

***What Makes Biblical Counseling Biblical?
Christ-Centered, Comprehensive, Compassionate, and Culturally-Informed
Biblical Counseling and Spiritual Formation***

by
Robert W. Kellemen, Ph.D., LCPC

Our passion is to *equip God's people to change lives with Christ's changeless truth through Christ-centered, comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally-informed biblical counseling and spiritual formation.*

Many people asked us to summarize the words *Christ-centered, comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally-informed.* In response, we offer for your consideration our condensed view of biblical counseling and spiritual formation.

Biblical Counseling/Spiritual Formation Is *Christ-Centered*

The church where I minister has a sign that you see every time you step in the pulpit: *It's All about Him.* It's a reminder to preacher and parishioners that we live **all of life** in, to, and for Christ. Biblical counseling should, of course, share this same conviction and commitment. Unfortunately, it does not always. E. Brooks Holifield insightfully traces the path of American pastoral care from a focus on Christ and salvation in and through Him alone, to an increasing focus on self and "self-realization."

Truly biblical counseling is Christ-centered in that its goal is to exalt Christ, its foundation is the Word of God, its purpose is conformity to the image of Christ, and its path is communion with Christ and connection with the Body of Christ. It's all about Him!

In Church history believers used the Latin term *coram Deo* meaning in the presence of God, face-to-face with God. We live, move, and have our being, meaning, and purpose in Christ. Eternal life and abundant life are found in Christ alone. Biblical counseling and spiritual formation assist God's people to exalt Christ and to enjoy Him forever.

Biblical Counseling/Spiritual Formation Is *Comprehensive*

Truly biblical counseling addresses the *complexity of life* lived in a fallen world. The Bible profoundly describes existence through our creation in God's image, our fall into sin, and our redemption in Christ. Only when taken together can we understand *people*, diagnose *problems*, and prescribe *solutions*—**biblically**.

Biblical counseling follows a holistic approach to the *nature of human nature*. Created in the image of God, we should reflect God in our relational (spiritual, social, and self-aware), rational (images and beliefs), volitional (motivations and actions), emotional (responses and reactions), and physical capacities. Only when united can we help *the whole person to become a whole person*.

Biblical counseling takes a robust approach to *counselor training*. It refuses all shortcuts as it recognizes the need for equipping in biblical *content*, Christlike *character*, relational *competencies*, and Christian *community*. Only when combined can we produce truly effective soul care-givers and spiritual directors.

Biblical Counseling/Spiritual Formation Is *Compassionate*

As the modern biblical counseling movement enters its third generation, we must learn to *integrate truth and love*. We need to listen to the biblical wisdom of passages such as Ephesians 4:15 (speaking/embodying the truth in love), Philippians 1:9 (our love abounding in depth of insight), and 1 Thessalonians 2:8 (we loved you so dearly that we gave you not only the Scriptures but also our own souls). No longer can the caricature be true of “take two verses and call me in the morning.” Biblical counselors must enter deeply, personally into the lives of parishioners and counselees.

As compassion grows, our focus is expanding. Whereas some early approaches to biblical counseling highlighted almost exclusively the vital aspect of *confronting the sinning*, current models must equally emphasize *comforting the suffering*. Historic models of *sustaining*, *healing*, *reconciling*, and *guiding* combine *parakaletic* soul care and *nouthetic* spiritual direction. Compassionate biblical counseling lovingly and humbly addresses suffering *and* sin through prescribing God’s grace as the only solution for our disgrace.

Biblical Counseling/Spiritual Formation Is *Culturally-Informed*

Modern biblical counseling had once been the exclusive domain of white males. Now many diverse, new voices are being added to the biblical counseling movement. As we listen to the previously silenced voices of women and minorities, we are enriching biblical counseling and erecting intercultural relational bridges.

As we hear these inspiring voices, we learn how to counsel more effectively in intercultural settings. Not only that, but the application and interpretation of this diverse biblical wisdom greatly enhance *all* areas of biblical counseling theory and practice. We learn together how to minister Christ’s changeless truth for our changing times.

In Summary

Christ-centered, comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally-informed biblical counseling and spiritual formation addresses:

**The Focus of Life*: To exalt God and to enjoy Him forever.

**The Complexity of Life*: Creation, Fall, and Redemption (People, Problems, and Solutions)

**The Nature of Human Nature*: Relational (Spiritual, Social, Self-Aware), Rational, Volitional, Emotional, and Physical Beings

**Counselor Training:* Biblical Content, Christlike Character, Relational Competencies, and Christian Community

**Truth and Love:* Scripture and Soul

**Suffering and Sin:* Parakaletic Sustaining/Healing and Nouthetic Reconciling/Guiding

**Intercultural Diversity:* Biblical Insights from and Relationships between Christian Men and Women of All Cultures