor preparation in Evangelical seminary M.Div. programs.