

Introduction: in October of 2006 I had the opportunity to attend the annual conference for the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC). The main purpose in my attending that conference was to consider whether I would pursue certification in Nouthetic Counseling, also called Biblical counseling.

- This label is used to distinguish an approach that purposefully rejects an integrationist view (integrating systems of counseling with unbiblical presuppositions) and seeks to build with a purely Scriptural framework. While other systems may be able to observe things that are true and from which we can learn, their presuppositions cannot be integrated with the Bible.
- This emphasis was, in God's providence, brought into the realm of the church by the human instrument of a man named Jay Adams. Though there are those within the biblical counseling movement that have emphasized things differently, or who have continued to grow in insights of the Word of God, Dr. Adams is usually recognized as the “father” of this movement. His writing and research in this area was at a time when (and has only increased) pastors were only thought to be public preachers, while counselors (often completely influenced by Freud, Skinner, and Rogers) were considered the “experts”, and people with personal problems were to go to such experts for the prescribing of medicine, delving into the past, etc.
- So my attendance at this conference was to consider more closely that approach, speak with those who practiced it, and look at the possibility of going through their training program to be “certified.” The first phase of this certification process included reading 5 books on biblical counseling, listening to 30 hours of audio training, watching 10 hours of videos seeing this kind of counseling done. The second phase included taking both a theological exam and a counselors exam. The third and final phase, which I am presently in, is to do 50 hours of counseling within a year which is supervised by an experienced mentor who gives weekly feedback to detailed counseling reports that I submit to him.
- One of the primary reasons that an association was formed and this certification process was assembled, was that there were problems with people who said that they were “Nouthetic” or biblical counselors who had really only picked up some ideas of this view of counseling, and from what I have heard have actually done damage. This certification process, as well as the ongoing membership within the association (with Web Site listing) is to try to make a distinction between those who claim themselves to be this, and those who are recognized by a group of trainers and peers to be.
- There are primarily one reason that I decided at that conference to pursue certification. First, it was not that I could become recognized as an “expert.” This program is certification, and is not accredited, I will not have any special title from it. Second, it was not that I could get information that I could not get from Scripture so that I could be better qualified. I believe fully in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
- The reason I personally pursued this training is that I could be a better pastor. I desired to learn from others who have been blessed of the Lord with insights into the Word and the application of the Word in helping people change.
- During this past year, in a total of 42 messages, I sought to share some of those insights as I continued to learn and study and apply those principles in counseling in my own study with some of you, as well as some outside our own congregation.
- I covered such topics as: What is biblical counseling? Comparison to other counseling methods, Spiritual Growth (3 messages), The Heart, Heart Idolatry, Guilt and Repentance, Forgiveness, Trials and Suffering, Worry and Anxiety, Fear, Depression, Anger, Common marriage problems, marriage, husbands, wives, sexual unity, parenting, and the Christian single.
- For the most part then, we have completed this series. However, the thing I have learned I intend to continue to use and apply. I am still learning, still studying, and plan to do so as long as God gives me breath for the purpose of applying these things to myself and helping others to grow in the likeness of Christ.
- So as a kind of closing chapter and postlude to this series, I want to make some miscellaneous observations and lay out 3 key things that I believe are important that I have learned and that I would want you to keep in mind.

1.) Almost everything dealt with in counseling people has to do with the proper way we respond when we don't get what we desire.

- In a perfect world, there will be no need for counseling. In a fallen world, things are broken and we all face disappointment. It has to do with our desires, our wants. How do we handle those disappointments (that are real) in a way that pleases God.
- Circumstances (small or large) disappoint – lost job, bad health, loss of loved one, dog gets into trash, car breaks down, don't get into school one desires, don't get the house, can't lose the weight
- People disappoint – spouse, friend, leaders (home, church, work, state), bad drivers, even failed expectation of self.
- The ways we respond improperly include sinful anger (not getting what we desire, think we have a right to), depression or self-pity (not getting what we desire), anxiety (that we won't get what we desire), fear (that something we don't desire will happen), loneliness (not getting what we desire in the way we desire) lack of forgiveness.
- This is tied to the issue of idolatry – what do we go to for satisfaction, comfort, rest, ease, escape.

2.) Fundamental to handling these disappointments is a recognition of God's sovereign control and purpose in them all. – Romans 8:28 Ephesians 5:20 Galatians 5:22

- Living by faith that God can reorient, and satisfy our greatest desires in Him, and in eternity.

3.) Change in how we handle these disappointments is a lasting change in practice of thinking and behavior.

- I am convinced that we are more influenced by a kind of Gnosticism or mysticism than we realize.

- There are some, particularly new Christians, who are instructed and reoriented for the first time.
- Most of what I do is remind people of what they already “know.” Counseling and counselors are sometimes viewed as having great “secrets” that will help us that we can’t figure out for ourselves (a by-product of Freud).
- I huge part of counseling, I am seeing more clearly, has not only to do with teaching people the truth of the Word (by which we are sanctified and learn how to please God), but how to be transformed.
- For this to happen, it takes a lot more discipline, planning, and exercising of oneself than we first think. Some people are by personality, upbringing, or other factors simply not given to this kind of practical diligence. But I have seen that without it there is not real and lasting change. In other words, “working really hard” at it seems so unspiritual, and some would say be trusting in the flesh.
- But notice these verses 2Timothy 3:16 1Timothy 4:7 Hebrews 5:14 2Peter 1:5 Proverbs 4:23 13:4 2Corinthians 7:11
- Yes, these verses applied the wrong way can create self-absorbed, hypocritical, rule oriented people.
- But these verse applied in the right way (by the help of the Spirit, by the direction of the Word) is God’s means for our becoming more like Christ.