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ARIZONA SOUTHERN BAPTIST VIEWS TOWARD  
COUNSELING IN THE CHURCH

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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ARIZONA SOUTHERN BAPTIST VIEWS TOWARD  
COUNSELING IN THE CHURCH

by

Nelda Bloomquist Nichols

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
WITH A MAJOR IN COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE  
In the Graduate College  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out what Arizona Southern Baptists' views are toward counseling in church. The research consisted of a pilot study and a main study. In the pilot study, there were thirty-four questionnaires answered, yielding a reliability coefficient of .89.

In the main study, there were 283 questionnaires answered by groups from four churches in Arizona. The questionnaires were distributed by a staff member to either Sunday School classes or other groups, and to individuals 18 years or older.

The data was tabulated and analyzed. These main conclusions were discussed. Southern Baptists agree very strongly that the church should sponsor trained counselors to help members during problem times. The majority of people prefer that this counselor be a member of the church, although no important preference for counselor payment was found. Southern Baptists want to see prayer, biblical quotations and spiritual techniques, when dealing with problems, used in counseling, although strength of support for the above differed with each variable. An educational degree for the counselor was preferred, however, the type of degree desired was unsubstantiated. Implications and recommendations are presented.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In today's society, most Christians will encounter interpersonal problems sometime during the course of their life. These problems will be varied and occur with differing intensities. In the past, most people who sought help with their problems utilized mental health professionals. However, today there appears to be an increasing disillusionment with professionals in their abilities to help people successfully solve their problems. This has resulted in people seeking other approaches to counseling. One growing approach which reflects this change in thinking is that of Christian counseling. This is evidenced by the increasing number of books and articles that have appeared in recent years.

There is no agreement among Christians today as to what relationship Christianity should have with counseling. Some believe that psychology and the church should remain totally separate with psychology taking care of emotional needs and the church taking care of spiritual needs. Others reject secular psychology as pagan and believe counseling should only be done in the church using the Bible and prayer as tools (Adams, 1970). Most Christians, however, have mixed emotions about the relationship Christianity should have with counseling. On the one hand, they see much potential in a scientific study of the human being and believe that the insights of psychology

can help the church to minister more effectively to the total needs of humanity. But on the other hand, some of the fundamental concepts of psychology appear to be directly in opposition to Christian beliefs (Narramore, 1979; Carter, 1979).

What then, is the answer? The Bible states that Christians are to teach everything that Christ taught and commanded. Obviously this encompasses religious doctrines such as salvation, prayer, heaven, hell, spiritual growth, and the attributes of God. Nevertheless, Jesus also spoke about many personal and practical issues. He dealt with marriage, parent-child interactions, relationships between people, logical consequences for behavior and how to be happy. All of these are concerns that people bring to counseling. (Collins, 1980a).

In one sense, Christian counseling has been with us throughout the ages. The Old Testament is filled with examples of godly men and women who were used by the Holy Spirit to encourage, confront, guide, advise, and in many other ways, help those in need. There are many references in the Bible which instruct people to seek counseling because wisdom comes to those who receive counsel (Proverbs 13:10). Paul, the Apostle, wrote that "we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves" (Romans 15:11). Most importantly, Jesus, whose life Christians are taught to study and imitate, spent much time talking to people both individually and in groups, and attending to their needs. In Isaiah, Jesus is also given the name "Wonderful Counselor".

In summary, the local church has the opportunity to restore troubled people to happy and productive lives. Christ said "love your

neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). One way the local church can demonstrate this love is through guidance, encouragement, and counsel. In the Bible helping people is not presented as an option but as a requirement for every believer. Therefore, it is important to find out if church members believe that counseling should be an integral part of a church based ministry.

#### Statement of the Problem

Although the number of publications written in the field of Christian counseling is increasing, almost no research has been reported. Church attender's views toward the importance of counseling in the church and the use of biblical referral and prayer is unknown at present. The type of counselor training and requirements preferred and the source from which the counselor should receive remuneration was also investigated. Classification by age, sex, marital status and whether or not the person has received counseling in the past was examined to see if any differences exist in these subgroups.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gather evidence in order to determine the extent Arizona Southern Baptist church attenders believe that counseling services should be established as a church goal, and, in addition to this, how they prefer to finance this effort. The counselor's training and the amount of biblical integration within the counseling session are variables which were evaluated. This study will ascertain if differences do in fact exist among subgroups as indicated by the responses to the questionnaire. (See Appendix A) The responses

will be viewed according to the subgroupings of age, sex, marital status, and previous counseling experiences.

