



WHAT'S SO CHRISTIAN ABOUT COUNSELING?

by Dr. Andrew Graham



The mission of Hobe Sound Bible College is to “prepare servant-leaders who think Biblically, live Spirit-filled lives, fulfill the great commission, and glorify God in all they do.” For more than fifty years, we’ve been preparing students to make a difference around the world as pastors, missionaries, musicians and educators.

Why the decision to expand our complement of degree programs to include degrees in counseling? Does this really fit the mission of our founders?

Soul-care was a central mission of the church long before the advent of modern counseling. In fact, many concepts of counseling were articulated in the early church fathers’ writings on pastoral care. With nearly 1 in 4 adults manifesting symptoms of distress in any given year, future church leaders need to learn the information and skills to assist others—whether within the context of ministry or professional counseling.

One’s perspective on counseling is dependent upon one’s value system: theological foundations and psychological foundations. Just as a beautiful home cannot be constructed without an adequate foundation, a good counselor needs adequate foundations in both biblical worldview and psychological orientation. Good practice is preceded by good theory and, for the Christian counselor, good theory is built upon good theology.

Christian counseling has been defined as the integration of theology and psychology. Many techniques developed by secular theorists and practitioners are the same used by those practicing Christian counseling. The distinctions that separate Christian counselors from their secular counterparts include unique assumptions concerning the attributes of God, the nature of human beings, the authority of Scripture, the reality of sin, the forgiveness of God, and hope for the future. Christian counselors have unique goals related to spiritual growth. They have unique methods that are consistent with biblical teachings such as prayer, Scripture reading, confrontation with Christian truths, and encouraging church participation. Christian counselors demonstrate unique characteristics to include a deep commitment to Spirit-filled servanthood, a dedication of God-given abilities and a desire to help

others in their move toward personal wholeness, interpersonal competence, mental stability, and spiritual maturity.

Christianity provides a basic framework that reminds each person that they are precious to God and have inestimable value because they are created in His image and for His glory. Christian counseling affirms the Bible as the primary source for all meaning and purpose, the guidebook given by God so that believers may live in communion with Him. While not claiming to be a comprehensive guidebook, the Bible does address issues pertaining to loneliness, discouragement, relationship conflict, grief, anger, and a host of other issues often addressed in counseling.

It is not unfaithful to God’s Word to expand our knowledge and understanding by studying His created works, His general revelation. John Wesley recognized that theological methodology should include Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. Psychological information, as both a function

of reason and experience, should be integrated into the preeminent theological construct: Scripture. Counselors who are committed Christians are going to have fundamentally Christian views of persons, conceptualization about the cause of problems, goals for therapy, and techniques to facilitate change.

Helping those in distress is not an option according to Scripture. The claims of the gospel are all-encompassing and should penetrate every area of a Christian’s life. For the Christian counselor, the question is not whether or not psychology relates to Christian faith, but how. Secular counseling strategies may be appropriate—provided they do not undermine biblical teaching.

Pastors and leaders around the world are identifying the need for counselors who are skilled, effective, and thoroughly Christian. The Counseling Program at Hobe Sound Bible College will provide the information and skills-training for those who have the desire to provide competent Christian-based counseling.

Our newest degree offerings include a Bachelor of Arts in Counseling and an Associate of Arts in Counseling; we continue to offer a minor in Counseling alongside our other degree programs. Each option is available both on-campus and online. Degree programs meet the educational requirements to become a Board-Certified Biblical Counselor or Board-Certified Pastoral Counselor as well as allowing prospective graduate students to complete the prerequisites for a master’s degree in professional counseling, the gateway to licensure.

To learn more about our counseling department, please see our official page: <http://hsbc.edu/academics/areas-of-study/counseling/> or our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HSBCcounseling>. We’re looking for prospective students who feel a call to become pastoral counselors, youth counselors, substance abuse counselors, mental health counselors, social workers, and chaplains. We’re also looking for supporters who see the value of Christian counseling and are willing to partner with us to provide scholarship opportunities to worthy students studying to meet this need for those trained in Christian counseling. If you have questions, review the websites noted—or contact me via email: andrewgraham@hsbc.edu.