



CCEF NOW

Restoring Christ to Counseling & Counseling to the Church

2012

**WHAT HAS HELPED
YOU IN YOUR TROUBLES?**

Ed Welch

**MEANINGFUL ACTS OF
EASILY FORGOTTEN KINDNESS**

Tim Lane

**EMBODYING CHRIST'S LOVE
FOR THE SHAMED**

Winston Smith

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

An Interview with Tim Lane,
Aaron Sironi & Alasdair Groves

Welcome



to our first issue of **CCEF Now**. Our goal in publishing this magazine is to encourage, equip, and inform you. As you read the articles we trust that you will be encouraged in your own walk with Christ, equipped to better serve others, and informed about the **present** work of CCEF.

Although we have been in existence since the late sixties, our organization continues to grow and learn. In Philippians 1:4-6, the Apostle Paul says,

*I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, **being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

We are thankful for the ways God continues to grow us in grace and wisdom as we experience the present blessings of Christ in our lives. As Paul aptly put it, we are in an ever-present process of change that will never end until Christ completely makes us into his very likeness. Growth and change are a vital part of our lives, now and in the future. This is true of individual Christians, churches, and ministries like CCEF. Thank you for partnering with us through the changing seasons of our ministry.

As we move into the future, we continue to need your prayers, encouragement, support, and accountability to stay on course and be the ministry God has called us to be. As you consider your financial giving for 2012, please pray about partnering with CCEF and consider supporting the many initiatives included in this magazine.

With gratitude,

Dr. Timothy Lane
President
CCEF

TESTIMONY

“We’ve turned to CCEF for a number of years to help us think through the gospel’s application to the Christian life. What CCEF offers is this: gospel-rich resources, Christ-centered counseling, a life-transforming message. Need I say more? CCEF has been a vital partner for my ministry and our church.”

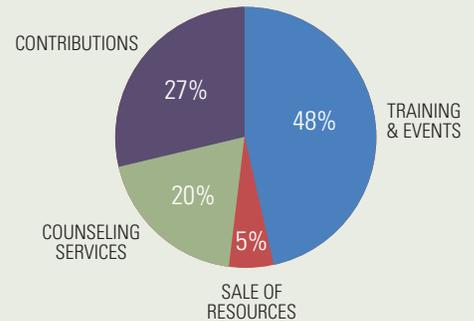
Deepak Reju, Pastor

Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington D.C.

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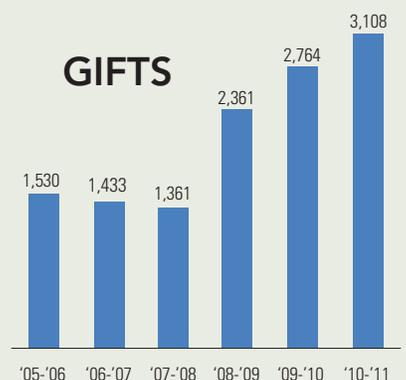
\$800,000 needed in support annually



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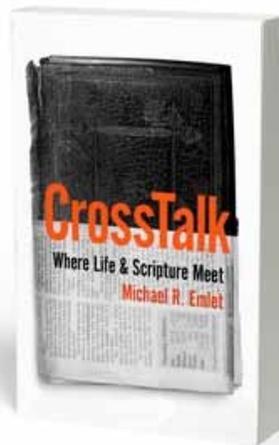
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Living BIBLICALLY

by Mike Emlet

I recently read A. J. Jacobs' New York Times bestseller, *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*. Jacobs is a secular Jew who vows to live according to both the Old and New Testaments every day for an entire year. Despite what you may think of his quest, his humorous (and often poignant) reflections on the challenge of putting the Bible into practice are well worth the read. (Not to be missed are how he stones an adulterer in Manhattan and how his wife cleverly subverts his attempts to adhere to Old Testament laws concerning menstruating women!)

I should have some sense of the intent of the passage for the original audience.) Now that's not inappropriate but it is incomplete. Why? Because focusing only on that text is the equivalent of focusing on one scene in a movie without understanding its relationship to the plot line of the film. How can you make sense of the scene without understanding the whole story? The same is true of Scripture. The Bible is God's revelation, the story of how he redeemed his people over the course of history, which culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of his Spirit upon the church. Jesus tells his disciples that



The Bible is God's revelation, the story of how he redeemed his people over the course of history, which culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of his Spirit upon the church.

Applying the Scriptures to life—your own or another's—seems like a fairly straightforward task until you really begin to think about it (or try to teach others to do so). As a biblical counselor, I'm constantly seeking to connect people with the life-giving message of Scripture. I seek to do that in my own life as well when I read and study the Word. Unless the indwelling Spirit guides me, I'm sure to misfire. We depend on God's Spirit as we set about this task. But how, exactly, should we approach "application"?

In the past I might have simply asked, "What general principle does this text teach and how does that idea work out in my life today?" (Of course, even to do this,

everything in the Old Testament points to him (Luke 24:44-47). This is not to say that every passage speaks explicitly about Jesus Christ, but rather that the story of God's unfolding kingdom, centered on Jesus, is the backdrop against which any passage must be understood and applied.

So, when I think about application now, I ask, "What is God communicating to his people at that particular point in redemptive history when he spoke? How does it relate to what comes before and after it in the story?" Then I am better primed to ask, "How should this passage, now understood in light of Jesus' first and second comings, shape my motives, thoughts, emotions, words, and actions?"

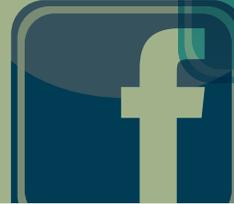
This redemptive thrust is absent in A. J. Jacobs' book. His approach is devoid of the triune God who tells this story in Scripture in order for people to turn to him and find forgiveness from their sin and comfort in their suffering as they await the renewal of the entire cosmos. As Christians who have the privilege of using the Bible in ministry, we want to be faithful to apply God's word in such a way that the person and power of Jesus Christ is not minimized. Our aim for our biblical application, both personally and in the context of ministry, is that it be gospel-centered, so that Christ is magnified. The more clearly we see Christ for who he really is, the more we, and the people we minister to, will be helped.

Michael R. Emlet, M.Div., M.D. serves as a counselor, faculty member and the Director of the School of Biblical Counseling at CCEF. Mike recently released his first full-length book: *CrossTalk: Where Life & Scripture Meet*. In addition, he has authored several mini-books including *Asperger Syndrome*; *Help for the Caregiver*; *OCD*; and *Angry Children*.



WEBUPDATE

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In the past few years, we have increased the amount of free content on our website. Our desire is to come alongside you and equip you in a variety of ministry contexts. Each week we take your questions and respond through our “CCEF Presents” video series and our podcasts. We also feature weekly blog posts and articles written by faculty and counselors. Because of these efforts, traffic to our website continues to grow. CCEF resources pages have been viewed over three million times in the past three years. Half of those views occurred in 2011! Our site also continues to reach new people. 40% of the visitors to our website every month are new ones. We invite you to join the movement and visit our website today for rich biblical counseling resources.

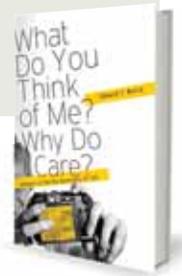
The expenses involved with maintaining and producing content for our website is fully funded from donations. Please consider giving to support our efforts on the web. With your gift, our web ministry can reach people all over the world.

TESTIMONY

“Rather than the typical self-help, formula-oriented materials that are so often seen in the counseling world, CCEF helps us see how Jesus enters into our broken lives to bring comfort, healing, repentance, and redemption.”

