

# Western

MAGAZINE  
FALL 2013

## INSIDE & OUTSIDE THE BOX:

COUNSELING AND COACHING

### **“UNSTUCK”:**

HOW COUNSELING HELPS  
PEOPLE MOVE FORWARD

### **HAND IN HAND**

FOR ONE COUNSELING STUDENT,  
MINISTRY LOOKS LIKE AGRICULTURAL  
ADVENTURES

### **BE A BETTER HELPER**

10 THINGS NOT TO DO



A PUBLICATION OF WESTERN SEMINARY

## > LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Greek term *paraclete* is used in Scripture to describe someone who comes alongside another to provide needed help and support. In passages such as Jn. 14:16, it is used of the Holy Spirit (where it is often translated “helper,” “counselor” or “comforter”). Recognizing that the Spirit typically works through human instruments to accomplish His work, *paraclete* can also be used to describe the role played by humans as they are used by the Spirit to further His purposes in the lives of others.

This issue of the Western Magazine focuses on how some Western graduates do kingdom work in ministry roles that many people don’t often associate with seminary training. Few, if any, are surprised to discover that Western trains pastors, missionaries, and teachers; but some don’t expect us to prepare Christian counselors and coaches as well. We thought it might be helpful to explain why we do so by illustrating the types of ministries they do and some of the fruit produced through their interaction with others.

You’ll discover that these men and women bring the love and truth of Christ to people who would never think of seeking out a pastor for help, and who may not even consciously seek out an evangelical believer. But in the providence of God, evangelicals who are well-trained and placed in a variety of support roles and networks end up engaging them and looking for opportunities to address both their felt and real needs. They also can support pastors by helping deal with some complicated issues that could far too easily fill a pastor’s schedule and thus distract him away from priorities such as conscientious sermon preparation, traditional pastoral care, etc.

The issue begins with an article on “gospel-centered integration,” since the use of information from extra-biblical sources in ministry is a source of controversy among some conservative evangelicals. So I try here to introduce, in broad strokes, some of the primary issues being contested while also establishing some guidelines for maintaining fidelity to biblical values in the use of disciplines such as psychology and other social sciences.

You will also find articles written by Western faculty describing how their approach to counseling and coaching aligns with Western’s mission and goals. These articles are supplemented by profiles of Western students and alumni who use that training to minister to both believers and unbelievers. In each issue, we want to include some resources or suggestions that could help you in your ministry as well; so you will find not only some helpful books recommended, but also a “top ten” list of mistakes to avoid when seeking to help someone.

We hope you emerge concluding that other forms of “people helping” such as counseling and coaching are not mere appendages to seminary training but, when practiced in an authentically Christian way, are important ways of bringing God’s light and love to others who might not be reached otherwise.

*Randal Roberts*

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*Western Seminary strives to serve as a catalyst and resource for spiritual transformation by providing, with and for the church, advanced training for strategic ministry roles.*

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# NOTES

## THE SPURGEON FELLOWSHIP

*2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pastor's Conference*

**Speaker:** Alistair Begg

**Date:** Jan. 20–22, 2014

**Location:** Cannon Beach, OR

**Registration and information:**

Aaron Halvorsen

*ahalvorsen@westernseminary.edu*

The Spurgeon Fellowship aims to enhance the personal character and professional competency of pastors and contribute to the reformation and revival of local congregations. Join us for worship, fellowship, and teaching from Pastor Alistair Begg!

## REVIVE!

*Fall 2013 Sessions*

**Nov. 1, 2013:** Eastside Portland

**Oct. 25, 2013:** Westside Portland

**Nov. 15, 2013:** Vancouver, WA

**Registration and information:**

*WCM@westernseminary.edu*

Women involved with ministry are invited to attend Revive!, a half-day interractional learning experience with three different opportunities to attend in the Portland/Vancouver area.

## MUCH TO CELEBRATE!

Because of friends like you, Western finished the 2012–2013 Fiscal Year with a slight budget surplus, a great cause for celebration! In addition to the highest level of gift income in four years, the Seminary also experienced record high enrollment for the 2012–2013 school year. Your ongoing support makes this all possible. Keep on the lookout for year-end giving opportunities this fall to participate in the exciting work that God is doing at Western Seminary.

## CLL BECOMES 'ONLINE CAMPUS'

What was formerly known as the Center for Lifelong Learning has been renamed Western Seminary Online Campus. Now students anywhere around the globe can complete their M.A. (Biblical and Theological Studies) without relocating.

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**419**

Students served  
online annually

**36**

Faculty teaching  
online courses

**92%**

Online course  
satisfaction rate

## NEW MISSION AND CULTURE TRACK

The newly launched Master of Arts in Ministry and Leadership (MAML)–Mission and Culture Track is designed to prepare and train men and women to bridge cultural divides with skill and understanding. Students interact with ministry leaders who are leading the church in reaching diverse populations with the gospel. In doing so, these students are becoming the next generation of missional pioneers for Christ.

