

Dr. Bob Kellemen knows that God has called all of His children to be active participants in the ministry community that He designed the church to be. Bob also knows that it is not enough to give people a vision and call them to commitment—they must also be biblically trained. Equipping the body of Christ for personal ministry has been Bob’s lifework. This practical, step-by-step equipping manual is the mature fruit of that lifelong commitment.

—**Paul Tripp**, Founder and President of Paul Tripp Ministries;
Author of *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hand*

So many of us long to see our churches equipped to minister the blessings of God’s Word to one another . . . and yet somehow it seems all too easy to get bogged down in the “how.” Bob Kellemen has given the church a tremendous resource—outlining not only the “how” but also the “why” and most importantly the “who.” This is a resource that will revolutionize the way your church does ministry and will give you the resources you need to offer practical help from a many-membered body serving one another and their community.

—**Elyse Fitzpatrick**, Author of *Counsel from the Cross*

This is a must-read book for every person who longs to see their church be more effective at helping people grow and handle the issues of everyday life. It is intensely biblical with a model that flows right out of the pages of Scripture. But it is equally practical. You will be encouraged and equipped to be a person who . . . encourages and equips. My friend Bob Kellemen has done a masterful job at helping us all think about how to be truly effective in the culture in which Christ has placed us.

—**Steve Viars**, Senior Pastor, Faith Baptist Church, Lafayette, Indiana;
Author of *Putting Your Past in Its Place*

Equipping Counselors for Your Church is an excellent resource for both individual leaders and also group discussion. The insight gained from years of experience by Dr. Kellemen and by the twenty-four best-practice churches is evident throughout the book. This is the book for you if you want to launch a biblical counseling ministry or want your church’s current counseling ministry to move to a place of increased effectiveness. Use *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* to help you identify the issues and solutions in your situation.

—**Randy Patten**, Executive Director, National
Association of Nouthetic Counselors

Bob Kellemen—trainer and coach extraordinaire—has a simple goal: he wants to see your church’s one-on-one ministry transformed. The way he does that is by giving clear, practical instruction along with a huge package of supplies and tools. And when you follow his coaching you’ll be surprised to find that the result is not so much Bob’s system as it is an equipping model that is specific to your church.

—**Ed Welch**, Faculty Member of CCEF; Author of
When People Are Big and God Is Small

This is the book we needed years ago at Mars Hill Church to help us rethink our counseling ministries. By God’s grace we ended up with something like what Dr. Kellemen envisions—but save yourself the trouble we endured and let Bob’s wisdom guide you strategically through the process. In fact, join me; I’ll be using this book to rethink it all over again.

—**Mike Wilkerson**, Pastor of Biblical Living, Mars Hill Church,
Seattle, Washington; Author of *Redemption: Freed by Jesus
from the Idols We Worship and the Wounds We Carry*

Dr. Kellemen has produced a landmark book that fills a significant vacuum in the biblical counseling literature: a comprehensive work that not only offers an exceptional overview of biblical counseling, but also provides a wise, strategic, and thoughtful guide outlining the essentials of developing a robust counseling ministry within the local church. *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* has the potential to influence a massive paradigm shift in how ministry is exercised in the body of Christ both now and in future generations.

—**Jeremy Lelek**, President, Association of Biblical Counselors

Bob Kellemen knows equipping biblical counselors from A to Z. He has done a tremendous job of structuring a step-wise strategy to develop the lay counselors in your church. In his humble style, Bob has gathered the best leaders of local church counseling ministries and done the work of benchmarking for you. This is a book that you will reference often as you help the hurting and equip the saints for the work of soul care in your church.

—**Garrett Higbee**, Executive Director of Biblical Soul Care Ministries,
Harvest Bible Chapel, Elgin, Illinois

Bob Kellemen's *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* is a desperately needed gift to pastors and church leaders for helping the church to envision, enlist, equip, and empower the saints for the work of ministry. Bob's seasoned, insightful, and humble experience emerges in each chapter and is also reflected in his detailed appendices. I highly recommend this work whether you are just starting out or have been in the trenches for years. I was personally encouraged and challenged in addition to coming away with many ideas that I will use to assess my own ministry.

—**Robert K. Cheong**, Pastor of Care and Counseling,
Sojourn Community Church, Louisville, Kentucky

Dr. Bob Kellemen is a born encourager, coach, and equipper. His vision and enthusiasm are contagious! Bob has thought carefully about how to foster effective counseling of those struggling with sin and suffering in the context of the local church, and how to encourage informal disciple-making among all members. The result is this comprehensive resource, which will take your congregation through envisioning your unique counseling ministry; enlisting, equipping, and leading counselors; and administering your program. Whether you are a pastor, a ministry leader, or a church member who's already caught the biblical counseling vision, there's something in this manual for you. Read it and dare to dream.

—**Laura Hendrickson**, Psychiatrist; Biblical Counselor;
Author of *Will Medicine Stop the Pain?*

Dr. Kellemen's book fills a long-standing gap in Christian counseling and church-based ministry literature. It is an excellent resource for church leaders or counselors who are looking for practical biblical guidance, which includes instructions and all the necessary nuts and bolts for developing the one-on-one personal ministry component in their church's spectrum of care. It is marvelously comprehensive and systematic, while at the same time flexible enough to apply to a variety of church personalities.

—**Sam R. Williams**, Associate Professor of Counseling,
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

This is a remarkable book. Bob Kellemen has accomplished the seemingly impossible task of combining sound Christian theology, informed biblical counseling principles, and practical training procedures into a guidebook

for developing a counseling ministry in the local church. He walks you through each step and shows you how to make counseling ministry unique to your church—not borrowed and artificially applied, but intrinsic to the God-given vision and biblical mission of the local body of believers. The result is a thoroughly biblical book that provides rich material for ministers, seminary students, and people interested in developing care-giving ministries. This book is a must for anyone interested in counseling and the church.

—**Ian F. Jones**, Chair of Pastoral Counseling, Baptist Community Ministries, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

I am alarmed at how many people in our ever-increasing multiethnic urban society faithfully attend Bible-believing churches with successful external appearances while living in unbelievable personal and family dysfunction! Bob Kellemen's call for and guidance toward a revolution of humble biblical counselors within the church is a timely resource for an urgent need.

—**A. Charles Ware**, President, Crossroads Bible College, Indianapolis;
Author of Darwin's Plantation: Evolution's Racist Roots

Do you ever wish someone would help you better envision, understand, organize, and implement personal ministry in your local church? If so, this book is for you. After interacting with twenty-four ministry leaders, Dr. Bob Kellemen serves as your personal coach, giving you insight on how to better serve the body of Christ. As you seek to serve those God has called you to help grow and maneuver through the challenges of life, this book will help you understand, plan, develop, and implement authentic and lasting personal ministry in your church.

—**Kevin Carson**, Pastor, Sunrise Baptist Church, Ozark, Missouri

EQUIPPING
COUNSELORS
for
YOUR CHURCH

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THE **4E** MINISTRY TRAINING STRATEGY

Robert W. Kellemen


P U B L I S H I N G
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Acknowledgments

The year was 1973 and I was fourteen. My older brother, Rick, began dating a Baptist girl, and if you date a Baptist girl you attend a Baptist church. Rick, being the *older* brother, informed me that if he had to go to church each week, then so did I. That, from the human side of the equation, was how God sovereignly arranged for me to begin attending Grace Baptist Church in Gary, Indiana. Within a year, I surrendered my life to Christ as my Savior.