David Benz, Pastor at Grace Presbyterian Church in Virginia.

To find our resources visit
www.ccef.org/resources.



NEW!
from Ed Welch

CCEF :: PRESENTS

In a recent video series, Dr. David Powlison shared four resources he has found helpful for counseling ministry. In the following excerpt from the video, David discusses a quote from *The Four Loves* by C.S. Lewis.

The Four Loves: CS Lewis

“We have so much to learn from our brothers and sisters who have gone before us. Christians who lived in generations before ours dealt with the same kinds of issues that we do. They too processed and personalized the Bible’s revelation, and some put those reflections into their own words in hymns and books. That is similar to what we do in counseling because most of counseling is in our own words. Biblical counseling is not simply a litany of Bible citation. There may be instances when we open to one particular passage and spend time there, but most of what is said is in your words and in the words of the person you are counseling.

One living and rich paraphrase of the truths of the Bible is a quote from C.S. Lewis’ book, *The Four Loves*. The quote gives a marvelous depiction of the fundamental nature of our relationship with God. “*Man’s love for God must always be very largely, and must often be entirely, a Need-love. This is obvious where we explore forgiveness for our sins or support in our tribulations. But in the long run it is perhaps even more apparent in our growing – for it ought to be growing – awareness that our whole being by its very*

nature is one vast need; incomplete, preparatory, empty yet cluttered, crying out for Him who can untie things that are now knotted together and tie up things that are still dangling loose.”

In this quote, Lewis captures something that has numerous implications. For example, he says that man’s love for God is a “Need-love,” but the way he unpacks it is exactly the opposite of the need theology and need psychology that is popular in our contemporary culture. When Lewis speaks of a need love, it is not a need for self-esteem, a need to feel loved, a need to feel significant, or a need for excitement in our lives. He’s referring to our need for forgiveness of our sins and a need for support in our tribulations. Lewis turns on its head the entire way that our modern world thinks about the nature of how God’s love and human need meet. We need God to untie the knots inside of us and in the world around us.”

Visit our website to watch the full video and to search for other free online resources. www.goo.gl/dTNGN

Join the Movement
www.ccef.org



SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

In addition to providing counseling, CCEF also trains counselors and pastors to minister in their unique contexts. In order to fulfill our mission of ‘Restoring Christ to Counseling and Counseling to the Church,’ we are committed to intentionally addressing sensitive topics—namely, sexual misconduct in ministry relationships. As messy as this issue can be, we must engage it and equip people to not only handle situations as they arise, but also prevent them from happening. The following interview features several questions answered by Tim Lane, Alasdair Groves, and Aaron Sironi.

Q: How does a pastor or counselor fall into sexual misconduct? Is there one type of personality or situation that causes it to happen?

Aaron Sironi: Many studies look at people in ministry who entered into sexual relationships with those in their care, and ask questions like, What kind of personality led to this? What kind of situational factors? What kind of training or lack thereof contributed to a person’s engaging in an exploitative, harmful, destructive relationship with someone they were caring for? Unfortunately, these studies didn’t produce good answers to those questions. That helps us know we should instead ask, How do we prevent this from happening? There are some serial perpetrators in ministry positions who go from one victim to the next, but this is not usually the case for how people slip into sexual sin with a congregant. Because each one of us is susceptible to temptation, we need to take protective and preventative measures and understand the underlying dynamics that lead to sexual sin.

Q: What are some important things a pastor or counselor should consider when a person confesses attraction or offers flattery?

Tim Lane: It is important to keep in mind that what a counselee or congregant is saying may not be sexually laden. What they’re probably saying is, “I get this positive feeling when I’m with you.” It is also crucial for helpers to know how to respond in that situation. One extreme would be to soak it up inappropriately. Another extreme would be to shut down.

Alasdair Groves: Training on how to respond in these situations is invaluable. Pastors and counselors need training to know how to wrestle through what the person is really saying. What you’ll learn is that it really isn’t about you; the person is revealing something that is coming out of a deep troubling in the heart.

Aaron Sironi: I agree. The first helpful thought is, “This is not about me.” Our temptation as caregivers, pastors, or counselors is to think, “Wow, I’m so caring. I’m so wise. I’m so pastoral.” This

is where trained psychologists, therapists, and counselors have an advantage over most people in ministry because they have been trained to expect admiration. They know there will come a time when their counselee will, in more clinical terms, project inner desires and unconscious deep needs and fears onto this relationship. For many counselors, it is grist for the counseling mill. They don’t take it personally. So when a counselee says to the psychologist, “I love you. I want to seduce you,” or idealizes the counselor in some way, the counselor is ready for that and sees that it may be part of the counseling process and relationship. Again, it’s not about the counselor.

Q: What should you say when someone you’re counseling says, “I’m attracted to you. I’m drawn to you. I find you warm and welcoming and helpful”? How do you treat this person as a real person bringing real issues to the table when you’re on the receiving end?

Aaron Sironi: Do not shame the person in those moments. She is vulnerably communicating something from her heart, and you should walk cautiously and graciously. Your goal as a counselor is to help her understand her deep desires and what drives those desires. You can do this by asking questions like, “Help me understand these feelings that you have for me. What is it about our relationship that is so attractive to you?”

Q: Would you continue to see a counselee who expressed an attraction to you? If so, how would you proceed?

Alasdair Groves: Your response as a counselor or pastor depends on the circumstances. You must be wise about the context of the relationship. It may be best to invite someone else into the counseling room—like a trusted friend or relative of the counselee. For example, you can say, “I’ve heard you talk a lot about your sister. I know she lives in the area. Maybe she could start coming to these sessions. I think it would be helpful. It seems like you’re trying to find something in this relationship that I can’t give to you or be for you.” This obviously is an ethical statement, but it goes

beyond simply drawing a boundary. It drives at the reality that a counselee's longings will be answered in Christ, not the counselor. The hope is that a counselee begins to critique her own longings and asks, "Am I longing for the right things?"

Q: Does sexual misconduct occur only when a physical boundary is crossed?

Aaron Sironi: No. Lines can be crossed in ways we communicate, like an inappropriate or suggestive email. It could be any communication that expresses attraction to the person or if you receive the attention and savor it. There may never be physical contact, but you are nevertheless acting inappropriately.

Alasdair Groves: I would push that line back even farther to what I am doing in my mind and in my heart.

Tim Lane: Exactly. If you find yourself looking forward too much to a particular counselee coming in, then you must ask yourself if your motives in seeing that person are appropriate.

Q: Can one of you give a seemingly innocuous example that could turn into misconduct?

Aaron Sironi: A while back I was working with a woman in midlife who had a great deal of pain and woundedness in her life. In most sessions, she would sit in my office and cry for the entire hour that we were together. One evening I was home with my family working and I had a mental image of taking one of my fingers and gently wiping a tear from her eye. That image scared me, because it is in a subtle way like this that counselors and pastors begin to cross boundaries. It starts with a desire to care for another person, to see yourself as able to bring comfort and understanding. Then you begin to think that you are just what the person needs. It is this temptation to be the Caregiver that leads to crossing lines of appropriate care. It is at these moments we start to think about our counselees in inappropriate ways.

Alasdair Groves: It's rarely ever a conscious decision that recognizes, sure, this is bad for the person, but I am going to go ahead and do it anyway. So often it's not a sudden switch from being the caregiver to being the abuser. More likely, you've been deluding yourself the entire time that you've been working with the person. The decline never starts by becoming physical. Even the relationships that become sexual don't start with being physical. It starts with the inner feeding in the heart, it starts with words, it starts with returning inappropriate affection.