#### Questions to be Answered

This study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Do Southern Baptists believe that the church should sponsor counselors?
2. What is the most appropriate manner to financially support this service?
3. What amount of religious integration do people believe is most helpful in the counseling session?
4. What qualifications should the counselor have?
5. Do separate groups within this population have differing ideas concerning counseling in the church?

#### Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions are made:

1. These four churches are representative of other churches in the southwest which have the same enrollment.
2. The study will not be affected by the religious component, pastor loyalty, or believing one should answer in a particular manner, because of the confidentiality of the answers.
3. The population will know about the field of Christian counseling and how they feel about it's inclusion within the church.

### Definition of Terms

Primary terms used in the study are defined as follows:

Counselor: An individual who is professionally trained with either a Master's or a Doctoral degree from an approved counseling or psychology program.

Christian: Person who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross for the sins of the world. It is only by confession of sin and accepting Jesus as his Savior that this person is forgiven, can have an intimate relationship with God, and is allowed entrance into heaven.

Christian counseling: Conducted by a Christian counselor who uses both traditional counseling techniques and methods derived from his or her theological base. This includes the biblical view of man, prayer, biblical quotations, and the confession of sin. This counselor believes that becoming a Christian is necessary for the person to truly have a fulfilled life and will attempt to lead the client in this direction.

Counseling by a Christian: Secular counseling techniques used by a person who is a Christian. Christian theology may or may not enter into the counseling session.

Secular: Disassociated with religious teachings or principles (not for or against). Pertains to this present world or to things not spiritual or sacred. In counseling, the session would be conducted without the introduction of a religious component.

Pastor: Minister of the gospel having charge of the church or congregation.

Biblical training: Master's or Doctorate course work leading to a

degree in theology from a Southern Baptist approved seminary.

Church attender: Person attending a Southern Baptist church, most often being an officially enrolled member of the church.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In reviewing the literature on counseling in the church, it becomes obvious that most articles or books are based on the author's personal opinion rather than research. After conducting an ERIC search using the following key words in several combinations: counselor acceptance, pastoral, Christian, counseling, values-clarification, church workers, helping relationship and church program, along with a manual search of the RIE and CIJE, only one research article appeared, along with eight articles which were not empirical. The conclusions reached by the professionals span the spectrum. Crabb (1975) states that "there are almost as many approaches to counseling as there are counselors".

The Joint Commission of Research in 1955 under the Mental Health Study Act discovered that when people had personal problems, only 28 percent went to professional counselors or clinics. Approximately 29 percent consulted their family physician and 42 percent sought help from a clergyman. Collins (1980b) believes that approximately the same percentage is true today and suggests several conclusions to be considered. First, people in need of help have a strong desire for counseling that is based on and is sympathetic to the fundamental teachings of Christianity. Secondly, the pastor is called upon to do much of the counseling that is done in this country. And thirdly, the seminary has a responsibility to train individuals in this ministry.

However, Krebs (1980) believes there are four reasons why pastors should not be counselors. First, people who seek their pastor for counseling are usually expecting an easy and rapid change in their personality. Neither the pastor nor the church member is really equipped to take the lengthy time necessary for personality change. Further, Krebs states that transference must take place on an anonymous "faceless" therapist. A pastor can not be that person to someone within his congregation. Third, role confusion occurs since the pastor has a variety of roles to perform with the member of the church who is receiving counseling. The final reason centers around misplaced priorities. Pastors have leaned so heavily toward counseling that less glamorous, but important jobs have received little attention.

In a study by Pierce (1980) men and women were asked about their preference for pastoral counseling roles. Forty six Protestant and Catholic adults volunteered and answered the questionnaire. The results for the study indicates a desire for trained counselors in a local church, however, no agreement on the method of payment was reached. Pierce's research indicates that the sex of the preferred counselor was female, despite the low level of significance.

Hopkins (1976) proposes that there are three possible relationships between religion and counseling/psychology: (a) religion and counseling are different and distinct, (b) religion and counseling converge or overlap, and (c) religion and counseling are identical. The differences between these will be discussed.

