

#631 Contemporary Issues in Counseling  
Western Reformed Seminary  
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Spring 2023

## COURSE INFORMATION

### Course Objective

This course is designed for those desiring to pursue a more in-depth understanding of biblical counseling and the distinctive issues or problems encountered with particularly difficult counseling challenges. Topics covered include anger, worry, fear, depression, medical issues, learning disorders, eating problems, decision-making, gender issues, abuse, crisis counseling, and other specific subjects and situations.

### Student Learning Outcomes

By successfully completing this course, you will be able to do the following:

1. Recognize and explain eleven contemporary issues in counseling.
2. Contrast biblical approaches of counseling eleven contemporary issues with other approaches.
3. Apply biblical counseling methodology to these eleven contemporary issues.
4. Design a counseling course of action to deal with these eleven issues.

### Required Textbooks

- Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change*
- Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp, *How People Change*
- Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases*

### ACBC Questions – aligns with SLO 3 and 4

You will be required to answer six questions from the ACBC Theology Exam and five from the ACBC Counseling Exam. Using essay style writing, please respond thoroughly to each of these assigned statements or questions. Write your answers as though you are explaining them to a counselee, defining all terms clearly and precisely. Use 1.5 spacing. Your answers should be 1 page to 1 1/2 pages in length. Support all your answers with Scripture. You may use any written or oral sources, but you must cite your sources at the end of each answer. You will incorporate the feedback from the professor in your answers and resubmit them the following week.

### Reading Response – aligns with SLO 1 and 2

During this course, the student is responsible for completing all the required reading. The student needs to read carefully, thinking about how the material applies to his/her own life, as well as others he or she may be in contact with. One 3-page (one page per textbook) report on all that has been read. Please give concise but relevant answers to the report questions. Carefully answer all the questions below for each of your textbooks for this report! Include these questions and respond in accordance with WRS's writing standards (no bullet points).

#### Reading Report Questions

1. Did you read all the assignments? Yes \_\_\_\_\_, No \_\_\_\_\_. If no, indicate the percentage read \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What important principles did you see concerning the Christian life? (Please summarize them.)
3. Was there anything you disagreed with or had questions about? If so, what?
4. What were the most significant challenges or lessons you learned for your own life from the reading assignments?

5. Was there someone you encouraged with what you have learned? If so, please explain.

### **Article Analysis – aligns with SLO 1 and 2**

You will write five 2-page analyses of articles provided in this class. You will provide brief critique of an article's biblical argument and helpfulness.

Articles for Analysis (articles will be provided by professor)

- Joshua Blount, "Transgenderism: An Introduction to the Literature for Biblical Counselors," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 34, no. 3, (Fall 2020):48-68.
- Edward Welch, "A Discussion Among Clergy: Pastoral Counseling Talks with Secular Psychology," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 2, (Winter 1995): 23-34.
- John Bettler, "Counseling and the Problem of the Past," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 12, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 5-23.
- David Powlison, "Anger Part 1: Understanding Anger" *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 14, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 40-53.
- Edward Welch, "Counseling Those Who Are Depressed," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 18, no. 2, (Winter 2000): 5-31.
- Ed Welch, "Eating Disorders," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 9-13.

### **Critical Analysis Paper – aligns with SLO 2**

Write a 5-page analysis (with properly formatted footnotes citing pages you reference in each book) comparing and contrasting the two approaches of change in *How to Help People Change* and *How People Change*. Be sure to carefully analyze their use of scripture, theology, and hermeneutics for the way people change through counseling. You will need to answer vital questions, citing the Scripture that is used by each book: What role does the gospel play in the sanctification process of the believer of each approach? What role does repentance play in the sanctification process of each approach? How do the indicatives and imperatives of Scripture play their part in personal change? Conclude your analysis with a thorough list of strengths and weaknesses of each book and what was most helpful for you as a biblical counselor.

### **Writing Format**

All written assignments must follow *The SBL Handbook of Style*. You will find formatting samples and other invaluable resources on formatting at <https://wrs.edu/student-center/student-handbook-and-resources>.

### **Grading**

- Reading and reading responses – 30%
- Attendance and participation – 15%
- ACBC exam questions – 30%
- Critical analysis paper – 25%

## **Class Schedule**

September 5

NO CLASS (Labor Day)

September 11

ACBC Theology Exam 20

September 18

ACBC Theology Exam 21

Article Analysis # 1

September 25

ACBC Theology Exam 22

October 2

NO CLASS (ACBC Conference)

ACBC Theology Exam 23

Article Analysis # 2

October 9

ACBC Theology Exam 24

October 16

ACBC Counseling Exam 16

Article Analysis # 3

October 23

ACBC Counseling Exam 17

October 30

ACBC Counseling Exam 18

Article Analysis # 4

November 6

ACBC Counseling Exam 19

November 13

NO CLASS (NAPARC meeting)

ACBC Counseling Exam 20

November 20

Article Analysis # 5

November 27

Article Analysis # 6

December 4

Reading Response

December 11

Critical Analysis Paper

ACBC Exam Study Guide  
Theology Exam 20

Q: Explain the synergistic nature of sanctification being sure to describe the relationship between God's grace and moral effort in the Christian life.

