

# Letter from the Editor



by KIMBERLY MONROE

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Dear *JBC* readers,

As the year draws to a close, we are pleased to publish this third and final issue of the *JBC* for 2022. This is volume 36, issue 3, but you probably do not think about volume and issue numbers like we do. For Lauren Whitman and me, it means we have worked on thirty-three issues together. Maybe we will stop counting at some point, but I doubt it. Our *JBC* work is a delight, and we enjoy keeping track!

Though much has changed over the years, the basics of our editing process have remained the same. When we begin a new volume, we lay out a tentative plan and look forward to bringing each issue from the draft stage to publication. We start with five or six articles on different topics and in various stages of development. To some extent, they may even be geared toward different audiences. The sense at that point is how different they are from each other, and the challenge is to work with the authors to make each as clear and as helpful as possible. But somehow, by the end of the editing process, the articles also seem to fit together.

This is probably why subscribers often comment that the issues are thematic. My response to these comments is usually something like: “Really? That’s great, but we don’t plan it that way.” Indeed, we don’t plan it, and yet there is this phenomenon that occurs. By the time we are ready to publish, the differences between the articles are long

forgotten. Instead, we see the common threads, and an unexpected, yet familiar, unity appears. Simply put, we see how all of the articles show us something about Jesus and how to live as his disciples. To be even more specific, we sense this unity when the content reflects CCEF's mission statement, which is to restore Christ to counseling and counseling to the church.

This issue is no different! Each article reflects the mission in some significant way. There are six articles and we have a three/three split, with three articles that reflect each of the two aspects of our mission.

To restore Christ to counseling, we begin with an article that addresses crises of faith.

In "Counseling in a Season of Faith Deconstruction," author Michael Gembola discusses how to help those who are struggling to hold on to their faith. He points out that many of these struggles result from ethical concerns rather than objections to the gospel, and he offers practical wisdom on how to respond based on your relationship with the person. Finally, a reflection exercise is included that counselors can use to help people think through the factors contributing to the faith questions that are troubling them.

Next, Laura Andrews observes that we often remain silent before God—even when we are in distress. In "God Loves a Complainer: A Case for Sharing Our Laments with Him," she explores some of the common reasons for our silence and encourages us to speak to him about our troubles. Andrews reminds us that lamenting to God is a vital part of cultivating intimacy with him, maturing as believers, and practicing faithfulness. Jesus cries out to his Father; shouldn't we cry out to him, as well? This article equips you to bring these truths to counselees who hesitate to bring their complaints to God.

In our third article that restores Christ to counseling, Alasdair Groves provides guidance for constructive communication between a husband and wife after sexual sin has occurred. Drawing on wisdom from Ephesians 4:29, he offers a framework for confession that prioritizes what is best for the spouse who was sinned against over what is comfortable for the offender. How unusual this is in our culture! Such

an act of selfless love, grace, and honor can only be sustained by dependence on God's forgiveness and commitment.

The next three articles advance our mission to restore counseling to the church.

In a thought-provoking piece, Ric Rodeheaver shares his admiration for the pioneering work of Puritan Richard Baxter, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century English pastor. Baxter engaged in regular counseling care for his congregants and argued that preaching alone is an insufficient view of the pastorate. Rodeheaver agrees and maintains that counseling must be part of every pastor's schedule. Based on his experience, he offers three ongoing practices to help a church build a culture of care and counseling that includes trained lay counselors who can support the pastor in fulfilling the call of this crucial ministry.

Next, we have an article that describes how a congregation in California cares for people experiencing thoughts of suicide. In "A Suicide Care Plan: One Church's Model," Kendra Fabel describes how her church trains its pastoral staff and lay volunteers to recognize the warning signs and how to respond if a congregant discloses thoughts about ending their life. Their plan establishes a triage team that stands ready to help with the decision-making needed in response to such a disclosure, and a care team to provide longer-term support for the at-risk person. These ideas can serve as a starting point for your church's leaders to discuss their own approach to those experiencing this intense suffering.

Julie Lowe then draws on her years of counseling practice to instruct us on teaching safety skills to children. Though the article is meant to help parents, she also intends to educate the church at large on how to keep our children safe. She reminds us that most child abuse is perpetrated by adults whom children already know—family members and friends—not strangers. So rather than living in fear of strangers, Lowe advises us to equip children to evaluate a person's intentions by what they *do*, not by what they say or whether they are known to them (Luke 6:43–45). She explores how role-playing can help parents and other trusted adults teach these skills. I wish I had this help when my boys were young! It is an excellent resource for any parent, children's counselor, or youth pastor.

We hope the articles in this issue of the *JBC* will bless your ministry and remind you that knowing Jesus truly makes a difference in every area of life.

On behalf of the editorial team,

Kimberly Monroe

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