The first relationship, religion and counseling are different and distinct, is the position taken by minister and psychologist Dr. Samuel Hopkins. He states "although theology often utilizes psychology and psychology studies religious beliefs and behaviors, the two subjects use different methods and have different objectives". These subjects can be in harmony with each other if viewed separately, but if an attempt is made to integrate, then competition results. He further states that there is no Christian system of counseling. Christian counseling is simply psychology applied in religious settings by religious agents. (Hopkins, 1976, p. 225)

The second relationship is that of religion and counseling converging or overlapping in some areas although they are different in other areas. For example, religious counselors have frequently used concepts of Carl Jung (1938) and Viktor Frankl (1955). Existential and humanistic psychologists have discussed the need for meaning in one's life and at times actually sound very religious. Hopkins sees a promising convergence of religion with psychology regarding the emerging definition of Christian counseling as a speciality which deals with people in time of crisis or transition. This would allow churchmen to minister to people during their major life events of birth, death, sickness, and marriage.

The third relationship is that religion and counseling are identical. This assumes that both can be completely integrated. The major fundamental Christian writings today fall into this category. However, even in this section there is no particular agreement among

theorists. It seems best to look at it as a continuum along which there are many ideas ranging from the very conservative to the more liberal. The remaining ideas and people discussed in the review of literature fall into this category.

Some writers reject psychology, including the field of counseling, and conclude that the Bible is the only book that a Christian counselor needs to assist others. Jay Adams (1970), well known writer and theologian, argues that psychiatrists (and presumably other mental health professionals) have taken over the work of preachers and are trying to change people's behavior and values in an ungodly manner. In his writing to pastors, Adams states that "by studying the Word of God carefully and observing how the biblical principles describe the people you counsel...you will gain all the information and experience that you need to become a competent Christian counselor without a study of psychology". (Adams, 1970, p. 18)

Collins (1980a) disagrees with the above statement by Adams. He says that the "Word of God has great and lasting relevance to the counselor's work and the need of his or her clients, but it does not claim to be and neither is it meant to be God's sole revelation about people helping" (p. 19). God has given man a mind to reason and learn. Psychologists have developed research tools to study human behavior and methods to record and teach others what they have learned. Although counselors have limited knowledge and it is not error-free, they can use their understanding of mankind, gained from research to help clients overcome their difficulties. Collins emphasizes, however, that

discovered knowledge, through research, must always be consistent with and tested against, revealed biblical truth. But counseling effectiveness is limited when Christians pretend that the discoveries of psychology have nothing to contribute to the understanding and solution of problems.

Crabb (1975) also adheres to the same belief as Collins in regard to this issue. "We must develop a solidly biblical approach to counseling, one which draws from secular psychology without betraying its scriptural premise, one which realistically faces the deep (and not so deep) problems of people and honestly evaluates its success in dealing with them, and most importantly, one which clings passionately and unswervingly to belief in an inerrant Bible and an all sufficient Christ" (Crabb, 1975, p. 18).

Counselors also differ in their approaches to the counseling process. Jay Adams (1970), Bruce Narramore (1979) and John Carter (1979) have published manuals which use evangelical methods in solving problems of living. These writers imply that conversion is necessary for mental health, sin is the cause of personal difficulties, individuals need to confess deviant behavior and assume responsibility for it, and prayer and scripture are essential counseling tools. This emphasis clearly states that the ventilation of feelings can not take the place of what Christ did on the cross.

Solomon (1977) agrees with Adams, Narramore, and Carter, but sees the majority of emotional problems as not being caused by personal sin, but being traceable to childhood rejection which has limited the

person's options in coping with responsibility and stress. He does define Christian counseling as "leading another person in understanding and appropriating all that the Lord Jesus Christ is for all that he needs, both here and hereafter" (Solomon, 1977, p. 21). First, this form of counseling attempts to lead a person to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and then to train him or her in spiritual matters and growth. This helps the individual to understand psychological and/or interpersonal difficulties in which the focus is on the manner in which life can be transformed by the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2) through the work of the Holy Spirit, making the life of Christ a workable reality within the believer.

An even more controversial stance is taken by Father Blank (1977). In addition to the client needing to accept Jesus Christ, he or she is also strongly encouraged to become baptized by the Holy Spirit (speaking in unknown tongues). Although the Charismatic movement is not part of most Southern Baptist churches, it is a growing movement in some denominations. Father Blank believes that much of abnormal behavior is a result of demon possession, so he uses prayer to cast out the evil spirit. Prophecy/visions are also incorporated into his counseling session.

