Doctrine for the Care of Souls

A 1689 Baptist Confession Devotional

This devotional was designed and built with the people of Redeemer Borger in mind. I hope it finds you well and becomes a tool that draws us closer to God and to one another in loving care and discipleship.

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Devotional Through the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Preface

History, Confession, and the Care of Souls

The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689) stands as the most influential doctrinal standard among English Particular Baptists emerging from the turbulent milieu of seventeenth-century England. Its roots extend back to the First London Confession (1644/46), composed amid the English Civil War to clarify Baptist orthodoxy and distance Particular Baptists from radical sectarianism. By 1677, in a period marked by the Clarendon Code and the suppression of dissenting worship, Particular Baptist leaders adopted—privately and anonymously—a revised confession closely aligned with the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) and the Savoy Declaration (1658), yet carefully adapted on matters of baptism, church polity, and the magistrate. With the Toleration Act (1689), the same document—already in circulation—was publicly subscribed by messengers of the churches, becoming widely known as the "1689" Confession.[1]

Theologically, the Confession positions Particular Baptists within the broader Reformed family. Its aim was not novelty but catholicity (in the Reformation sense): to express unity with Reformed orthodoxy while articulating Baptist distinctives (notably believer's baptism and congregational polity under a plurality of elders).[2] The document's thirty-two chapters move from Holy Scripture to God and the Trinity, then to decree, creation and providence, anthropology and sin, and the covenant of grace in its Christocentric fullness. It follows with effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, saving faith and repentance, and the ethical posture of the Christian life. The closing sections treat worship and the ordinances, church and communion of saints, and last things. In this way, the 1689 offers a systematic, doxological map of biblical truth ordered toward the church's worship, witness, and pastoral care.[3]

This devotional grew out of a conviction shared by the Confession's framers: doctrine is pastoral. Soul-care is likewise pastoral in nature, and doctrine drives the focus of our soul-care. *The 1689 is not a speculative treatise; it is a shepherd's handbook.* Its chapters were honed for ecclesial use—catechesis, preaching, examination for membership and office, and the shared confession of faith among congregations. Contemporary biblical counseling inhabits the same pastoral horizon: addressing sin and suffering, guilt and shame, fear and despair, and cultivating hope, repentance, and perseverance through the Word, Spirit, and communion of saints. The Confession's categories—providence, Christ's mediation, free will and moral inability,

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[1] On the 1677 provenance and the 1689 public subscription, see Renihan; Lumpkin;White.

[2] The alignment strategy has been widely noted: adopting Westminster/Savoy structure while articulating Baptist distinctives (Renihan; Denault).

[3] The Confession's chapter architecture follows Westminster/Savoy with Baptist modifications (Lumpkin; Renihan).

sanctification, means of grace, assurance, and final judgment—provide a robust theological grammar for understanding the human condition and the dynamics of spiritual change.

The approach of this work is intentionally confessional and applicatory. Each devotional unit proceeds as follows:

1. **Reading the chapter** — a thorough and reflective reading of each chapter of the 1689 confession of faith.
2. **Chapter Summary** — a concise, historically sensitive synthesis of the Confession's teaching with key biblical texts.
3. **Informing Biblical Counseling** — how this doctrine positively frames, motivates, and directs care for souls.
4. **Guarding Biblical Counseling** — pastoral cautions that prevent distortions.
5. **Reflection and application** — each day ends with reflective questions, points of application, and a prayer adapted from *The Valley of Vision*. This is a good place to have a journal to write down your thoughts and answers.

The primacy of Scripture is assumed throughout. Confessional formulations serve as faithful summaries—not replacements—of the biblical witness. The expectation is ecclesial: these pages live best inside the local church, under the ministry of the Word, sacraments, discipline, and prayer; they are not designed to isolate counseling from congregational life but to embed it within Christ's shepherding of His people. In other words, this devotional is purposeful and intentional for the life of every believer within the church, not just the leaders.