Q: Is cross-gender counseling appropriate?

Alasdair Groves: Even if we came down to an easy answer that there should never be cross-gender counseling, we have to be aware that cross-gender counseling is not the only way a counseling relationship becomes sexual. We cannot avoid the issue of abusing our power by simply limiting our counseling to people of the same gender. If you are going to do cross-gender counseling, you need to do it wisely. You want to have thoughtful ways to make counseling safe for both you and the counselee. I do see cross-gender counseling as an appropriate option for certain ministry contexts. There are times when you may be the best situated person to help someone with biblical, compassionate wisdom. In that situation you need to understand what the risks are and weigh that with the person's context.

Tim Lane: The answer to this question seems to be something that is an individual choice. If you choose not to counsel members of the opposite sex, you have a good reason for doing that. You're aware of your own weaknesses, temptations, and patterns of sin. Yet there are others, myself included, that are willing to counsel a member of the opposite sex. What we must do is set up guard rails of accountability and oversight. When I counsel a woman, I also talk about my marriage and children, which gives the person the understanding that I am in a solid, happy marriage. I am in the counseling room as a faithful husband and father who also wants to care well for the counselee.

Aaron Sironi: I appreciate the concerns of those who have chosen to not do cross-gender counseling. They see something, and with integrity try to guard themselves against misconduct. Many counselors don't take this question seriously and just brush it aside, which we cannot afford to do.

That said, I do work with female counselees. In situations when women have been treated unjustly and cruelly by men, it can be beneficial for women to work with men. If I refuse to counsel her, I think it would be a significant disadvantage in her growth process to not have a man love and care for her well. That care will be a restorative element that God can use to heal some of her wounds. To keep that from a counselee would be a loss. I would be remiss to operate out of a self-protection mode instead of seeking to care deeply and wisely for this person.

Tim Lane: I've been in many situations when a woman who was mistreated by a man has come to a point where she expresses what Aaron described. Women who have had a broken history with men and then experience a safe counseling relationship with a man, come to grow in their faith and belief that God really does care and love them. We incarnate the love of God as we care for them wisely and appropriately.

Preventing Sexual Misconduct in Counseling: **SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS**

To further equip individuals in ministry who minister to members of the opposite sex, we asked Aaron Sironi and Alasdair Groves to share some practical preventative and protective measures they take in cross-gender counseling. See their response to this challenging subject.

If you regularly counsel people of the opposite gender, we suggest the following guidelines to proactively create a safe counseling environment. As the overwhelming majority of cases of sexual misconduct involve men exploiting women, we will focus on advice to men, but these suggestions apply equally to men and women.

Creating a Safe Counseling Environment

- Good accountability is non-negotiable. Surround yourself with several wise brothers or sisters who know you well and know your personal weaknesses and temptations. Tell these people about your counseling work, and be especially careful to share about any time you are tempted or aroused by what you talked about with someone. This is usually an established practice in a counseling ministry but is equally important for pastors who may work in a more isolated environment.
- If you are discussing sexual issues and/or struggles with someone of the opposite gender, regularly speak of this counseling relationship in supervision or with your elders.
- Always make sure someone else is nearby and aware that you are speaking with a counselee.
- Consider introducing your counselee to the woman who works in the next office (if there is someone) for your counselee's sake. It can be very helpful for a woman coming to see you to know there is another woman nearby whose name she knows and to whom she has at least spoken. (This would also be effective for men who come in to see a female counselor. They are reminded that someone is near and that they are accountable for their actions.)
- In some cases, it may be profitable for the counselee to invite another faithful friend (e.g., husband, sister, or mentor) into counseling sessions with you.
- If you are married, make sure your office has photos of your wife (and children) in plain sight. This visual reminder of your family sends an important message to your counselee (i.e., who you are and to whom you are connected). Most importantly, it serves to ground you in this as well! When appropriate, speak favorably about your spouse and family. This communicates your devotion to them, above any attachment to the counselee.
- Consider installing a sizeable window in your office door.
- Be careful if you are counseling using internet technology like Skype. In a world full of internet pornography, where computer videos are for secret sexual sin, speaking over the computer makes it easier to feel like you are speaking to an object rather than a person. Furthermore, the sense of distance—being physically removed from her world and having a screen between you—can give you a sense of privacy or protection that may embolden you to say or do things you would not say

or do in person. Consider having someone sit with your counselee during online conversations.

- Do not hold sessions outside your counseling office and do not meet outside your regular counseling hours. Do not even meet in your office if there is nobody else around. Do not meet longer than you planned.
- Do not touch the counselee beyond (possibly) shaking hands. Do not give out your cell phone number, chat online, or engage using a personal Facebook account, etc.
- Only share things in counseling that you would want your spouse and pastor to overhear.
- Finally, on the broadest level, you should continually be on the lookout for the many ways you are tempted to use your counseling/pastoral role to feed your own selfish pleasures and desires (for admiration, respect, appreciation, to be needed, to be special/important, to rescue, etc.). Remember that you are in a position of power and are held responsible before God (and by the church and the government) for what transpires between you and the counselee.

How to Respond When an Issue Develops

- Never reciprocate a counselee's expressions of romantic affection.
- Understand that you may need to end a counseling relationship in certain situations. It is better to discontinue counseling and to refer the person to another helper than to lead someone into a relationship where you abuse the power and trust she has given you. A decision to stop counseling because of romantic attraction—from either side—should be made in concert with other wise members of the body.
- If a counselee expresses her attraction to you and it seems appropriate to continue counseling her, be very careful to maintain protective boundaries around and in your counseling relationship. Be significantly more guarded and less forthcoming than you normally would about your personal life. To share personally in that situation may communicate a tenderness, affection, or intimacy you do not intend. Making these kinds of self-disclosures may communicate that a counselee has a special role in your life that will feed her struggle (and/or yours!). Recognize that a counselee's romantic attraction to you is not an uncommon dynamic in counseling ministry, yet one that requires careful and thoughtful handling. Again, this should be discussed with a colleague, mentor, or supervisor.
- Likewise, when you are speaking with someone to whom you feel any romantic attraction, never keep this information to yourself! Never. As a counselor, speak to your supervisor or supervision team. As a pastor, speak to your elders or pre-es-

tablished accountability partner. Do not give into the foolishness of believing you can “handle it on your own.” Regardless of how many years you’ve been doing counseling ministry, make a habit of speaking to the appropriate people about any sexual arousal.

- If you are married, wisely consider sharing the sexual thoughts and feelings you experience in counseling with your wife (without betraying a counselee’s trust or violating confidentiality). She too needs to understand the impact on you of counseling people who are being vulnerable to you and toward whom you feel tenderness, affection, and concern. This is actually an important way to strengthen your marriage and build trust. Bringing these issues into the light can be challeng-

ing, but it allows you to pray together for your ministry more wisely, and it gives your wife an opportunity to voice both concerns and encouragement to you in a way that will both guide you and strengthen your resolve to walk uprightly when you are confronted with temptation.

In all these suggestions our purpose is not to scare counselors or pastors as much as it is to promote a healthy respect for our own vulnerability to temptation and sin. Indeed, our goal is transparent living, where openness and accountability about our temptations in counseling is simply an extension of the honesty and living-in-the-light nature of the rest of our lives.



Alasdair Groves, M.Div. is the Director of Counseling at CCEF New England and is an adjunct faculty member at CCEF.



Aaron Sironi, LCPC directs the CCEF affiliate office in Billings, Montana and is an adjunct faculty member at CCEF.

