



Revised and Updated

# Counseling One Another

A Theology of **Inter**personal Discipleship

PAUL TAUTGES

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**Paul Tautges**

Shepherd Press

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# Endorsements

*This book gets it right! Comprehensive and convincing, Counseling One Another shows how true biblical counseling and preaching fit hand-in-glove. Those who preach, teach, or counsel regularly are sure to benefit greatly from this helpful resource.*

**Dr. John MacArthur**, pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California; author; and Bible teacher on the Grace to You radio program

*A gathering storm surrounds the day in which we live, a dark hour in which the absolute sufficiency of the Scripture has come under attack. But how refreshing—and rare—to see a book like this that asserts the irresistible power of God’s Word to develop true discipleship by the sovereign working of His Spirit. This is not a ‘trendy book’ like so many, blown about by the prevailing evangelical winds. Rather, here is an anchor for authentic ministry that will stimulate real spiritual growth in God’s people. May the Lord set an open door before this book and use it to affect the lives of many.*

**Dr. Steven J. Lawson**, President of One Passion Ministries; speaker; and author of many books, including *Famine in the Land*, *The Expository Genius of John Calvin*, and *Foundations of Grace*

*Like their pastors, most Christians have adopted a professionalized or psychologized view of counseling that naturally excludes uneducated laity. This is why I believe that this book, Counseling One Another, addresses a serious deficiency in the discipleship ministry of Christians within the church. It advocates a radical departure from the status quo and a return to an authentic personal ministry of the Word among Christians through discipleship counseling. It effectively lays the theological foundation for Christians regaining the New Testament priority of addressing personal soul troubles with biblical counsel.*

**Dr. John D. Street**, Chair, Graduate Program in Biblical Counseling, The Master’s College and Seminary, Santa Clarita, California

*In Counseling One Another, Paul Tautges lays the theological foundation for biblical counseling—in a way that is both comprehensive and compassionate. This book demonstrates a staunch commitment to an expository, exegetical examination of counseling as presented in God’s Word. Any pastor or lay person wanting a foundational starting point for understanding Christ-centered, comprehensive, and compassionate biblical counseling in the local church would be wise to read and reread Counseling One Another.*

**Bob Kellemen, Ph.D.**, Crossroads Bible College; Author of *Gospel-Centered Counseling*

*The ministry of counseling has for too long been relegated to the professional counselor. Paul Tautges brings the biblical command for discipleship right back to the local church and to all believers. He takes the word “counseling,” a word often perceived as being for professionals only (and threatening to average church laymen), and helps to reduce that fear, encouraging believers to fulfill their responsibility by uniquely redefining this ministry biblically as intensely focused and personal discipleship.*

*Rather than send people who are struggling spiritually, socially, and emotionally to a limited group of professionals, Tautges makes the case theologically that all church members have the responsibility to disciple one another and restore hurting people. He makes it clear that it is not just pastors who are responsible for counseling, but it is a “one-another-ministry” for all who claim the name of Christ.*

*Counseling One Another is a must-read for all pastors and believers who take Matthew 28 and discipleship in the local church seriously.*

**Dr. Ron Allchin**, ACBC Fellow, Executive Director of the Biblical Counseling Center, Arlington Heights, Illinois, and author of *Ripening Sonship*

*Do you want the members of your community of faith to effectively serve each another in love? This book is aimed at equipping them to do that. It is a primer on the balance of features that biblically committed discipling must include. Paul Tautges shows that counseling, not in a clinical, professional or technical sense, but in the “one anothering” sense, is suffused with discipleship. They can’t be separated. Counseling is one integral, unavoidable, needed component for the building up of the body. Counterfeits abound. Tautges warns us about them. But the positive force of this book fleshes out sound biblical features of “one another” counseling within a ministry committed to Scripture, the cross, and the church.*

**Rick Horne**, D.Min., TUMI-Chester, Site Coordinator/Professor,  
rhone@worldimpact.org

*Paul Tautges’ book is readable, accessible, practical, and biblical. More than just a handbook for Christian counselors, Counseling One Another encourages and enables the church to address the need for biblical discipleship. Loaded with information and application, this is an excellent workbook for all Christians who are seeking to grow in grace and take their rightful place in the body of Christ.*

**Dr. Jim Winter**, UK pastor for over thirty years, international lecturer, and author of *Opening up Ecclesiastes*, *Depression: A Rescue Plan*, and *Travel with William Booth*

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# Foreword

It is unfortunate that the idea of Christians counseling one another has largely fallen into disfavor in the contemporary church. If you were to admonish average born-again Christians with the responsibility of counseling others, the common excuse would often be, “I’m not a counselor! That’s something for a credentialed professional with a special gift and a PhD” Counseling is not conceived as a significant aspect of personal ministry for individual Christians in the church. For them, counseling is complicated, private and messy, something reserved for the specialist. This sophisticated, often sullied job is not the type most Christians are anxious to pursue. Essentially, this attitude has greatly diminished the personal ministry of the Word of God and gravely weakened the church.

