
Counseling Ministry Within Wider Ministry

Interview with John Babler and David Powlison

DP: Tell us something about yourself, your education, where you work, and your ministry.

JB: When I was twenty, all my designs and plans for my life fell apart. Even though I had grown up in a Christian home, attended church, and even made a profession of faith, I realized that I had not been living a life that honored God. God showed me that I had no ability to plan what to do with my life. I realized that I had been living a life in rebellion to God, and He brought me to repentance and an acceptance of Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. Several months later God called me into the ministry. After completing my undergraduate degree, I spent one year at Princeton Seminary before beginning study at Southwestern. At Southwestern, God narrowed my call to what was known as social ministries, and I completed a Master of Arts in Church Social Services at Southwestern as well as a Master of Science in Social Work at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). Before graduating from Southwestern I gained ministry experience in youth ministry, as Associate Pastor, and in inner-city missions.

Upon graduation, I served as Program Director at the Children's Home in Amarillo, Texas. It was there I began to realize that much of what I had been taught, both at

Southwestern and UTA, made logical sense, but was not biblical. An example is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It makes logical sense that we have to meet our basic needs first and then progress to higher order needs, such as the spiritual, but Matthew 6 stands Maslow on his head. It teaches that we need to seek God first, and then He will provide the things we need. This does not mean that we refuse help to people who need food or clothing, but that we realize their greater need, and as we minister in Jesus' name, we prioritize the spiritual and eternal.

After three years at the Children's Home, I returned to Southwestern to pursue Ph.D. studies. At this time I had enough clinical-practice hours to add the status of Advanced Clinical Practitioner to my Social Work license. I took the test and passed it with little study and a high score. In my intellectual pride over passing the test, God humbled me and I began to contemplate whether I could pass a test over applying Scripture to my ministry. I concluded that I could not pass such a test. I was familiar with the content of the Bible and with theology, but the idea of applying Scripture to my ministry was a new concept. That began what has now been a seven-year journey of beginning to learn how to apply Scripture to my life and how I can minister it to others. This journey of learning to minister God's Word will continue for the rest of my life.

Shortly thereafter, I became aware of

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nouthetic counseling. I'd heard Jay Adams referred to disparagingly a couple of times at Southwestern, but I didn't know anything about biblical counseling. I heard about the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, and began to look at it and to read some of Adams. I realized that the criticism that biblical counseling was "simplistic" was inappropriate. I began going to NANC conferences. Within about two years, I found that I fit there.

DP: Give some details. How do you see Scripture applied to ministry and life?

JB: Much of my ministry has been dealing with people in crisis. At the Children's Home, I faced kids removed

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from homes, abused kids, and parents trying to be reunited with their children. I spent several years in a hospice, dealing every day with life and death. I found that people in the midst of crisis tend to be *very* open to spiritual things. I began to see many biblical bridges between the temporal or physical problems and the spiritual issues. One of the most obvious is when we do ministry to those who are hungry. In John 6:35, Jesus feeds people, then says, "I am the bread of life." When I'm ministering with food to a hungry person, that biblical bridge tells us there is more to being filled than having food on the table. Experientially, I was beginning to apply those biblical bridges to people we were dealing with in crisis situations.

Another thing was that I began to see what Scripture said about itself. "God's word is living and active" (Heb. 4:12). I tell my students that I'd much rather use God's living and active Word than the dead thoughts and ideas of humans.

DP: Those other words are fundamentally incomplete and insufficient compared to the living, active Word of the living, active God.

JB: To me, it's affirming that I came to convictions—to what I would call nouthetic, biblical counseling convictions—*apart* from study in biblical counseling itself. God brought me through the work of His Holy Spirit, through His Word, and through ministry experience to come to see the need for that. Rather than my being converted, so to speak, by others in my situation, it was more a discovery: "Wow! There are *other* people out there who think like I do! And there's lots of good information out there to help me grow and improve." That

encouraged me. When people say that I'm an "Adams-ite," for example, I know that I wasn't reading Jay Adams at the time that God was developing these convictions in me. I agree with Adams as long as he's bearing witness to Scripture, but Scripture and God's work in my life came first.