Counseling Services **UPDATE**

Despite difficult economic times, the number of people coming to CCEF for counseling continues to grow. In the past two years, we have seen the number of hours we counsel increase by 33%! We are thankful that God continues to open doors for our counselors to walk alongside individuals as they struggle with life’s hardships. This growth has provided increased counseling revenue of 17% this past year. This revenue allows CCEF to hire more counselors and provide better counselor training.

2011-2012 INTERNSHIP

For the second year in a row, CCEF has doubled our number of interns to twelve. Along with increasing the size of the group, we have added an additional component to the scope of the program. Historically, CCEF has fulfilled the second half of our mission, restoring counseling to the church, through our various training and educational initiatives, like the internship. This year we are actively restoring counseling to the church by partnering with nine local churches and one non-profit organization. Every intern has been paired with one of these sites and provides weekly counseling services on location. Members and visitors of those churches are invited to come and receive free biblical counseling services. The ability to bring the depth of biblical counseling to the depth of need people face in the city is an answer to prayer! Please join with us as we praise God for this exciting development! Pray for his guidance and work through the interns.

SUPERVISION

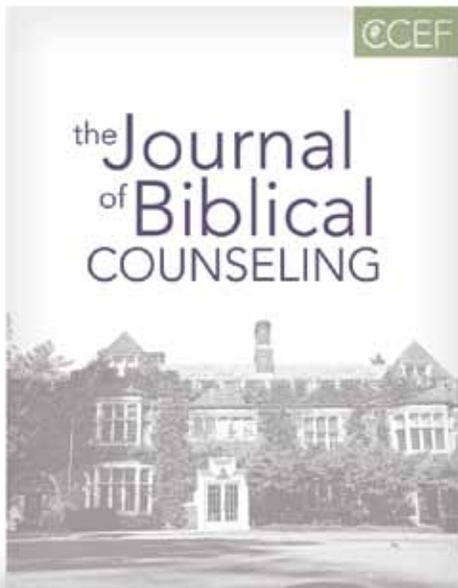
We are grateful for the opportunity to expand the scope and significance of our mission. In addition to sending out counselors from CCEF, we are receiving counselors from churches. For the first time, we have gathered a small group of local church-based counselors to come in for supervision. These counselors have a well-established counseling load and desire supervision because of our expertise and experience. They participate in a group dynamic to discuss cases and get feedback that they then take back to their local ministry setting. We are grateful to come alongside and help these counselors in their ministry. We also desire to learn about the unique challenges they face as church-based counselors so that we are sharpened to better equip the church. Please pray for this endeavor and for our ongoing relationships to be strengthened.

LOOKING AHEAD

In the future, our hope is to establish a network of CCEF counselors. Our internship is just the beginning. We are working toward seeing CCEF students serving in churches around the world. God has chosen the church context to be the primary locus of transformation in people’s lives, and CCEF’s mission is to equip and train the church so that God’s people are able to bring the truth of the gospel to bear on complex problems and deep struggles. To continue these initiatives, we need funding. Join us in this movement to train willing students who have the desire to go out and serve in Christ’s church.

UPDATE

The Journal of Biblical Counseling



For over thirty years the Journal of Biblical Counseling has been one of the most unique distinctions of CCEF. This publication was at the forefront of developing and expanding the biblical counseling movement. Due to high printing costs, we suspended the publication of the Journal four years ago. Our hope then was to resurrect its publication in the future, and that time has come! The Journal will re-launch in January 2012! The new medium for this publication will be online, which will make it available to a broader audience across the globe. We are thankful for this opportunity to expand the reach and influence of the biblical counseling movement.

Dr. David Powlison continues his role as Editor of the Journal. The new Journal will be similar to what subscribers remember: theologically sound and thoughtful pieces that cover a wide range of topics. We will also incorporate new columns, including “Lives in Process” papers from CCEF students that document how God worked in a particular issue in their lives. For a sneak peek at the forthcoming Journal, we’ve included a “Lives in Process” article.

Lives in Process

Introduction by David Powlison

Like a green tree, a child grows and keeps on growing. The Bible gives us this lovely picture of human flourishing:

*The righteous flourish like the palm tree
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon....
They still bear fruit in old age.
They are ever full of sap and green.*

Psalm 92:12, 14

Surely, one delight in being God’s child is that, whatever your chronological age, you should be evergreen. Wherever our Father is present and pruning, we continue fruitful and full of sap. It is a wondrous thing: Christian growth began on the day of your new birth, and will continue until your deathday. And, if the most sober intuitions about eternal life are accurate, we will continue to grow more wise, more joyous and more loving, forever and ever, Amen.

The story that follows bears witness to a trajectory of growth. The details matter. Particular things exemplify broad, life-giving principles. For starters, notice how God tailor-makes growth. It matters that this man is in his 20s, that he is married, that he is married to the woman who is his wife, that he has the temperament that he does. Growth never happens in general.

Furthermore, notice how he keeps discovering things. Initial insights into a subtle attitude ripen into profound awareness of need for transformation. Notice how self-awareness and awareness of need for Christ go hand in hand. Notice how receiving Christ’s love changes what he wants himself to be as a husband. Impatience pushed his wife away; patience and kindness take her person and her concerns into his heart.

(continued on page 9)

David Powlison, A.B., M.Div., Ph.D. has taught CCEF’s most popular course, Dynamics of Biblical Change, for over 30 years. He has been an eye-witness to the transformative work of God in the lives of countless students. He serves as the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* at CCEF and has written extensively on the relationship between faith and psychology. His books include *Speaking Truth in Love*, *Seeing with New Eyes*, and *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context*.



Stomping Among Lilies

I find a frustration within my heart at times, subtle as it may be, that strangles the grace from simple, unguarded moments in communication with my wife. It is impatient. It expects its own way. It doesn't have time for the gospel. This frustration is especially destructive within the vulnerability and intimacy of marriage. The following is a window into my experience amidst biblical change. I should tell you now that when you reach the end, my journey will not yet be complete, but it is begun. This is the beauty of true change. The Word of God does more than to show us how to cope. It moves us. It rearranges life in such a way as to make room for grace to enter in and actually change us.

.....

I notice in the unguarded moments of my marriage—those simple, garden-variety moments that seem like any other—a certain susceptibility in my heart. Moments like my way in the front door at home, stumbling in on an afternoon with bags in hand, my wife already home awaiting my return. Moments like a quick phone call from her during the day, when we have yet to connect since that morning. Moments like her hurried request from the other room for my help with some particular task.

Sometimes, an interaction can change from beautiful to broken in only a moment. All of a sudden I am annoyed with her for expecting my attention to questions before I can even get my keys out of the front door. All of a sudden my wife seems less of a joy on the other end of the phone as I realize how long this call is going to take. All of a sudden I feel hesitant to put down my book and run into the other room in response to her request for assistance. *All of a sudden*. It happens so quickly.

If you spend any time in the Word at all and you see there the grace and beauty with which it calls us to live with one another, then you cannot escape its implications for frustration. Frustration is not innocent. Consider even briefly Col. 3.19, “*Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them,*” or Eph. 5.25, “*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*” Or consider 1 Cor. 13.3-7, “*Love is patient and kind... it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*” Is frustration innocent in light of these descriptions of life together in marriage?