How has such a narrow and negative view of Christians counseling one another become so entrenched in the church? For many pastors, it begins in the seminary. Most pastoral counseling classes strictly train pastors so that they are ill-equipped to handle serious soul turmoil, much less teach others to do so. Theological training is insufficient to deal with refined layers of consciousness. Only a licensed psychotherapist has the educated insight to decipher the complexities of the psyche. When this occurs, a seminary has tacitly acknowledged that the Bible is at best a primitive psychology, insufficiently sophisticated in matters of the soul.

Additionally, many seminaries teach a truncated view of ministry. Pulpit preaching is the exclusive task of the pastor, not counseling. Many men go to seminary to learn how to preach sermons, not shepherd individual souls or train congregations to counsel. As long as a pastor can preach a good sermon, he is well equipped to pastor a church. Not only does this concept of pastoral ministry violate the discipleship ministry of the New Testament church (Acts 20:20, 31; Col. 1:28–29), but it is also a wrong view of preaching. Preaching today is often restricted to the delivery of homiletical sermons from a church pulpit. But the New Testament semantic range of the word (2 Tim. 4:2; “to preach,” Greek *kerusso*) is much broader and encompasses the meaning of the personal preaching of the Word through counseling.<sup>1</sup> One-on-one

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counseling is one form of proclaiming or preaching the Word, other than the proclamation of the Word from a pulpit.

Like their pastors, most Christians have adopted a professionalized or psychologized view of counseling that naturally excludes uneducated laity. This is why I believe this book, *Counseling One Another*, addresses a serious deficiency in the discipleship ministry of Christians within the church. It advocates a radical departure from the status quo and a return to an authentic personal ministry of the Word among Christians through discipleship counseling. It effectively lays the theological foundation for Christians regaining the New Testament priority of addressing personal soul troubles with biblical counsel.

**Dr. John D. Street**

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Dedicated to  
Dick and Pat Otte,  
human instruments of God,  
who not only pointed me to salvation in Jesus Christ  
but, like Paul in Corinth, invested almost two years  
of their lives teaching me the way of discipleship  
&  
Jerry Bridges,  
who has discipled me through his books  
from my earliest days as a believer.



# The Cause for This Book

## Chapter 1

Recent comments in an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* testify to the church's growing confidence in Christian psychology as the answer to the church's need for the ministry of counseling. In this brief article entitled "Growing Christian Shrinks," Cara Marcano states, "Psychology is one of the 10 largest majors at the more than 100 schools that are members of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities," according to the council's vice president.<sup>1</sup> The Christian interest in embracing psychology and religiously mixing it into a crock of therapeutic stew continues to rise. Hence, there is a need for a study of the type of counseling ministry that will benefit believers the most.

Ms. Marcano goes on to affirm that the most popular Christian psychologists "are still those who keep their faith separate from their discipline. [For example] David Myers, a professor at Hope College in Holland, Mich., and the author of a well-known introductory psychology text, is also a Christian. But he is hardly known as a Christian at all in most mainstream psychological circles."<sup>2</sup> The discerning believer is thus forced to ask how a Christian author can write a textbook on the science of human behavior and leave Jesus Christ out. How can a famous Christian psychologist not even be known as a Christian in his closest circle of influence? How can a psychology that is called "Christian" (*like Christ*) be indistinguishable from anything the rest of the world has to offer? No wonder Christian psychologists are so popular! The offense of the cross has been trumped by a greater love for social and intellectual acceptance, resulting in the man-centered theories of human behavior these psychological counselors promote being so readily received. The reason for this appears to be that these theories have been completely gutted of *true* biblical psychology—a worldview that exalts Jesus Christ as the perfect God-man, the crucified and risen Lord who came to save sinners from the penalty and power of indwelling sin.