During my high school years at Grace Baptist, my life intertwined with three individuals, without whom this book would never have been written. The first was Senior Pastor Bill Goode (who is now home with Christ). Though I didn't know it at the time, it was during these very years that Pastor Goode was instrumental in the launch and early development of what now has become known as the modern nouthetic biblical counseling movement. Pastor Goode's commitment to equipping counselors for the local church has stayed with me these forty years.

At Grace Baptist I also met and was discipled by our youth pastor, Ron Allchin. Pastor Ron not only ministered to me, but reached out to my family in many ways. Though the Lord led Pastor Ron to another church during my high school years, we always stayed in contact. Today, Dr. Ron Allchin equips biblical counselors around the nation and the world. He was a model for me as a youth; he remains an example for me now.

A third influential person from Grace Baptist was Steve Viars. Steve and I actually met years earlier in the neighborhood when I was in second grade and he was in first grade. So our paths go way back,

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

to say the least. Steve and I grew up (though some might question that about us), and we journeyed together to Baptist Bible College and to Grace Theological Seminary. Steve is now the senior pastor at Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana—one of the premier churches in the world where you can be equipped as a biblical counselor. Steve’s real-life, best-practice approach to equipping counselors has richly influenced my own ministry.

Who, other than God, would have thought that Rick’s dating a Baptist girl would lead to Bob’s writing *Equipping Counselors for Your Church*? All I know is that this book would not be in your hands without the shaping influence of Bill Goode, Ron Allchin, and Steve Viars. It is with gratefulness to Christ that I dedicate *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* to Bill, Ron, and Steve.

Introduction

WANT TO CHANGE LIVES?

During the early days of television, two shows dominated the airwaves. One aired on Tuesday nights and the other on Sunday evenings. Initially the more popular of the two shows was *The Texaco Star Theatre* hosted by Milton Berle. It was originally designed along the lines of the old-fashioned vaudeville variety hour with a host highlighting a half-dozen guests each week. However, little by little, Milton Berle became the star. As the format changed, the accent gradually focused increasingly on Berle himself. There were fewer guest acts, and Berle began to dominate each show. In just eight years, the show ran out of steam. *No one person is talented enough to carry any show, or any ministry, for more than a short time.*

The other show, *The Ed Sullivan Show*, experienced a very different fate. If any show in the history of television could be called an institution, it would be *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Every Sunday night for more than two decades, this show brought an incredible variety of entertainers into homes. Sullivan's show continued as a major hit for fifteen years longer than Berle's show.

Unlike Milton Berle, Ed Sullivan never wavered from his original format. *He was the host who called other people to center stage.* Numerous performers made their television debut on his show: Walt Disney, the Beatles, Elvis Presley, Bob Hope, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, and

hundreds more. Though Ed Sullivan died soon after the last run of his show, his legacy outlives him.

Are You like Milton Berle or Ed Sullivan?

God calls Christian leaders to be like Ed Sullivan, not like Milton Berle. If we are like Milton Berle, and the spotlight increasingly focuses on us and our individual ministry, then biblically we are missing God's mark as equippers. If we fail to focus on equipping, then we selfishly treat God's people like children who have never grown up spiritually.

God wants us to be like Ed Sullivan—a host who calls others to center stage by equipping them to fulfill their calling. When we focus on equipping, we leave an other-centered legacy of loving leaders.

Allow me to introduce you to several modern-day Ed Sullivan-like church leaders. I currently provide 4E consulting for each of these leaders, and they represent well the readers I picture as I write this book.

Pastor Eric is planting a church. He and the eight families ministering with him are passionate about launching a church from the ground up—a church where every member is equipped to speak the truth in love. They want biblical counseling to be the DNA of their congregation.

Jan has been a volunteer women's ministry director in her church for over a decade. She wants to train a dozen women in biblical counseling. She envisions some of them using their training to be more effective small-group leaders—relating truth to life. Others she foresees providing biblical counseling to the growing number of women who seek her help.

Randy and Monica serve together on a ministry launch team that's so new they don't have a ministry name yet. Randy is an elder, seminary student, and youth pastor; Monica is a volunteer ministry leader. The leadership team in their church of two hundred wants them to launch a counseling ministry. As Monica put it when she e-mailed me, "We don't want another *program*. We want a *ministry* that saturates our whole church with equipped one-another ministers."

John is the senior pastor of a large church, and his wife Rachel has two degrees in counseling. They called me to ask, "Bob, do you help churches to do course corrections and relaunches? Five years ago we tried

to launch a biblical counseling ministry, but it was too program-focused. Could you help us figure out how to do it more relationally this time?”

I have written this book for people like Eric, Jan, Randy, Monica, John, and Rachel. People like *you*—pastors, ministry leaders, women’s ministry directors, elders, deacons, church planters, and students. I have written this book because I am convinced that you want to be an Ed Sullivan, not a Milton Berle. I know that you are passionate about equipping God’s people for every-member ministry as disciple-makers—as biblical counselors. I want to be part of the process of equipping you to equip others (2 Tim. 2:2).

Changing Lives with Christ’s Changeless Truth

The people I consult with are hungry for a comprehensive, real-world approach to equipping God’s people for one-another ministry. Like you, they want to empower others for the personal ministry of the Word—as biblical counselors, caregivers, spiritual friends, elders, deacons, small-group leaders, disciplers, or mentors. *Leaders want to change lives.* However, for most church leaders, the training process can seem overwhelming—vision-casting confusion, change-management struggles, recruiting headaches, quality-of-care matters, training material questions, supervisory difficulties, legal issues, and other legitimate, complex concerns often derail the equipping process.

My purpose in writing *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* is to assist leaders like you in equipping people confidently, wisely, lovingly, and biblically. I want this book to be like a personal conversation with your private consultant—coming alongside you, walking step-by-step, hand-in-hand, to equip you to fulfill your Ephesians 4:11–16 calling to empower the body of Christ to change lives with Christ’s changeless truth.

As I speak in churches about one-another ministry, God’s people share with me their rejection of the old model where the pastoral staff hoarded the ministry. They are clamoring to be unleashed and mobilized for the personal ministry of the Word. *God’s people want to change lives.* They care, but they feel ill-equipped to care like Christ. They want

to know what to do after the hug. They know the Bible says they are competent to counsel (Rom. 15:14), but they also know that the Bible calls them to be equipped to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:11–16).

So my second purpose in writing is to launch a revolution in every-member ministry. This book's *4E Ministry Training Strategy* offers a twenty-first-century, best-practice manual for Christ-centered, church-based, comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally informed mobilization of the priesthood of all believers. It assists churches to become places not simply *with* biblical counseling ministries, but *of* biblical counseling. My goal is not the production of yet another program or yet another ministry on the sidelines. My goal is the promotion of a congregation-saturated mindset of every-member ministry, which will result in an entire congregation passionate about and equipped to make disciples.

The 4E Ministry Training Strategy: Passing the Baton of Ministry

It's a nice goal, right? But we both know that you've "been there, done that." You've heard the promises before. Lots of theoretical talk, but little practical, real-world, biblical help. You are tired of equipping approaches that promise much but deliver little. If you are like the people I consult with, then you are ready for an approach to equipping that is comprehensive, simple to implement, and relationship-oriented, rather than program-focused.

Some equipping approaches are like straitjackets with a one-size-fits-all model. *The 4E Ministry Training Strategy* provides practical principles that you can personally, relationally, and uniquely apply in your specific ministry setting. By reading best-practice case studies from two dozen churches with a wide diversity of ethnic, demographic, and denominational backgrounds, you will be able to design a simple process for *your* church.