DP: You discovered something, got excited, and then found like-minded people.

JB: The distinction between biblical counseling and integrationism became clear to me. I had the education, credentials, and experience in integrating psychology and social work, but I realized through ministry to people that a lot of what I'd been taught didn't work. The times when I was most effective—whether in the Children's Home or the inner-city mission—were when I used Scripture when ministering to people, when I followed Jesus' example rather than counseling from some other perspective. When I returned to Southwestern to pursue a Ph.D., I met Larry Randall, a pastor-counselor at Birchman Baptist Church, where we are members. I began to discuss things with him, went to a NANC conference, and began reading about biblical counseling more. It became clear to me that I'd missed some things and that my education was incomplete. I struggled with whether I needed to quit the doctoral program and go somewhere for a Master's in biblical counseling. I believe the Lord made it clear to me that was not what I needed to do, but that I should stay where I was. With hindsight I can see the wisdom in that. I was able to teach at Southwestern as an adjunct for three years before I got my Ph.D., and then was elected to full-time faculty.

DP: Say one more word educationally. You did not go for a degree in biblical counseling. Where did you get your biblical counseling training?

JB: Primarily from studying on my own, self-generated. As I formed my convictions and began to bring them into my teaching, I would study the biblical material myself. I would teach from my convictions and adapt the classes I was already teaching to reflect those biblical convictions. The NANC annual conferences are not so much a place to learn—although I do learn things—but an opportunity for encouragement. I don't have too many "aha" moments. More often it's "Wow! That's good. That's true. It's good to be reminded of that." But to know that I'm not alone has been the primary encouragement.

DP: What are the orienting cornerstones that shape your view of counseling?

JB: First, the testimony Scripture bears about itself: Hebrews 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:15-17. In Southern Baptist life those verses have been used as a rallying cry for our battle over inerrancy, as they should be. But if God's

Word is able to equip people for every good work, is counseling a good work or not? If it is, then the inerrant Word that we're arguing for says that it's the sufficient Word to prepare people for ministering. Second Peter 1:3 says, "God has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness." What I had picked up in my seminary training was that Scripture was inerrant for matters of faith and practice, defined as a narrow band of "spiritual" issues, not for how we think about and practice all of life. A foundational piece for me would be what Scripture says about itself, that it is sufficient. It's not Scripture plus social work, Scripture plus psychology, or anything else.

The second key is the *application* of Scripture. As we've developed our program in ministry-based evangelism, we have defined four foundational components that Scripture teaches and models. We must be biblical, relational, wholistic, and practical. All these have to do with application. I used to say there were no easy answers. I don't say that anymore, because the more I study Scripture, the more I realize the answers are very plain. But putting them to work in my life and others' lives is the difficulty. Scripture is practical and applicable today. We often relegate it to something to be studied every morning, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night—and then put back on the shelf. It's so much more. God's words are to be a part of our lives if we want to be blessed, as Psalm 1 says.

If we are biblical, we'll be relational. I had been trained and educated that my role as a professional was to define my relationship with others based on *me* as the professional and *them* as the clients. I had to be careful with boundaries, I couldn't counsel my own family and friends—the trappings that come with the profession. I began to see, as I looked at Scripture and Christ's life, an example of discipling-oriented relationships that didn't hold to that at all.

DP: *It crossed all the boundaries.*

JB: With the relational aspect came the idea of speaking the truth in love. We're *all* called to do that with each other. Some of us speak the truth more easily, and have to temper it with love. Others of us love more easily, and have to temper it with speaking the truth. We honor God when we do both. Biblical relationships break the professional-client mold.

