Caring and Counselling

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WAVERLEY MODEL OF COUNSELLING
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CWR
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Foreword

The late Rev Dr Selwyn Hughes, the founder of CWR, was strongly convinced of the importance of the Scriptures. In his earlier years of Christian ministry, his commitment to the Bible as the Word of God led to the request from people in his church for help in their daily Bible reading. From some jottings to meet the need for help with the Bible, which he wrote on filing cards, the daily Bible-reading notes of today, *Every Day with Jesus*, were born. It is no surprise then that the counselling model which he originated, influenced by the insights of Dr Larry Crabb, has a strong commitment to the Bible as the revelation of God. In this context, the Bible was his source for the understanding of humanity and of the root causes of the problems people face.

A brief history

CWR’s counselling courses have been developing for a number of decades. Selwyn Hughes and Trevor Partridge pioneered the first courses in response to a growing awareness on their part that teaching from the pulpit alone was not enough to address many of the deep problems people face. While this may be of no surprise to us today, it was a significant awareness at that time. The early courses were designed to help Christian pastors and counsellors help people in local church contexts particularly.

As the CWR counselling programme has developed, a range of shorter and longer courses have been included. At the time of writing, the popular one-week ‘Introduction to Biblical Counselling Course’ (IBC) continues to provide an excellent ‘taster’ for the longer CWR counselling programmes. But as a stand-alone course, this one-week programme is highly valued by those who attend. The IBC focuses on both personal transformation as well as counselling insights. For around twenty years a longer modular counselling training programme (Certificate of Christian
Counselling) has been conducted in various formats, including ten live-in weekends at Waverley. Over more recent years, the course has been developed further to include the specific requirements of Christian counsellors who work outside of local church contexts. Some of these counsellors work with people who have little contact with the Church or, perhaps, who are antagonistic to it. The central challenge for CWR staff has been, and continues to be, to maintain CWR’s distinctive biblical foundation while remaining up-to-date in its teaching of counselling theory and practice.

More recently, for the sake of simplicity, the unique CWR Model of Counselling has become known as the ‘Waverley Counselling Model’, or simply the ‘Waverley Model’ because of its development at CWR’s centre at Waverley Abbey House in Farnham, Surrey.

During the last few years of the twentieth century, a second year was added to the long counselling programme of CWR – the Diploma of Christian Counselling. Around the same time, CWR began a partnership with London Bible College (now London School of Theology) providing the counselling expertise for an undergraduate course in theology and counselling which continues at the current time. The long course programme continued its development over a number of years, with extra modules being developed by the tutors as CWR worked towards gaining university recognition of its counselling courses.

Roehampton University approved counselling courses

In 2010, the CWR long counselling programme was validated by Roehampton University and is now being offered at certificate, diploma and graduate levels in association with the university. There have been many years of very hard work given by the tutors and administrative staff, past and present, whose efforts have made this possible. In particular I would like to recognise the contributions of Heather Churchill, Irene Davies, Owen Ashley, Andre Radmall, Nigel James, Elizabeth Hodkinson, Mary Higginson, Kathy Overton, Rosanna Cole and, in earlier days, Selwyn Hughes, Trevor Partridge, Jenny Trust, Simon Gibson and Nathalie Hallevorden.
Relationships and the counselling courses

One of the features of CWR counselling courses at Waverley is the inter-personal dynamics that occur as students and tutors come together for extended periods. Some of the most appreciated elements of the course are those serendipity moments that occur as students and staff mingle. Alongside the excellent planned elements of the courses, these unexpected and unplanned events are often both enlightening and personally transforming. The quality of these experiences that occur as course participants relate and learn together are frequently commented on favourably by both students and staff.

Perspective

I have undertaken the task of writing this book with a range of perspectives in mind.

First, the historic understanding and teaching concerning the CWR Counselling Model is foundational.

Second, I have endeavoured to include something of the current development of the model by those who teach it in their tutorial roles with CWR. I have included the numerous revisions and suggestions of the tutors who have reviewed the various drafts and I particularly thank Heather Churchill, Irene Davies, Owen Ashley and Andre Radmall for their input. It has been my intention to be collaborative in every way I can.