Strong (1977) and Collins (1980a) have a more liberal approach to Christian counseling. Although they agree that individuals need to know Jesus Christ and do not accept ideas that are contradictory to the scriptures, they also employ secular counseling techniques. Each one is a strong proponent of the need to develop a theory for Christian

counseling since they realize that many of the psychological beliefs about human nature disagree with biblical beliefs. However, they both agree that psychology has developed some very helpful ideas which can be incorporated into their own theory of Christian counseling.

Strong (1976) has articulated the differences which he sees between the content in secular and Christian counseling. In secular counseling people are viewed as being basically good and as being significant solely because they exist and because of their own merit. In other words, the foundation of all secular counseling is the individual. At the central focus of Christian counseling is Jesus Christ, where man is viewed as having a sin nature, but is justified and worthy by God's grace. A second difference is that most Christian counseling systems emphasize the concept of responsibility, while secular counseling stresses the rights of the individual. The third major difference is the source of power used to change the individual's life. In secular counseling, the source is the willpower of the individual. In Christian counseling, the willpower of the individual is important, but is viewed in connection with the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Each counselor views the client role as well as his or her own role in a different manner, as influenced by the relationship between religion and psychology. This role runs the gamut of complete separation with no influence of religion to the complete dependence upon the work of Christ in the individual's life.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methods and procedures of the study. The chapter has been divided into four sections: (1) description of the subjects, (2) data gathering, (3) description of the procedures, and (4) treatment of the data.

#### Description of the Subjects

The subjects in this study are male and female individuals who are 18 or older. They are attenders of Arizona Southern Baptist churches which do not have already established counseling centers and have an average weekly attendance of at least 390 but less than 700. Four of the churches in Arizona which meet this criterion are: First Southern Baptist of Chandler, First Southern Baptist of Tempe, Twenty-second Street Baptist of Tucson, and Emmanuel Baptist of Tucson.

#### Data Gathering

For the purposes of obtaining as much information as possible, as many people as time permitted were surveyed at each of the four churches. A pilot study was conducted at Casas Adobes Baptist Church. The 34 individuals who answered the questionnaire one week were asked to answer it again the next week without knowledge of the purpose for which they were repeating the questionnaire. The results of the pilot study yielded a reliability coefficient of .89. Validity of the



questionnaire was examined by administering it to eleven separate individuals. Each was subsequently interviewed and the original questionnaire was edited to make it clearer and more understandable to the respondents.

#### Description of the Procedure

1. Each pastor or Minister of Education, depending upon the preference of the church, received a personal visit by the researcher, explaining the purpose of the study and eliciting his help for the project.

2. During the visit, the staff member and the researcher agreed upon a convenient way for the questionnaire to be distributed and answered.

3. Questionnaires were handed out by one of the following methods:

- a. staff member distributed the questionnaire himself to different Sunday School classes
- b. researcher attended one of the weekly Sunday School planning meetings and at that time asked for the help of each adult Sunday School director who then handed out the questionnaire the following Sunday
- c. staff member passed out the questionnaire to various groups within the church

4. After each Sunday School director or staff member collected the completed questionnaires, he or she mailed them to the researcher the following day in a self addressed and stamped envelope.

### Treatment of the Data

The data was compiled from the 283 questionnaires answered, in percentile scores for each of the questions on the questionnaire. All of the scores are presented together for the total score and then broken down and presented in each category. The categories are as follows: male, female, single, married, divorced, remarried, 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, over 60, previous counseling by a pastor, previous counseling by a counselor, previous counseling by both pastor and counselor, previous counseling by no one, and previous counseling by other. Each church was also scored separately to yield more information and to see if differences existed within the churches.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The data was collected according to the procedure described in Chapter 3. This chapter discusses the data and the results found in the study. Also included is an explanation of how the data was compiled as well as the subjects' characteristics. Results are presented for each question answered for the total group, as well as the following categories: sex, age, marital status, and previous counseling experiences. Information obtained from additional comments is also reported in this section.

#### Compilation of the Data

Of the 283 questionnaires which were returned to the researcher, 231 were complete. Those questionnaires which were not fully completed shared one of two common characteristics. First of all, the largest group of incomplete questionnaires was done by individuals who had not marked one of the four choices for marital status. Some wrote in widow or widower, while others left it blank. The second group consisted of unanswered questions. Prime among these was number three which concerned how the counselor should be paid. For example, 16 people wrote in responses stating that the counselor should not be paid but rather volunteer. Others failed to answer questions or wrote in varied answers throughout the questionnaire without any observable patterns.