Some equipping approaches offer piecemeal advice that addresses aspects of equipping, but lacks a comprehensive strategy to move from launch to leaving a legacy of loving leaders. *The 4E Ministry Training Strategy* moves you through the four stages that every ministry launch

must tackle to establish ministries built to last and to grow ministries from good to great. Its biblical and practical focus will empower you to:

- Envision God’s ministry.
- Enlist God’s ministers for ministry.
- Equip godly ministers for ministry.
- Employ/Empower godly ministers for ministry.

Like you, I dread seeing effort expended on programs that don’t launch or don’t last. This is why I have focused the past quarter-century on answering questions such as these: How do we pass the baton of ministry? How do we effectively disciple the body of Christ for one-another ministry in the church and to the community? How do we disciple disciple-makers? How do we equip biblical counselors for the local church?

After launching biblical counseling ministries in three significantly different churches, after over a dozen years of training hundreds of pastors, counselors, and ministry leaders in the seminary setting, and after a decade of consulting with churches, I am ready to answer those questions in writing. To paint for you the big picture of the training skills this book will help you to hone, imagine with me passing the ministry baton in a four-lap relay.

Lap One: Envisioning God’s Ministry—Core Values

I understand that some of you have spent countless hours in relatively unproductive vision-catching/casting training. We will see why such sessions often fall flat and fall short of producing lasting congregational change. Chapter one will show how to saturate the entire congregation with a passion for and equipping in one-another ministry. Chapters two through four will model how to facilitate relationship-building gatherings that excite people about mutually developing a powerful *Mission, Vision, Passion, and Commission Statement* (MVP-C Statement) that results in a practical ministry action plan.

In a sentence, here is what you will learn in lap one (envisioning God’s ministry): *How to jointly create church-wide and ministry-specific*

MVP-C Statements that nourish the compassion, conviction, and connection needed to launch flourishing training ministries. You will learn to discern if you are running in the right direction—core values. It does no good to equip people for the wrong purposes for your church and community. That’s why we need to learn the ministry mindset shift that changes everything. It is why we need clarity about God’s calling.

***Lap Two: Enlisting God’s Ministers for Ministry—
Connected People***

I understand that some of you have launched ministries with great expectations, but then experienced crushing resistance. Even the best-laid plans can face bumps in the road, and even the best-prepared runners can stumble when jostled by other participants. Chapter five will address this with strategies that many training curriculums omit—relational change management (consensus building) and biblical conflict resolution. I also understand that some of you have spent countless hours in relatively non-relational recruiting. Chapter six will describe how to move from “panicked recruiting of warm bodies to a program,” to relational enlisting of like-minded, committed servant-leaders connected to a captivating vision.

In a sentence, here is what you will learn in lap two (enlisting God’s ministers for ministry): *How to mobilize ministers by nurturing a family and building a team prepared for change, skilled in conflict resolution, and connected to the MVP-C Statement.* You will learn how to ensure that the right people are running the right lap in the relay race—connected people. It does no good to launch a ministry if the congregation is not passionately involved. That is why we need a connected congregation.

***Lap Three: Equipping Godly Ministers for Ministry—
Coached People***

I understand that some of you have spent wasted hours in somewhat disorganized training. Chapters seven through ten will demonstrate how to unite the 4Cs of equipping creatively and biblically. These four chapters will explain how to equip the head (content/truth), the heart

(*character/love*), and the hands (*competence/skills*) in the context of the home (*community/relationship*).

In a sentence, here is what you will learn in lap three (equipping godly ministers for ministry): *How to apply transformational training strategies that comprehensively address the 4Cs of biblical content, Christ-like character, counseling competence, and Christian community.* You will learn to ensure that every race participant is a skilled runner—coached people. It does no good, and potentially much harm, to send ill-equipped people into the personal ministry of the Word. That is why we need clear biblical counseling equipping goals, objectives, curriculum, materials, strategies, and methods.

Lap Four: Employing/Empowering Godly Ministers for Ministry—Comprehensive Strategy

I understand that some of you experience a spontaneously negative reaction to words like “organizing,” “administrating,” and “programs.” It all sounds, and often is, so non-relational. I get it. That is why chapters eleven and twelve will map out organizing the organism and administrating the ministry. These chapters will equip you for *relational* leadership that leaves a legacy of loving leaders.

In a sentence, here is what you will learn in lap four (employing/empowering godly ministers for ministry): *How to oversee the ongoing organizing of the organism for God’s glory by leading ministries that are built to last, that grow from good to great, and that leave a legacy of loving leaders.* You will learn to discern if the runners are running on all cylinders—comprehensive strategy. It does no good and wastes valuable time to envision, enlist, and equip, only to stop short of the ongoing administering of the ministry. You have these trained folks; now what do you do with them? How do you equip people in a caring way that builds community? How do you become a community as you impact your community?

“These Are Your Grandbabies!”

Sister Ellen Barney is the First Lady (senior pastor’s wife) of a large, predominantly African-American church near Baltimore, Maryland. She has

implemented the *4E Ministry Training Strategy* for over a decade to equip over a thousand women in her LEAD (Life Encouragers And Disciplers) Ministry.

They do it up big! Their graduation ceremonies are better than those of many colleges. I remember the first time Sister Ellen invited me to be their commencement speaker. As she introduced me, she looked over the crowd of more than fifty graduates and said, “These are your grandbabies, Dr. Kellemen! You trained me and I trained them!” Now, years later, as Sister Ellen has trained trainers who train others, she tells me, “Dr. Kellemen, these are your great-great-grandbabies!”

Do you want to be a spiritual grandparent—discipling disciple-makers? Do you want to pass the baton of ministry? Do you want to change lives? Keep reading.

The 4E Ministry Training Strategy

Want to Change Lives?

- I. Envisioning God’s Ministry: 2 Timothy 1:6–7
 - A. More than Counseling: Catching God’s Vision for the Entire Church
 - B. Examining Heart Health: Diagnosing Congregational and Community Fitness
 - C. Dreaming God’s Dream: Jointly Crafting Your *MVP-C* Statement
 1. Mission Statement: Your God-Given Ministry Calling and Purpose
 2. Vision Statement: Your Unique Ministry Dream, DNA, and Fingerprint
 3. Passion Statement: Your Captivating Ministry Identity and Imprint
 4. Commission Statement: Your Strategic Ministry MAP—Ministry Action Plan
- II. Enlisting God’s Ministers for Ministry: 2 Timothy 2:2
 - A. Shepherding the Transformation: Cultivating a Climate for Ongoing Ownership
 1. Preparing the Congregation for Change: Relational Change Management
 2. Building Bridges and Breaking Down Barriers: Biblical Conflict Resolution