## WEBSITE RE-LAUNCH

Get ready for a new and improved website in Fall 2013! Western staff members have worked hard to bring you improved navigation and usability, responsive design for easy mobile browsing, and a fresh look consistent with our most current branding.





Students kneel during the Dedicatory Prayer, a Western Commencement tradition that symbolizes the servant's attitude that should characterize their ministry.



Michelle Bengtson, Poplar Photography



Clockwise, from left: Guest professor Dr. Allen celebrates with graduates; Pastor Chip Ingram, author, coach, and father of graduate Annie Iskandarian delivered the commencement address; Annie Iskandarian waits with her graduating class for the ceremony to begin.



# SAN JOSE COMMENCEMENT

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2013!

On Saturday July 20, 2013, Western Seminary San Jose held its annual commencement ceremony at Hillside Church in San Jose, CA, to celebrate the accomplishments of eleven graduates. Pastor Chip Ingram, author and coach gave the commencement address. Chip challenged our graduates not to stifle their vision to fit into what is possible by their own efforts, but to nurture a vision that boasts of a great and wonderful God. Three of our graduates, Annie Iskandarian (MABTS), Sik-Lam Wong

(MFT) and Sam Musgrave (M.Div.), shared how God has transformed their lives as a result of training at Western Seminary. They spoke emotionally about their deeper love for Jesus and appreciation of the gospel. Dr. Ron Allen charged the graduates to become active participants in Psalm 117. It was a great day of celebration and praise to our great God!



# GOSPEL-CENTERED INTEGRATION?

BY DR. RANDY ROBERTS

**T**he term “oxymoron” refers to words that logically can’t be joined together. “Christian gangster” would be one example. Some feel that “gospel-centered integration” is likewise an oxymoron; if you have one, you can’t have the other. So, can programs like counseling and coaching be both gospel-centered and integrated? Western thinks so; but to demonstrate why, we must first define our terms.

By “gospel-centered,” we mean making central to our life and ministry the good news of God’s glorious victory in Christ over the powers of sin and death. The saving benefits of His redemptive work are received by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone. Furthermore, reconciliation with God represents the ultimate human need, so all

those doing authentic Christian ministry must keep that need in mind as they minister Christ’s truth and love to others.

Our use of “integration” in this context is not referring to the blending or bringing together of people representing different ethnicities, though the gospel has unique power to do that (cf. Gal. 3:28). Instead, what is being blended or brought together in this case is biblical revelation and extra-biblical content, i.e., insights drawn from sources like the social sciences. Some believers feel that this kind of integration can enrich our ability to serve God faithfully; others feel that, more often than not, it leads to theological compromise. What is behind these respective schools of thought?



## SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Non-integrationists will argue that God has revealed in Scripture, either explicitly or implicitly, everything we need to know to live a God-honoring life. This is known as the sufficiency of Scripture. It doesn't mean that biblical revelation is exhaustive or comprehensive: it doesn't in breadth or depth tell us everything that can be known, even about topics it addresses. Rather, a careful study of biblical truth will tell us everything we need to know to love and serve God. In other words, its content is sufficient to "fully equip us for every good deed" (cf. II Tim. 3:16-17).

Evangelical integrationists typically agree with this position, but add to it by arguing that there are additional truths that can be discovered outside of Scripture that can be useful to the believer. Appeal is made to general revelation as a supplemental source of insight, and is often expressed in statements like, "All truth is God's truth" (of course, this depends on whether or not a particular assertion is in fact true, i.e., it accurately reflects reality as God defines reality).

Applied to fields like counseling, you can readily see where this leads to two different approaches. On the one hand, non-integrationists typically argue that biblical counseling, using insights drawn exclusively from Scripture, is the best way to help others. On the other hand, integrationists recognize the unique value of biblical truth, but feel much greater freedom to supplement that truth by adding ("integrating") insights from sources outside of Scripture as long as that content does not contradict Scripture.

Non-integrationists will often charge integrationists with inadequate trust in the transforming power of biblical truth and with too quickly turning to

other sources for help in dealing with human problems. They also feel that the traditional pastoral role as "physician of souls" has been usurped by a new class of counseling professionals whose counsel too often reflects elements of a non-Christian worldview. Integrationists in turn criticize non-integrationists for a simplistic or naïve use of Scripture in diagnosing and/or treating human problems and for too quickly dismissing the help professional counselors can provide for people with especially challenging psychological issues that can drain a pastors' time and distract from their other priorities.

## WHY INTEGRATION?

Many who share Western's commitment to gospel-centeredness find themselves in the non-integrationist camp and might be puzzled as to how or why we offer an integrationist approach to ministries like counseling and coaching. Here are the key points of our rationale.

