Southeastern
Baptist Theological Seminary

Central Affirmations of
Southeastern's Biblical Counseling Program

Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and for the glory of His name, the counseling programs at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary are committed to equip students to serve the church and fulfill the Great Commission through the ministry of Biblical Counseling. We will provide Christians who are called to the ministry of counseling the training and experience that is needed **to explain and apply the authoritative and sufficient written Word of God in a clinically informed manner.**

The **guiding foundation** for Southeastern's Biblical Counseling program is that **the Holy Scriptures are the written Word of the Living God and are necessary for understanding people as spiritual, moral, relational, and psychological beings (2 Timothy 3:14-17; Psalm 1).** Southeastern's counseling program prepares students to counsel from within the framework of a biblical anthropology, developing a biblical, God-related understanding of human problems, and implementing truthful, graceful, timely, relevant, and practical Christ-centered methods of problem solving and change (Psalm 1:1-2; Hebrews 4:12-13).

We believe that the Bible speaks to all of life and to all of its problems. Holy Scripture points us to a person and a relationship with Jesus Christ as our Savior and Redeemer. The ultimate solution to the human condition is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of his work for us, the gospel. The gospel provides the only power for true and lasting life transformation. Jesus is the wisdom of God, and through him alone, we receive redemption from sin, the sanctifying empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the hope of a new and eternal life.

We believe that all personal, social, and familial suffering and disorder results from separation between God and humanity, as a result of Adam's sin. We are born with inherited sin and the corrupting consequence of that sin in our minds, our bodies, and our familial and social structures. Therefore, we believe that the Bible clearly explains that sin is the fundamental problem people have, and it is at the root of all psychological and physical suffering—sin in all its dimensions and consequences: mental disorders, relational trauma, and the many diseases and dysfunctions of the body.

We believe that the Bible explicates the cure for our diseases and disorders, and provides a plan for fixing what is broken and wrong — the Gospel of God in Christ. The Bible further explains the application of what Christ has done, is doing, and will someday finally do to cure our disorders and diseases. The basis for distinctly Christian counseling is rooted in something that is external to us, something that God did and does and will forever do for those who belong to him. This plan for change is grounded in decidedly supernatural components that a person must access in order to change thoroughly. The Good News is that God has done something for us that enables us to change. Paul's way of putting this is that the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

We believe that human persons are psychosomatic wholes. A person's spirit is inextricably linked to their body. The sinful condition of humanity impacts one's embodied experience and influences our moral response. We therefore take seriously biomedical conditions, and aim to understand how physiological factors may impact one's psychological well-being.

We believe that biblical counselors can benefit from both the biological and social sciences. Even though the assumptions of secular psychology are not grounded in a Christian worldview, we believe that insights nevertheless exist in the social sciences that assist us in understanding and counseling a person's mental condition, and sometimes facilitating application of biblical truth to their lives. Thus, we aim to train students in what we call "clinically informed biblical counseling."

We believe that biblical counseling is a part of the local church's mission to make disciples and teach them to obey the Lord, and is therefore best practiced when it is properly related to a local body of believers. We hope to play an active part in restoring to our churches to practical biblical wisdom in the care and cure of souls. Biblical counseling, in concert with the other ministries of a church, facilitates the process of sanctification and strengthening of the Body of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Romans 15:14).

We believe the character of the counselor and the quality of the relationship between counselor and counselee are as important as practical skill. Christ-likeness, relationally manifested through the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; James 3:13-18), is the ideal for the counselor and the goal for the counselee. The ultimate goal of all aspects of the counseling relationship is to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17).

We believe that lasting and God-glorifying change comes when people overcome their problems and mature in the context of a living, vital relationship with Christ, and his body, the Church. This foundational affirmation does not deny that non-Christians may benefit from Biblical counseling, but these affirmations emphasize that deep and lasting change is brought about only by God himself and is applied to only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God and died for the forgiveness of sins in order to reconcile us to God.

In summary, Southeastern's counseling degrees grant a uniquely constitutive role to Scripture, to the gospel of God in Christ, and to His Church. Holy Scripture is our primary "sourcebook." We need God's Word to understand God's world and the persons within it that he created in his image. Our aim is to bring the wisdom of God's Word, the hope and power of His Gospel, and the unique relevance of the church community into the care and cure of souls, the restoration of broken people and their marriages and families.