- B. Mobilizing the Ministers: Nurturing a Family and Building a Team
 - 1. Conducting Christ's Opus: Saturating the Congregation with One-Another Ministers
 - 2. Calling People to Connection: What People Need to Know about Your Ministry
 - 3. Matching the Right People to the Right Ministry: What You Need to Know about Ministers
- III. Equipping Godly Ministers for Ministry: Ephesians 4:11–16; Romans 15:14
 - A. Competent to Counsel: The Résumé of the Biblical Counselor
 - 1. Biblical Content: How to Change Lives with Christ's Changeless Truth—Head
 - 2. Christlike Character: How to Be like Christ—Heart
 - 3. Counseling Competence: How to Care like Christ—Hands
 - 4. Christian Community: How to Grow Together in Christ—Home
 - B. Mapping Our Focused Curriculum: Core Proficiencies of Competent Biblical Counselors
 - C. Transformational Training Strategies and Methods: Equipping Competent Biblical Counselors
- IV. Empowering/Employing Godly Ministers for Ministry: Matthew 22:35–40; 28:18–20
 - A. Orchestrating Ministries for God's Glory: Organizing the Organism
 - 1. Launching Ministries Built to Last: Administrating Ministries
 - 2. Leading Ministries from Good to Great: Mentoring/Supervising Ministers
 - 3. Leaving a Lasting Legacy of Loving Leaders: Passing the Baton of Ministry
 - B. Practicing Ethical and Legal Wisdom in Ministry: Caring Carefully

PART 1

Envisioning God's Ministry



When my daughter, Marie, was young, we played *How Much Do I Love You?* I'd say, "I love you as big as this room." Marie would respond, "I love you as big as this house." I'd answer back, "I love you as big as this city!" Marie would counter, "I love you as big as the world!" Not to be topped, I'd reply, "I love you as big as the solar system!" Marie would top even that with "I love you as big as the universe!"

When most people think about "vision," they think too small. They focus on church-specific or ministry-specific vision. Those are vital areas of focus, and we will learn together how to develop them biblically. But we are going to start bigger than that—much bigger—*universal*. Before you can catch God's vision for your church or ministry area, you have to be caught by God's grand vision for the church. So we will launch part one with the ministry mindset shift that changes everything: *More than Counseling: Catching God's Vision for the Entire Church*.

Then you are ready to do envisioning work, right? Close, but not quite. Before you can catch God’s vision for your specific church or specific ministry area, you need to know where you have been and where you are now. Vision points to the future, but to pursue a better future you have to know your history and your current culture. So the second chapter of part one focuses on *Examining Heart Health: Diagnosing Congregational and Community Fitness*.

Once you have caught God’s vision for the church and examined the past and current state of your church and community, then you are ready to catch God’s vision for your specific congregation. Thus, chapter three explores *Dreaming God’s Dream: Becoming an MVP-C Congregation*. Here you learn *what* and *why*: what a Mission, Vision, Passion, and Commission Statement (MVP-C) is, and why—biblically—it is so vital to develop one.

Biblical principles must lead to practical plans that work in the real world of church life. This is why chapter four guides you step-by-step through the how-to of *Living God’s Calling: Jointly Crafting Your Biblical Counseling MVP-C Statement*.

I am a coach and teacher at heart. Coaches and teachers love concrete, measurable objectives. In the classroom, I call them SOLOs: Student-Oriented Learning Objectives. For this book I label them ROLOs: Reader-Oriented Learning Objectives. Through your active reading and application of the four chapters in this section, you will be equipped to:

- Be a catalyst for a congregation-saturated shift to the ministry mindset that changes everything—every member a disciple-maker (chapter one).
- Be a spiritual cardiologist who diagnoses the heart health of your congregation and community, to establish a baseline for envisioning God’s future dream (chapter two).
- Champion the biblical meaning of and necessity for jointly crafting congregation-wide and ministry-specific MVP-C Statements (chapter three).

- Guide your biblical counseling ministry team in jointly crafting a ministry-specific MVP-C Statement (chapter four).

How big does God love you in Christ? Bigger than the universe! Because He does, He has given you His Word so you can be captivated by His universal vision for His church. Join me in chapter one as we learn about Christ's grand vision for His Bride.

I

More than Counseling

CATCHING GOD'S VISION FOR THE ENTIRE CHURCH

With our regular attendance of 275 people, ours was an average-size church, at least in the megachurch culture of the day. But because our church served an infinite God and tenaciously pursued a giant vision for every-member ministry, we were significant in God's eyes. Perhaps that's why, in His affectionate sovereignty, He called us to face a significant situation.

At first glance, Steve and Alexis were the all-American couple living the American dream. Married over two decades, three teen children who would make any parent proud, great jobs, beautiful home, active in their previous church . . .

But look beneath the surface and you would see another story, as I did the day that their oldest son, Eric, knocked on my office door. Hesitantly, he unfolded a family narrative that shared how their American dream had become a family nightmare. One child had been physically abused. Another child depressed. The mom was fearful and in denial. The dad was angry and controlling. Infidelity had previously rocked the family.

A church our size should refer them to a counselor, right? As an average-size congregation, surely we did not have the resources to meet such an immense and complicated crisis, right?

There was nothing small or average about this problem. If most churches and Christians are honest, there is nothing that unusual about the problem either. Filled with sin and suffering, yes; out-of-the-norm, no. By God's grace, there was nothing small or average about our response because there had been nothing small or average about our *proactive, congregation-wide preparation* for such messy, real-life issues.

From the day I first candidated to be senior pastor, I asked God to help us change the ministry mindset from small-church, pastor-centered (the Milton Berle church) to big-God, equipping-focused (the Ed Sullivan church). To communicate this shift in perspective, I declined the title "senior pastor," choosing instead the clunky but precise title "congregational discipleship pastor." That didn't mean that I would disciple everyone. It did mean that my main calling was to oversee that *we* disciplined every member.

This was the reason that two short but intense and active years later, an entire congregation was prepared to unite as a team, as a family, and as the body of Christ to minister to this young man, his parents, and his siblings. Even before Eric walked out of my office, biblical, relational, relevant plans were in place to begin addressing not only the immediate crisis, but also the ongoing heart issues. Our "average" church had learned the awesome lesson about how to change lives with Christ's changeless truth. Together, we caught and cast the vision of the priesthood of every believer—not as some academic idea, but as our biblical calling.

We understood that "pastoral care" is not just what the pastor does, but what every member is equipped to offer. With my education—master of theology in biblical counseling and doctor of philosophy in counselor education—I could have (unwisely) tried to handle this on my own. Instead, we responded as a united family to minister Christ-centered help to this family.

Steve met with me for formal biblical counseling (while a trainee participated in our sessions). Steve and Alexis met for formal biblical

counseling with one of our trained biblical counselors. One of our elders began an informal but intensive mentoring relationship with Eric. One of our deacons began the same with Eric's younger brother. One female biblical counselor met with Eric's younger sister in a mentoring relationship, and another met for formal biblical counseling with Alexis.

We understood that "biblical counseling" is not simply a ministry of a few in one corner of the church, but a mindset of an entire congregation that the Bible is sufficient for every life issue. With our active LEAD (Life Encouragers And Disciplers) group of trained biblical counselors, we could have (unwisely) tried to handle this within the confines of the biblical counseling ministry. Instead, we responded as an equipped congregation to minister to this family.

Because there was evidence of physical abuse, we worked through the proper channels and worked out a plan for the daughter to stay for a period of time in the home of a family in our church—a family equipped to minister biblically and lovingly. Our Iron Sharpeners men's ministry provided Steve with love—tough love. Our women's ministry became a haven, but not an escape, for Alexis.

It took a congregation. It took both formal biblical counseling and informal one-another ministry. Both emphasized the personal ministry of the Word where members spoke and lived God's truth into the lives of this family. We understood that "one-another ministry" is not just shallow chitchat reserved for the "easy stuff," but a biblical vision for the entire church for all of life. With our connections with licensed Christian counselors in the community, we could have referred this family to outside professionals and assumed that our only roles were to pray and hug (both essential callings). Instead, we ministered comprehensively to this family as the unified body of Christ. (Of course, we communicated with outside authorities about abuse, and we consulted with medical personnel about depression.)