Data were compiled from every question answered according to instructions. Information left blank was discarded and not included in the calculations.

#### Subjects' Characteristics

Subjects were asked to report their sex, marital status and age. Respondents to this questionnaire were 41% male and 59% female. Concerning marital status, 16% were single, 75% married, 7% divorced and 4% remarried. Subjects' ages varied from 18 to over 60. The 18-29 group contained 32% of the respondents, 25% were 30-39, 20% were 40-49, 12% were 50-59 and 11% were over 60. Regarding previous counseling, 29% of the subjects or a member of their family had seen a pastor for counseling, 14% had seen a counselor, 37% had not received counseling by anyone, 4% by other, and 16% by both a counselor and a pastor.

#### Total Group Results

The results for the total group are presented in Tables 1 through 8 along with the subgroup results for each of the questions. What follows is a written description of the tabulated results. Those who were surveyed stated 95% of the time that the church should sponsor trained counselors to help members during problem times, 5% stated that the church should not. On question number two regarding whether or not the counselor should be a member of the church, 61% responded yes that he or she should be, 5% responded no, and 34% responded that it does not matter. In reference to the counselor's source of remuneration,

43% thought the counselor should be a paid member of the church staff, 20% thought the counselor should not be paid by the church but by the person receiving help, and 37% thought the counselor should be paid by both the church and the person receiving help. On question number four, 84% said that prayer should be an essential part of each counseling session, while 15% said it was useful in some sessions, and 1% said that prayer should not be integrated into the counseling session. Regarding biblical quotations, 58% responded that they should be an essential part of each counseling session, 41% responded that they are useful in some counseling sessions and 1% responded that biblical quotations should not be integrated into the counseling session. The next question related to how problems should be dealt with in the counseling session with 9% of the subjects stating that problems should be dealt with by confessing sin and then turning the problem over to God, 8% thought that a traditional employment of counseling skills which would be manifested in helping the person to understand his or her behavior be used, and 83% thought both of these techniques should be utilized. Lastly, concerning counselor qualifications, 28% stated that a counseling or psychology degree was necessary, 1% stated that a seminary degree was preferred, 24% stated that both degrees were necessary, 25% stated that either one was appropriate, and 22% stated that neither one was necessary.

Table 1. The church should sponsor trained counselors

	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Total Group	267	95	15	5
Sex				
Male	108	94	7	6
Female	154	94	10	6
Marital Status				
Single	36	95	2	5
Married	174	94	12	6
Divorced	17	94	1	6
Remarried	9	100	0	0
Age				
18-29	74	88	10	12
30-39	68	97	2	3
40-49	53	95	3	5
50-59	32	100	0	0
Over 60	29	94	2	6
Counseling Exp.				
Pastor	79	94	5	6
Counselor	32	89	4	11
No one	96	93	7	7
Other	12	100	0	0
Both	43	98	1	2

Table 2. The counselor should be a member of the church

	Yes		No		Doesn't Matter	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Group	173	61	15	5	94	34
Sex						
Male	78	68	4	3	33	29
Female	94	57	11	7	60	36
Marital Status						
Single	23	60	3	9	12	31
Married	113	61	10	5	62	34
Divorced	12	67	0	0	6	33
Remarried	6	67	0	0	3	33
Age						
18-29	45	53	8	10	31	37
30-39	47	67	1	1	22	32
40-49	37	66	3	5	16	29
50-59	19	59	2	6	11	35
Over 60	19	63	1	3	10	34
Counseling Exp.						
Pastor	64	76	3	4	17	20
Counselor	14	39	3	8	19	53
No one	59	57	3	3	41	40
Other	7	58	0	0	5	42
Both	26	59	5	11	13	30

Table 3. Method of Counselor Payment

	by church staff		by person		by both	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Group	106	43	50	20	93	37
Sex						
Male	45	44	20	20	37	36
Female	64	41	31	20	60	39
Marital Status						
Single	20	56	8	22	8	22
Married	64	39	33	20	68	41
Divorced	11	61	4	22	3	17
Remarried	2	25	1	12	5	63
Age						
18-29	32	40	18	22	30	38
30-39	40	58	8	12	21	30
40-49	23	41	11	20	22	39
50-59	9	30	7	23	14	47
Over 60	10	36	8	28	10	36
Counseling Exp.						
Pastor	37	49	11	15	27	36
Counselor	15	42	6	17	15	41
No one	40	42	20	21	35	37
Other	4	45	2	22	3	33
Both	15	37	9	22	17	41