First, integration is not only an issue for fields like counseling and coaching. All who seek to serve God will have to wrestle with the question of to what extent they will use principles drawn from social sciences as part of how they do ministry. For example, the "hook, book, look, took" approach often used in preparing Sunday School lessons is drawn more from educational psychology than from biblical data. For that matter, a sermon comprised of an introduction that attracts the listeners' attention, followed by three points joined by logical connections, and concluding with a summation and call to action is more informed by Aristotle's Rhetoric than by biblical precept or precedent. Church growth

theory is largely predicated upon the sociological principle of homogeneity ("like attracts like"), and missiologists are typically trained in basic cultural anthropology to be able to understand better their audience so they can minister to them more effectively (often citing passages like I Cor. 9:19-22).

My point: just about everyone is doing some form of integration, whether knowingly or unwittingly, whether thoughtfully or naively. Some of the results are more controversial than others. For example, many argue – rightly, in my view – that homogeneity, as often practiced in church growth, risks being overly-enamored with cultural criteria for determining success and losing the opportunity to model the supernaturally ethnically-integrated community described in Gal. 3:28.

Second, when integration is not done well, it tends to discredit the practice of integration itself. But we believe that confuses an unsound practice with a poor execution of that practice. In other words, if the practice itself is truly unsound, it should be abandoned altogether. But if the problem instead is found in poor execution, then the remedy is instead proper execution.

**All who seek to serve God will have to wrestle with the question of to what extent they will use principles drawn from social sciences as part of how they do ministry.**

This is an important point, because sometimes integrationists leave themselves vulnerable to criticism from non-integrationists when they don't do integration well. As a result, all attempts at integration are dismissed as being futile and counter-productive.

An often overlooked factor in sloppy or superficial integration is the disproportionately influential role played



by one's prior training. The 17th century Puritan pastor Richard Baxter illustrates this point when he warned those of his day who were seeking to study both philosophy and theology to be careful in what order they did so. Why? He said if you studied philosophy first and then learned theology, you would tend to study theology as a philosopher. Because you would read theology through the philosophical "lens" already in place, it could cause you to misunderstand it. Conversely, if you studied theology first, you would study philosophy as a theologian. That way, you would likely recognize more easily and quickly those aspects of philosophy that were inconsistent with a Christian worldview.

This is a critical point because many prospective counselors come to seminary with undergraduate degrees in psychology from non-Christian schools. Hence, certain mental frameworks and definitions are already in place. As a result, they sometimes "hear" theological concepts with psychological "ears." For example, they see a term like self-love used in Scripture, but instinctively understand it in terms that better fit secular psychology (e.g., as self-esteem) than in the way actually intended by the biblical authors. Making counseling students aware of this phenomenon, and having them take robust training in Bible and theology as part of their programs, is a good antidote. Not coincidentally, that is the approach used at Western. This means that our counseling programs are longer than those offered by most other schools, but we believe our students should be affirmed for choosing an approach that would best prepare them for a truly integrated counseling ministry.

For here we are dealing with the authority of Scripture. Where it speaks, all other truth claims on those topics must either comply or else be discarded. Biblical truth, rightly understood, must never be contradicted or replaced with human "wisdom." While extra-biblical information may supplement biblical content for ministry use, it must never supplant it. Similarly, confidence in the timeless and uniquely transforming power of the gospel must never be eclipsed by a contrary commitment to "cutting edge" psychological insight. While some vocabulary surrounding phenomena such as addictions may be new, the phenomena itself is as old as human fallenness; and so is the solution found in Christ (cf. I Cor. 6:9-11)!

## PRACTICE WITH CARE

With these caveats, we believe one can be genuinely gospel-centered, honor the historic evangelical commitments to the inerrancy, sufficiency, and authority of Scripture, recognize that many of the ways in which God works are both counter-intuitive and counter-cultural, and still utilize in a prudent and responsible manner content found outside of Scripture to help accomplish Kingdom goals.

**...just about everyone is doing some form of integration, whether knowingly or unwittingly, whether faithfully or naively.**

As a concluding example, take the widely respected British expositor D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. In a fascinating book entitled *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cures*, Lloyd-Jones describes the value of understanding one's self in diagnosing why some Christians' spiritual experience varies from that of others. In so doing, he uses categories drawn from the Myers-Briggs temperament test. Those categories are not found in Scripture, and in fact can be traced back to a problematic source (i.e., Carl Jung). But the dynamics they describe do not contradict Scripture, and Lloyd-Jones is careful to balance them with clear biblical statements of the commonality of human experience in both Adam and Christ. At the same time, he found distinctive temperamental tendencies to be very helpful in both understanding his Christian life and in caring pastorally for others (cf. pp. 14-18). So being gospel-centered need not require dismissing the value of integration, but it does mean that we need to practice it with great care and diligence if we are to be both faithful and fruitful. ■