The ongoing, intensive, intimate, biblical response of our church exemplifies the purpose of this book. I want to help your church become a place not simply *with* a biblical counseling ministry, but *of* biblical counseling. You don't need another program. You want a congregation

saturated by the vision of every-member ministry and equipped to offer one-another ministry. Even more, you want a congregation where *every member is a disciple-maker*.

Every Member a Disciple-Maker

It's *in* to talk about every member being a minister. I agree. However, I don't think the language of "every member a minister" goes far enough. My passion and, most importantly, God's passion focuses on every member becoming a disciple-maker. That ministry mindset shift changes everything.

"Every member a disciple-maker" explains the title of this chapter: *More than Counseling*. Biblical counseling is vital—it is my life calling. Launching biblical counseling ministries is important—you will learn how to do that in this book. You won't learn less than that, however; you will learn more than that—much more.

The 4E Ministry Training Strategy is nothing less than an application of the apostle Paul's admonition in 2 Timothy 2:2 to pass the baton of ministry. "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." It's the Ed Sullivan church.

"Teach" is the same Greek word Jesus chose in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:20. The word implies much more than academic knowledge. Instead, it embodies the "4Cs" of disciple-making that we will learn throughout this book:

- Biblical Content/Conviction
- Christlike Character
- Counseling Competence
- Christian Community

In order to help Steve, Alexis, and their family—especially to help them not only in a reactive crisis mode but also in a proactive discipleship mode, our congregation needed 4E equipping for 4C ministry. That's exactly what you are about to learn in this book—how

to *make disciple-makers*. This chapter equips you to become a catalyst who spurs your congregation to catch God's vision for every-member disciple-making.

The Big Picture: The End Goal—Transformed People

The end goal of this book and of all church ministry is not simply to launch a biblical counseling ministry. The end goal is transformed people—people transformed into the image of Christ. Remember this core theme:

- A relationship with *the* transforming Person (Christ)
- Produces transforming leaders (you and your team)
- Who relationally lead a transforming process (the 4Es)
- That the Spirit uses in transforming your church (the body of Christ)
- So others (the congregation and community) are also transformed into disciple-makers.

My vision is to equip you to build an equipping culture. God's fundamental vision for body growth focuses on every member speaking the truth in love to one another in every situation. That's it. Get that and you get this chapter—you get God's purpose for His body today.

It's everywhere. It's in Matthew 22:34–40 with Matthew 28:16–20; Romans 15:14; Ephesians 4:11–16; Ephesians 5:19; Philippians 1:9–11; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; 2 Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 3:12–13; Hebrews 10:24–25. God's end goal is for every member to be a disciple-maker who speaks and lives gospel truth in love to help every member grow in content, character, competence, and community.

We have wrongly defined biblical counseling so that it is about solving problems. We've made it a subset of discipleship focused on reactive work with persons struggling with sin. Instead, we should think of biblical counseling as synonymous with comprehensive personal discipleship. Biblical counseling is focused one-another ministry designed to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

We don't want to create the ministry mindset where the only way people can relate to one another is by discussing their problems. The goal is to move people forward in Christlikeness whether or not they are facing specific crisis problems. We need a definition of biblical counseling that encompasses all of life.

Christ-centered, church-based, comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally informed biblical counseling depends upon the Holy Spirit to relate God's Word to suffering and sin by speaking and living God's truth in love to equip people to love God and one another (Matt. 22:35–40). It cultivates conformity to Christ and communion with Christ and the body of Christ, leading to a community of one-another disciple-makers (Matt. 28:18–20).

I love biblical counseling, but we can't see it as a ministry of a few people to a few "unhealthy" people. Biblical counseling is the calling of all of God's people all of the time because we are all striving to grow in Christ all the time.

Does that mean we shouldn't launch local church counseling ministries? Not at all. There is nothing unbiblical about people with a special gifting and a special passion wanting to focus their ministry energy on biblical counseling. Just like there is nothing unbiblical about some folks in a church taking extensive training in evangelism. Does that mean that only the "evangelism folks" are called to share their faith? Of course not. We want a church *of* evangelists where everyone is passionate about and equipped to share their faith, even if we have members who focus more time on evangelism. In the same way, we want a church *of* biblical counseling where everyone is passionate about and equipped to speak the truth in love, even if we have some within the church who focus more time on biblical counseling. This book helps you with *both* goals.

In my ministry as a pastor in three churches and in my consulting ministry, I use simple language to identify this “both/and” idea of equipping every member for one-another disciple-making *and* equipping some members for biblical counseling. I call every-member ministry the *Informal Model*. Throughout this chapter and book, you will gain practical insight into how to saturate your congregation with passion for and equipping in every-member disciple-making through the *Informal Model*. You will also be trained to envision, enlist, equip, and empower biblical counselors—the *Formal Model*.

The Big Question: The End Game—Disciple-Makers

When we understand the big picture, then we are prepared to ask the big questions—the right questions. Questions like:

- How do we make disciple-makers?
- How do we leave a legacy of loving leaders?
- How do we encourage our congregation to be caught by God’s vision for “every member a disciple-maker”?

It is when we ask and answer these big-picture questions that we are best prepared to ask the more specific questions related to equipping biblical counselors for one-another ministry. Questions like:

- How do we effectively disciple the body of Christ for one-another ministry in the church and community?
- How do we prepare people for the personal ministry of the Word?
- What is God’s strategy for preparing a congregation to speak the truth in love to one another?

I asked you the biggest of big questions in the Introduction: “Want to change lives?” There is nothing more life-changing than discipling disciple-makers, passing the baton of ministry, and leaving a legacy of loving leaders.

This was our goal in ministering to Steve and Alexis. Not only is their marriage united and glorifying Christ, not only is their parenting (of their now young adult children) vibrant, they are discipling other disciple-makers. They not only made it through their family crisis, but became disciple-makers as a result of moving through their crisis with Christ and the body of Christ.

The Personal Ministry of the Word: Seven Church "Styles"

Sometimes when I train pastors, especially in seminary settings, I get a push back about "counseling." It typically sounds something like this: "I do my counseling from the pulpit. People don't need anything but the preached Word."

Having been a senior pastor, and rarely having given up the pulpit, I don't take issue with any pastor who is passionate about the pulpit ministry of the Word. I do take issue with anyone who pits the pulpit ministry of the Word against the personal ministry of the Word.

All biblical ministry should involve speaking the truth in love. That should be done from the pulpit to the crowd through an equipped person fully focused and prepared to relate God's truth to people's lives—*the pulpit ministry of the Word*. Speaking the truth in love should also be done one-to-one and in small groups, both formally and informally, as members of the body of Christ change lives with Christ's changeless truth—*the personal ministry of the Word*. If we want a church of biblical counseling where everything is saturated with the conviction that God's Word is sufficient for all of life, then pulpit ministry and personal ministry must remain in harmony.

Disciple-Making Champions

As part of my best-practice research, I surveyed two dozen cutting-edge churches that equip their people to speak the truth in love. Throughout each chapter we will hear from these Disciple-Making Champions.¹

1. See Appendix 1.1 for a listing of the twenty-four best-practice churches and para-church agencies.

**Steve Viars, Senior Pastor, and Rob Green,
Counseling Pastor, Faith Baptist Church**

Steve Viars and Rob Green are just two of many leaders of the biblical counseling ministry at Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette, Indiana. At Faith, you find no discrepancy between what happens in the pulpit, what occurs in formal biblical counseling sessions, and what transpires in informal spiritual conversations.