If we're biblical, and build loving relationships, then we'll be wholistic. I see Jesus concerned not just for the spiritual aspect of people's lives, their relationship with Him, and how to live a godly life. He is also involved in physical healing. He provides for physical needs and deals with emotions. I see Him ministering to whole people.

DP: *What do you see Jesus doing for the widow of Nain and*

other beaten people, grieving people, and hurting people?

JB: When Jesus ministered to Lazarus's family, He wept himself. He entered into grief. He comforted with hope of the resurrection. He pointed them to Himself. He confronted their unbelief and confusion. He elicited their faith. Then He raised Lazarus! He didn't go to them and put His arm around them and say, "It must be tough. I really don't have any answers."

DP: *He invited their faith. He did something.*

JB: And because He was wholistic, addressing the whole person, He was practical. In teaching our students to do ministry-based evangelism, we teach them ways to be practical.

Doing practical good is tied to bringing the good news.

DP: *You've mentioned "ministry-based evangelism" as the centerpiece of what you teach. Give us a nice, cogent definition of what you have in mind.*

JB: Ministry-based evangelism, as I've enumerated these foundational pieces, is ministry that is biblical, relational, wholistic, and practical. Upon those foundations, or roadbed, we like to say that we see a two-lane paved road. One lane is ministry-based *evangelism* for the lost person. The other lane is ministry-based *discipleship* for the saved person.

By saying "ministry-based," it means that any ministry we do to a lost person, whether it be counseling, providing food or clothing to "down-and-outers," or a music training program for the "up-and-outers," or whatever ministry we do, the *focus* of that ministry is not "to help people." It's to glorify God. It's to bring people to be used of God, to bring people unto a saving relationship with Christ. Doing practical good is tied to bringing the good news. I heard it said in social work circles, "If you give a person a fish, you feed him for a day; but if you teach him to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." I was in the Philippines two years ago and heard the rest of the story: "If you introduce him to the Creator of fish, he is fed for eternity." Sometimes we're going to give people fish, sometimes we're going to teach them to fish, but all the time we want to attempt to introduce them to the Creator of fish.

The ministry-based *discipleship* lane of the road focuses on every Christian's greatest need. Whatever their pressing need, whatever they come presenting as their problem, their greatest need, just like ours, is to become more like Christ. Whatever brings them to us for practical ministry in its various forms is an oppor-

tunity to be a witness for Christ and His power, to be a testimony of His Word and its power. In both evangelism and discipleship, we meet the person at the place of their practical need. It's not just man-centered social work; it's not just a bare message about Jesus Christ.

DP: Give a concrete example and illustrate the inter-working of all those principles.

JB: A pastor named Scott was taking our Introduction to Ministry-Based Evangelism class. He said, "I'm hearing all these things, but how do they work?" He asked a few other questions, and I gave a few answers. The next week he came back and said, "I guess I'm getting to see how this really works." I said, "How's that?"

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Scott said, "Friday I was in the office, and a call came: the dreaded benevolence call. I almost told the secretary to say that I wasn't there, and to take the number. But I really felt convicted. If I'm committed to this and am learning this, I need to talk to people in need, so I took the phone call. The woman on the phone said, 'I got your number because my sister's children go to your Christian school.'"

That is an interesting pathway to ministry. Part of that local church's ministry was a Christian school. It met educational needs. It had so impacted the community that someone two steps removed from the church picked up the phone and called for help. Scott told me, "She said she had called ten other churches that were closer to where she lived, and nobody would help her. That's when her sister suggested, 'Why don't you call them? They'll help.'" Why did the sister have that perception even though she wasn't a member of the church? Because she had been involved in the school. The sister had experienced the church's commitment to and interest in the community.

Scott recalled, "The woman told the story of how her husband had left her. He had a problem with drinking. He had sold all their furniture and left her with an empty townhouse. She hadn't seen him for two weeks. Rent was overdue. She had two kids. She was going to be evicted in a week."