Table 4. Use of prayer in the counseling session

	Is essential		Is useful		Should not	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Group	237	84	42	15	2	1
Sex						
Male	98	85	17	15	0	0
Female	136	83	26	16	2	1
Marital Status						
Single	35	92	3	8	0	0
Married	153	83	31	16	1	1
Divorced	12	71	4	24	1	5
Remarried	9	100	0	0	0	0
Age						
18-29	64	76	20	24	0	0
30-39	59	85	9	13	2	2
40-49	48	87	6	11	1	2
50-59	27	84	5	16	0	0
Over 60	28	90	3	10	0	0
Counseling Exp.						
Pastor	69	82	14	17	1	1
Counselor	28	82	6	18	0	0
No one	88	85	15	15	0	0
Other	11	92	1	8	0	0
Both	36	82	7	16	1	2

Table 5. Use of biblical quotations in the counseling session

	Is essential		Is useful		Should not	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Group	160	58	115	41	5	1
Sex						
Male	67	58	48	42	0	0
Female	91	55	69	42	5	3
Marital Status						
Single	20	53	18	47	0	0
Married	108	59	73	39	4	2
Divorced	8	47	8	47	1	6
Remarried	5	56	4	44	0	0
Age						
18-29	46	55	38	45	0	0
30-39	42	60	25	36	3	4
40-49	35	62	20	36	1	2
50-59	12	38	20	62	0	0
Over 60	20	65	10	32	1	3
Counseling Exp.						
Pastor	46	55	38	45	0	0
Counselor	15	43	20	57	0	0
No one	62	60	39	38	2	2
Other	9	75	3	25	0	0
Both	26	60	17	39	1	1

Table 6. Methods by which problems should be dealt with

	Confessing sin		Counseling skill		Both	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Group	26	9	23	8	230	83
Sex						
Male	9	8	9	8	97	84
Female	17	10	15	9	134	81
Marital Status						
Single	6	16	2	6	28	78
Married	10	6	21	11	154	83
Divorced	1	6	0	0	17	94
Remarried	1	11	0	0	8	88
Age						
18-29	5	6	6	7	73	87
30-39	6	9	5	7	59	84
40-49	6	11	4	7	46	82
50-59	1	3	1	3	30	94
Over 60	6	20	6	20	18	60
Counseling Exp.						
Pastor	7	8	5	6	72	86
Counselor	4	11	3	8	29	81
No one	10	10	14	14	78	76
Other	2	17	2	17	8	66
Both	2	5	1	2	41	93

Table 7. Counselor qualifications

	Counseling degree		Seminary degree		Both		Either		Neither	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Group	75	28	3	1	66	24	68	25	61	22
Sex										
Male	23	20	3	3	21	19	29	25	37	33
Female	55	35	0	0	46	29	36	23	21	13
Marital Status										
Single	10	27	1	3	12	32	9	24	5	14
Married	55	30	2	1	38	21	47	25	43	23
Divorced	6	35	0	0	2	12	5	29	4	24
Remarried	4	44	0	0	4	44	1	12	0	0
Age										
18-29	19	24	2	2	15	19	27	33	18	22
30-39	20	29	0	0	24	34	15	21	11	16
40-49	17	31	0	0	14	26	13	24	10	19
50-59	9	31	0	0	4	14	7	24	9	31
Over 60	10	34	1	3	6	20	4	13	9	30
Counseling Exp.										
Pastor	16	20	1	1	19	23	21	26	24	30
Counselor	11	31	0	0	8	23	13	37	3	9
No one	27	28	1	1	25	25	22	22	24	24
Other	2	17	0	0	2	17	3	25	5	41
Both	20	46	1	2	12	27	7	16	4	9

