



**PT5350/01**  
**Pastoral Counseling**

Fall 2026  
Reformed Theological Seminary, Houston

**Class Dates**

Friday | 9/18/2026 | 3:00 PM - 9:30 PM  
Saturday | 9/19/2026 | 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM  
Monday - Tuesday | 9/21-22/2026 | 3:00 PM - 9:30 PM  
Friday | 10/23/2026 | 3:00 PM - 9:30 PM  
Saturday | 10/24/2026 | 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

**Professor Information**

Dr. Jim Newheiser  
Professor of Christian Counseling and Pastoral Theology  
[jnewheiser@rts.edu](mailto:jnewheiser@rts.edu)

**Office**

Counseling Offices/Front of Chapel

**Office hours**

By Appointment

**TA/Assistant**

Olivia Schneider  
[oschneider@rts.edu](mailto:oschneider@rts.edu)

**Course Description**

This class is a general introduction to biblical pastoral counseling, including an overview of current trends in counseling theory and practice and the role of biblical counseling in church and parachurch settings. Basic counseling skills will be taught in this course. Application is made to conflict resolution, anger, fear, worry, depression, and suffering with emphasis on developing strategies and applying scriptural principles.

**Course Objectives**

- To help the student apply the Scriptures to counsel himself
- To inform the student about various approaches to soul care
- To build the student's confidence in Christ and Scripture to meet people's spiritual needs
- To teach the student a basic methodology of biblical counseling
- To show the student how to use Scripture to help in the most common pastoral counseling situations

## COURSE MATERIALS

### Books:

1. Adams, Jay. *Competent to Counsel*, Zondervan, 1970 (270 pages)
  - a. Available as Free E-book via RTS Library EBSCO
2. Eswine, Zach. *Spurgeon's Sorrows*; Christian Focus, 2014 (143 pages)
3. Evans, Keith A. *Counseling & Extrabiblical Methods: Maintaining Fidelity to Scripture in Soul Care*, ACBC, 2026. (26 pages)
4. Greggo and Sisemore. *Counseling and Christianity Five Approaches*, IVP (250 pages)
  - a. Available as Free E-book via RTS Library EBSCO
5. Newheiser, Jim. *Help! I Want to Change* Mini Book, Shepherd Press, 2014 (57 pages)
6. Newheiser, Jim. *Help! My Anger is out of Control* Mini Book, Shepherd Press, 2015 (57 pages)
7. Sande, Ken. *The Peacemaker*, Baker Books, 2004 (318 pages)
8. Tripp, Paul. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand*, P&R (376 pages)

### Articles: \*Provided on Canvas\*

1. Articles from the Journal of Biblical Counseling (JBC):
  - a. Powlison, David. *Affirmations and Denials, A proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling*, JBC 19.1 (2000), 18-25 (8 pages)
  - b. Powlison, David. *The Ambiguously Cured Soul*, JBC 19, no. 3 (2001).
  - c. Powlison, David. *Critiquing Modern Integrationists*, JBC 11.3, 24-34 (11 pages)
  - d. Powlison, David. *Cure of the Souls (and Modern Psychologies)*, Part 2, JBC 25.2, 13-20 (8 pages)
  - e. Powlison, David. *Pastor as Counselor*, JBC 26.1, 23-39 (17 pages)
2. Powlison, Welch, Hurley and Berry. *Dialog between Biblical Counselors and Integrationists*, Journal of Psychology and Christianity, Winter 1997 (78 pages)

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Reading Report

The expectation is that students will read every word of these books and articles to receive full reading credit. Students will be graded based on their self-reporting according to the following rubric:

|  |                                           |
|--|-------------------------------------------|
|  | Percentage of the book read word-for-word |
|  | Percentage of the book skimmed            |
|  | Read by due date (Yes or No)              |

The Reading Report is located in the Files tab on Canvas and must be filled out, signed, scanned, and uploaded by the due date. Digital signatures will also suffice. There will be a small penalty if the reading is not completed by the due dates. Not doing the reading will result in more significant penalties. Reports submitted late or students who must be reminded

to submit their report will suffer an academic penalty. Reading due dates are indicated in the Class Schedule, located at the bottom of the syllabus.