Scott was able to pay her rent from diaconal money. He continued to talk with her, and found out she was a Christian. She had a testimony, though her life was currently in tatters with marriage and financial problems,

and no church family. Scott was able to pay her rent. Scott came back to me the next week and said, "The problem is I have paid her rent, and I encouraged her to come to church, and she did come with her kids. So we're beginning to develop a relationship, one of those four key factors. But they were behind a month in rent anyway, so I really only bought seven days. Do I pay another month's rent or not?"

I responded, "Absolutely! Right now you don't have a chance to work out any kind of plan or strategy as far as what she needs to do. If you pay another month's rent, you will have an opportunity to disciple and challenge her, and work with her to look at options to see what she needs to do."

Scott said, "She probably needs to move, but she doesn't want to."

I said, "Without being able to lay the groundwork, even if you don't pay the month's rent, she'll probably try to find somebody else to pay the month's rent. She'll get another month, but she won't get the discipleship or training she needs."

Scott agreed, "Okay, I have people in the church willing to give her some furniture. What do I do if her husband comes in and steals it?"

"Write your driver's license number on it, and tell her to say, 'The church gave me this. If you take it, they'll press charges on you for stealing the furniture.'"

He said, "Oh, I never thought of that! It can be dealt with." They began to minister to her in practical ways. Here's what happened. First of all, when Scott paid the second month's rent, the landlord said, "Why are you doing this? She's not a member of your church. Why are you helping? I don't understand." Because of time constraints Scott gave praise to the Lord, though he didn't have a chance to share any more of the gospel with him at that time. Then, about a week later, the husband came back home on a Saturday, and he was sober. He said, "Why are they doing this? You're not a member of the church. They don't know us. Why are they helping us? Why are they doing this?" The woman said, "I don't know. You'll have to talk to Scott." He said, "I'd like to do that." She said, "Why don't you come to church with me tomorrow?" He said, "I don't know." She said, "Would you meet with Scott for lunch after church?" He said, "Well, okay. You and the kids go to church and Sunday School, and we'll meet for lunch."

They did that. Scott explained why he'd helped them, and was able to present the gospel to him over lunch. The man committed his life to Christ. But it doesn't end there. Then it shifted gears into the concept of ministry-based discipleship. That night the husband, on his own initiative, called Scott and said, "I've really sinned against our landlord by not keeping my com-

mitment to pay rent and do what I needed to do. I need to ask his forgiveness. Would you go with me?"

Scott said, "Yes." They went to the landlord. This time Scott had the opportunity to share Christ with the landlord. The landlord didn't make a commitment to the Lord, but the church made a commitment to minister to him, too. They also found out that a warrant was out for the husband's arrest. They were able to work with him to get his legal problem straightened out. This is the wholistic aspect. It wasn't just counseling or just evangelism, or just meeting material needs, or just becoming a family to broken, isolated people. It was all of the above. They brought more furniture for the family. A man in church offered the husband a job, and they provided other financial help. They poured a significant amount of money into the family, getting them on their feet. Two weeks later, the wife walked down the hall with tears in her eyes. The husband's testimony was, "Before last week she could walk down the hall with tears in her eyes, and I wouldn't have even noticed or cared. But I asked her, 'Why are you crying?' She said, 'If you would have told me two weeks ago that you'd be home sober and we'd be studying the Bible together as a family, I would have laughed.' He said, 'Me too.'" This family today continues to be active in the church.

This is an example of ministry-based evangelism and discipleship. If we just did the evangelism, or just the counseling, or just the social work, we would not have the same result. We could follow each of those to its logical outcome, but none alone would result in an intact family, coming to the Lord, being active in church, rebounding economically, and being committed to growing in Christ and towards each other.

DP: *So you have found like-minded people in the biblical nouthetic counseling world. But any movement is always in process. We're not complete. I sometimes use the metaphor that Jay Adams discovered a chest of buried treasure, lifted up the lid, scooped up as much as he could carry, and brought it out to civilization. But there's more treasure. We know what we believe, but there's much more wisdom, grace, and power. What are the implications of ministry-based evangelism and discipleship for what we think of as "counseling"?*

JB: I think that the biblical counseling movement often misses the treasure of what we try to do in ministry-based evangelism. In addition to the abundant biblical teaching and examples linking ministry with evangelism and discipleship, we can also learn from studying some biblical concepts that do not translate well into English.