Introduction

Why the 1689 Matters for the Care of Souls

Biblical counseling rests on the conviction that the triune God has revealed all that is necessary for life and godliness in Holy Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Yet Scripture itself calls the church to hold fast the pattern of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13). Confessions do not compete with Scripture; they organize and guard the church's reading of Scripture across time. The 1689 functions as a pastoral map—a concise, balanced, and time-tested synthesis of core biblical doctrines—so that counseling does not become therapeutic improvisation untethered from the faith once delivered to the saints.

Three features of the 1689 make it especially apt for counseling ministry:

1. **A Coherent Doctrine of God and His Works.** Chapters 2–5, present a God who is wise, holy, and sovereign, whose purposes are good and whose providence is meticulous. This provides an anchor for counselees facing suffering, uncertainty, and fear, correcting both fatalism ("nothing matters") and anxiety-driven control ("everything depends on me"). Providence is not a denial of secondary causes; it is the theater in which prayer, prudence, and obedience genuinely matter.
2. **A Realistic Anthropology and Christ-Centered Soteriology.** Chapters 6–15 offer a biblically realistic account of the fallen human condition (moral inability, disordered loves, pervasive corruption) and the all-sufficient grace of Christ in effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, faith, and repentance. This balance resists humanistic optimism (self-rescue through technique) and spiritual despair (change is impossible). The gospel provides indicatives (what God has done in Christ) that ground imperatives (how we now live)—the key pastoral dynamic for lasting change.
3. **An Ecclesial Context for Formation.** Chapters 22 and 26–30 place spiritual growth within worship, Word, prayer, ordinances, discipline, and fellowship. Counseling is not a privatized practice but a ministry embedded in the church's ordinary means of grace. The Lord's Day, public worship, the preached Word, baptism and the Lord's Supper, and loving church oversight are not optional add-ons; they are God's appointed channels of nourishment, identity, and accountability essential to care.

Methodologically, this devotional assumes several pastoral commitments:

- **Sufficiency of Scripture and the Priority of Exegesis.** Counsel must arise from what God has said, not speculative psychology. The Confession aids by gathering the Bible's teaching into coherent loci.
- **The Indicative–Imperative Pattern.** Change proceeds from grace: God's saving acts (Rom. 6; Eph. 1–3) ground our obedience (Rom. 12; Eph. 4–6). Moral exhortation

without gospel foundation becomes moralism; grace without obedience becomes antinomianism.

- **The Role of the Church.** Pastors, elders, and mature members (Titus 2) form a care ecosystem—teaching, admonishing, encouraging, and restoring with gentleness (1 Thess. 5:14; Gal. 6:1).
- **Means of Grace and Ordinary Faithfulness.** God typically forms His people through ordinary patterns—daily Word and prayer, weekly worship, communal accountability—rather than dramatic shortcuts.
- **Holistic Attention to the Person.** Scripture addresses the heart (beliefs, desires, loves) and recognizes embodied and situational realities (Ps. 103:14; Prov. 14:30). Wise counsel attends to both without reducing spiritual problems to biology or environment.

How should readers use this devotional?

- **Personally**, as a daily guide for meditation. Read one chapter at a time: absorb the summary, consider how it informs your own struggles or your ministry to others, and heed the guards that keep care on biblical rails.
- **Pastorally**, in elder and leader training, membership classes, or counseling supervision—where shared doctrinal categories standardize care while leaving room for pastoral prudence.
- **Congregationally**, to cultivate a culture of mutual ministry in small groups, one-to-one discipleship, and family worship—so that doctrine becomes naturally conversational and practical.
- **Counseling-Specific**, as a framework for case conceptualization: for example, Providence for suffering; Sin and Repentance for entrenched habits; Adoption and Assurance for shame; Church and Ordinances for isolation and identity; Last Things for grief and fear of death.

If the Confession is a map, Scripture is the terrain, and counseling is the journey of walking with others toward Christ. The hope of this devotional is to place a tested map in the hands of shepherds and saints, that the church might counsel with clarity, courage, and compassion in an age of distortion. The result we seek is not merely doctrinal precision but pastoral fruitfulness—lives reordered to God, families and congregations strengthened, and suffering borne with hope as Christ's people speak the truth in love and grow up into Him who is the Head (Eph. 4:15–16).