Consider now what might be the opposite of these verses. “*Husbands, hold fast to your own desires, even if it means being harsh with your wives.*” Or, “*Husbands, love on your own terms; it is of little relevance how Christ has loved you.*” Or, “*Love is impatient and inconsiderate. It insists on its own way; it is often irritable and resentful; it secretly rejoices when it gets what it wants through manipulation. It barely survives day to day, believes in nothing, hopes in nothing, endures nothing.*” When I consider before the Lord my moments of frustration in my marriage, they look and feel much more like these latter verses than they do the former ones.

The Word confronts us with the truth that frustration is not an innocent whim. It shows us that there is something fundamentally wrong in frustration. It is antithetical to love.

I began to understand that frustration deconstructs togetherness. Even when it is subtle on the outside, it is always destructive on the inside. Frustration is the experience of interpreting something or someone as an obstacle to one's own desire, and wanting that obstacle removed or changed. When I feel this way toward my wife, I necessarily turn myself against her because she has become that obstacle. Because of this, frustration divides. And when this happens between spouses, an exclusive union between only two persons, frustration then isolates. Because I have turned on her in my heart, my wife finds herself momentarily abandoned by her friend, lover, and support.

All of a sudden I dismiss her feelings because she seems disinterested in mine. All of a sudden I complain because I am unhappy that she needs me in an “untimely” moment. All of a sudden I criticize her because she does not seem concerned to help meet my clear expectations for plans one morning. Frustration within marriage always produces disunion because, rather than fill the space between spouses with constructive, tender, grace-oriented communication, it fills the space with destructive, divisive, self-oriented dissatisfaction.

I have to ask myself this question: what motivates these recurrent moments of frustration, especially within the preciousness of marriage? What motivates frustration with someone for whom just minutes ago I would have given anything? I ask myself that question because the Word asks it of me. The Word gives us a framework for how to understand ourselves, and it reveals what is essential to our reactions, our emotions, our words: *they are the product of the desires rooted within our own hearts* (Matt. 15.18; Luke 6.43-45; James 3.12). In order to understand my moments of frustration, then, I cannot only observe my circumstances. I need to see what

desires rule my heart in the moment of those circumstances. “*What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel*” (James 4.1-2). God reveals that beneath my frustration that sabotages moments with my wife are many restless desires

first chapter of 1 Timothy: “*But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.*” (1 Tim 1.16). Christ’s perfect patience is his evidence to me that he loves me. He calls me to love in this same manner that he loves me. The same patience, gentleness, and long-suffering the

Biblical change is not a rearrangement of the situation but a transformation of the heart.

that develop in absence of love for him. In any given moment that I drift from love of God, a great shift takes place across every other desire in my heart. I turn inward and desire on my own terms. I desire time on my terms. I desire love on my terms. I desire control on my terms. When my heart is far from the gospel, these desires rule those moments rather than desires for the love and ways of God, and they reach the surface in reactions, emotions, and words of frustration when my wife is not willing to accommodate them.

As I wrestled with this within, I learned something further revealing: frustration isn’t necessarily *loud*. I began to realize the process of change would go much deeper than I had anticipated. I had experienced moments of success in being slower to communicate frustration in unguarded moments but, as outwardly calm as I was, I realized that *quiet* frustration existed beneath the surface. Quiet frustration is that frustration that may not give a terse response, but *resents* a spouse inside for expecting your attention at the moment. It *wishes* my wife did not want my help in the other room. It *imagines* what it would be like if she would wrap up this phone call sooner than later. Frustration does not have to be loud at all. It can rule us in complete silence.

This is the moment in the journey that I began to understand that biblical change—real transformation—is not merely from frustration to passivity. A restraint to communicate frustration may have been the first step in change but it was not the destination. Biblical change is not a rearrangement of the situation but a *transformation* of the heart. The heart works in one of two directions—either self-centeredly or other-centeredly. Biblical change is a transformation from the former to the latter. An other-centered heart cannot be contained by passivity; it desires to be like Christ and act in love. Biblical change not only constrains us, but also moves us. It lifts our eyes and then teaches us to love what we see. It transforms my heart toward an other-centered concern for my wife’s welfare through a patient, enduring, and safe love. It moves us away from frustration and toward its opposite, which is *constructive gentleness*. Biblical gentleness in marriage is to create, guard, and propagate an experience of unity, blessing, and peace for my wife. The motion from frustration to constructive gentleness is one from self-centered *dividing* to other-centered *uniting*.

Through his Word, God captures our hearts and leads us through this process of change. For me, one experience of this was in the

Lord has with me is what I am called to embody in my relationship with my wife. Christ intends that she experience him, her true Husband, in my love for her. It broke my heart to realize how my moments of frustration obscure this ministry of mercy and love within our marriage. But what wonderful encouragement and hope the Word becomes to us, leading us in what gospel life and love look like in even the smallest unguarded moments of marriage

Loving my wife as Christ does is only possible because of what Colossians describes in chapter 3, which I encourage you to read in its entirety. “*Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.*” How can we ever be faithful to love like this verse intends? The answer is revealed earlier in the chapter. We can love like Christ because our lives are “hidden with Christ” (v.3). To say we are hidden in Christ describes that we are *united* to him, *living* in the reality of the gentleness, patience, and love in which Christ perseveres *for us*. In this union we are made like him so that we can “*put on... compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another...above all these, put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony*” (v.12,14). Change comes by our moment by moment life in Christ (Jn 15.5).

I hope you will not be discouraged to hear that this has been a rather gradual process. There remains a long way ahead. But this patient process is how the Lord chooses to change us. It is not this way in every instance, but it is for most. His patient ways with us allow change to take hold of the deepest parts of our lives. Luther writes, “We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it.” Let us also add, we are growing toward *him*. This is biblical change.

by Chris Carter





School of Biblical Counseling

Our School of Biblical Counseling (SBC) continues to grow and have influence around the world. Each year CCEF has the privilege of hosting international students. In addition to the students we taught at our partner institution, Westminster Theological Seminary, we welcomed four international students to CCEF last year to participate in our one year onsite training. Since 2005, we have had approximately 300 students from 40 countries outside the United States participate in our training program.

Since the inception of our Distance Education program, there have been 3,500 registrants in our online classes. 30% of those registrations were in this past year alone! In order to better cultivate relationships with online students, CCEF offers two opportunities annually for distance students to come onsite for intensive training. At our June 2011 intensive we welcomed 30 students from 22

states and 3 countries. This was an encouraging time and a unique opportunity to train our online students in person. Students participated in the course Essential Qualities of a Biblical Counselor, taught by Monica Kim. Through lectures, group discussions, practical assignments and hands-on, one-to-one counseling sessions during the course of the class, students were encouraged to identify their strengths and weakness as counselors and to develop practical plans for growth. This popular course is available only during our January or June intensives. Please pray for our students enrolled in our Certificate program.



Monica Kim, M.A.R. is an Associate Faculty member and a counselor at CCEF. She has written for the Journal of Biblical Counseling and serves on the pastoral staff at her church.

TESTIMONY

“CCEF’s approach to counseling is thoughtful, grounded in grace, academically sound, and intensely practical. Each course, instructor, and classmate that I have encountered has contributed richly to my education and approach in my work as a pastoral counselor. As a student at CCEF, I learned essential counseling skills. But, more importantly, my walk with God was strengthened. The Kingdom-focused, Christ-centered community that I found at CCEF challenged and encouraged me deeply while reminding me that I am part of something much larger than myself.”

Kim Sadler
Executive Director of HeavyGrace Ministries, Inc.

To learn more about our training program visit ccef.org/training.