Our goal is to be a church of biblical counseling—we want these truths to permeate everything we do. . . . Call it counseling; call it specialized discipleship. It doesn't matter. We want to be a progressive sanctification machine, a discipleship factory. We want people growing and changing where God's Word and Spirit make each of us more like Jesus Christ through careful attention to the inner person. That is what brings honor to God. . . . The goal of our biblical counseling training just like the goal of all our ministries is to glorify God by winning people to Jesus Christ (for unsaved counselees) and equipping them to be more faithful disciples (for saved counselees).

Pastor Bill Goode, the senior pastor who preceded Pastor Viars and who launched Faith's biblical counseling ministry, clung to the same vision.

The local church *is* a counseling ministry. The question is not, "Should Christians counsel each other?" because they already are. Most Christians are ministering to one another on a personal basis. So the question is, "What *kind* of counseling is offered? How *effective* is the ministry? Do people have *confidence* that the Word of God has answers to everyday life problems?"

**Pastor Mike Wilkerson, Pastor of Biblical Living,
Mars Hill Church**

Mike Wilkerson's title screams Ephesians 4 vision: *Pastor of Biblical Living*. Mike pastors at Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington. He makes plain their biblical philosophy. "When I say we envision being a church of biblical counseling, that's just to say that one-anothering is normative in our church life."

ENVISIONING GOD'S MINISTRY

Pastor Wilkerson uses several terms to show the synergy between the pulpit ministry of the Word and the personal ministry of the Word. He describes the pulpit ministry of the Word as the “air war” in which sermons soften and prepare hearts for the personal ministry of the Word. He calls the personal ministry of the Word the “ground war” in which biblical counseling, small-group ministry, and one-anothering help each member of the body to be a disciple-maker.

When we re-launched the ministry, since our teaching pastor, Mark Driscoll, initiated the process, and he desired unity, we all agreed on the biblical direction. So we had the air war covered—the biblical philosophy of ministry embedded in the preaching. The ground war is an equal priority. We're committed to building it well—theologically and relationally—and having it unified with the air war (the pulpit).

When it comes to the personal ministry of the Word, not every church is like Faith Baptist and Mars Hill. Churches have various styles of doing relational ministry. Knowing how personal needs are met in typical churches helps us to compare and contrast these models with God's vision for His church.

The Staff Model

When a church member has a “problem,” many churches respond to that person through the *staff model*, where the main caregiver is one of the pastors. This approach uses the classic pastoral-care model where the pastor marries and buries, ministering from cradle to casket, in the home and in the hospital. The pastor typically focuses in a reactive way on crisis needs.

A potential strength of this model is that theoretically you have well-trained caregivers. Unfortunately, very few pastors believe they have received effective training in the personal ministry of the Word. There are major weaknesses in this approach, including pastoral burnout and the pastor monopolizing the ministry (the Milton Berle church). Also, the majority of members are not ministered to because the focus is on the unhealthy person in crisis. People learn that if they want the pastor's attention, they had better

have a problem. As a church grows, there is no way for one person (or even a staff of people) to minister to the entire congregation.

The Shepherding Model

Because the staff model can't work as churches grow, other churches implement the *shepherding model*. In this approach the primary caregivers are deacons, deaconesses, elders, ministry of mercy team members, shut-in teams, and visitation teams. The methods vary, sometimes using tele-care, other times systematic home visitation, crisis response teams, or groups with someone designated to oversee care for members. Typically the ministry occurs on a regular but infrequent basis as the focus is on "touching base" so no one "falls through the cracks."

Strengths of this method include many members having a ministry, every member having a minister, and no one being isolated. Weaknesses include resistance to being assigned to a group, since this model is often based on geography rather than natural relationships. Additionally, the team members may burn out, drop out, or drop the ball. At times training is inadequate and sometimes non-existent.

The Small-Group Model

Since intimacy and frequency is often missing in the shepherding model, many churches use the *small-group model* as their primary vehicle for meeting personal needs. Here the caregiver is the small-group leader and hopefully each small-group member. Methods vary, since small-group ministries have a myriad of philosophies. The frequency of care typically involves weekly to monthly connection on an ongoing basis, sometimes being time-limited.

There are numerous strengths to this model when it is run well. Many members are ministered to, and many members can have a ministry. Close relationships can develop, and spontaneous need-meeting often occurs. There are, however, weaknesses in this model. Those not in small groups (in many churches at least 50 percent of the congregation) fall through the cracks. Unfortunately, many churches provide little equipping in small-group leadership—especially in the personal ministry of the Word of speaking the truth in love.

The Sunday School Model

Larger churches often institute adult Sunday school classes frequently known as Adult Bible Fellowships (ABFs). These ABFs become mini-congregations within the congregation. The caregiver in this *Sunday school model* is the ABF teacher, or the ABF care group leader. Methods include meeting needs through care groups, tele-care, and spontaneous need-meeting. The focus is on crisis need-meeting, plus semi-regular touching base, as well as periodic social/fellowship gatherings.

There are several strengths in this approach. Many members have a ministry and many are ministered to. No one in the ABFs falls through the cracks. Weaknesses include the tendency of those *not* in ABFs to fall through the cracks, along with the possibility of untrained care-givers, few counseling needs' being met, and ministers burning out and dropping out.

The Specialist Model

Some churches, especially with "tough cases," select the *specialist model*. In this method the caregiver, if inside the church, is the pastoral counselor or lay counselor. If outside the church, the caregiver is the licensed counselor, social worker, or psychologist. The focus is on crisis need-meeting and ongoing counseling with scheduled appointments for primary care.

Theoretically the strengths include well-trained caregivers offering intensive help for intense life issues. If inside the church, weaknesses include a professionalized and specialized model of ministry, counselors who are not fully equipped, and few members ministering. If referred out, weaknesses include potentially secular care, or Christian care that is not biblically based. Also, the role of the church as a discipling community is minimized. At best, this model results in a church *with* biblical counseling, but it is not a church *of* biblical counseling.

The Spontaneous Model

In reaction to the professionalized approach, many churches follow the *spontaneous model*. In this method, theoretically every member cares

intimately for a few other members. The methods include an Acts 2 spontaneous combustion model aided by a passion for connection built into the preaching, the vision statement, and the hearts of members. The focus is on the holistic care of members as found in Acts 2:42–47. Ideally, the frequency is daily as needs are perceived and shared.

The strengths are obvious: the model is biblically based and involves Holy-Spirit-empowered reciprocal one-another ministry of every member. However, in actuality, often only the deeply connected are cared for. Additionally, this model often minimizes training because it lacks a focus on “organizing the organism.” At best, this model results in a church *of* one-another ministry, but it is not always a church *with* biblical enlisting, equipping, and empowering.

The Scripture and Sacraments Model

Other churches react against a therapeutic, seeker-sensitive culture and decide to follow a *Scripture and Sacraments model*. Picture this as the pulpit ministry of the Word minus the personal ministry of the Word. The method involves little structured means for care-giving and need-meeting, with the assumption that the truth preached from the pulpit provides all the biblical counseling necessary, and motivates the body equipped by the pulpit to minister to one another. The focus typically is upon doctrinal correctness and depth.

There are obvious strengths to this model. Truth is preached. Doctrine is learned. People can be inspired to live an Acts 2:42–47 body life. There are also weaknesses. The personal ministry of the Word is de-emphasized, and if it happens at all, the caregivers are often ill-equipped to translate truth to life. They know truth, but they don't know how to bridge the truth-life gap. At times the staunch preaching of doctrine can lead to a mood of truth trumping love, of head over heart.