**2. Personal Growth Project (Self-counseling)**

Choose a personal area in which you would like to grow. Develop a plan for change and implement your plan. The area for growth could include a qualification for eldership (1Tim 3 and Titus 1), an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5), or an area of pastoral counseling in which you need to improve. Find resources that speak to your issue – audios, mini-books, journal articles and books. Write a **one-page summary** to be turned in near the beginning of the semester outlining the problem and what resources you intend to use.

Write a **four-page report** to be turned in towards the end of the semester on how you have seen your thinking and actions change over the course of the semester with specific reference to how the resources you selected impacted you.

**3. My View on Counseling Paper**

At the beginning of the semester students will write a two-page paper (double-spaced) on their view of the practice of counseling in the local church and what they hope to get out of this course.

**4. How My Views Developed Paper**

At the end of the semester, students will write a five-page paper (double-spaced) on how their counseling views have developed. This paper should address issues including the sufficiency of Scripture in counseling, when and to whom to refer counselees, and the role of the church in counseling.

**5. Website Review**

Spend at least 1 hour each in browsing the following websites – CCEF, Biblical Counseling Coalition, ACBC, and IBCD. Write a two-page summary of what specific resources you have found that a pastor or counselor could utilize.

**6. Final Exam – 2 options**

Option 1: A final exam covering class material with questions and case studies will be offered. This will be a take home exam in MS Word format. An unmarked Bible is the only resource allowed during this exam.

Option 2: Those interested in ACBC certification have the option of taking half of the ACBC exam in lieu of a final. The exam will be offered as a take home exam and should be completed in MS Word. The Bible will be the only reference allowed during the exam. Students may not use the concordance or study notes in their Bibles during the exam. All answers should be well-supported with Scripture. The student should plan to spend the full three hours taking the exam. The final will be taken during the final exam period in December.

*Final Exam Questions:* ACBC Counseling exam questions 1–2, 4–8, 11, 13–15, plus possible extra questions from lectures and/or case studies.

\*Please complete the exam in the format provided on Canvas. Students may need to do research outside of class lectures in preparation to answer the questions from the ACBC exam.

## **7. Class Participation**

It is required that students be present for all class sessions. If a student is “provisionally hindered” from attending class, if possible, please notify the instructor. It is expected that students will keep current in their reading and assignments. Failure to comply with these standards will result in grade reduction, unless other arrangements have been made. During the semester, students will be expected to actively participate in class discussions.

## **GRADING**

- |                                  |               |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| • Required reading               | 25%           |
| • Papers and Written Assignments | 20% (5% each) |
| • Exam                           | 45%           |
| • Class participation            | 10%           |

\*All papers and exams must be uploaded in MS Word format.

## **ACBC Certification**

RTS-Charlotte offers the opportunity to be certified through the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). If you choose the ACBC track, you can meet all of the requirements for ACBC certification through your core counseling classes with little to no additional work.

We highly encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity. ACBC is well known and respected for their commitment to train church leaders and laypeople to offer biblical care and counsel.

If you would like to learn more about how to be certified through RTS, please email our Counseling Office Administrator at [counseling.charlotte@rts.edu](mailto:counseling.charlotte@rts.edu) for more information.

To learn more about the benefits of ACBC certification and their commitments as an organization, [click here](#).