Exciting Changes for 2012

CCEF is in the process of significantly improving the quality of how we deliver our Distance Education program to students around the world. We are currently planning, recording, and editing our courses. We will begin to offer our courses in video format in June 2012, beginning with the Dynamics of Biblical Change course. We investigated several learning management systems and, after much research, decided to work with a web-based virtual classroom. Please pray for this huge undertaking and for our entire Distance Education team in the coming months. If you are interested in supporting these efforts, please consider sending in a tax-deductible gift to help improve our program.

To view a clip from Dynamics of Biblical Change visit www.goo.gl/5ksKZ

SBC partnerships

CCEF has formal partnerships with several accredited institutions including Redeemer Seminary (Dallas, Texas), Biblical Theological Seminary (Hatboro, PA), Westminster Theological Seminary (Glenside, PA), Westminster Seminary California (Escondido, CA), and SEMBEQ Seminary (Montreal, Quebec, Canada). Please pray for these partnerships and the training we provide to seminary students. Pray for our shared vision to see the biblical counseling movement grow throughout the world.

MEANINGFUL Acts of Easily Forgotten Kindness

by Tim Lane

I have been on Facebook for a few years. It started as a way to over-see and engage with my children when they first joined Facebook. I am not a fanatic, but I do enjoy the occasional interaction with a friend or reconnecting with someone from high school or college that I have not spoken to in thirty years! I recently reconnected with a former college student from my days as a campus minister. He sent me this message:

Tim,

I do not know if you remember me from your campus ministry days. I just wanted to let you know that you gave me my first Bible. This story is dear to me and I tell it often: You were making an announcement about free Bibles for kids in low-income neighborhoods. I had just become a Christian through a retreat the week before. I asked you if I could have one of those Bibles and you gave it to me. I read one chapter every night during that semester and wept over the pages. I just wanted to thank you for being faithful. It changed my life!

Wow, all I did was hand this student a Bible! Thankfully, he said that it wasn't me who changed his life; reading God's word changed him. Yet God involved me in getting a Bible into this young man's hands. It was such a simple act on my part, not even remotely heroic. But it was an opportunity and I could have responded differently. I could have acted on these thoughts, "These are for the kids, not you." Or, "Can't you afford to buy one? You aren't in our target population." By God's grace, I didn't. I stretched out my arm and handed him a Bible. That's it.

So why do I share that story? It certainly doesn't lend itself to my own fame and personal glory. I share it because this simple encounter highlights something that we emphasize at CCEF: you don't have to be a formal counselor to have deep impact in people's lives. Why would someone who works for an organization that seeks to equip wise counselors emphasize this? Because it is biblical! Formal counselors are needed, but the body of Christ is a powerful community and God uses everyone in many different ways.

I teach a class that takes all of what we believe at CCEF and stresses how we have countless opportunities to incarnate the grace of Christ on any given day, within the context of our daily relationships. You don't need a formal degree in counseling or an office with stated hours of operation to help and encourage others. During the first class, I ask students this question, "Who has had significant influence in your life?" You would be astounded to know that I hear the same answers year after year. It never changes! Some of the usual suspects are a parent, relative, friend, Bible study leader, sibling, or informal mentor. Very common people.

I then ask students to describe ways the person wielded influence. I commonly hear responses about patience, humility, gentleness, kindness, vibrant faith in Christ in the face of hardship, pursuing love, or compassion for hurting people. Very common virtues.

It is rare that anyone names a formal counselor or even a pastor. You will get the occasional youth leader, probably because that is such a formative season of life. These consistent responses reveal that God delights in using ordinary people who exhibit simple gospel virtues. This is where God does his miraculous work as he quietly and persistently builds his kingdom.

Let me tell you about one person who impacted my life in a miraculous way. Mr. Prince was an elderly southern gentleman who taught me when I was in junior high Sunday School. That's right. Mr. Prince was brave enough to take on a class of ten junior high boys and teach them week after week. Can you imagine what it must have been like to teach junior high boys the Bible? We would fidget and joke with one another within three feet of Mr. Prince, somehow thinking he couldn't see us! Occasionally, Mr. Prince would say in a calm southern voice, "Boys, I want you to listen to Mr. Prince. He loves you and wants you to grow up to love Jesus." Understand that Mr. Prince was no pushover.

Formal counselors are needed, but the body of Christ is a powerful community.

He owned his own business and was well acquainted with the push and pull of life. But he was calm, gentle, and patient with us week after week. When I didn't show up one Sunday, he would send me a card saying he had missed me.

I look back and wonder what I might have done if Mr. Prince had come down hard on our boyish antics. It is highly likely that I would not have come back or used it as an excuse to keep God at arm's length (as if we can really do that!). Instead, he loved us well by showing up week after week, exhibiting simple, yet miraculous, gentleness and patience. I remember these things about Mr. Prince—these very relational, personal demonstrations of love—yet I don't remember anything he actually taught us! His love for us is the enduring take-away from my days in junior high Bible study. More than anything else, his love is what spoke the loudest. I think he knew that.

So, who influenced you? Or better still, who are you influencing?

Tim S. Lane, M.Div., D.Min., is the President of CCEF and also serves as a faculty member and counselor. Tim has been counseling for more than 25 years and has previous experience in both campus and pastoral ministry, including serving as a pastor for ten years. He co-authored the books *How People Change and Relationships—A Mess Worth Making*. He also authored several mini-books including *Forgiving Others*, *Sex Before Marriage*, and *Freedom From Guilt*.



What has helped you in your TROUBLES?

by Ed Welch

Take a random sample of Christians and ask them this simple question: What was most helpful to you when you were going through trouble? This is what you will hear.

The #1 answer: people. People are the cause of most trouble; people are the salve for most trouble. Relief comes in a letter, a visit, kind and understanding words, or by a consistent presence that sits next to you in church, drops off a gift, shares a meal with you, offers Scripture to you, downloads worship music for you. The list is endless. Love can be very creative in the way it comforts those who are hurting.

Please don't think that the encouragement of others is merely a random act of kindness. All this mobilized love, of course, is from the Spirit who often gives gifts anonymously (Isaiah 45:1-5). The Suffering Servant has a soft spot for those who suffer. As a result, believers and unbelievers alike will usually find some comfort in the words and deeds of another person.

There is still more going on behind the scenes. We were created to be a people. The created intent of human beings was that we would move toward each other—not against and not away from. In this present era, in which selfishness and cruelty are still apparent, there are risks in moving toward other people, but we are guaranteed isolation and grief if we wall ourselves off. When we follow God's created intent for us, life feels a bit more right and good. It feels more like home.

Notice the important implications of this. Grief can mistakenly believe that it wants to be alone. And, yes, there are some people who use that alone time well, but no one should stay there, no matter what grief tells you. When you are suffering, the last thing you want is to move toward other people at small group or at the Sunday service, but that is exactly when you should do it. A

couple went through the loss of a child. The wife moved toward other people, including her husband. The husband isolated himself. The wife had it right, and it was only her hard and fast commitment to him that kept the marriage together. When suffering hits home and one spouse moves away from the other, the consequences to the relationship can be severe.

With this #1 answer in view, the escapist traditions stand out as being much more deleterious and doomed to fail. If, during hardships, you avoid people and move toward things and activities, you only intensify the pain, in which case you turn even more frequently to your preferred source of pseudo-comfort. Drugs and alcohol have been the most common and destructive of the away-from-people traditions, but there are many others: video games, pornography, spending money, and eating. Foolishness that isolates can be very creative.

Move toward people. Move toward. Do not move away. Do not wait. Move toward. As you do you will be acting truly human, and that's good.