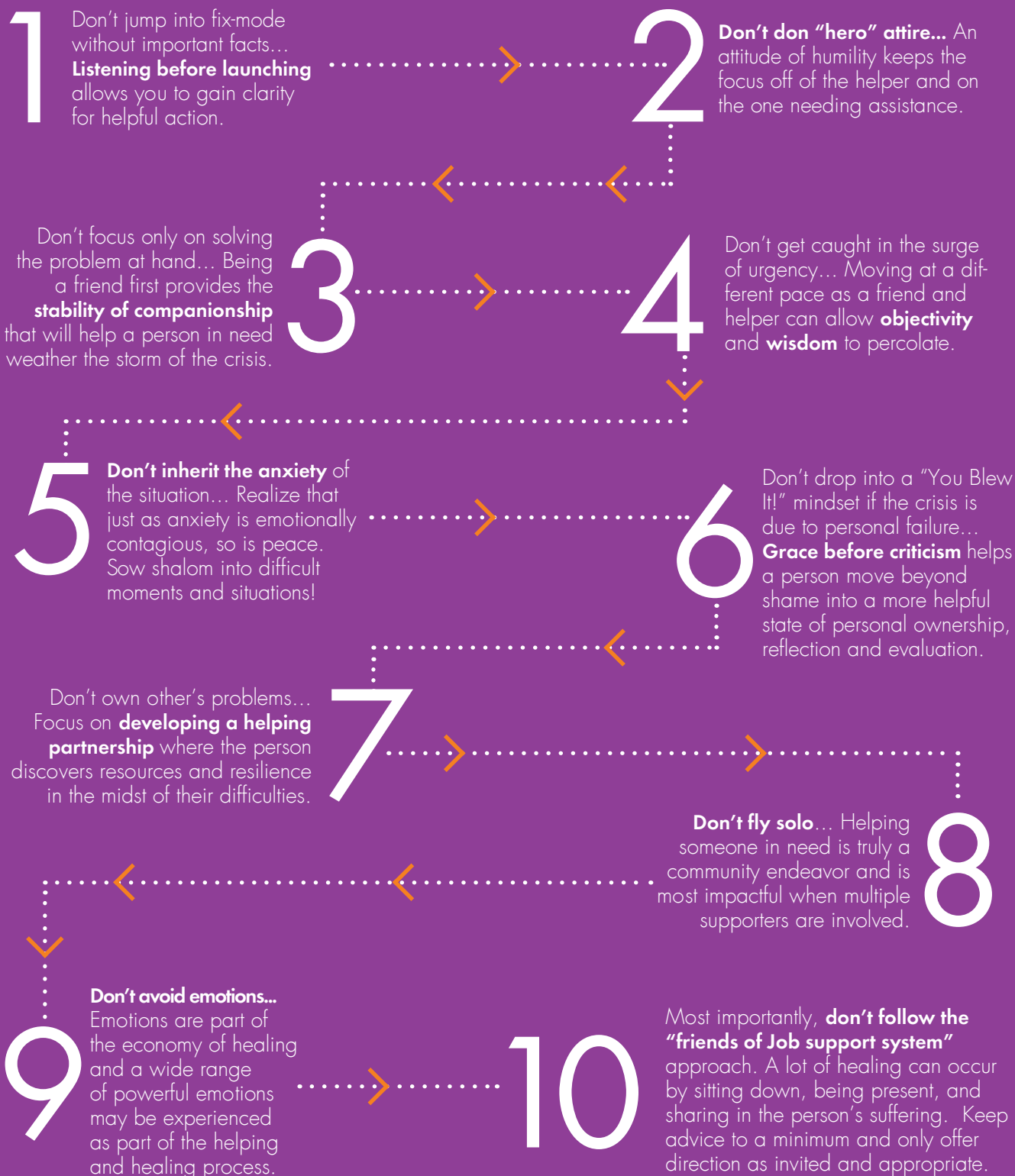


*Dr. Randy Roberts is president of Western Seminary and Professor of Spiritual Life Development. He holds degrees from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Western Seminary, and U.C. Davis.*

# BE A BETTER HELPER

## TOP TEN THINGS NOT TO DO WHEN TRYING TO HELP

Jon Holmes, L.M.F.T. and Director of the Marital and Family Therapy program at Western Seminary Sacramento Campus, shares some insight to help you be a better helper.







# A NEW WAY OF CONVERSATION

HOW THE SKILL SET KNOWN AS COACHING IS HELPING  
MINISTRY LEADERS WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY BY CHAD HALL



**A**s the Apostle Paul said, the gospel is “the power of God to bring salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16). Ministry leaders serve as God’s laborers in proclaiming and unleashing the gospel message—the good news that God’s kingdom is made real through the person and work of Jesus and that everyone (anyone!) who believes can experience a new and transformative life.

Ministry leaders employ a number of skills and approaches in our efforts. We talk to people, we preach, we listen, we show care and compassion, we witness to the power of God to bring salvation in our own lives and in the lives of those around us.

For over a decade I have trained ministry leaders to employ a set of skills that can often improve their effectiveness. That set of skills is collectively known as coaching. In fact, I have come to believe that coaching can be an important skill set for today’s ministry leaders.