One of those biblical concepts is that of deacon. A *diakonos* is a servant, a waiter, volunteer, or hired help, there to minister to others' needs. But at least in South-

ern Baptist circles, "deacon" is used exclusively in reference to a formal office in the church. While certainly that's part of the New Testament record, the formal use occurs in a distinct minority of times that word is used. Most often, it's used in an informal sense of servant to another's welfare. When Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, she got up and *deaconed* them. We're missing some of the treasure in that broader, biblical concept of deaconing.

Another concept we often fail to appreciate is *paraklete*. It typically now refers almost exclusively to the formal description of the Holy Spirit. But the term is also

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used informally many times to refer to someone who comes alongside to help someone else. I think often, even in the counseling room, we may be isolated from people. Maybe we don't come alongside them as much as we need to. I believe, and I tell students, that ministry-based evangelism and discipleship, especially that relational component, is messy. You get phone calls at three in the morning. People's crises don't fit our schedules.

DP: *Say more about relationship, in your own life and ministry as you teach your students. What are some key ways to come alongside to minister to another?*

JB: If we are followers of Jesus, and He says, "I'm going to tell you what's most important," it would seem we'd want to listen. He says we're to love God with all our heart, soul and mind. So before we can be effective in the second commandment—it's second for a reason—we need to look at removing the log from our eye, to truly love our Lord, so we are not hypocritical.

DP: *I'll paraphrase: the fervency, simplicity, and directness of your love for God is the very foundation. But how does that become more than just words?*

JB: When we look at the two great commandments, we see the emphasis God puts on relationship, first with Himself, and then with others. Jesus challenges us: what is your priority? Is God truly first in your life? Then, how do you go about ministering to others? Ministry is incarnational. The second great commandment says to love our neighbor as we already love ourselves. How do we love ourselves? We feed and clothe ourselves. We look out for our interests, our comfort, our

welfare. We protect ourselves from harm. I put flesh on that by challenging folks to look at Jesus' life. Much of His ministry was done in the midst of interruption. I don't know about you, but I'm not into interruptions. I'm task-oriented. I like to get things done. A Christian psychologist in a book on burnout cited the passage where Jesus goes across the lake with His disciples to a lonely place. He said it illustrated how it's okay for us to take care of ourselves, that we need to get away. I

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agree with that as far as it goes. However, the rest of the passage goes on to say that other people saw them leave, ran around the lake, and beat Him to the other side. When Jesus got out of the boat, He didn't say, "Sorry, folks, we're on vacation." No, He had compassion. I think that's part of the challenge. That was an interruption. They were tired already, but Jesus taught the people until sunset, and then fed five thousand of them. I wonder sometimes if our focus on ourselves doesn't keep us from allowing God to do things through us that only He can do. For example, when I'm tired, and somebody calls me on the phone and I don't feel like dealing with it, could there be a figurative feeding of the five thousand if I give myself to God and to others? The pastor, Scott, called me at ten o'clock on Saturday night a few weeks ago. I was tired. I had to get the kids up early in the morning for church. But by God's grace, I didn't say, "Sorry, we'll talk later." We ended up talking for two hours, because he was in the midst of a significant church and personal crisis. Our conversation was a vital help to him.

Another example is the ministry I did during the two weeks after the shooting at Wedgwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth. My hospice experience gave me a pretty good understanding of how others' emotional, physical, and spiritual crises affect me, and how I react. I had a deep sense of spiritual exhaustion. But I was able to minister long hours, in the midst of quite a bit of spiritual weariness. Apart from God's strength I would not have been able to do that. People would say, "It must be tough. You've been doing a lot!" No, God, for whatever reason, chose to sustain me with His grace and power. I knew it wasn't me!