The #2 answer: Scripture. The second most common comfort-in-trouble is Scripture. Some people might argue that it should be #1, and maybe it should, but a broad sample of people won't mention it quite as often as the #1 answer. Both sources of help take some work. This one takes more effort, though it is sure to end in encouragement.

One day a friend who was going through very deep waters was talking about how Scripture rescued her day after day. She would have ranked Scripture #1 and other people #2. She used the expression "force feed" and the phrase was immediately etched into my brain. I'll probably forget my own name before I forget this.

She would wake up in the morning, pre-

fer to do nothing, maybe get a cup of coffee or three. Her soul did not realize what it needed. So she would force feed. She didn't always want to, but she always did it.

I have since met many more force feeders. They are a persistent group. They will feed on Scripture, like it or not, until they are satisfied, full, thankful, even joyous. They never settle for merely a bite. They keep eating until the encouragement and comfort of Christ lifts them up and they are ready to head out and lift up others.

You can discover these people in a few different ways. When you are going through your own struggles, notice who offers you Scripture. Now, some folks will offer you Scripture and it might sound trite or hollow. The problem could be your own, of course, but a force feeder will give you Scripture, perhaps even something as common as Romans 8:28, but it won't sound mechanical. Instead, they are giving you a trusted friend. They are giving you the best gift they ever received. Ask them to tell you more.

the Spirit works through people,
and the Spirit certainly works
through Scripture

The #3 answer? There is none, at least there is no consensus #3. Some people find great encouragement in the sacraments, others in music. So there are other items on the list. But the Spirit works through people, and the Spirit certainly works through Scripture. What more do we need?

Edward T. Welch, M.Div., Ph.D. is a counselor and faculty member at CCEF. Ed has written extensively on the topics of depression, fear, and addictions. His books include: *When People Are Big and God is Small*; *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*; *Blame it on the Brain*; *Depression—A Stubborn Darkness*; *Running Scared*; *Crossroads: A Step-by-Step Guide Away From Addiction*; and *When I Am Afraid: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Fear and Anxiety*.



the passage is when Jesus explains the meaning of what he is doing:

“Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:13-17).

own, we should try to make this connection as naturally and clearly as possible. For example, as we express personal sorrow and compassion for the suffering of the shamed, we also offer the comfort of remembering with them that Jesus too has experienced the agonies of shame and suffering. The psalms ultimately give voice to his very own cries of “How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?” (Ps.13:2). Or, for example, as we express genuine indignation and anger over the betrayals and abuses committed by those in power, we can remind the shamed that God too is angry at abusive shepherds: “I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock” (Ezek. 34:10a).

To help the shamed see and experience the grace of Christ and be changed by it, we must embody that grace and express Jesus’ love for them.

“you will be blessed if you do them”

What does this mean for counselors? Here are a few implications.

First, we have a role to play in removing the shame of others and it is not simply to point the shamed to Jesus, but to serve in the way he serves. He didn’t just tell the disciples about washing the feet of others; he actually washed their feet. There is no substitute for that in ministry. Jesus gives us a kind warning that speaks of the danger of considering ourselves faithful students all too willing to talk about their teacher but unwilling to do what he has done. We must be willing to don the humility and posture of a servant, wrap a towel around our waists, and kneel before the shamed, touching their feet, not with a scowl of resentment or upturned noses, but in love, touching and washing those who desperately need to know the love of Christ in the first person.

Second, we should be careful not to rush the shamed through their stories. Jesus took the time to wash each of the disciples’ feet. He didn’t rush. Our response isn’t simply a prelude to the work of Christ but a critical part of it. Clearly our love and concern isn’t a substitute for the love of Christ, but as those united to him and one another, it is certainly a critical expression of it. Our loving response is concrete, immediate evidence of Christ’s compassion and care. When we rush people through their stories it can communicate that we are ashamed of what we are hearing, that we can’t bear having their dirty feet in our face.

Finally, because we are offering Christ’s love and not simply our

Remember this connection must be artful or the counselee will feel like we are abruptly switching gears when we move from our personal response to reflect on Jesus’ response. The more we personally interact with Christ’s love as found in Scripture, the more naturally and spontaneously we can share it with others.

How do we embody Christ’s love for the shamed? We do it by following his example. We humbly love and serve the shamed—dirty feet first.

TESTIMONY

“As a Christian and also as a pastor, I am truly grateful for CCEF and their commitment to the glory of God, to his gospel, and to the sanctifying truth of his word. Our church has used many of CCEF’s resources to help equip our pastors and members of our body to love and disciple each other and to carry each other’s burdens through the sin and suffering of this life. The resources of CCEF have not only grown me in my love and devotion to Jesus and equipped me as a biblical counselor, but they have also been used in powerful ways by God in the lives of those I am counseling.”

Curtis Field,
Pastor at Redemption Church in Arizona



Winston T. Smith, M.Div. is a counselor and faculty member at CCEF. Winston is the author of the popular *Marriage Matters: Extraordinary Change Through Ordinary Moments*, as well as several mini-books, *Divorce Recovery*; *Help for Stepfamilies*; *It’s All About Me*; *Who Does the Dishes?*; and *Help! My Spouse Committed Adultery*.

MEET the Counselor



Julie Lowe has been counseling for over thirteen years at CCEF. As an associate faculty member, she teaches CCEF's Counseling Children and Adolescents course. We recently sat down with Julie to discuss her ministry and take pictures of her fascinating office. We hope you enjoy this issue's 'Meet the Counselor.'

How did you come to work at CCEF?

When I came back to the area after college, a woman at my church was taking classes at CCEF and she invited me to come along. As a result of being in the classes, I decided to get my master's in counseling at Biblical Seminary. Then I did an internship at CCEF, and things flowed from there. I began as a part-time counselor, later got hired as the Director of Student services, and eventually became an Associate Faculty member.

What did you like about CCEF when you first sat in on a class as a student?

When I graduated from my undergraduate degree in Christian counseling, I knew how to ask good questions, paraphrase, and draw people out, but I never learned how to apply the Bible. That obviously really bothered me. I see now that God put that concern on my heart to prepare me for an answer. When I began to take biblical counseling courses at CCEF, I saw that God did have something to say to people about life and their problems, and that the Bible is applicable to the problems we face.

Your career reflects a commitment to the reality that God has something to say to people, including children. Tell us how you came to focus on counseling children.

I've worked with children all my life and always loved children. After I was counseling at CCEF for a few years, I saw the need for the development of good methodology for counseling children biblically. I began to think about ways to best connect with children, because we can't expect children to connect at an adult level. I started to read about different methodologies that work well with children and attended trainings. From there, my personal passion for issues like adoption, foster care, child abuse, and child maltreatment issues only grew. I wanted to be a Christian voice that speaks into those issues, not only in the counseling office but in secular spaces as well.

I began to do a lot of work with kids who had been molested

or abused. Many outside professionals are involved in those cases, like lawyers and case workers, and I saw an opportunity to be a biblical voice and advocate for the child and family. I also decided to pursue state licensure, which I viewed as a way to be missional. Licensure gave me access into places where biblical voices were absent. Not only that, but some judges and lawyers will only work with licensed therapists. In those instances, families have the option to come to CCEF and have a biblical counselor working with them.

You are currently pursuing play therapy certification. What is play therapy?

Through different types of play, play therapy allows a child to communicate in the ways that come most naturally to that child. It can be through art, drama, games, or books. With each child, I seek to discover ways the child expresses thoughts and feelings. In my office, I have many options that a child can gravitate toward: puppets, materials for coloring, games, books, live birds, and a sand tray with miniatures. The miniature figurines, for example, offer a child a way to project his situation, family, and world onto the figurine. Talking about traumatic things is incredibly hard, even for adults, so I want to look for non-threatening ways for children to talk about these things. When they can project it onto a puppet, figurine, or story and it doesn't feel like they're exposing themselves, it allows them to be more open about what's really going on. The play gives children a safe way of revealing what they're thinking and feeling.