## WHAT IS COACHING?

Coaching is a way of conversing that leads to new awareness, which in turn leads to new action for the person who is being coached. In a coaching conversation, one person (the coach) focuses only on supporting the other person (the coachee) in concentrating on a particular topic of the coachee’s choosing. The coach helps shape the conversation so that the coachee is better able to move through three phases: 1) narrowing their focus to the most important aspect of the topic, including his or her preferred outcome for the topic; 2) expanding his or her thinking to include new options and fresh possibilities for creating the preferred outcome; 3) narrowing the options to select one or two new actions to take in order to contribute to the preferred outcome. The coach helps the conversation move along by asking powerful questions, practicing active listening, and employing a handful of other complementary skills.

To coach effectively requires the exercise of certain skills, but it also requires the coach to have a peculiar mindset. A coaching mindset starts with the assumption that the person being coached is more of an expert on his or her own life than is the coach. By resting on this assumption, the coach can engage the coachee in a conversation that

the coachee “owns,” if you will. Rather than the coach taking control and pushing the coach’s agenda on the coachee, the coach supports the coachee in exploring and pursuing the coachee’s agenda.

A coaching conversation can be applied to practically any topic that a motivated coachee wishes to discuss. Coaching can be employed formally or informally. Some coaches are paid to work with clients such as executives or people experiencing a career transition. Others use coaching skills to improve their family relationships or to support team members. My favorite application of coaching is for evangelism and discipleship—supporting people as they experience the power of God to bring salvation.

## COACHING FOR EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

Coaching is such a wonderful fit for evangelism and discipleship conversations because the approach makes ample room for the Spirit of God to be active and effective in the life of the coach and the person being coached.

When we apply coaching in conversations with non-believers, we support the non-believer in discerning where they are in life, what’s working well and what’s not working so well, what hopes are present and unfulfilled, and what’s next for them. As we ask and listen, the coachee becomes more open for discovery, and space is created in which God’s Spirit can operate. The coach supports the coachee in considering what is crucial for both the long-term and short-term, in expanding awareness for how to deal with what is crucial, and in committing to key actions that will support the coachee’s

**A coaching mindset starts with the assumption that the person being coached is more of the expert in his or her own life than is the coach.**

progress. Sometimes a coaching conversation will result in a direct evangelistic moment in which the coachee experiences and responds to the transformative power of the gospel. Typically this involves both the coachee’s openness and the coach’s discernment about what to share and when to share it, both partnering with God to usher the coachee into belief and salvation. Other times, a coaching conversation is a seed-planting witnessing event during which the coachee experiences a

conversation partner who truly cares about the coachee as a person. This kind of conversation plants seeds by challenging the coachee to examine, with honesty, his or her life and to conduct a sort of inventory of what is working and not working. Such an examination, if

**This kind of conversation plants seeds by challenging the coachee to examine, with honesty, his or her life and to conduct a sort of inventory of what is working and not working.**

conducted honestly, must result in an admission that something is off, that hindrances are blocking the person from living a fulfilled life, and that change is needed. The coach partners with the other person to discern what level of change the coachee is ready to experience and what the coachee needs to do in response.

Coaching conversations stand in contrast to conversations in which one person pushes an agenda on the other person in an attempt to convince, cajole, or sell. Typically in those kinds of conversations, the other person grows increasingly resistant and closed, squeezing out any space for exploration in an effort to protect themselves.


Coaching is also an appropriate approach for discipleship conversations. Coaches support the work of the Spirit in sanctification by partnering with the coachee to examine his or her life, discern where there is room for progress, and determine what sins, habits, beliefs, and characteristics are preventing the coachee from fully following Christ.

## WHEN (NOT) TO COACH

Coaching is not always the appropriate approach to take. We must be discerning about when to engage a person in the supportive role of a coach and when to take the more directive approach of telling or teaching. Being directive is most appropriate when a person is open to learning and eager to hear what the teller/teacher has to share.

Coaching is also inappropriate when dealing with people who have suffered trauma, been wounded, or are suffering from addiction. In such cases, the healing approach of a counselor or therapist is more fitting.

It's important to note that learning to coach others does not replace the power of God in salvation. We cannot technique people into experiencing the gospel in a transformative way, whether our technique is preaching, teaching, serving, counseling, coaching, or anything else.

These are some of the ways we join God in what He is doing in the lives of those around us, and we are wise to employ these competencies as methods of cooperation, not as methods of manipulating others or of replacing the power of God for salvation. 

## DON'T MISS THIS!

### **Coaching for Christian Leaders: A Practical Guide**

*by Linda Miller and Chad Hall  
(Chalice Press, 2007)*

A great introduction to how the practice of coaching (especially active listening, the framing of key questions, and identifying next steps) can be useful in Christian ministry. Both Miller and Hall teach in Western's coaching program, which Hall also directs.