Select Bibliography

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- **B.R. White**, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*.
- **Pascal Denault**, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*.
- **Robert Strivens**, *The 1689 Handbook.*
- The **Westminster Confession of Faith** (1646); the **Savoy Declaration** (1658); the **Second London Baptist Confession** (1677/1689).
- **Arthur Bennett**, *The Valley of Vision.*

Day 1: Chapter 1 - Of the Holy Scriptures

Read chapter 1 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Martin Luther's conviction that his conscience was "captive to the Word of God" reflects the heart of Chapter 1 of the 1689 Confession. Scripture is the foundation for the Christian life, ministry, and counseling (Ps. 19:7–11; Matt. 4:4). The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16–17; John 17:17), standing as the supreme authority for what we believe and how we live (Isa. 40:8; Matt. 24:35). They are necessary for salvation (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23), sufficient for every good work (Ps. 119:9, 105; 2 Tim. 3:17), clear in essential truths, *perspicuity* (Ps. 119:130), and self-authenticating (John 10:27; Heb. 4:12). The canon is complete (Rev. 22:18–19). We interpret Scripture under the illumination of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 2:9-12), allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture (2 Peter 1:20-21; Acts 15:15-16), while creeds and confessions remain subordinate to God's authoritative Word.

Informing Biblical Counseling: This doctrine establishes Scripture as the counselor's primary and sufficient tool. Through God's Word we discern heart idolatry, expose sin, and hold out the hope of the gospel. While the Bible does not speak exhaustively about every subject—nor should we treat it as a textbook for all fields—it fully addresses the spiritual, moral, and relational issues at the core of counseling. Wherever Scripture speaks about the heart, sin, suffering, wisdom, or godliness, we can trust it completely. God's Word equips counselees to engage Him personally and grow in sanctification, moving their confidence away from human expertise and toward divine wisdom in struggles like anxiety, anger, and despair. In these areas, Scripture is clear, authoritative, and sufficient. To elevate any other source above it is to drift toward idolatry. The Bible provides counselor and counselee with God's final and unchallengeable standard for all matters of life and faith.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: This doctrine guards counseling from treating secular psychology as equal in authority to Scripture—whether by elevating therapeutic models like CBT, relying on personal mystical experiences, or embracing pragmatic methods that bypass God's Word. Secular approaches often promote self-autonomy, which shifts trust away from God and subtly undermines biblical authority. When any system adds to or rivals Scripture, it cannot offer true spiritual healing. While common grace means secular insights may contain helpful observations, only Scripture provides a complete understanding of human nature, the root of our struggles, and God's redemptive work. God's Word alone addresses the heart in a spiritual and moral way that leads to genuine transformation. Therefore, Scripture supplies everything needed to faithfully counsel believers, offering the wisdom, truth, and hope essential for life and godliness. It remains fully sufficient in all the areas for which it speaks, guiding both counselor and counselee with divine authority.

Scripture Meditation: Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17 and Psalm 119:97–104.

Journal: How has Scripture corrected or equipped you in past struggles (be specific)? Where in your current life or ministry do you need its sufficiency most acutely?

Personal Questions:

1. In what specific counseling situations do you feel tempted to supplement Scripture with extra-biblical sources, and how does this chapter challenge that inclination?
2. Select a common issue (e.g., marital conflict or depression): How does viewing Scripture as sufficient and perspicuous (clear in essentials) reshape your diagnostic and remedial approach?
3. Reflect on a personal experience where non-biblical counsel proved inadequate or harmful: What role did Scripture's authority play (or could have played) in resolution?
4. Evaluate your own dependence: On a spectrum from "Scripture alone" to "Scripture plus," where do you land, and what practical changes would full alignment require?

Practical Applications:

- Open every counseling session with a relevant Scripture reading, briefly explain it, and pray for illumination.
- Assign counselees a "Word-Centered Journal" tracking daily insights from assigned passages.
- In group studies, discuss and refute common objections to sufficiency (e.g., "the Bible doesn't address modern psychological problems").
- In everything you do, word and deed, ensure that Scripture is driving it and teach counselees to do the same.