Table 8. Client's previous counseling experience

	Pastor		Counselor		No one		Other		Both	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Group	83	29	39	14	106	37	11	4	44	16
Sex										
Male	48	42	9	8	40	35	5	4	13	11
Female	40	24	27	16	65	39	7	4	8	17
Marital Status										
Single	12	32	5	13	17	44	1	3	3	8
Married	53	29	24	13	68	38	9	5	27	15
Divorced	6	33	1	6	3	17	1	6	7	38
Remarried	5	56	1	11	1	11	1	11	1	11
Age										
18-29	26	31	15	18	29	34	0	0	14	17
30-39	21	30	7	10	27	41	4	6	9	13
40-49	18	31	6	11	19	33	2	4	12	21
50-59	11	34	4	13	11	34	2	6	4	13
Over 60	23	23	10	10	51	51	10	10	6	6
Counseling Exp.										
Pastor	83	100	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Counselor	N/A	N/A	39	100	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
No one	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	106	100	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11	100	N/A	N/A
Both	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	44	100

### Additional Comments

Additional comments written on the questionnaire varied greatly although most can be grouped into one of three subject areas. The first group was very supportive of Christian counseling in the church and they gave support and encouragement for the topic and the research study. One person wrote, "Counseling should be a vital part of the ministry of the church and should be done by trained counselors. Most pastors are not equipped to counsel and haven't the time to do so. Moreover, most have a difficult time keeping counseling confidential".

A second group of comments centered around the counselor's remuneration. Many wrote that the counselor should not be paid, but volunteer. One individual wrote, "People should counsel only because they have the [spiritual] gift to help people and [as such] should not be paid for using their gift". Other comments centered around the sliding fee schedule so that individuals would have monetary investment in the counseling, and yet be able to afford the services.

The third type of responses basically stated that counseling is useful in the church, but not of utmost importance. Most of these people also said that the counselor did not need any special training, only if the problem was "really serious" would someone need to see a professional counselor. One person wrote, "The counselor must be committed to God, know His word, and have the ability to counsel, but the wisdom comes from God, not from school or degrees".

Individuals who had been counseled by others specified a variety of "counselors". These included: friends, friends of God,

Holy Spirit, mental health clinic in Phoenix, marriage encounter seminar, friends in the ministry, different members of the body of Christ, psychologist and the Bible. One person listed under other "and he did more harm than good".

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was one of a descriptive nature with a purpose of discovering what Southern Baptist church attenders think about counseling in the church. This chapter will draw conclusions, state implications and make recommendations based upon the data gathered and presented in the previous chapters.

#### Conclusions

The results of this study allow several conclusions:

1. Southern Baptist church attenders believed very strongly that the church should sponsor trained counselors in order to help its members during problem times.
2. A majority of Southern Baptists preferred that this trained counselor be a member of the church, despite some who felt that this was not an important issue.
3. Preferences for the method of counselor payment were unsubstantiated. More favorable support was given to the counselor who would be a paid church staff member. The other variable supported was that the counselor should be paid by both the church and the person receiving help.
4. Southern Baptist church attenders firmly supported the notion that prayer should be an essential part of each counseling session.



5. It was felt almost unanimously that biblical quotations should be integrated into the counseling session. What varied was whether this should be used all the time or only some of the time. This can be a discretionary measure.

6. Once again supporting an integration principle, Southern Baptists soundly agreed that both techniques should be used, that of confessing sin and turning the problem over to God, and more traditional counseling skills helping the person to understand his or her behavior.

7. Despite variation among academic training desired, it can be concluded that some educational level is preferred, rather than no training.

8. Sixty-three percent of those who responded had experienced some means of counseling from either a pastor, counselor, or some other form.

9. More than any other group, males sought aid from a pastor as opposed to a counselor.

10. Overall Southern Baptist church attenders had positive views about counseling in the church, but approached the subject with some caution.

#### Implications

Although caution must be exercised in making generalizations, the results suggest that several implications be considered.

The data indicated that Southern Baptist church attenders would like to see some type of counseling program instituted by the church, if one is not already in existence. Since 63% of the people surveyed

had previously sought out some form of counseling, it seems safe to conclude that there would be a demand for church sponsored counseling if such a service were to exist. Church attenders may begin to ask for a counseling program so the church should be aware and willing to consider their requests.

The congregation's preferred method of counselor payment is for the counselor to be a paid church staff member. However, many people stated that the counselor should be paid by both the church and the person receiving help. This method of payment would probably be agreeable to a larger number and would lessen the financial burden that the church would have, thus making a counseling service more feasible for smaller churches. Since no dominant preference was discovered, perhaps each individual church should make that decision based upon their individual needs.

