

## If Solomon For Wisdom Prayed

John Newton (1725–1807)

If Solomon for wisdom prayed,  
The Lord before had made him wise;  
Else he another choice had made,  
And asked for what the worldings prize.

Thus he invites his people still,  
But first instructs them how to choose,  
Then bids them ask whate'er they will,  
Assured that he will not refuse.

And dost thou say, "Ask what thou wilt"?  
Lord, I would seize the golden hour;  
I pray to be released from guilt,  
And freed from sin and Satan's power.

More of thy presence, Lord, impart,  
More of thy image let me bear;  
Erect thy throne within my heart,  
And reign without a rival there.

Give me to read my pardon sealed,  
And from thy joy to draw my strength;  
To have thy matchless love revealed  
In all its height, and breadth, and length.

Grant these requests, I ask no more,  
But to thy care the rest resign;  
Sick or in health, or rich or poor,  
All will be well if thou art mine.



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[www.centralseminary.edu](http://www.centralseminary.edu) | [info@centralseminary.edu](mailto:info@centralseminary.edu)

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## *In the Nick of Time*

### An Outsider's Experience with the Biblical Counseling Movement

Kevin T. Bauder

When I came to Central Seminary nearly thirty years ago, I had little exposure to the biblical or nouthetic counseling movement. I had read Jay Adams's *Competent to Counsel* as an undergrad, but that was years before. I couldn't have told you how nouthetic counseling differed from the teachings of Bill Gothard, which I had discovered to be biblically flawed. I had a sort of generalized impression that nouthetic counselors considered all mental and emotional troubles to be sinful. That seemed a bit excessive to me.

On the other hand, I'd already decided that psychology and its kindred disciplines were pretentious to the degree that they claimed to be sciences. Scientific method involves three elements. The first is observation and quantification of empirical phenomena. The second is the formulation of predictive hypotheses framed in cause-and-effect terms. The third is the testing of those hypotheses through repeatable experimentation. I reasoned that treating human behavior in such cause-and-effect terms eviscerated freedom and damaged our humanity. Intellectual insight and moral action had to stand outside the web of natural cause and effect. By failing to acknowledge this point, psychology and the social sciences made false claims and even contradicted themselves.

Consequently, I was deeply suspicious of what biblical counselors call *integrationist* approaches to Christian counseling. The integrationists attempted to use the Bible for spiritual matters, but to integrate the insights of secular psychology for matters of the soul (including the emotional life). I saw this attempt as a betrayal of a genuinely Christian understanding of human nature.

When I came to Central Seminary, the biblical counseling department and programs were headed by Dr. Thomas Zempel. Tom was a zealous advocate of nouthetic counseling. He had received his doctorate from Westminster Seminary, where he had been trained by the men who were involved in the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation. He was a certified biblical counselor, and while I was teaching at Central Seminary he became a fellow

with the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors. Later, he helped to organize the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors.

The first thing that struck me about Tom was that he was both compassionate toward counselees and passionate about biblical counseling. He gave himself to the task. He also labored to train his fellow Christians to become biblical counselors. He believed that they were all “competent to counsel.” Besides organizing Central Seminary’s biblical counseling program, Tom constantly recruited both students and fellow professors into the ranks of biblical counseling. He talked about biblical counseling all the time. Names like David Powlison, Ed Welch, Tedd and Paul Tripp, and Bill Goode were often on his lips.

I had previously assumed that nouthetic counselors were all in lockstep with Jay Adams. Tom showed me that they were not. He introduced me to some of the differences within the biblical counseling movement. For example, figures in the movement agreed that the “inner man” or soul affects the “outer man” or body, but they disagreed over the extent to which the body can affect the soul. Tom respected Bob Smith, a physician who downplayed the effect of the body on the soul. But for our program he recruited Mark Stuckey (also a physician) to teach the course on “Material and Immaterial.” Stuckey convincingly demonstrated that the body-soul influence worked in both directions. Tom did not see this as a difference that ought to divide biblical counselors.

At the time I came to Central Seminary, I had spent the past several years working out the implications of the Shema (Deut 6:4) and the Greatest Commandment (Deut 6:5) in light of Jonathan Edwards’s understanding of the religious affections. Studying Edwards, C. S. Lewis, and (ironically) H. Richard Niebuhr, I had developed an understanding of idolatry that Tom saw as closely paralleling what was being taught by the CCEF. He tried to convince me to present this material for some biblical counseling event, though I never did.

There were certain questions over which Tom and I disagreed. One was whether Christians still have a sin nature or whether enduring sin is the collection of habits formed by living an unsanctified life. Another was the degree to which sinful attraction centers in the body rather than the soul. Tom was always a wonderful conversation partner.

Tom and I also discussed the traditional Christian distinction between affections and passions. I believed that this distinction was important both for progressive sanctification and for church ministry. I saw the cultivation of right affection as crucial to progressive sanctification, while Tom (and, I thought, the biblical counseling movement in general) tended to place greater emphasis upon knowing and doing. Tom helped me to see that most

biblical counselors did emphasize the affections, even though they expressed it in other words. Together we continued to probe and test this distinction for its applicability until he left Central Seminary.

In all our conversations Tom manifested patience and charity rather than confrontation and denunciation. He was genuinely interested in understanding my point of view, and he genuinely wanted to persuade me of the value of biblical counseling. I never heard him simply label and dismiss people who disagreed with his position, and I never saw him get brittle over his views.

I absorbed some of Tom’s excitement during the organization of the ACBC. The new association was bringing together individuals from various corners of the biblical counseling movement. Not all of them knew each other well. Not all of them completely trusted each other (the strict “Adams” crowd seemed most standoffish). But Tom overflowed with confidence that these factions needed each other, that they could converse with each other, and that they could all benefit from the mutual interchange. He saw the ACBC as an attractive and expansive organization rather than a purist and expulsive one.

At the time I came to Central Seminary, the center of gravity for biblical counseling was Westminster Seminary and the CCEF. The primary organization for biblical counselors was NANC. The counseling ministry at Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana, was a secondary hub, as was Master’s Seminary. Since then, biblical counseling has grown significantly in some of the Southern Baptist institutions. For example, the Institute for Nouthetic Studies (founded by Jay Adams and Donn R. Arms) has merged into Midwestern Baptist Seminary.

I wonder whether today’s biblical counseling movement is still the attractive and expansive movement that I saw in Tom Zempel or whether its leadership is becoming more rigorist, purist, and expulsive. I am raising the question, not offering a judgment. I wish that Tom and I could sit and talk about it. But the Lord took him to heaven in 2016, and I’m not as close to others in the movement. Still, I would love to see the current leadership address this question in a clear and unified way.



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This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

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