Let me say one more thing about relationship. The Scripture tells us that Jesus *saw* the multitudes. I think about the fact that often we don't *see* people, whether it be our next-door neighbor or somebody with a flat tire. They're not people to us. We don't really see them.

Then Scripture tells us that He had *compassion* on them because they were as sheep without a shepherd. We don't realize a sheep without a shepherd is dead meat. Lost, wandering sheep are helpless, sick, hungry, easy prey. Jesus had compassion—and He gets practical.

DP: *You are part of the Southern Baptist world, the biggest evangelical denomination in the United States. You have deep Southern Baptist roots. You're committed to the biblical counseling vision. Where's the denomination at? Some well-known psychological organizations such as Minirth-Meier and Rapha have SBC roots. How do you size up your denomination: both church life and seminaries? Where is it going?*

JB: It's hard for me to know what the person in the pew thinks or believes. I think most Southern Baptists have an interest in learning about the sufficiency of Scripture, how to apply it, and how to minister God's truth in love. I think there's a lot of confusion among the people in the pew about counseling. For many years, pastors typically have had a referral mentality. That certainly has been caught or taught by many people in the pew.

DP: *Some people will never even need to use the word "counseling." Call it personal ministry, ministry-with-your-name-on-it.*

JB: Another issue—I deal with this all the time with my students—is that most of us don't know Scripture well enough to counsel with it. Even those who have an interest often have fear, too: "I can't do that. I don't know Scripture well enough."

In one of my classes, I do several role plays. The first one I use involves a young girl of fifteen meeting with a woman youth worker. The fifteen-year-old has basically come to get permission to have sex with her boyfriend. I set up this situation because everybody in the class at seminary would believe that's wrong. But in all the years I've used this case—and I coach the counselee to push the counselor for Scripture—I've only had one person who even did a *mediocre* job of being able to find Scripture about something so obviously opposed to Christian faith. That case drives most students to study: "If you want me to minister Scripture, I don't know *where* to find it. I don't know *how* to use it. I need to learn."

DP: *What Scriptures do you think they should use?*

JB: Our body is a temple where God Himself lives: 1 Corinthians 6. Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit: Galatians 5. There should not be even a hint of fornication and immorality because God hates it: Ephesians 5. The marriage bed should be honored: Hebrews 13. Sex is created by God as a joy within the commitment of marriage: Genesis 2, Proverbs 5. The teenager needs more than a prohibition; she needs a reason to choose differently. I like the term "positive replacement." What do you *replace* lust with? You replace lust with self-con-

trol and with love.

DP: *One of the things I'll talk about is that if you are sleeping with your boyfriend or girlfriend, you're not loving them. If you actually love each other, you want to protect the other, to serve their welfare. If you go in the direction of immorality, that's not love. It's hate. God does not just prohibit; He replaces selfishness with real love.*

JB: How do you do that? It becomes an incarnational issue. The youth-worker must love the teen. She can't just say, "The Bible tells you *not* to do that." Instead, "How can we map out a strategy together? God has something much better for you. How can I walk with you in regards to keeping yourself pure?" The biblical truth is ministered in the context of relationship.

DP: *What about the Southern Baptist pastors? How do they view psychology and counseling?*

JB: Integrationist organizations have had quite an impact on Southern Baptist pastors. I think by and large most Baptist pastors are supportive of those groups and comfortable with them. One of the biggest challenges to Southern Baptist pastors is that they think, "I know this fellow, and he is a godly person who loves the Lord. I trust him. You're telling me I shouldn't trust him. How do I reconcile that?" My response is, "I'm not saying you discredit him as a Christian. I'm saying you need to be a 'Berean' about what he's teaching and doing. If, indeed, he is not counseling from Scripture, then you need to respond to that." A second issue is that many Southern Baptist pastors do not view counseling as a part of the ministry of the church. Based on that, counseling ministry is seen either as an extra to be endured, or as something to be referred out. We have to go back and ask, "What is the role of ministry in the church?" We have this same issue in the broader context of ministry-based evangelism. We tend to refer these people and needs out to others. We miss the opportunity to minister.