Most church members would prefer that prayer be included in the counseling session. Whether or not biblical quotations should always be used is unclear so therefore the counselor should follow the clients direction and adjust accordingly. The counselor should use both traditional counseling skills along with spiritual methods such as the confession of sin in dealing with personal difficulties.

Since it appears that males may be reticent to visit a counselor, it may be desirable to have special recruitment procedures for the male population. One idea might be to hold a male related issues seminar and discuss the role of feelings and changing stereotypes in today's society. However, since all groups have sought out counseling in the

past, a counseling program should attempt to address the needs of each particular group.

In summary, Southern Baptist church attenders appear to be very open to counseling in the church, however they want to be assured that Christian ideas and values are represented in the counseling session. Traditional secular theories of problem solving can easily incorporate the fundamental Christian based belief system. The survey has demonstrated the important areas to be included.

#### Recommendations

Since such a large percentage of Southern Baptist church attenders believe counseling should be incorporated as a ministry of the church, individual churches should consider what they can do in order to obtain such services. There are several options that are available to the church. First, the church could include a counselor as a full-time paid staff member or they could arrange a part time position with a counselor. The church could also examine the provision of employee benefits (i.e. insurance and social security) and simply provide office space and let remuneration responsibilities fall upon the clientele. A sliding pay scale could be implemented to offset church expenditures. Another possibility if the church were small would be for several churches to join in sponsoring a counselor. A different choice might be to offer training courses to teach lay counselors how to help clients with some of their more minor problems or perhaps talk to church attenders who happen to be counselors about volunteering some of their time. The church should become aware of the congregation's

emotional needs as well as spiritual needs and begin making plans to help them with their area of concern.

Another recommendation concerns educational institutions. It is recommended that Southern Baptist seminaries require several counseling courses in order to better prepare ministers for counseling, if there is not such a requirement already established. Also recommended is that the counseling department along with the religion department at each university offer a course dealing with special issues concerning the combination of religion and counseling to better train counselors who might have an interest in this subject area.

The last recommendation is for more research to be conducted in three different areas on the subject of Christian counseling. First, there is a need to continue discovering Christian views concerning all aspects of counseling. More surveys could be done asking different questions, using different churches and surveying different parts of the country so that generalizations can be easily made. Secondly, research is advised in investigating not only congregations' preferences, but also which techniques and approaches are actually most effective in dealing with Christian people. Thirdly, conduct research which continues to advance the knowledge of Christian counseling and work on developing a uniform and comprehensive theory of Christian counseling.

APPENDIX A

BELIEFS ABOUT COUNSELING AND THE CHURCH

Please mark the statement or answer with which you most closely agree.

ALL ANSWERS ARE CONFIDENTIAL. Thank you for your time and assistance.

1. The church should sponsor trained counselors to help members during problem times.  
 Yes       No
2. The counselor should be a member of the church.  
 Yes       No       Doesn't matter
3. The counselor:  
 should be a paid member of the church staff.  
 should not be paid by the church but by the person receiving help.  
 should be paid by both the church and the member receiving help.
4. Prayer:  
 should be an essential part of each counseling session.  
 is useful in some counseling sessions.  
 should not be integrated into the counseling session.
5. Biblical quotations:  
 should be an essential part of each counseling session.  
 are useful in some counseling sessions.  
 should not be integrated into the counseling session.
6. Problems should be dealt with in counseling by:  
 confessing sin and turning the problem over to God.  
 traditional counseling skills, helping me to understand and change my behavior.  
 utilizing both techniques during the session.
7. Counselor qualifications:  
 counseling/psychology degree  
 seminary degree  
 both are necessary  
 either one is appropriate  
 neither is necessary

8. I or some member of my family has received counseling by:

\_\_\_\_\_ a pastor.

\_\_\_\_\_ a counselor.

\_\_\_\_\_ no one.

\_\_\_\_\_ other. \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following for statistical purposes.

I am:

\_\_\_\_\_ male      \_\_\_\_\_ female

and \_\_\_\_\_ single      \_\_\_\_\_ married      \_\_\_\_\_ divorced      \_\_\_\_\_ remarried

and \_\_\_\_\_ 18-29      \_\_\_\_\_ 30-39      \_\_\_\_\_ 40-49      \_\_\_\_\_ 50-59

\_\_\_\_\_ over 60

Please write any additional comments on the back of this page.

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