Prayer Guide:

Pray that God strengthens you and conforms you according to the Scriptures and his Son.

"O thou who hast the hearts of all men in thine hand, form my heart according to the word, according to the image of thy Son, so shall Christ the Word, and his word, be my strength and comfort." *Valley of Vision, Christ the Word*

Day 2: Chapter 2 - Of God and of the Holy Trinity

Read chapter 2 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: In this chapter of the 1689 Confession, we're given the foundational truth about God and the Trinity—truth that shapes every part of our faith. There is one living and true God who is eternal, infinite, unchanging, all-powerful, all-knowing, holy, just, good, and loving. This one God exists in three co-equal, co-eternal Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—distinct in their personal relations yet one in essence and glory. Though God's being is far beyond our full comprehension, He has made Himself truly knowable through His Word. All things exist for His glory (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24; Isa. 6:3; 1 Cor. 8:6). Because we always live according to what we believe in our hearts, these truths form the foundation of "our fellowship with God and our comforting dependence on Him." In short, what we believe about God will shape our entire relationship with Him.

Informing Biblical Counseling: To be a Christian is to know and walk with the Triune God of the Bible. Because of that, it matters that we truly understand who this God is. When someone embraces a Trinitarian view of God, it gently shifts their focus away from themselves and toward worship of a majestic and unchanging God. His immutability brings comfort in seasons of change, His glory gives purpose, and communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit brings healing and hope. God's attributes shape our worship and help us understand our sin and suffering in the right perspective. And within the Trinity, we see God's beautiful plan of redemption: the Father purposes our salvation, the Son accomplishes it, and the Spirit applies it to our lives. Helping our counselees grow in their understanding of God, as Trinity, is essential for helping them in the midst of their sin and suffering.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: How does a right understanding of God and the Trinity guard our counseling? First, it protects us from anthropocentric approaches that place human desires above God's glory. When counseling becomes centered on felt needs rather than God's character and purposes, it inevitably leads people away from true hope and transformation. A robust view of the Trinity also guards us from errors such as modalism, which distorts how we pray and relate to God, and from deistic assumptions that treat God as distant or uninvolved. The God of Scripture is Father, Son, and Spirit—personally present, actively redeeming, and intimately involved in the counselee's life. Anything that elevates the creature above the Creator will mislead those we counsel. But when we keep God's attributes and the Triune nature of God at the center of our counseling, our counseling remains anchored in truth. Truly biblical counseling places God in His rightful place—and to do that, we must have a proper understanding of who He is. Knowing God rightly, drives us and our counselees to proclaim *"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory (Isa. 6:3)!"*

Scripture Meditation: Read Isaiah 6:1–8 and John 17:20–26.

Journal: How does the Triune God's holiness expose your sin, and His love invite communion? Where do you need deeper Trinitarian awareness?

Personal Questions:

1. How has a shallow or distorted view of God's attributes (e.g., forgetting holiness) allowed sin patterns to persist in your life or when counseling others?
2. In counseling relational wounds (e.g., abandonment), how can emphasizing Trinitarian fellowship offer a superior model to secular attachment theories?
3. Critically assess a popular therapeutic idea like "self-compassion": How does it compare/contrast with biblical dependence on God's self-sufficiency?
4. Which divine attribute most convicts or comforts you currently, and how might meditating on it reshape your approach to a specific counseling challenge?

Practical Applications:

- Incorporate Trinitarian-structured prayers in sessions (addressing each Person).
- Develop an "Attributes Meditation Guide" for counselees to apply one attribute daily to their struggle.
- Discuss the different attributes of God and how they relate to the counselees situation.
- Discuss in groups how Trinitarian doctrine counters modern "therapeutic deism."

Prayer Guide:

Pray in reverence to the triune God who created and redeems all things.