Why did you decide to pursue play therapy certification?

Part of my pursuit in becoming a registered play therapist is missional. One of my goals is to speak back into the field of play therapy and be a voice of biblical counseling in secular environments. Learning about what some of the very skilled experts in the field are doing sharpens me and provides an opportunity to explore how the richness of the gospel can enhance their methodologies to better love and serve children wisely.

How do you use your office?

Children tend to have fears and stereotypes of what counseling might be like. They are so surprised when they walk in because the room is fun! Even adults love to be in this office! Children find my office immediately engaging and the environment puts them at ease. In the first session, I let kids explore the room and ask questions. If I know a child is reluctant or fearful about being here, then I let her pick what she wants to do, whether it's a game or coloring, because I want to build bridges to a relationship. Having this room and these tools helps do that naturally.

part of the process. Transformation must happen in the context of the family. Adults can make changes for themselves, but children are dependent on their parents and on the choices people are making around them. Therefore, the key to working with children is working with parents. They are always part of the solution.

Whenever I can have parental involvement, I want it. My goal is for the parent to be the child's wise counselor. I want the parents to do what I'm doing with their children. I equip parents to help their kids in the moments they're struggling. When I am with children in my office, they are usually not struggling in that moment; they



How do you use stories in counseling children?

I have a lot of books in my office and I use them often. I tell stories and let kids tell me stories. I find that stories connect so well to parables and metaphors that Jesus used. I also like to use the language of 'story,' and will say things like, "Your life is a story. God is writing your story. We don't know what the next chapter is, but God can write it like nobody else can."

What is the main difference between counseling children and adults?

I often say that if you can work well with children, then you can work well with adults. But just because you work with adults doesn't mean you can work with children. Working with children requires you to get out of your comfort zone and enter into someone else's world. You have to learn to think more simply and to express yourself and articulate in concrete ways. And if you can do that, then you're also learning to do that well with adults.

My goal is for the parent to be the child's wise counselor.

How does transformation in the life of a child look different than it does with adults?

The more I counsel children the more I realize that parents have to be

struggle at home or at school. I'm rarely there but parents often are there, so it's much better to equip parents to help their children. Just as I seek to be an expert of each child I counsel, I encourage parents to do the same. You want to get to know the child—her temperament, strengths, weaknesses, and areas she's prone to fall into sin and struggle. You do not have to be a professional counselor to connect with children at their level. I regularly tell that to parents and families so that they are encouraged to be an agent of change and help in a child's life.

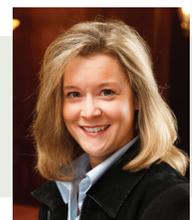
How does counseling children affect you personally?

We have five children and there are so many ways that being a counselor convicts me as a parent and vice versa. The two play off each other all the time. Parenting my children sharpens me, convicts me, and gives me empathy for what other parents face.

When I see children and families going through hard things, my instinct is to go home and shelter my kids. This inevitably leads me to a place of trusting in the sovereignty of God. It helps me realize that all I can do is be a godly parent and entrust my children to the Lord. That is what I tell parents to do and every day I'm challenged by my own words!

Please pray for CCEF's growing counseling ministry to children. Consider giving to support this important work at ccef.org/donate.

Julie Smith Lowe, L.P.C., M.A. is an Associate Faculty member and a counselor at CCEF. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor and has been trained as a Certified Christian Conciliator through Peacemakers Ministries. She has extensive experience with foster and adoptive families and speaks at events on topics surrounding women's issues, children, and conflict resolution.



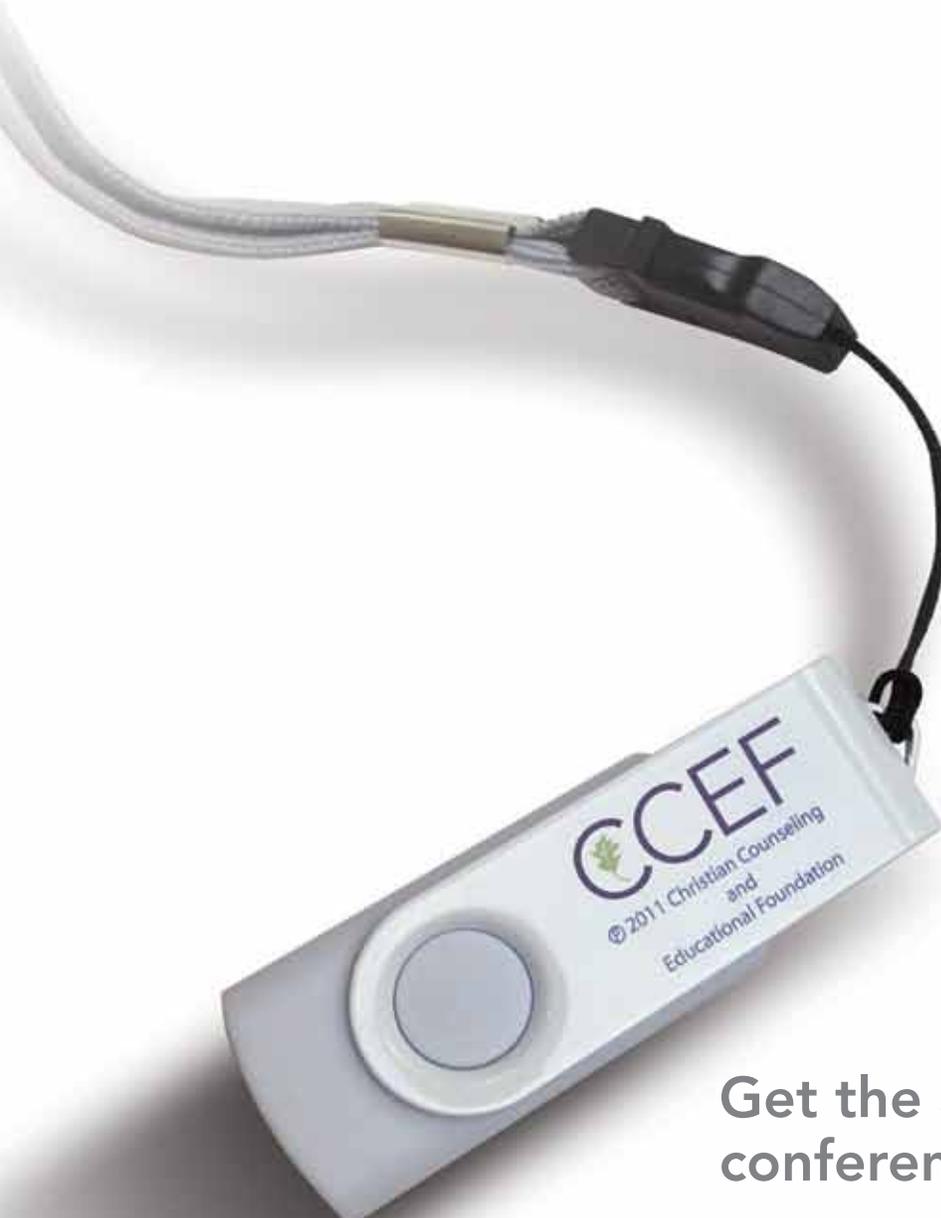


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