The *Wall Street Journal* article rightly gives credit to Fuller Seminary, located in Pasadena, California, for pioneering the integration of psychology and theology. Fuller's "was the first clinical psychology program outside a university to receive accreditation from the American Psychological Association. Its model, which is increasingly popular at Christian colleges in the U.S., combines serious theological study with

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rigorous psychological training, promoting ‘the cross in the heart of psychology.’”<sup>3</sup> However, what the article could not even have begun to uncover is the root cause of Fuller Seminary’s love affair with psychology; that is, its willful departure from sound theology, most particularly, its rejection of the inerrancy of Scripture, and the resulting loss of confidence in Scripture’s authority and sufficiency for life. In a day when doctrinal compromise is all too common, the church’s faith in the sufficiency of the Bible must be restored. A brief history lesson is in order.

### A History Lesson

The account of Fuller’s doctrinal shift is astutely recorded by historian George Marsden in his intriguing book *Reforming Fundamentalism*.<sup>4</sup> The book’s subtitle, *Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*, indicates how one seminary’s departure from its confidence in the Scriptures serves as an illustration of the change in Bible-believing Christianity in general. The primary goal of Charles Fuller and the other founders in 1947 was to establish a school of higher learning that would fill the void left by the loss of Princeton (and other institutions) to theological liberalism. Harold Lindsell, one of Fuller’s four original faculty members, later wrote about the school’s beginnings in his bombshell book on the war against inerrancy, *The Battle for the Bible*. In the chapter entitled “The Strange Case of Fuller Theological Seminary,” Lindsell provides the following commentary on the school’s beginnings: “He [Charles Fuller] and the founding fathers, including the founding faculty, were of one mind with respect to the Scriptures. It was agreed from the inception of the school that through the seminary curriculum the faculty would provide the finest theological defense of biblical infallibility or inerrancy.”<sup>5</sup> The desire of the founders was to create a place where both the evangelist and the scholar could be trained to offset the destruction caused by modernism. A highly intelligent faculty would also be given time to publish substantial theological works that would earn a level of respectability for the school and movement. In so doing, they believed they could create a New Evangelicalism that held firmly to the fundamental doctrines of Scripture, yet discarded the harsh spirit prevalent in cultural fundamentalism.

According to George Marsden, a big break came when Edward J. Carnell, one of Fuller's brightest theological minds, secured a book contract with a major secular publisher, which was considered "a great triumph for the new evangelicals."<sup>6</sup> However, the arrival of the book, *Christian Commitment: An Apologetic*, in 1957 was a significant shift away from the biblical, Christ-centered gospel toward a psychologized, man-centered message. According to Marsden, this original volume from Carnell's pen specifically "played down the gospel's offenses to secular culture."<sup>7</sup> In addition, his apologetic works in general were "conspicuous among evangelical literature in their relatively sparse references to Scripture."<sup>8</sup> This absence of the Word of God in his writings was intentional, as Carnell sought to persuade the unbelieving mind of the truth of Christianity not by appealing to the authority of Scripture, which unbelievers often scoff at, "but to truths derived from some common human experience."<sup>9</sup> Thus the way was prepared for human reason, based on experience, to eclipse the biblical gospel.

The subsequent downgrade from questioning the authority of Scripture to rejecting its sufficiency for life and godliness was no surprise. Though Fuller Seminary's original roots clung deeply to the authority of God's Word and the supremacy of the saving gospel of Christ, what became apparent only a decade after its founding was the snowball effect of theological compromise as the seminary's scholars "were now asking what they could learn from contemporary thought."<sup>10</sup> It quickly became apparent that faith in the authority of Scripture waned in direct proportion to their growing confidence in human philosophy.

Three years later, in 1960, Carnell published another work, *The Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life*. Marsden notes that this book "was more modest, gentle, and artful than his other books. He had been reading Freud [1856–1939] and was impressed by the coincidence of the insights of modern psychology and what he himself was seeing more and more as the heart of the gospel." Therefore, "Christian apologetics, he argued ... must add to its repertoire an appeal to the universal need for love."<sup>11</sup> This may appear to have been merely a small addition to the Christian faith, but in reality it was an enormous step away from the heart of the biblical gospel. Instead of holding to the truth that man is utterly depraved and in need of God's gracious redemption,