### Class Schedule (Subject to Change/Adjustment)

| Class Topics and Assignments                                                                                                                                                                 | Due Date                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Assignment:</b> My View of Counseling Paper (2 pages)                                                                                                                                     | Sep 11                     |
| Introduction: Counseling and the Church<br>Psychology and Christian Counseling<br>The Character of the Counselor<br><b>Reading:</b> <i>Competent to Counsel</i>                              | <b>Class Day</b><br>Sep 18 |
| Theological Foundations for Counseling<br>What is Biblical Counseling? Sola Scriptura and Counseling<br>Common Grace Wisdom in Counseling<br><b>Assignment:</b> Personal Growth Project Plan | <b>Class Day</b><br>Sep 19 |
| Nature and Nurture in Counseling<br>Change/Sanctification<br>Counseling Methodology<br>Observation Video                                                                                     | <b>Class Day</b><br>Sep 21 |
| Biblical Peacemaking<br>Observation Video<br>Anger<br>Depression                                                                                                                             | <b>Class Day</b><br>Sep 22 |
| <b>Reading:</b> <i>Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches</i>                                                                                                                          | Sep 25                     |
| <b>Reading:</b> Journal Articles plus Dialogue                                                                                                                                               | Oct 2                      |
| <b>Reading:</b> <i>Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands (p. 1-182)</i>                                                                                                                        | Oct 16                     |
| Fear/Worry<br>Temptation<br>Suffering/trials<br><b>Reading:</b> <i>Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands (p. 183-354)</i>                                                                      | <b>Class Day</b><br>Oct 23 |
| Trends in biblical counseling<br>Case Studies<br>Role play exercise<br><b>Reading:</b> Newheiser mini books                                                                                  | <b>Class Day</b><br>Oct 24 |
| <b>Reading:</b> Spurgeon's Sorrows<br><b>Assignment:</b> Website Review Paper (2 pages)                                                                                                      | Oct 30                     |
| <b>Reading:</b> <i>Thoughts on Religious Experience</i>                                                                                                                                      | Nov 6                      |
| <b>Reading:</b> <i>The Peacemaker</i><br><b>Reading Report Due</b>                                                                                                                           | Nov 13                     |
| <b>Assignment:</b> Personal Growth Report (4 pages)                                                                                                                                          | Nov 20                     |
| <b>Assignment:</b> How My Counseling Views Have Developed Paper (5 pages)                                                                                                                    | Dec 4                      |
| <b>Final Exam</b>                                                                                                                                                                            | Dec 11                     |

### **Additional Resources (Not Required)**

1. *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave: Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel* - Ed Welch
2. *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* - David Powlison
3. *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* - Heath Lambert
4. *Blame it on the Brain: Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience* - Ed Welch
5. *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth* - Kelleman and Viars
6. *Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* - Jay Adams
7. *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically* - John MacArthur and Wayne Mack
8. *Depression: Looking Up from the Stubborn Darkness* - Ed Welch
9. *Gospel-Centered Counseling: How Christ Changes Lives* - Kelleman
10. The Standards of Conduct for The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors
11. Forms for counselors (available in the [MACC Library](#) – Must login with RTS account).
12. The Journal of Biblical Counseling Archive: CCEF

## Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Pastoral Counseling (PT5350)  
 Professor: Jim Newheiser  
 Campus: Houston  
 Date: Fall 2026

| <b><u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b><u>Rubric</u></b>                          | <b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.<br/>           *As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | ➤ Strong<br>➤ Moderate<br>➤ Minimal<br>➤ None |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.                                        | <b>Strong</b>                                 | Student must integrate hermeneutics, biblical exposition, theological themes, historical information, cultural familiarity, and verbal skills in communicating the message of Scripture. |
| <b>Scripture</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.) | <b>Moderate</b>                               | Student must understand the original meaning of Scripture through the use of the original language and be able to apply it in counsel the text.                                          |
| <b>Reformed Theology</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Moderate</b>                               | Texts have theological messages that must be communicated to God's people.                                                                                                               |
| <b>Sanctification</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Minimal</b>                                | Counseling itself is a sanctifying process that should remind the student of complete dependence on God.                                                                                 |
| <b>Desire for Worldview</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Minimal</b>                                | This is one of the goals of counseling and so should be a desire of the counselor.                                                                                                       |
| <b>Winsomely Reformed</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)                                                                                                       | <b>Minimal</b>                                | Emphasizes a winsome approach to counseling, including the presentation of the truth of the gospel and the word of God to those who may not agree.                                       |
| <b>Preach</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Moderate</b>                               | Many of the same principles apply to both the public and private ministries of the Word                                                                                                  |
| <b>Worship</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Minimal</b>                                | Not addressed                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Shepherd</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Strong</b>                                 | The heart of biblical counseling is the care of souls.                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Church/World</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Minimal</b>                                | We wish to promote biblical counseling in various church contexts.                                                                                                                       |