

COUNSELING THE HARD CASES

A Book Review

Presented to

Dr. Stuart Scott

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for 34300

by

Chad S. Beck

March 11, 2013

On my honor, I have neither given nor taken improper assistance in completing this assignment.

Lambert, Heath and Scott, Stuart, eds. *Counseling the Hard Cases*. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2012. 307pp.

Counseling the Hard Cases has eleven contributors, making up the authorship of the book. Each contributor comes from various occupational backgrounds: professors of theology holding Ph.D's and D.Min's, medical doctors and nurses, and others who have come out of secular psychology into the realm of biblical counseling. Regardless of vocational backgrounds, all of the contributors offer their expertise in the field of biblical counseling. However, each contributor shares an unwavering conviction of the sufficiency of Scripture as it pertains to the changing of individuals' lives for the glory of God.

Lambert, who is now the Executive Director of NANC, opens the book with an introduction of the biblical counseling movement and the need for reliance on the Sufficiency of Scripture in counseling. Chapters two through eleven introduce a different case study giving a detailed account of a specific counseling situation. Each chapter is authored by a different contributing counselor, who uses Scripture to bring about true change within each counselee's life. The sufficiency of Scripture is the keynote each contributor refers to again and again in each of their counseling sessions. The contributors prove to their readers the uniqueness of their stories that God's Word is enough in dealing with real life everyday situations, even the hard cases.

The book offers its readers real life-counseling problems and how each counselor approaches each situation. The ultimate goal of biblical counseling (assuming one is a believer) is to bring the counselee to conformity in Christ. Throughout the book, the counselors make it

clear they are totally dependent upon God the Holy Spirit to work through His Word. Regardless of the counselee's physical state, physiological state, or emotional state, the counselors began and ended with the Word of God.

Each case presented in the book was unique in its nature; cases which stemmed from Post Partum Depression (PPD), Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), and sexual immorality including adultery and homosexuality. Yet, the counselors were able (by God's grace) to bring these people to a place of repentance toward God and faith in Christ. The counseling sessions always began with the gathering of a lot of information from the counsees. The gathering of information seems to play a major role in being able to properly counsel someone. Another factor I noticed throughout the book was each counselor urged the counselee to get a physical check up. Physical health can cause problems with people's spiritual well being. Whether or not the counselee had physical ailments or not, the counselors always dealt graciously with them using the Word of God as the main tool and guide to truly helping their counselee.

The cases in this book seem nearly impossible for a pastor or lay member to confront or to resolve. Dr. Stuart Scott admits early in his ministry that he sought out a Christian psychiatrist to send his counselee to when he said,

Unfortunately, at this point in my ministry, I had no idea how to help someone like Jackie. In fact, my seminary training had taught me to refer such troubled individuals to a Christian psychologist or psychiatrist. I chose to recommend Jackie to a local psychological or medical key from a biblical perspective and be prescribed the medications she likely needed. (203)

Even though the cases may seem impossible with man, "nothing will be impossible with God."¹ Dr. Scott did not just give up but rather continued to seek proper training and making himself available for his counselee. By God's grace and his conviction, Scripture was able to do what it

¹ Luke 1:37. All Scripture used will be cited from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted

says it will do, and Scott was able to help this lady to victory in Christ. This is just one example of how God was able to use His Word and his servant in bringing others to face their sin and give them ability to repent.

I believe the editors of *Counseling the Hard Cases* get their point across in their conviction of the sufficiency of Scripture as it pertains to counseling. Scott and Lambert prove this by reaching out in a collective effort to get real life stories, which were shaped and changed by the Word of God. One particular story shared by Lambert in “Sarah” dealt with postpartum depression in a new mother whose normal routine in life had suddenly changed due to her new child. Lambert writes, “On one occasion Zoe had been crying and would not stop. After a long time Sarah grew past the point of frustration. Not knowing what to do, she started thinking about throwing Zoe against the wall as hard as possible, just so it would be quiet for a few minutes (88).” At the end of Lambert’s time with this couple, he was able to see the power of Christ through God’s word in conforming this couple into the image of Christ by repentance and faith.

In each chapter of the book, God’s Word was presented for the counselees to examine themselves. The one pressing point I gleaned from the book concerning Biblical counseling is Biblical counseling does not strive for ‘behavior modification, rather a change of heart toward God and their sin. Therefore, Biblical counseling is simply biblically discipling a person, in order that they would be conformed into the image of Christ. This book from the outset argued for and proved in the end for the sufficiency of God’s Word for counseling the hard cases. Whether someone is a seasoned pastor, seminary student, or a lay member of a local church, I believe they could be greatly edified in reading this book, realizing it is not just the professionals who can help those seeking help; but rather, all Christians should be biblical counselors.