Definitions:

Sanctification  
Synergistic

Scripture Texts:

Philippians 2:12-13  
Romans 6  
Ephesians 4:22-24

Resources:

Robert L. Reymond, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson, 1998), 767-781.

Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, New Com. Ed. (Eerdmans, 1996), 527-544.

Anthony Hoekema, "The Reformed View" in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley Gundry (Zondervan, 1996).

Sinclair Ferguson, "The Reformed View" in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald Alexander (IVP Academic, 1989).

Stuart Scott, "The Gospel in Balance" in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, eds. James MacDonald, Bob Kellemen, Steve Viars (Harvest House, 2001), 167-180.

ACBC Exam Study Guide  
Theology Exam 21

Q: Explain the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life describing the importance of this role in the counseling process.

Definitions:

Scripture Texts:

Genesis 1:2

2 Samuel 23:1-2

Psalms 139:7-10

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Isaiah 40:13-14

Matthew 3:16

Matthew 28:19

John 16:8, 13

Acts 5:3-4; 8:29; 28:25-26

Romans 6:1ff; 8:9; 15:13

1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 12:4-6, 11

2 Corinthians 3:6; 13:14

Galatians 5:16-25

Ephesians 1:13; 2:22; 4:30

Philippians 2:12-13

Hebrews 4:12 with Ephesians 6:17

Hebrews 9:14; 10:15-17

2 Peter 1:20-21

Resources:

Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Zondervan, 1979), 249-262.

Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Zondervan, 1986), 20-23.

John MacArthur and Wayne Mack, *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically* (Thomas Nelson, 2005), 79-87.

ACBC Exam Study Guide  
Theology Exam 22

Q: Provide your understanding of how the Holy Spirit guides Christians.

Definitions:

Scripture Texts:

Proverbs 21:1

Psalm 73:24

Deuteronomy 29:29

John 17:17 and Ephesians 5:26 with 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and Romans 15:16

Colossians 3:16 with Ephesians 5:16

John 16:8, John 17:17

Resources:

Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Zondervan, 1979), 23-25.

Jay Adams, *A Christian's Guide to Guidance* (Timeless, 1998).

ACBC Exam Study Guide  
Theology Exam 23

Q: Provide a biblical description of the church.

Definitions:

Church

Scripture Texts:

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:23-32, Revelation 19:7-8

Ephesians 1:22, 4:15, Colossians 1:18

Acts 2:1ff

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Ephesians 2:11-3:6

1 Corinthians 10:32, Ephesians 3:1-6, 5:32

Acts 14:23, 27, 2:42

Ephesians 1:4-6, 3:21, 1 Corinthians 17:7, 1 Peter 4:7, Colossians 1:24-29, Ephesians 4:7-16, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 20:17-35.

Matthew 16:18

Resources:

Robert L. Reymond, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson, 1998), 805-836, 837-912

Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Zondervan, 1979), 276-280.

ACBC Exam Study Guide  
Theology Exam 24

Q: What role should the church play in the counseling process?

Definitions:

Scripture Texts:

Ephesians 4:12ff  
Hebrews 13:17  
Colossians 1:28-29  
Matthew 18:15-17

Resources:

Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Zondervan, 1979), 276-296.

Paul Tautges, *Counsel One Another* (Day One, 2009), 153-171.

John MacArthur and Wayne Mack, *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically* (Thomas Nelson, 2005), 222-230.

Rob Green & Steve Viars, “The Biblical Counseling Ministry of the Local Church” in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, eds. James MacDonald, Bob Kellemen, Steve Viars (Harvest House, 2001), 225-238.

Deepak Reju & Mark Dever, “The Health of the Church and Biblical Counseling” in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, eds. James MacDonald, Bob Kellemen, Steve Viars (Harvest House, 2001), 239-256.

### **Case Study – Tim and Emily**

Tim and Emily come from a church across town, and have asked to meet you because of some help that you offered their friends several months ago. They are coming because of a persistent problem they have had in their marriage. They explain that in their six years of marriage Tim has always had a “short fuse.” He regularly “loses it” when he comes home from work which fills the evenings with tense communication. Their weeks are filled with arguments about everything from dinner being ready on time, to whether they should have kids. Tim thinks Emily is a good wife, admits the problems are his fault, but says he just doesn’t know how to “maintain control.” About a year ago Tim went berserk screaming at Emily, kicking the kitchen table and throwing plates on the floor in response to Emily’s complaint that he came home late without calling. Emily was always uncomfortable with Tim’s previous pattern of outbursts, but this was different. She was truly scared. Tim was too. In tears she told Tim that something had to change.

