

Biblical Counseling
Week 11 2025-2026

ACBC Theology Exam –

23. Provide a biblical description of the church.

24. What role should the church play in the counseling process?

23. Provide a biblical description of the church.

Ephesians 2:19-22 –

So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 3:14–19 - *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

I. “What is the Church” by RC Sproul, Ligonier Ministries <https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/what-church>

Ecclesiology - the doctrine of the church – Ephesians 2: 19-22.

“[We] are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph. 2:19–20a).

Paul describes a building—the household of God. Christians are part of the household as they have been adopted into the family of God.

. “In [Christ] the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21–22).

The church is made up of the OT prophets and NT Apostles. The prophets and Apostles are the agents of revelation by whom God speaks to His people through the Word of God.

The foundation of the church is the Word of God through the prophets and the Apostles and is necessary for the entire church to stand securely.

Christ is the cornerstone that holds the foundation together. The church is a new temple built in

Christ, by Christ, and for Christ.

1 Peter 2:5 – You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

We are living stones.

“Each believer is part of this church just as each stone is part of a building. The church, the new temple, is still under construction. Every day, new stones are added. This new temple will not be finished until Jesus returns to consummate His kingdom. Christ is still building His church by adding people who are the stones that hold together in Him.”

(RC Sproul)

We are the church that God ordained from the foundation of the world. We are His people; we are His household.

Eph. 3:14–19 - For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

II. ACBC Doctrinal Statement

The Doctrine of the Church.

A. The church is the bride of Christ called to proclaim the Word of God, administer baptism and the Lord's supper, and exercise church discipline. The church is the organism through which God accomplishes his mission in the world. It is the main agent for all ministry of the Word, including the ministry of counseling and discipleship.

Matthew 16:18-20; Matthew 18:15-20; Romans 15:14; 1 Peter 2:1-12; Revelation 19:6-10

B. The Universal Church - We believe that the church consists of all who have put their faith in Jesus Christ from the day of Pentecost until the Rapture of the church. The church has a threefold purpose: to give God the worship and praise He deserves; to build up believers to spiritual maturity; and to evangelize the world—witnessing, by our words and our lives, the truth of God's provision for man through Jesus Christ.

Matthew 5:13–16, 28:18–20; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 4:4–16; 1 Peter 2:9–10

C. The Local Church - We believe that each local church is to be nurtured and governed by a group of elders who operate under the headship of Jesus Christ. These are men

called by God to a shepherding ministry and are recognized on the basis of Biblical qualifications. Local church elders may be assisted by deacons, who must also be Biblically qualified and who perform ministries of service.

Acts 14:23, 20:17, 20:28–31; 1 Cor. 14:34–35; 1 Timothy 2:9–12, 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9, 2:3–5.

III. Article II (SMCC Constitution)

As prescribed by the Holy Scripture, the chief duty of the church—the body and bride of Christ—is to honor and glorify God by worship and by committed, obedient love (Matt 5:16, 22:37, John 14:15, 1 Cor 10:13, 1 Pet 2:9).

The chief pursuits by which the church brings this glory to God:

- The edifying of itself (Eph 4:11-16)
- The purifying of itself (Eph 5:26-27)
- The educating and equipping of its members (Matt 28:19; Eph 4:11-12)
- The proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world (Matt 28:19; Lk 24:46-48; Acts 1:8)
- Acting as a restraining and enlightening force in the world (Matt 5:13-16; 2 Thes 2:6-7; Phil 2:16)
- Promoting all that is good (Gal 6:10).

IV. SMCC Doctrinal Statement – What We Believe and Teach (<https://smcc.church/our-doctrine>)

- We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Cor. 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

- We teach that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1- 21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Cor. 15:51- 52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

- We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11 3:6). The church is distinct from Israel, a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

- We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (Hebrews 10:25).

- We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Cor. 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship

are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5). We teach that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

- We teach that as the church of Jesus Christ, we are to be obedient to His command to "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; 2 Cor. 5:18-21) and individually we are to be witnesses for Christ in our sphere of influence (Acts 1:8). "God is not willing that any should perish"(2 Pe. 3:9) and because "...the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation"(Rom. 1:16), that we, as the church, corporately and individually, have the privilege and responsibility to proclaim it so that those who believe might be saved "(Jn 3:16; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9, 13).

- We teach the importance of discipleship (Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matt. 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matt. 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

- We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of

its cooperation. Elders should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Cor. 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

- We teach that the purpose of the church is to:
 - Building itself up in the faith (Eph. 4:13-16)
 - Prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-8)
 - Instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17)
 - Fellowship (Acts 2:43-47; 1 John 1:3)
 - Keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:38-42)
 - Advancing and communicating the gospel to the world (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

- We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42).

- Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

- The Lord's Supper - The commemoration and proclamation of His death

until He comes, preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28-32). The elements of Communion only represent the flesh and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but it is an actual communion with the present risen Christ and fellowship with His people (1 Cor. 10:16).