*Chad Hall is the Director of Coaching at Western Seminary. He is a Master Certified Coach (MCC) and holds degrees in theology from Duke University and Princeton Seminary. Chad lives in North Carolina with his wife and three children.*



# REACHING OUT

## A NEW DAY GROWS

A New Day Counseling Center, located at the Portland campus, celebrated its one year anniversary this past June. Making trustworthy counseling accessible and affordable to a broad range of clients facing a variety of challenges, the services provided are a ministry to the local community.

Although acknowledged to be a crucial part of personal healing and growth, counseling services are often priced beyond the reach of some of those most in need. A New Day works to close the financial gap by discounting fees based upon demonstrated need and providing sessions with graduate students that cost as little as \$10 per visit. This arrangement has a two-fold benefit: students (who work directly under the supervision of a licensed professional) are able to get the training and experience they need in order to become licensed themselves, and their clients are able to receive their services for a low rate, services that may not be available to them through other avenues.

A New Day has continued to grow and currently sees an average of 31 clients a week whose needs cover a range of

issues from depression and anxiety to premarital counseling. Kay Bruce, Psy.D., LPC, Director of A New Day Counseling Center, states, “Believing each day is a new day from God, we bring hope and healing to people in need . . .” The center has most recently expanded its outreach by hiring Matthew Corey, M.A., a counselor and military veteran familiar with the context of post-traumatic stress in combat.

A major initiative for the Fall 2013 is to complete a self-study for submission to the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) to be considered for accreditation under their oversight. “CACREP accreditation can help to ensure quality of education, increased degree portability, and a broader field of clinical service options available to our graduates,” says Dr. Bruce. The hope is to present a gospel-centered training program designed to equip professional counselors with the highest quality of counseling education and spiritual integration.

## COACHES WORK WITH INNER-CITY YOUTH WORKERS

“Ministry can be both life-giving and life-depleting. Many ministry leaders find, therefore, that they are in a constant struggle to strike a healthy balance between their ministries, families, and friends,” says Hoy Kim, Western alumnus and professional coach. During a coaching event at Urban Youth Workers Institute—a national non-profit that trains and resources urban youth workers and pastors to evangelize and disciple youth who live in at-risk zip codes—coaches trained by Western Seminary were able to provide individual coaching sessions to UYWI workers so that they could become better equipped to meet the ministry demands they face.

Hoy remembers one person he coached (we will call him “James”) who made remarkable progress: “During our first few conversations, James was looking for more effective ways to train his team of volunteer leaders, promote events, disciple students, and resolve conflict. About

halfway through our coaching, he began to open up and talk instead about how difficult the life of ministry can be for his wife and family. This led to a conversation about time management, creating healthy boundaries, and expectations. The motivation for change James developed was a direct result of the clarity and focus he received from a classic coaching conversation. I could see him beginning to make the necessary changes in his life that would help him be a more engaged husband and father, a stronger spiritual leader, and a healthier individual. Throughout the sessions, I could see the Holy Spirit at work and James responding in obedience.”


Opportunities such as this help keep ministry leaders biblically balanced and healthy so they are able to continue in a sustainable way the good work to which they are called.



# “UNSTUCK”

HOW COUNSELING HELPS PEOPLE MOVE FORWARD

BY DR. JUDITH NEEDHAM-PENROSE



**A**s we proceed into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many perceive the world to be increasingly complex and faster paced. The resulting emotional and spiritual challenges this creates for both individuals and their relationships affirms the need for seminary programs that equip men and women in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT). Western Seminary’s MFT Program (the Northern California equivalent of the Portland campus’ M.A. in Counseling) brings further depth and breadth to seminary training. How? By providing a Gospel-centered version of traditional counseling that helps counselees explore areas of personal hurt and struggle so that the transformational love of Christ can shine through to every area of their life.

Western students learn that prospective therapists often choose the role of helper because they themselves have been wounded by circumstances and/or have realized their own fallibility. Who they are as persons, and the relationship they have with Jesus, becomes the most important tool for change and transformation in the therapy process. The

Christian therapist's ability to form a relationship with the counselee that reflects the love of Christ, forges the therapeutic alliance that facilitates the internal or external changes that are necessary to accomplish the redemptive purposes of counseling. In one sense, the counselor's role with respect to the counselee may mirror the various functions demonstrated in Jesus' life (e.g., comforting, listening, blessing, convicting, preaching, proclaiming, teaching, encouraging, consulting, advising) while serving in roles such as friend, elder, healer, and intercessor.

While counselors are trained to be sensitive to others, first and foremost they must be sensitive to their personal relationship with God and to their own sinful patterns that need His ongoing grace and forgiveness. Western's MFT goal is to develop the whole person. Students are taught how to grow in their faith, not only through the study of the Word, but also by searching their hearts and minds for hidden areas in their own lives that need to be brought into God's light. This helps them continue to grow closer to God and live as exemplary servants of Christ and stewards of God (cf. 1 Cor. 4: 1-3).

To understand better the ministry impact of this program and how it complements the more traditional seminary courses, let's take a look at four representative Western students who are becoming trained to minister through counseling to both fellow believers and a hurting world.