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Carnell began to believe man's root problem was unmet psychological needs. Adding the teachings of Sigmund Freud to the teachings of Jesus Christ could result in nothing less than a departure from biblical truth, since Freud considered himself a savior whose purpose was to rescue people from the bondage of faith in God. Os Guinness writes, "It is well known that Freud dismissed religion as an 'illusion' and saw himself as a 'new Moses' with [Carl Gustav] Jung as his 'Joshua.' He advocated psychotherapy as 'a reeducation' for a new human civilization through a complete reversal of Mosaic morality and God-grounded objective guilt. Psychological liberty to Freud was a matter of messianic liberation."<sup>12</sup> Edward Carnell's digression from the Christ-centered gospel of Scripture to the man-centered gospel of Freudianism fits the scenario of Romans 1:21–22 perfectly. When men cease to honor God as God they become futile in their theories and their foolish hearts are darkened. The more they profess to having obtained human wisdom, the more they become fools. Therefore, it is to be expected that, when a church or seminary departs from the doctrine of inerrancy, a rejection of the Bible's authority and sufficiency will follow not long afterward. And once the authority and sufficiency of the Bible are undermined, it soon follows that belief in the total depravity of man and his desperate need of redemption through Jesus Christ is replaced by the psychological gospel of self-improvement.

Almost a decade after leaving Fuller Seminary, Harold Lindsell correctly predicted that the departure from the inerrancy of Scripture would "lull congregations to sleep and undermine their belief in the full-orbed truth of the Bible; it will produce spiritual sloth and decay; and it will finally lead to apostasy."<sup>13</sup> Man-centered wisdom wastes no time in filling the vacuum created by abandoning sound doctrine. As in the days of Jeremiah, they forsook God and shaped for themselves "cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). In the case of Fuller Seminary, the road was now paved and the birth of a school of psychology was fast approaching.

However, before this graduate school could become a reality, several key players had to be put in place. Since news of doctrinal compromise at the school had begun to spread, many faithful supporters chose to withdraw their regular giving from the Fuller Evangelistic

Foundation, a major source of income for the seminary from its birth, creating a significant funding obstacle. As a result, Marsden believes, “Unquestionably the most important addition to the board of trustees was C. Davis Weyerhaeuser,” the lumber tycoon from Tacoma, Washington.<sup>14</sup> Weyerhaeuser’s influence extended far beyond girding the school’s financial situation since he too was waffling on the doctrine of inerrancy. In fact, according to Lindsell, the new board member made no bones about it. He “was clear in his own conviction that the Bible had errors in it. Nor did he hesitate to make his position plain.”<sup>15</sup> Once elected as chairman of the board of trustees, Weyerhaeuser, along with the new dean of faculty Daniel P. Fuller and theistic-evolutionist J. Laurence Kulp, could advance the cause of “the progressive party,” those campaigning for the removal of inerrancy from Fuller’s creed.<sup>16</sup> Finally, after the progressive members of the faculty and the board of trustees succeeded in taking over the school and establishing their new order by forcing the inerrantists out, the field was tilled and ready to receive the planting of a school of psychology.

Relevant to the subject of counseling, however, is the interesting fact that the initiative to found a school of psychology “arose almost solely from Davis Weyerhaeuser and his wife Annette, who promised to finance the founding of the enterprise.”<sup>17</sup> Marsden continues, “Annette Weyerhaeuser’s role was central. She herself had suffered from some debilitating anxieties since early in their marriage.”<sup>18</sup> With her having received help from a psychiatrist, the conviction was firmly established in the minds of this wealthy couple that what was most needed was a school that would specialize in the integration of theology and psychology. Thus, in 1965, the Fuller Graduate School of Psychology opened its doors. However, rather than establishing a ministry-based approach to counseling that was saturated with Scripture, “From the outset the founders envisioned the School of Psychology not as a center for pastoral psychology, but as a bona fide PhD program in clinical psychology, to which they would add substantial theological perspectives.”<sup>19</sup> (And “add” theological perspectives is exactly what they had to do, since psychology not surrendered to the final authority of Scripture is anti-God.)

Yet the founders’ quest for integration could not be accomplished in

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a manner acceptable to a wider society without a nationally known figurehead. Subsequently, a search began for a psychologist who was respected enough by academia that his credentials and fame would help the new school “gain early accreditation.”<sup>20</sup> The search ended when Lee Edward Travis agreed to take the post. Travis, “one of the leading figures in the history of American psychology,”<sup>21</sup> was a baptized Mormon who had fallen away from his church. After a forty-year absence from involvement in his religion, Travis began attending a Presbyterian church in southern California where “he found himself overwhelmed by a profound sense of transcendence in which he felt found by God.”<sup>22</sup> As a result, only three years after his profession of faith in Christ, Dr. Travis agreed to take on the ground-breaking assignment which would shape the future of the New Evangelicalism. Marsden’s comments concerning Travis’s lack of theological grounding are invaluable:

Although his interests were wide and his theological instincts sound by Fuller standards, he was a new Christian and first had to learn theology in order to talk about integration. While he took up this task with eagerness, his policy for the school itself was that it first had to excel by conventional standards in clinical psychology before it could expend its energies in the unexplored areas of theoretical integration. The theoretical explorations were thus an added-on part of the program.<sup>23</sup>

Thus it has always been for Christian psychology from its beginnings—a little theology here, a little theology there, built upon the faulty foundation of man’s so-called wisdom. The enormous influence that Fuller Seminary has had in the field of counseling simply cannot be ignored. As in the book of First Corinthians, where the Apostle Paul confronts the church’s shift away from the gospel to the false security of the wisdom of men (1 Cor. 1:21), this man-centered integrationism, pioneered by Fuller, cannot be left unchallenged.

### The statement of the problem

In 1991, John MacArthur published a book entitled *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, in which he exposed three deadly influences within Christianity, one of which is “the infusion of psychology into the teaching of the church.” He observes,

There may be no more serious threat to the life of the church today than the stampede to embrace the doctrines of secular psychology. They are a mass of human ideas that Satan has placed in the church as if they were powerful, life-changing truths from God ... The result is that pastors, biblical scholars, teachers of Scripture, and caring believers using the Word of God are disdained as naïve, simplistic, and altogether inadequate counselors. Bible reading and prayer are commonly belittled as “pat answers,” incomplete solutions for someone struggling with depression or anxiety. Scripture, the Holy Spirit, Christ, prayer, and grace—those are the traditional solutions Christian counselors have pointed people to. But the average Christian today has come to believe that none of them really offers the cure for people’s woes.<sup>24</sup>

These words of a modern-day preacher echo the stern warning that God gave long ago through His prophet Jeremiah: “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD” (Jer. 17:5). Clearly, a man-centered philosophy of life is not the way to God’s blessing. The widespread acceptance of integrationism in the ministry of counseling, therefore, is a major problem. This book counters the problem by replacing it with a biblical theology of discipleship that is truly God-centered.

### The solution to the problem

Jeremiah not only warns against trust in man, because it leads away from God, but he also testifies concerning the blessing that is showered upon those who trust in God: “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD” (Jer. 17:7). This warning and promise raise important questions related to counseling: If a man-centered, psychological approach to behavioral change is not the way God intended for believers to be helped to conquer their personal problems, what, then, is the way? If the clinical counselor, trained in all the latest ever-changing theories of human motivation, cannot offer anything that is ultimately life-transforming, how are people to receive the help they so desperately desire? The solution remains the same now as it was in the days of the apostles: biblical counseling as a normal part of biblical discipleship.

### The intended scope of this book

Believers in Jesus Christ must be taught and trained to be richly indwelt with the Word of God, to live under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to be driven by the gospel, to express dependence on God through prayer, to be motivated by love for God and neighbor, and to be moved with compassion to help one another make progress in the ongoing work of sanctification. This is authentic biblical counseling. Therefore, in this book, counseling will be presented as a targeted form of discipleship, an intensely focused and personal “one-another” ministry aimed at the serious development of serious disciples.

The next chapter establishes the biblical basis of counseling as the fulfillment of Jesus’ great command to the church to make disciples who are obedient to the Word of God. Chapter 3 explains the challenge that man’s depravity brings to the process of discipleship, focusing specifically on God’s supernatural work of deliverance by conversion. Chapter 4 sets forth the indispensable requirement of personal discipline of the mind, heart, and life habits for the ongoing pursuit of godliness. Chapter 5 defends the need for compassion in the one-another ministry of restoration within the family of God. Chapter 6 puts in plain words the underlying conviction of authentic biblical counseling regarding the sufficiency of the Scriptures for life and godliness. Chapter 7 tackles the issue of psychological counseling by comparing the futility of man’s wisdom with the supremacy of the wisdom of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. Finally, Chapter 8 returns the ministry of discipleship counseling to its intended place—the Christ-centered, gospel-saturated local church that functions as a community of believers who are stimulating one another’s faith toward the fullness of maturity in Jesus Christ.

### The definition of key terms

The New Testament uses four different words to emphasize this more concentrated aspect of the disciple-making process: *parakaleo*, *protrepo*, *noutheteo*, and *paraineo*. The meanings and uses of these words help us to envision a well-rounded ministry that is geared toward helping people change.