Tim talked to his pastor who told him that he needed to see a professional therapist. Tim followed the advice and made an appointment with the Christian counselor whom his pastor recommended. Tim met with the therapist for a few sessions, who ultimately recommended he see a psychiatrist for medical care. When Tim met with the psychiatrist he was told that he had bi-polar disorder and began to take the medications prescribed by the physician.

Tim was initially discouraged to learn that he had a disease that would likely last his entire life, but he was thankful to have a plan to deal with problem. Emily was also encouraged that there was now at least something they could do.

Their encouragement quickly gave way, however, when after several months on the medication Tim had still not really changed. While his temperament seemed milder in general the loss of control, and screaming were still present. It was at this point that Emily began to regret ever marrying Tim. All the arguments together with the couple’s lack of children were taking their toll. She realized she was in a marriage that she did not want to be in, but didn’t think she had any options.

Then last week Tim “went completely crazy.” Emily suggested on a Saturday morning that Tim should cut the grass because he had not done it the week before. Tim did more than scream and throw things this time. As he yelled and became more “worked up” he threw the phone at Emily. He missed her, knocking a hole in the wall, but they both knew he had crossed a line.

Emily said she couldn’t take it anymore and wanted out of the marriage. She told him that if something didn’t change very quickly she was going to leave. That is when he reached out to his friend who recommended you.

Tim and Emily both profess faith in Christ, and relate their testimonies of conversion in their teen years. Both are also terribly discouraged. Tim doesn’t know how to treat Emily better since he is “plagued” by this disease. Emily loves Tim and would like their marriage to work, but she is worn out with the lack of change. She feels badly about wanting to leave because she knows he has an illness, but she is increasingly convinced that God is telling her to divorce Tim.

ACBC Exam Study Guide  
Counseling Exam 16 (see case study)

Q: How will you decide whether to pursue Tim and Emily as believers or unbelievers? What difference will their status as Christians make in your counseling?

Key Resources:

Jay Adams, *Ready to Restore* (P&R, 1981), 20-23.

Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Zondervan, 1979), 22-23.

Jay Adams, *A Christian Counselor's Manual* (Zondervan, 1973), 37.

Howard Eyrich & William Hines, *Curing the Heart* (Mentor, 2007), 187-193.

ACBC Exam Study Guide  
Counseling Exam 17 (see case study)

Q: Describe, as fully as you are able, your strategy to help Tim and Emily think biblically about his diagnosis and their use of bi-polar and illness language.

Key Resources:

Elyse Fitzpatrick & Laura Hendrickson, *Will Medicine Stop the Pain?*, (Moody, 2006), 50-51.

Garrett Higbee, "Tony and Bipolar Disorder" in Stuart Scott & Heath Lambert, eds., *Counseling the Hard Cases* (B&H Academic, 2012), 171-198.

Charles Hodges, *Good Mood Bad Mood* (Shepherd Press, 2013), 175-180.

Robert Smith, *The Christian Counselor's Medical Desk Reference* (Timeless, 2000), 216-219, 366-367.

Edward Welch, *Blame it on the Brain* (P&R, 1998).

ACBC Exam Study Guide  
Counseling Exam 18 (see case study)

Q: Emily is “Convinced that God is telling her to divorce Tim.” Write out your word-for-word response to Emily on this matter. In your response, be sure to address the themes of biblical decision-making and permission for divorce and remarriage.

Key Resources:

Decision-making

Jay Adams, *A Christian's Guide to Guidance* (Timeless, 1998).

Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Zondervan, 1979), 23-34.

Gary Gilley, *Is That You, Lord?* (Evangelical Press, 2007).

Stuart Scott, “Biblical Decision-Making” in *Biblical Manhood* (Focus, 2009), 59-78.

Divorce & Remarriage

Jay Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible* (Zondervan, 1980).

John Murray, *Divorce* (P&R, 1961).

Jim Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers*, (P&R, 2017).

John MacArthur, *The Divorce Dilemma* (Day One, 2009).

John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage* (Crossway, 2009), 157-176.

ACBC Exam Study Guide  
Counseling Exam 19 (see case study)

Q: What strategy would you employ to see repentance, reconciliation, and restoration happen between Tim and Emily?

Key Resources:

Robert Jones, *Pursuing Peace* (Crossway, 2012).

Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Baker, 2004).

Stuart Scott, *Communication and Conflict Resolution* (Focus, 2005).

Paul Tripp, *What Did You Expect?* (Crossway, 2010).

ACBC Exam Study Guide  
Counseling Exam 20 (see case study)

Q: Describe a detailed plan of restoring marital communication that you would pursue with Tim and Emily.

Key Resources:

Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Zondervan, 1970), 211-241.

Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage* (P&R, 1977), 55-90 (Unit 4).

Stuart Scott, *Communication and Conflict Resolution* (Focus, 2005),

Paul Tripp, *War of Words* (P&R, 2000).