Third, because of CWR’s historic and current commitment to the value of the Scriptures, the biblical perspective has been an ongoing influence in the writing process.

Fourth, as far as I have been able, I have endeavoured to remain objective in what has been written and to focus as far as possible on the first three perspectives rather than override them with my own personal views.

Fifth, I have tried to keep in mind that this is an introductory book, designed for those with little or no experience in counselling or who are new to the Waverley Model.

Sixth, I have been exercised by the task of writing in such a way as to be understood by those who have chosen to follow a different theoretical or practical approach to counselling. Keeping the balance has not been easy.
Caring and Counselling

This book is intended to provide a basic understanding of the Waverley Counselling Model. I trust that it will provide a helpful introduction, particularly for counsellors and pastoral carers-in-training who are students in courses conducted by CWR. It is not intended to be a comprehensive course handbook or an academic text. The book is written as a broad-based introductory text only. As a consequence it skims over some important areas, so as to provide something that is helpful but not too wordy. Without doubt, the CWR tutors will fill the gaps and provide the details as you undertake your CWR counselling or pastoral care course.

Finally, it may be helpful to clarify here that the word ‘counsellor’ and the more technical counselling term, ‘client’ are used interchangeably in this book.

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An Introduction to Christian Counselling
Pastoral care and counselling

A useful place to begin our exploration of the Waverley Counselling Model may be to explain the difference between pastoral care and counselling as we understand it at CWR. This is how we distinguish between the two. Pastoral care is regarded as a holistic support of an individual. In the Christian context, it will embrace a general concern for the well-being and spiritual and personal growth of the individuals within the church or local community. It not only involves one-to-one aspects, but includes such activities as providing transport, perhaps offering financial help in crises, arranging social support groups, and a variety of other caring activities. Pastoral care is a broad-based approach to helping people.

Counselling, by comparison, is much more specific. There is an agreement or a contract, written or verbal, between the counsellor and the person seeking help. Normally, people come to a counsellor because they are seeking understanding and help with a particular problem that is troubling them. The particular problem(s) which brings the person to a counsellor is known, in the Waverley Counselling Model, as the ‘presenting problem’. The person seeking help is referred to in counselling terms as ‘the client’, or sometimes ‘the counsellee’. So we can see that counselling is much more problem-focused, and not as broad-based as pastoral care. Nevertheless, counselling has a vital part to play in the pastoral care ministry within a local church, or the wider community.
Why counselling?

Each of us at various times in our lives experience troubling problems. We seek to manage many of these problems on our own. If we are successful in this, we will probably return to our normal life patterns. When we are unable to find a way forward, or to deal with painful issues within our lives, we are confronted with the decision concerning what options we have to improve our well-being. We may carry on struggling with the problem internally, treating it very much like an ongoing physical disability that we just have to learn to live with. Sometimes we are able to continue to function adequately, though it may be a struggle. But some of our problems are far deeper, more stressful, more emotionally painful, and more life-changing. These types of problems cannot be ignored. They rise up and demand that we respond in some way.

Have you ever been in the situation of standing beside your car with the bonnet up, in serious ‘going-nowhere’ trouble? It is amusing to observe a driver in this situation giving a wheel a kick – not in anger, but rather as though the kick may provide an incentive to the car to work normally. Have you ever done that? Of course, nothing changes, whether the kick is gentle or full-bodied. The problem and the solution are much deeper and more complex than that. Life’s problems and their solutions are often very similar.

So what options do we have when our internal problems become so debilitating that we are unable to function in the way that we would like? Sometimes we may try to push them down and suppress them, pretending to ourselves and others that it is not so bad. As we shall see later, this is a form of denial – not necessarily a denial that something is happening within us, but rather the denial of the amount of emotional pain or mental distress involved. Some people may take to alcohol or other drugs, or food for comfort to deaden the pain. Others may turn to pleasure, relationships, financial security or some form of personal achievement. Ultimately these may prove to be short-term measures, which potentially add further problems to the pre-existing one, when once again the deeper distress begins to rumble deep within.

Few people look forward to a visit to the dentist when they have toothache. A common response is to take some medication and hope that
the pain will disappear. It rarely does go away without dental help. The pain may be numbed temporarily by the painkillers but it lurks below, waiting to surface again when the effects of the medication weaken.