First, according to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New*

*Testament Words*, the Greek word *parakaleo* means “to call to one’s side,” hence, “to call to one’s aid.” It is used for every kind of calling which is meant to produce a particular effect, hence its various meanings such as “comfort, exhort, desire, call for.”<sup>25</sup> The Apostle Peter uses this word to urge Christians to abstain from fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:11), and the author of Hebrews insists that believers are to encourage one another to be faithful to their local assembly (Heb. 10:25). God’s plan for personal character transformation has always included other persons in the community of the faith because normal spiritual growth does not take place in isolation, but rather alongside others.

Second, the Greek word *protrepo* means “to urge forward, to push on, to encourage.”<sup>26</sup> For example, when Apollos desired to go to Achaia, the brethren “encouraged” others to welcome him with grace (Acts 18:27). Therefore, we will discover that, from time to time and in varying degrees, every person needs to be motivated to keep pressing forward in his or her pursuit of the application of biblical truth to life.

Third, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* says that the Greek word *noutheteo* means to admonish or warn. It means to put before the mind so as to “correct through instruction and warning.”<sup>27</sup> It differs slightly from teaching in that it is normally a response to some kind of error or it is a warning against spiritual danger, present or potential. When Paul counseled the Ephesian elders about the danger of the emerging false teachers who would seek to make disciples by their false doctrines, he reminded them of the three years in which he did not cease to admonish them (Acts 20:31). Romans 15:14 teaches that believers should be able to admonish one another biblically. This should always be toward the goal of spiritual maturity (Col. 1:28), and therefore believers should appreciate the shepherds who give them instruction toward that end (1 Thes. 5:12). The noun form, *nouthesia*, means “training by word—either of encouragement, when this is sufficient, or of remonstrance, reproof, or blame, where required.”<sup>28</sup> Therefore, we will also discover that God’s plan for making disciples requires believers to care enough to confront one another when brothers or sisters they love are in error, and to firmly warn or instruct them concerning their spiritual danger.

Finally, the Greek word *paraineo* means “to admonish by way of

exhorting or advising.”<sup>29</sup> An example of this is when, in the midst of a storm at sea, Paul admonishes his fellow sailors and urges them to keep their courage (Acts 27:9, 22). Therefore, we will also discover that the process of spiritual growth requires believers to give courage to their fellow companions on the journey of discipleship, especially when they are in the midst of the storms of life.

In all these cases, these believers are counselors, with or without a title. And the counsel dispensed is always in the form of words spoken from the commitment of biblical love. Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” As biblical counselors, we must take great care in the words we use with our disciples, for speech has the power to kill them with despair or to give them the hope of life. I appreciate David Powlison’s simple definition of counseling as “intentionally helpful conversations.”<sup>30</sup> The power of biblical counsel lies in the degree to which *our* words are filled with *the* Word.

### The working definition

The definition that I will develop and defend throughout this book is as follows: Biblical counseling is an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby believers come alongside one another for three main purposes: first, to help the other person to consistently apply Scriptural theology to his or her life in order to experience victory over sin through obedience to Christ; second, by warning their spiritual friend, in love, of the consequences of sinful actions; and third, by leading that brother or sister to make consistent progress in the ongoing process of biblical change in order that he or she, too, may become a spiritually reproductive disciple-maker. This definition describes the aim of biblical discipleship and supports the underlying principles of this book. Biblical counseling is helping one another, within the body of Christ, to grow to maturity in Him.

It has been said, “The faithful preacher will milk a great many cows, but he will make his own butter.”<sup>31</sup> So it is with this book. Remembering every person, author, theologian, friend, or teacher who has influenced my thinking over two decades of involvement in the ministry of disciple-making is impossible. However, I have done my best to give credit to every “cow” that has given me “milk.” Therefore, I trust the “butter”

will be useful to the church that Jesus gave His lifeblood to redeem. “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9).

### For further thought and small-group discussion

1. Read Romans 1:16–32. Discuss the downward spiral that occurs when the truth of the biblical gospel is suppressed by man-centered wisdom.
2. Read Jeremiah 17:5–8. Discuss the differences between trusting man and trusting God, and the consequences of each.
3. Read Hebrews 10:24–25. Discuss the reasons why God calls believers in Christ to be faithful to help one another experience spiritual growth. Compare this priority with the Apostle Paul’s approach to ministry as explained in Colossians 1:28.
4. Read Romans 15:13–14. What role does God want you to have in the lives of other believers?
5. Read Proverbs 18:21; Colossians 4:6; and Ephesians 4:29. Discuss the power of language. What changes does the Holy Spirit want you to make in your manner of speech toward others?