24. What role should the church play in the counseling process?

I. ACBC Doctrine

- The Centrality of the Church. We believe the church is the primary context for soul care, and that we must recover the church's responsibility to provide care for sufferers and sinners. Therefore, we encourage and support the indispensable ministry of biblical counseling as an expression of church life.

II. How Did We Get Here?

- The home of soul care is properly located in the church. This has always been God's intent, though the church has often failed to follow it. Too often the church has abdicated its role in shepherding God's children, giving the work to other authorities.

- The failure of the Church - The church drifted away from pastoral counseling with the rising popularity of emerging psychology and psychiatry in the early 20th century.

- Worldly perspectives, theories, and pragmatism allowed to influence how the church defined soul care and the ailments common to mankind. "Whatever defines the problem also sets the parameters for the solution."

- A breakdown in society - the religion of secular humanism in 20th century.

- The emergence of the Biblical Counseling Movement - Jay Adams: 1970s *Competent to Counsel*.

III. Reclaim the church as a culture of care.

- Sufficiency of Scripture defines both the problems of mankind and the solutions and is indispensable for soul care.

- A proper ecclesiology is required to understand how soul care is biblically designed to happen. Soul care is not a periodic task of the church but must be woven into everything the church does.

- There may be an occasional need for specialized care, but the church is to embrace that each follower of Christ is called to counsel according to God's Word wherever He has placed them.

- The church must again be the primary place where those who struggle can receive lasting hope and healing.

- Must present the church as the primary haven for answers to deep-seated human problems. God has designed every function of the church to be an integral part of soul care. God has provided the church with the necessary resources for us to care well for one another. Prayer, the Word, the work of the Holy Spirit, and Christian community are God's provisions to lead all of us to Christ even those with the deepest struggles.

- Counselors, ministers, and lay leaders are empowered to have confidence in God's purpose for the church, the power of his Spirit, and the sufficiency of his Word for soul care.

The Church as a Culture of Care by T. Dale

Johnson Jr.

IV. ACBC Standards of Conduct. The Commitment to the Church - The church is the body of Jesus Christ, whom he has purchased with his own blood, and has commissioned to advance his kingdom on earth. Because the church is the pillar and buttress of God's truth, it is indispensable in the ministry of counseling that seeks to communicate that truth. Biblical counselors do their work with the conviction that biblical change is ultimately impossible apart from the full ministry of the church.

A. Biblical counselors must be committed to the priority of the church in accomplishing their counseling ministry. Biblical counselors will place themselves under the leadership of a church and pursue the accountability of that leadership as it relates to their life, doctrine, and counseling practices.

B. Biblical counselors must pursue the closest possible connections between church accountability and the counseling centers where they serve. Whether the counseling ministry is formally part of the church or whether church leadership holds the center accountable through board involvement or personal accountability of individual counselors, biblical counselors know that the ultimate faithfulness of a counseling center is connected to its organizational proximity to Christ's body.

C. Biblical counselors must seek to involve their counselees in a faithful church. Counseling ultimately seeks, by divine grace, to aid counselees to conform their life to behavior that glorifies God. Biblical counselors understand Christians best grow in grace when they are actively involved in the church.

D. Biblical counselors must seek out, for themselves, and those they counsel, churches, which will faithfully discharge the command of Christ to show care through corrective church discipline. Such discipline is a central way that God cares for his flock, and protects the purity of the church.

Matthew 16:16-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Eph. 2:19-21; 1 Timothy 3:15; Titus 1:10; Hebrews 3:13; 10:25

V. Biblical Counseling In the Local Church – Romans 15:14

Levels of the Ministry of the Word:

- Pulpit Ministry/Public and Proclamation ministry – Preaching ministry of the Word.
- Small group exhortation ministry of the Word.
- Personal ministry of the Word = Biblical counseling and intensive discipleship

VI. Christ-centered, biblical counseling provided for the members and visitors of a local church, done by the trained leaders and members, with the goal of helping those people follow Christ and function as growing members of that congregation.

Thirteen benefits of church-based biblical counseling. A church-based setting provides -

- The direct oversight of God-ordained shepherds.
- Consistency of private counseling and the public preaching/teaching of God's Word.
- God-centered, Christ-exalting worship.
- Christ's ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- Formative and restorative/redemptive church discipline.
- The fellowship, encouragement, and example of mature fellow believers.
- Existing facilities and office space.
- Immediate opportunities to serve others.
- Resource people for auxiliary help.
- Benevolence assistance, including financial help or physical labor.
- Members' homes for counseling, discipleship, and small group life.
- Greater legal protection.
- All should be offered free of charge!

VII. Resources

John MacArthur *Biblical Doctrine* Crossway, 2017

"What is the Church" RC Sproul, Ligonier, <https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/what-church>

Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) <https://biblicalcounseling.com/about/>

Shades Mountain Community Church (SMCC) <https://smcc.church/our-doctrine>

T. Dale Johnson Jr. *The Church as a Culture of Care* New Growth Press, 2021

Dr. Robert Jones - <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2016/02/15/thirteen-benefits-of-church-based-biblical-counseling-part-1/part-2>