If we have a good social network, we may be willing to bring up the painful issue with a trusted friend or acquaintance. Deciding to do this is rarely easy. Additionally many people we know well may not be experienced or knowledgeable enough to help us with our current dilemma. An alternative is to seek the support of an experienced and well-trained counsellor or pastoral carer. Such a person is able to come alongside us as we struggle with our issues, providing understanding, wisdom and guidance as we process the issue that is troubling us and explore options for the way ahead.

It must be acknowledged that ‘going to counselling’ has carried a stigma in certain groups and some cultures over the years. Many people appear to believe that we should be able to sort out our problems on our own. Others, well-meaning Christians, may argue that we should look to the Bible or God only – we do not need others. Thankfully, this attitude has been changing. The need for counsellors and other therapists is more widely acknowledged of late. For the Christian counsellor, there is the opportunity to enhance the other ministries of the local church through their skills and empathy. The counsellor’s expertise provides a very valuable contribution to the Church and society at large, especially when a biblical world-view underpins the counselling.

Pastoral care provides valuable holistic support to all of us, but there are times when many of us need more specific, expert help with life’s challenges and pains. This is the role of Christian counselling.

Five questions that are essential for the Christian counsellor to address

Every counselling model has its own assumptions and unique knowledge base. CWR’s Waverley Counselling Model asserts that five key questions need to be considered if a counsellor is to be effective. In fact, these questions are significant for any Christian who is in a ‘people helping’ ministry. Waverley counselling courses address these five important issues at length, and we will consider them in more detail.
throughout this book. For now, a brief introduction to the five questions may be a helpful starting point.

1. WHAT IS THE BASIS OF OUR BELIEFS?  
**EPISTEMOLOGY**

Epistemology is the theory of where we obtain our knowledge. Everyone operates from a set of beliefs. Some of these beliefs are out in the open and others are hidden. Some are well-founded and others are faulty, or at least uncertain. Our culture, our life experiences, our learning, our thinking all play a part in shaping our beliefs.

The bedrock of our beliefs is known as **assumptions** – foundational ideas and beliefs upon which all other knowledge is assessed and measured. They form the essential foundations of our thinking and values. To one degree or another, all of our thinking and beliefs is founded on premises. Premises are presuppositions that we take for granted as true. Some of these premises are never tested, while others may be challenged by life’s experiences or other new information that we receive. Take for example the old premise that the earth is flat. This was a widely held and unchallenged belief for many centuries. New scientific information gradually changed the view of most (though not all) educated people.

Another example of the influence of premises on our lives is an individual belief concerning the existence of the Creator God described in the Bible. People who hold to this belief will look at life very differently from those who have come to the conclusion that there is no God as described in the Bible, or that there are many or different gods. To change the metaphor, the premise becomes a sieve through which new information and perceptions are filtered, and a basis for our view of life and our decision-making. To the committed atheist, evidence brought by Christians which points to the existence of the Creator is often rejected, and alternative explanations are brought forward. Our untested premises regularly blur our objectivity.

Perhaps we need to go a little deeper into counselling theory here. All counselling models, whether they be psychodynamic, person-centred, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (or CBT) and so on, or Christian approaches such as Adams’ Nouthetic Counselling or Frank Lake’s Clinical Theology are fundamental **assumptions about where truth is found, what makes us human, what causes psychopathology, and so on.** Tim Bond uses a
helpful metaphor by describing counselling models like ‘a pond’. Floating on the top are the leaves, and these are like the skills and interventions a counsellor will use, something that is generally obvious to all. Halfway down the pond, where the fish swim, are the counselling theories that a counsellor will draw on. But at the bottom of the pond, in the mud, lie the foundational assumptions that underpin a model of counselling. Like anything lying in the mud, they are far less obvious at first glance, but are nevertheless vital, as they underpin the counsellor’s approach.

When we think about this a little more deeply, we can begin to see how our underlying beliefs are critical to the theory and practice of counselling. Where we begin (our beliefs) will shape everything that follows. So before we consider the theory, skills and methods of counselling, we are wise to ask:

- How did we come to know what we know now? (teaching, experiences, culture, thinking)
- Are our belief foundations (our premises) reliable?
- What are the reasons for our confidence in believing that we have an accurate understanding of the nature of people and their problems?