The Biblical Plumb Line

As you reflect on these seven styles of meeting congregational needs, which do you value? As you ponder your church, which methods does it blend together? How well do they function?

My objective in presenting this overview is not to dissuade you from implementing any of these models. Many have real value. My purpose is to encourage you to evaluate each model using Ephesians 4:11–16 as your biblical plumb line.

My goal is to urge you to use a 4E strategy when you implement any of these models. In my ministry experience, research, and consulting, very few of these models apply a comprehensive *envisioning, enlisting, equipping, and empowering* philosophy to ensure that the model is biblically sound and practically effective.

My aim is to highlight how most of these ministry models fail the “both/and test.” They rarely include both the pulpit ministry of the Word and the personal ministry of the Word; both truth and love; both the formal and informal modes of speaking the truth in love; both pastors-teachers equipping the body and the body doing works of service; and they rarely include the vision of a church *of* and a church *with*. They lack a comprehensive approach to training God’s people.

Most importantly, none of these models highlight or effectively result in making disciple-makers. Most focus on meeting personal needs—not a bad aim, but not God’s ultimate vision. Others focus on caregiving and some on every member a minister—but not on *every member a disciple-maker*. Even the Scripture and Sacraments model, which seeks to prioritize making deep disciples, follows a model that will not result in equipped disciple-makers. Telling truth does not produce 4C disciple-makers. Part three on equipping describes the type of training that best produces disciple-makers who are complete in knowledge (content/conviction), full of goodness (character), and competent to counsel (competence) one another (community).

God’s Grand Vision for His Church: Ephesians 4:11–16

In Ephesians 4:11–16, the apostle Paul highlights the Bible’s most powerful, focused vision statement for the church. This passage offers God’s ministry description for church leaders and for every member. By distilling the essence of God’s call, His vision captures our imagination and motivates the shift in ministry mindset that changes everything.

The Résumé of Pastors

Most pastoral search committees would be thrilled to read a candidate's résumé that demonstrated the ability to preach, counsel, and administrate. Most seminaries would be delighted if graduate exit interviews indicated that pastoral ministry students perceived their seminary training as having equipped them for preaching, counseling, and administrating. Being equipped to *do* the work of the ministry seems to be everyone's ideal goal for church leaders.

Everyone but Christ. His pastoral ministry description demands the ability to *equip* others to do the work of the ministry. If seminaries followed Christ's vision for pastoral ministry, they would focus on *training trainers*. If pastoral search committees desired in a pastor what Christ desires, they would throw out every résumé that failed to emphasize experience in and passion for equipping the saints.

You would think we would listen to the Head of the church. Paul spends the chapters and verses leading up to Ephesians 4:11–16 showing why Christ has the right to write the pastor-teacher's ministry description.

- He is our Redeemer in whom our full salvation is complete (1:1–14). We should surrender to His will for His redeemed people.
- He is seated at God's right hand ruling over everything with all authority, appointed the Head over everything for the church, which is His body (1:15–23). We should follow His directives for the church.
- We are His workmanship, created in Christ to do the beautiful work prepared for us from all eternity (2:1–10). We should want to know what He prepared pastors and people for.
- He is the chief cornerstone upon whom the whole building (the church) is being built (2:11–22). We should follow His architectural drawings for the church.
- He is the revelation of God's grace toward which all time and eternity have been moving (3:1–14). We should yield to His infinite wisdom for His people.

- His love for us surpasses all knowledge (3:15–21). We should submit to His calling on our lives.
- He ascended higher than all the heavens in order to fill the whole universe (4:1–10). We should listen to the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the universe.

The Pastoral Ministry Mindset Shift That Changes Everything: Every Pastor an Equipper of Equippers

Instead, we listen to modern church culture that screams, “The pastor is the preacher, caregiver, and CEO!” It’s time to listen to the Head of the church. “It was he who gave some to be . . . pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service” (Eph. 4:11–12). *Christ’s grand plan for His church is for pastors-teachers to focus on equipping every member to do the work of the ministry.*

Under the Spirit’s inspiration, Paul launches verse 12 with a tiny Greek word (*pros*) translated by an even smaller English word (“to”) with giant meaning: “with the conscious purpose of, in order for, for the sake of, with a view to.” The word indicates the future aim and ultimate goal of a current action. That is, by definition, a vision statement—Christ’s grand vision statement for every pastor-teacher.

What is the future view, the future vision for which Christ sovereignly gave His church pastors and teachers? Paul says it succinctly: “*To prepare God’s people for works of service.*” These eight words must be every church leader’s reason for existence.

One central word—“prepare”—must capture every leader’s passion for ministry. “Prepare” comes from the word for “artist” or “craftsman.” Local church leader, your special craft, your opus, is people, equipped people, disciple-makers. Your spiritual craft or gift is to help others scout out their spiritual gift, identify that area of ministry, and empower them to use that gift.

In Paul’s day people commonly used “prepare” in the context of conditioning an athlete. Local church leader, you are a spiritual conditioning coach. Your job is not to play all the positions on the team, but to coach all the players on the team, to strengthen their spiritual

condition so they are able to do works of service. This fits perfectly with how Paul uses the word “prepare”—to train others so they are fully fit and mature enough to complete their calling. *The leader’s calling is to help God’s people fulfill their calling.*

These weren’t just words for Paul. He made making disciple-makers his personal ministry description—Colossians 1:28–29. He made equipping equippers his personal ministry practice—Acts 20:13–38. Christ’s grand vision so captured Paul’s ministry mindset that at the end of his life he passed on to Timothy the vision of equipping equippers of equippers—2 Timothy 2:2. The baton of equipping passed from Christ’s hands, to Paul’s hands, to Timothy’s hands, to the hands of reliable disciple-makers who passed it on yet again.

Let’s not drop the baton. Let’s keep Christ’s grand vision alive and moving into the future.

Yes, But

Some may ask, “Are you saying that pastors should not preach the Word, counsel, and administrate?” Not at all. Christ, the Head of the church, has written the primary ministry description for all pastors. Pastors should equip equippers for the work of the ministry. Within this overriding calling, pastors can preach, counsel, and administrate.

When I was senior pastor, every time I preached I asked myself, “How does this message further my calling to be a catalyst for equipping the saints for the work of ministry?” As a player-coach, when I counseled I had trainees in the room with me. When I visited the hospital, I took apprentices with me. My goal wasn’t to be the church’s primary caregiver, but to equip a church of caregivers. In my administrative role, I sought to oversee the equipping of every member. Yes, I preached, counseled, and administrated—always within the context of Christ’s grand vision for the church, which is the pastor as the equipper of equippers.

Others may be thinking, “I’m with you 100 percent. I’m not an ordained pastor, although I am a recognized, active ministry leader in my church. How should I apply these truths?” Ephesians 4:11–12 provides the ministry description for all those raised up for church leadership.

If you are the small-group director, ask, “How can I orchestrate all our small-group leaders and members to be disciplined to speak the truth in love?” If you are the women’s ministry director, ask, “How can I fulfill Christ’s call for me to equip women to equip others?”