## THE COMFORTED AND THE COMFORTERS

Sally first sought help as a counselee when she discovered her husband's sex addiction. As part of a Christian family involved in the church, she never fathomed that her husband was struggling with such a problem. She was initially so devastated she wanted to separate from her husband. However, her therapist, a Christian counselor and Western graduate trained in addictions, helped her talk with her husband and eventually facilitated him receiving treatment at a Christian recovery center for sex addicts. Sally herself joined a women's group for spouses in order to receive support for her co-dependency issues. Later, Sally and her husband both went to marriage counseling. Through these life-changing experiences, a desire to teach and support others in building strong Christian marriages developed, leading her to the MFT program.

Dave came from a dysfunctional family system with a father who was addicted to alcohol and drugs. The pain he experienced as a child of an alcoholic, and the problematic patterns of his family that were also evident in his own life, prompted him to begin counseling in an attempt to ward off the potential for similar addictions. As an assistant in youth ministry at his

## **The Christian therapist's ability to form a relationship with the counselee that reflects the love of Christ, forges the therapeutic alliance that facilitates the internal or external changes that are necessary to accomplish the redemptive purposes of counseling.**

church, he witnessed frequent misunderstandings between his generation and his parents' generation, increasing the complexity of addressing social and behavioral issues. Troubled by the denial and pride he saw in his culture that inhibited seeking help, Dave began studying to be an MFT counselor as well as an addiction specialist.

Jim decided to change careers when his family started to fall apart. He had been so busy climbing the corporate ladder he lost sight of his family's needs. Communication with his wife became strained as she begged him to spend more time with her and their teenage son. The more she begged, the more he withdrew; he felt pressured from all sides. Then one day their son committed suicide. Jim knew his son had problems, but had not realized the seriousness of his wife's concerns. In his grief Jim found refuge in his newly-revived relationship with the Lord. After counseling and reflection, Jim knew he had failed his family by focusing on his professional success more than honoring the biblical principles of healthy relationships. As a result, he dedicated himself to help develop strong families through education and counseling.

Monica felt a call to missions at a very young age. She was raised in a Christian home and went to a Christian college for her undergraduate degree in Bible and Psychology. She met her husband while working for a missions organization. Monica desired to use her counseling skills on the mission field with both missionaries and nationals. Her story may not be as dramatic as some of her peers, but while she was in Western's graduate program Monica became more

*cont. on page 19*







# HAND IN HAND

One Western counseling student is realizing her dream to use traditional horsemanship to minister to hurting youth and families. BY KATE SCHLEUSNER

For many girls there is a span of time, often in their early teen years, when they are especially enraptured with horses. Often this love finds an outlet in riding lessons during summer camp, plastic horses on top of dressers, and dog-eared copies of *Black Beauty*. For Western counseling student Susan Davis, however, that love for horses was neither fleeting nor an end in itself. By the time she was in middle school, Susan not only loved horses but also knew that she wanted to use that love to help hurting people find healing. With the help of Western Seminary donors, Susan is now living that dream.

At the age of thirteen, Susan met Dave Berger, Executive Director of Hand In Hand Farm, and found the opportunity that she needed. Dave, or “Mr. Dave,” as the Hand In Hand kids call him, is a genuine horseman, trained in authentic equine and agricultural traditions dating back to the 19th century. Hand In Hand was developed to help rebuild both troubled youth and their families by using mentorship programs that emphasize biblical principles (including personal responsibility, and hard work). The programs provide support networks comprised of parents, church and community members, and teachers so that lasting change can be made through

consistent, positive reinforcement. The farm also provides programs for the handicapped and the elderly, including a therapeutic horticulture program run by Dave’s wife, Miss Athena, to create a safe place for them to experience hands-on learning. After participating in the program for a short while, Susan remembers approaching Dave and saying “This is what I want to do with my life. Can you help me get there?” Fast-forward about ten years, and Susan is now the Director of Children’s Education and the Secretary of the Board of Directors for the farm, which became a registered non-profit in 2010.

Dave has also been preparing Susan to eventually take over the operations of Hand In Hand Farm, so she felt the need to expand her education and enhance her qualifications by pursuing a master’s degree in counseling. As she began looking at graduate programs, Susan knew she wanted a school that wouldn’t demand she quit ministry to train for ministry. Her search yielded few options, so when she heard about the gospel-centered approach and flexible scheduling of Western Seminary at a ‘Psych Night’ grad fair, she eagerly applied. With

that part of the process complete, Susan now faced a new challenge: as a full-time volunteer at a non-profit, she knew her continuing education would

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have to be funded through scholarships. Wondering what she would do if she didn’t receive enough financial aid, she considered her options: stop



◀ Many ways to serve: Susan Davis uses agricultural adventures to bring unity, peace and healing to those in need.

▲ Teamwork: Susan and program kids work together to accomplish the task at hand.