From its beginning in the middle of the last century, Selwyn Hughes, the founder of CWR, shaped the foundations of the current CWR counselling programme. He held to the firm belief that effective Christian counsellors need to have a mindset that is soaked in the narrative and principles found within the Bible, and to have a clear understanding of its many themes and concepts. He taught that the more understanding one has of these, the more substantial is the framework one has for comprehending the nature of people’s problems. This conviction is emphasised in the following statement:

It is the conviction underpinning all the CWR counselling courses that the Bible speaks to people’s non-organic [or non-physical] problems with a clarity and meaning that supersedes all other approaches. It is our conviction also that were there no psychological text books in existence it would be possible to build, from Scripture alone, a basic framework for understanding the root causes of every problem of the human personality.
It may be worth pausing again to ask ourselves the following questions:

- What are the key beliefs that shape the way I think and how I look at life?
- Have any of my foundational beliefs ever been challenged?
- What has been the outcome of that challenge?
- Has my world-view (core beliefs) changed significantly since I was a child?

2. WHAT IS MY UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN? ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology is the study of human beings – how we function and how we behave. At this point the Christian counsellor will have a significantly different belief to a secular counsellor. The Scriptures describe human beings as being made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–27). This is a foundational belief of CWR counselling and pastoral care courses. As a consequence of this premise, people are to be understood as image-bearers. And the image we bear in some measure is the image of our God. It would take a lifetime of thoughtful investigation to understand the depths and the implications of this incredible description found in the book of Genesis and developed in other sections of the Bible. What this scriptural picture does indicate is that we humans are designed to resemble and reflect God in certain ways. While the actual meaning has been a point of significant discussion, this short description reveals our significant place of privileged relationship with our Creator. A second foundational belief concerning the nature of people is that we are relational beings, designed for relationship with God and relationship with others. Both of these crucial beliefs and their implications for understanding people and their problems, and for counselling, will be explored further as we proceed.

A counsellor who holds an alternative anthropology will have a very different understanding of the nature of people. Consequently they will follow a different approach in their counselling theory and practice. For those of us who hold to the biblical perspective, we begin by seeking to comprehend what ‘being created in the image of God’ means, and what has gone wrong with humanity. Then we are in a stronger position to form an accurate understanding of those who are suffering and to develop an effective approach to help these people.
We take our cars into a garage for a service, believing that the people who will attend the vehicle understand its purpose and design. Similarly, when we have physical problems, we go to a trusted doctor or consultant, believing that they understand anatomy (the physical nature of a human being) and how to address any problems that are occurring.

It was a little alarming to observe a sign hanging on a wall in Bangalore some years ago. It read something like this: ‘Dr ______, medical student – first year’. I hoped that the good doctor was not considering any major medical procedures, though he may have been able to provide some help for minor conditions! Limited knowledge and inadequate skills can be dangerous. While psychological and spiritual issues are less tangible and may be effectively hidden, it is no less important that those who seek to deal with problems in these areas understand the design of our humanity and the possible roots of our problems. Only then will the pastoral carer or counsellor have a realistic basis for helping those who are struggling within the complexity of their inner beings.

From our Christian perspective, it is clear that God has bestowed on us a dignity that defies accurate description. What an encouraging and positive starting point for us when we meet troubled, damaged or broken people! We know what we were designed to be. This perspective gives us deep insight into God’s original intention for troubled persons, and provides a source of hope and encouragement as we proceed to help them address their circumstances and issues. To deny or ignore the biblical perspective of our intrinsic nature and our core identity as dignified and valued creatures leads counselling theory and practice in a very different direction.

3. WHAT ARE THE REAL PROBLEMS THAT PEOPLE FACE? PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

‘Psychopathology’ can be defined as the understanding of the problems that hinder or prevent people from achieving effective personal functioning. When people come to counsellors they are usually aware of a number of problems that are causing them difficulty. We describe these known problems as ‘presenting problems’ – the problems of which individuals are aware, and which they describe to the counsellor. Because people are complex, frequently there are deeper issues that are complicating a