The Résumé of the People of God

Sadly, in far too many churches, the people of God are second-class citizens when it comes to the work of ministry. If a “layperson” makes a hospital visit, that’s okay, but we want to know, “Where’s my pastor?” Christ’s vision is so different. *Pastors and teachers serve the people so God’s people can serve the congregation and community.* Far too many “laypeople” are recruited to fill a position and to fill a need—make the coffee, cover the nursery during the service—but not to fulfill a calling.

Paul’s phrase “works of service” elevates the ministry of God’s people. “Works” has a sense of divine calling and meaningful purpose. We could translate it as “vocation” and “mission.” The Bible uses it to describe God’s creative work. God the Creator commissions us for creative, zealous, purposeful work—work that glorifies Him as we serve one another.

Paul’s word for “service” highlights personal service rather than serving for wages, serving as a slave, and serving publicly. It involves love in action through sacrificial ministry modeled after Christ’s sacrifice. Christ calls His people to creative, purposeful, meaningful, sacrificial, personal ministry to one another in His name. In the context of Ephesians 4:11–16, that work is nothing less than making disciple-makers through the personal ministry of the Word.

The Member Ministry Mindset Shift That Changes Everything: Every Member a Disciple-Maker

When leaders and members fulfill their purposes together, the body of Christ builds itself up in two specific, cohesive ways: doctrinal unity and spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:12–13). When a congregation knows the truth not just academically, but personally, their love abounds in knowledge and depth of insight (Phil. 1:9–11).

We often miss the vital real-life, how-to application of every-member disciple-making that Paul embeds in this text. How does the church come to unity and maturity? Exactly what are pastors equipping people to do? Specifically how do members do the work of the ministry?

Paul answers: by “speaking the truth in love” we grow up in Christ (Eph. 4:15). Every word in this passage funnels toward this remarkable phrase “speaking the truth in love.” *Christ’s grand plan for His church is for every member to be a disciple-maker by speaking and living gospel truth to one another in love.*

Paul selects an unusual Greek word that we often translate as “speaking the truth.” Actually, we should translate it both as “speaking” and as “living the truth.” We might even coin the phrase “truthing.” Paul likely had in mind Psalm 15, where the psalmist asks, “Who may dwell in your sanctuary?” He answers: “He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, *who speaks the truth from his heart*” (Ps. 15:2). Who can serve in God’s sanctuary, the church? The one who embodies truth in relationships.

The word for “truthing” that Paul uses indicates being transparent, truthfulness, genuine, authentic, reliable, sincere. It describes the person who ministers from a heart of integrity and Christlike, grace-oriented love. It pictures the person whose relational style is transparent and trustworthy. The tense and context indicate that the body of Christ should continually, actively, and collectively embody truth in love as it walks together in intimate, vulnerable connection. In one word, Paul combines content, character, and competence shared in community!

While the word means more than speaking, it does not mean *less* than speaking. While it means more than sheer factual content, it does not mean *less* than the gospel fully applied. Paul uses the identical word in Galatians 4:16. There he is clearly speaking of preaching, teaching, and communicating the truth of the gospel of Christ’s grace (salvation) applied to daily growth in Christ (progressive sanctification).

Combine Galatians 4:16 with Ephesians 4:16, both in context, and we find an amazing description of gospel-centered biblical counseling—of the personal ministry of the Word. Speaking the truth involves:

Communicating gospel truth about grace-focused sanctification in word, thought, and action through one-another relationships that have integrity, genuineness, authenticity, transparency, and reliability, done in love to promote the unity and maturity of the body of Christ for the ultimate purpose of displaying the glory of Christ's grace.

The normal agenda and priority of every Christian is to make disciple-makers. Christ's training strategy for disciple-making is pastors and teachers equipping every member to embody the truth in love through the personal ministry of the Word—biblical counseling.

What happens when leaders focus on equipping God's people to make disciple-makers through the personal ministry of the Word by speaking and living the truth in love? Paul shows us in Ephesians 4:16. The body in robust health grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

Disciple-Making Champion:
*Pastor Robert Cheong, Pastor of Care and Counseling,
Sojourn Community Church*

Dr. Robert Cheong, pastor of care and counseling for Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, Kentucky, is passionate about equipping God's people for gospel-centered counseling. His definition of church-based counseling harmonizes beautifully with Paul's Ephesians 4:11–16 vision.

Gospel counseling is a way of loving one another by understanding the struggles of unbelief and lies in the midst of sin and suffering through listening to and exploring the heart, while proclaiming how Christ and His gospel truths apply in deeply personal and particular ways, so that we can live out and grow in the gospel by faith in community, enabled by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Cheong unites counseling and the personal ministry of the Word.

Gospel counseling is an aspect of gospel ministry that represents the relational ministry of the Word in which every Christian is called to participate. In less “technical” terms, the essence of counseling is helping one another to understand and apply the gospel to the details of life so that we can live the gospel by faith in community.

Pastor Cheong’s connection between the church and counseling is an apt exclamation point on Christ’s grand vision.

Counseling that flows from the gospel reflects the essence of gospel ministry and must be done by the church—the people of God. God calls every member of His church to the relational ministry of the Word where people labor with their entire lives to help those in the church family to grow in maturity in Christ (cf. Col. 1:28–29) and to help those outside the church family to see their need for Christ as Savior and Redeemer. Helping others to live out the gospel and to submit to the gospel is what it means to “be the church.” Therefore, the renewal of counseling is not to have such a ministry done *in* the church but *by* the church, so the church can *be* the church.

Commencement: It Takes a Congregation

Most books end each chapter with a conclusion. I don’t like that label any more than I like it when counselors call their final session the “termination session.” I call my final biblical counseling meeting “commencement” because I want to communicate positive progress on an ongoing journey with Christ. For the same reason, I’m calling the end of each chapter the commencement. Let’s commence.

When I started my ministry as congregational discipleship pastor, I didn’t begin by launching a biblical counseling program. That never would have been sufficient to minister effectively to Steve, Alexis, Eric, and the others in their family. Instead, I invited our congregation to join me on a journey of catching God’s vision for every-member disciple-making. Because of that focus, this family received both formal biblical counseling and informal one-another ministry.

As our congregation engaged in the vision-catching process, we joined together to assess and diagnose the heart health of our congregation and community. We knew that we couldn’t understand where to go until

we knew where we had been and where we currently were. Join me in chapter two as we learn about that process: *Examining Heart Health: Diagnosing Congregational and Community Fitness*.

Growing Together: Questions for Reflection, Discussion, and Application

1. If the all-American couple entered your congregation, how prepared would your church be to minister to them in their current crisis and in their ongoing Christian lives? What do you think your congregation might need to do in order to be better prepared?
2. Would you say your church is a church with biblical counseling or a church of biblical counseling (a congregation saturated with equipped one-another ministers)? Why?
3. In your life and in your church, how much of a transition would it be to shift from doing the work of the ministry to making disciple-makers? What might that shift look like and involve?
4. Of the seven styles of churches, which do you value? Which methods does your church use? How well do the styles function in your church?
5. Reflect on the résumé and the ministry description of the biblical pastor, teacher, leader.
 - a. Who has equipped you to equip others? How did they do it?
 - b. Whom have you equipped to equip others? How did you do it?
6. Ponder the definition of “speaking the truth in love”:

Communicating gospel truth about grace-focused sanctification in word, thought, and action through one-another relationships that have integrity, genuineness, authenticity, transparency, and reliability, done in love to promote the unity and maturity of the body of Christ for the ultimate purpose of displaying the glory of Christ's grace.

- a. How would you evaluate your personal ministry of the Word based on this definition?
- b. How would you assess your congregation's personal ministry of the Word based on this definition?