DP: *The social work/welfare system and the mental health system are two parallel tracks. Each tackles an area that the church tends to not think of as integral to her ministry. How are seminaries doing in teaching the solution?*

JB: There are only two schools that I am very familiar with: Southwestern, where I teach, and Southeastern. Historically, Southwestern has had three options for people interested in a counseling-type ministry: Pastoral Ministry, Psychology and Counseling, and, where I teach, in Social Work and Ministry-based Evangelism. The Psychology and Counseling program has moved towards being more open to the importance of Scripture and prayer, but seems to have an abiding commitment to integrating what they perceive to be the truths of psychology with what they perceive to be the truths of Scripture. So we have differing philosophies of coun-

seling within Southwestern.

As I shared before, what we've done in Social Work and Ministry-based Evangelism is to provide a broader application of biblical counseling truths. Our program has grown dramatically, from about 35 students four years ago to 125 today. In our department we have a growing number of students coming with a real interest in broad ministry in the local church. They want to know how Scripture applies, and they want to use Scripture.

The other school I'm familiar with is Southeastern Seminary. Dr. Patterson has recently brought in a full-time faculty member who is a biblical counselor. Also,

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Dr. Patterson himself in his presidential address at the Southern Baptist Convention challenged Southern Baptists to step away from the alliance with secular psychology—the "marriage to psychology," as he called it—even though psychology gets baptized with Christian terminology. I've heard a few things about Southern Seminary in Louisville, that there's an interest in biblical counseling, but I don't know details.

DP: *There does seem to be a growing interest among Southern Baptists to put Christ back into counseling.*

JB: I think it's a logical follow-up to the battle we've had to reestablish a high view of Scripture as inerrant. As that doctrine has been recovered, rightfully so, there has been a growing interest in the things of Scripture. I think part of the interest is also driven by pragmatism. The secular methods and ideas we've tried in the past aren't working.

The best way I can put it is that God, in His sovereignty, is calling His people—in this context, Southern Baptists—back to recognition of sufficiency, and back towards dependency on His Word. There is a growing desire to say, "We want to be about the things of God and to use Scripture." In the larger Southern Baptist context, Henry Blackaby has the respect of almost all Southern Baptists and has done a good job of emphasizing the sufficiency of God's word for personal, spiritual life. Henry Brandt has done similar things. They have quite an influence in the popular press in Southern Baptist life.

Ken Sande of Peacemaker Ministries has also been received with wonderful openness in many sectors. He spoke at a national conference last spring in Houston, and his teaching has opened many people to practical,

biblical counseling.

DP: Do you want to say anything about the Southern Baptist Association for Biblical Counseling?

JB: I wish we were about three months farther along than we are. About two years ago, a pastor and biblical counselor in the Southern Baptist Convention began to have a vision for a group within the convention to provide an opportunity for those who have convictions about biblical counseling to have fellowship and to encourage each other. Out of that was born the Southern Baptist Association of Biblical Counseling. The decision was made early on that it would not be a certifying body, but that it would look to NANC for certification. Our focus would be on fellowship, education, and encouragement. There have been two meetings, bring-

ing together many pastors and others committed to biblical counseling. Our next meeting is scheduled for the spring, in Alabama. Dr. Patterson has committed to deliver the keynote address, which is very significant. The SBABC is another example of the growing interest in biblical counseling among Southern Baptists.

DP: Any final remarks you want to throw on the table?

JB: These are exciting days to witness God at work. I would have never guessed five years ago that the things we just talked about would have happened. There didn't seem to be any predictors. I look forward to seeing what God is going to do. I hope that in five more years I'll be able to say, "I had *no* idea that so much would have happened!"