Teaching: Susan teaches kids about tansy, a weed that is toxic to cattle and horses.




working at Hand In Hand so she could go to school part time and work part time—an option she was reluctant to consider because she knew it would mean greatly reducing or eliminating the programs the farm was able to offer—or letting go of her desire to get her master’s degree. Fortunately, before either of those decisions had to be made, Susan received word that

**“Without the help of donors, I think the program would look very different in size and scope.”**

she had been accepted into Western and had been awarded the President’s Pathway Scholarship, which is funded through donor support and would cover a large portion of her tuition. That allowed her to enroll in the program. “I could have gone to school and tried to make it work,” said Susan, “but without the help of donors, I think the program (Hand In Hand) would look very different in size and scope.”

Now a year into the Counseling program, Susan is already seeing the benefits of her education played out in “real life.” Without having to worry about how she is going to pay for next term’s tuition, she is focusing on getting the most out of her education and putting it to practice on the farm. “It’s making Christianity applicable in ways we can feel and see and understand,” Susan commented as she talked about how her learning is being put to use as she works with Hand In Hand clients. “It’s so encouraging to see the research that backs up what we are already doing and practicing at the farm.” As someone who works with troubled youth and dysfunctional families, practical help is what Susan needs. Kids that come to the farm are given the opportunity to complete different apprenticeship levels so that as they grow and mature, they are given more responsibility and more interaction with other kids and animals. Work is a common theme on the farm:

hard work, team work, and dirty work. Dave and the team at Hand In Hand have tapped into an ethic which our modern and technologically-driven world sometimes seems to have forgotten: honest, hard labor develops a sense of self-worth by serving others. It also helps kids stay too busy to get into trouble while their conscience is maturing. Of course, the reward of learning how to ride a horse doesn’t hurt either!

Susan, who is still every bit as in love with horses as she was when she was thirteen, is enjoying the satisfaction that can only come from both living and growing a dream. Thanks to the support of donors, Susan is, as she says, “doing what I was made to do.” 



# PRESIDENT'S PICKS:

## RECOMMENDED READING

### **The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams**

by Heath Lambert (Crossway, 2011)

A helpful analysis of how the biblical counseling movement has changed (some would say matured) since its founding by Jay E. Adams. An important read for integrationists who may be responding to outdated stereotypes of this movement and for biblical counselors who want to model the goal of "reformed, and always reforming" in their ministry.

### **Helpful Truth in Past Places: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Counseling**

by Mark Deckard (Christian Focus, 2010)

Deckard illustrates how counseling was practiced in a pre-psychology era by a group of pastors who had to deal with many issues still facing us today. The Puritans are well-known for their commitment to bring God's word to bear upon all of life, and this book illustrates how their biblically-grounded insights into the human condition and God's redemptive work in Christ can be still be sensitively applied as the ultimate remedy.

### **Psychology & Christianity: Five Views (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)**

edited by Eric Johnson (IVP, 2010)

Aimed at an audience with some prior knowledge of the integration controversy, this volume gives representatives from five different positions the opportunity to state their position positively and then interact critically with the other contributors. A sequel is also available that illustrates how these different views work themselves out in practice.

aware of some of her own dysfunctional communication tendencies among other subtle but problematic sinful patterns. Through her theological training in the seminary's MFT program, she built a stronger understanding of scripture and how to apply God's truth in counseling not only with others, but also in her own walk with the Lord.

## ALL PARTS OF OUR HEART AND BEING

In each of these cases, the help of a trained professional working through a para-church organization brought individuals to a more consecrated life in Christ. Dedicated time and specialized help was provided that might not have been available through their pastor, should they have even chosen to meet with him. In turn, through their experiences of having a Christian counselor walk beside them, they chose to help others who are hurting in their marriages and families. This pattern is described in II Cor. 1: 3-4: "The God of all comfort comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

As Christians, and in response to what God has done for us in Christ, we are called to completely surrender ourselves so that Jesus is honored as Lord in every area of our life. Counseling can help uncover and sanctify those areas where we may feel stuck or stunted, whether emotionally or spiritually. E. Stanley Jones, a missionary

to India, introduced the concept of the unconverted subconscious (UnS) in Psychotherapy in 1968. This concept of the "unconverted subconscious" is similar to the concept of speaking the Gospel (truth) to all parts of our hearts and being. Sanctification is a life-long process made possible only through the grace of Jesus Christ; exploring the depths of the mind and the heart allows us to see where and why we struggle, so we can begin the processes of healing and growth that comes through such awareness.

The Christian life is one of surrender and consent to God rather than one of constraint. Part of the vital job of Christian therapists is to help clients come to understand why they do what they do, and to help them to see and pursue better choices that align with God's good, perfect and acceptable will (Rom. 12:1-2). That can require a deeper probing of a client's inner life to promote emotional and spiritual breakthroughs.

We in the Marriage and Family Therapy Department at Western Seminary are honored to be used in the Lord's service to train the next generation of therapists for this critical work. ■



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