

An Interview with Three Women in Counseling Ministry



by MICHAEL GEMBOLA

One of the required counseling classes at Westminster Theological Seminary is Counseling in the Local Church. The class focuses on congregational care. In this context, “counseling ministry” usually refers to pastoral care or lay ministry in one-on-one or small group settings. While some students ultimately pursue work in professional counseling contexts, most plan to work in church ministry roles. As I’ve served as a teacher in this class, I have helped students think through their calling and future work. In these discussions, I have heard questions from women about some of the challenges they face in pursuing ministry careers. Most of the questions have been asked by men as well, but women face particular hurdles especially in some local church settings.¹

So last year I invited three women to join a class discussion and share their experiences of working in various counseling contexts. They

1. I addressed some of the topics explored in this interview in my lecture “Collaborative Counseling: Working Well with Church Leadership” at the CCEF 2020 National Conference, Created to Draw Near, Hershey, PA, October 2, 2020. For an audio product, go to <https://www.ccef.org/shop/product/collaborative-counseling-working-well-with-church-leadership/>.

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answered questions from me as well as students—and highlights from our conversation are represented below. The three women I interviewed are: Jamie Yoo (JY), Eliza Huie (EH), and Kathie Donaldson (KD). The initials MG are mine. The interview has been edited for clarity.

Exploring Calling and Career Paths

Question from MG: Ladies, welcome. Please tell us about what you do and about your career path after graduate school.

EH: Thank you for having us here! It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to encourage counseling students. My journey into biblical counseling started with CCEF's counseling certificate training, and I later attended Missio Seminary and received a master's in counseling. After graduation I served as a counselor for eleven years at Life Counseling Center in Maryland. During that time, I stepped into the role of executive director. Currently, I work as director of counseling of McLean Bible Church in the DC area. I also serve as the dean of biblical counseling for Metro Baltimore Seminary, where I teach Foundations in Biblical Counseling to seminary students.

KD: I graduated from Western Kentucky University with a master's degree in counseling and taught high school for several years while also serving in the local church. I did a lot of counseling with students while I was a teacher. For example, if a student didn't turn in homework, that quickly became a conversation about what was going on in the student's life. When I decided to become a counselor, my pastor encouraged me to go to Westminster. I started with the CCEF certificate program and then completed the master's in counseling. I found that I was often serving in the area of trauma, so I continued my education at Missio Seminary, which I found very helpful.

I have also served as a recitation instructor at Westminster and CCEF for the Counseling in the Local Church and Essential Qualities of a Biblical Counselor classes. I run my own private practice, I counsel in my local church, and I also work with Dr. John Applegate, a Christian psychiatrist, through the Philadelphia Renewal Network.

JY: I have a heart to see more women in counseling ministry and see them bless the church with their gifts, so I'm thankful for the opportunity to participate today. I too attended Westminster. I wanted to study

theology as a foundation for my counseling and was persuaded by David Powlison's article on why he chose seminary for counseling training.² I believed that having a better understanding of theology would help me to have a better understanding of people and the human condition so that I could use a biblical framework in my care for people. After completing my MDiv with an emphasis in counseling at Westminster and interning at CCEF, I started working as a counselor at CCEF. My husband and I then moved to Australia to plant a church. My role there was focused on counseling. During that season, I also had a corporate career that gave me opportunities to use my counseling skills in unexpected ways.

After several years of being abroad, we moved back to the States. I'm now back at CCEF as a contract counselor, but I primarily work at my private practice in Manhattan.

Question from MG: What are some of your areas of counseling focus?

EH: Like many counselors, I engage in a broad scope of counseling issues through individual and marriage counseling, and I've written resources on parenting.³ I also have a specific focus on caring for people who have gone through trauma, with a particular interest in how trauma affects our bodies.

JY: I work with people on issues related to marriage and family, anger, depression, loneliness, anxiety, shame, addictions, body image, cultural identity, and more. I also appreciate my bi-cultural identity as a Korean American and enjoy working in settings where I can effectively minister with an awareness of the cultural dimensions in life and counseling.

KD: I work in a number of different areas. I often counsel teens and twentysomethings in addition to marriage counseling and trauma work.

2. David Powlison, "Answers for the Human Condition: Why I Chose Seminary for Counseling Training," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 20:1 (2001): 46–54.

3. Eliza Huie, *Raising Kids in a Screen-Saturated World* (Leyland, UK: 10Publishing, 2018) and *Raising Teens in a Hyper-Sexualized World* (Leyland, UK: 10Publishing, 2017).

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The Journal of Biblical Counseling

(ISSN: 1063-2166) is published by:

Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation

1803 East Willow Grove Avenue

Glenside, PA 19038

www.ccef.org

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