"Three in One, One in Three, God of my salvation, Heavenly Father, blessed Son, eternal Spirit, I adore thee as one Being, one Essence, one God in three distinct persons, for bringing sinners to thy knowledge and to thy kingdom….O Triune God, who commandeth the universe, thou hast commanded me to ask for those things that concern thy kingdom and my soul. Let me live and pray as one baptized into the threefold Name." *Valley of Vision, The Trinity*

Day 3: Chapter 3 - Of God's Decree

Read chapter 3 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 3 teaches that God, from all eternity, decreed all things according to His own wise and holy counsel (Eph. 1:11; Isa. 46:9–10). These decrees arise solely from God's will and not from anything foreseen in His creatures. He governs events through real secondary causes (Prov. 16:9), ensuring that His sovereignty does not cancel human responsibility. While God ordains whatsoever comes to pass, the Confession carefully guards His holiness by insisting that He is never the author of sin (Jas. 1:13–14). Creaturely choices remain voluntary and morally accountable within His overarching plan (Acts 2:23). The decree especially highlights God's eternal purpose of redemption in Christ, who was "foreknown before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20). Ultimately, this chapter offers assurance that history is neither accidental nor uncertain. All things unfold under the purposeful, unchanging, and benevolent will of a God who accomplishes His plan for His glory and the good of His people (Rom. 8:28).

Informing Biblical Counseling: God's eternal decree gives counselees a stabilizing confidence that their lives are not ruled by chance but by divine wisdom (Ps. 115:3). When suffering feels overwhelming, Scripture affirms that the Lord works all things according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11), and nothing escapes His notice (Matt. 10:29–31). This brings comfort to the anxious and hope to the discouraged, reminding them that God is near and purposeful even in hardship (Ps. 34:18). Yet the Confession's balanced teaching preserves human responsibility. People cannot attribute sin to God (Jas. 1:13) but must confess, repent, and pursue obedience from the heart (Acts 17:30). Counselors can encourage meaningful change because God provides grace, strength, and "a way of escape" from temptation (1 Cor. 10:13). The decree also supports prayer, since God ordains both ends and means (Phil. 4:6–7; 2 Cor. 1:11). Thus counselees can trust confidently and act faithfully within God's sovereign care.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of God's decree must be handled wisely to avoid harmful distortions in counseling. One danger is fatalism—the belief that human effort is pointless if God rules all things. Scripture rejects this, affirming both divine sovereignty and the meaningfulness of obedience (Phil. 2:12–13). Counselors must emphasize that God uses means, including wise decisions, prayer, and counsel (Prov. 12:15), to accomplish His purposes. Another danger is implying that God is morally responsible for evil. Scripture clearly declares that God is light and in Him is no darkness (1 John 1:5), and that human sin arises from the heart (Mark 7:20–23). This protects counselees—especially the wounded—from thinking God delights in the harm done to them. A final danger is oversimplifying suffering. Counselors must allow space for lament (Ps. 42:3–5), uphold God's compassion (Isa. 41:10), and walk patiently with those in pain. The decree comforts, but it must never be weaponized.

Scripture Meditation: Read Ephesians 1:3–14 and Romans 8:28–39.

Journal: How do eternal decrees and election before time anchor your identity and hope beyond performance or circumstances?

Personal Questions:

1. How might misunderstanding sovereignty contribute to despair in repeated counseling failures or chronic suffering, and what redemptive reframing does the doctrine offer?
2. In a personal trial, trace the interplay of God's decree and your choices: Where is the tension, and how does Scripture resolve it?
3. Evaluate popular sayings like "God helps those who help themselves": How does this chapter correct such semi-Pelagian tendencies in counseling advice?
4. How can emphasizing God's decrees bring genuine comfort to a grieving counselee without minimizing their pain or responsibility?

Practical Applications:

- Guide counselees in creating "Providence Timelines" mapping God's sovereign hand through life events.
- Assign Romans 8 memorization for assurance in trials.
- In training groups, role-play balancing sovereignty and exhortation.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for strength, belief, and trust in God as the Sovereign Creator and sustainer of all things good.

“O Lord, I hang on thee; I see, believe, live, when thy will, no mine, is done; I can plead nothing in myself in regard of any worthiness and grace, in regard of thy providence and promises, but only thy good pleasure.” *Valley of Vision, The Divine Will*

Day 4: Chapter 4 - Of Creation

Read chapter 4 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 4 of the 1689 Confession affirms that God created the world out of nothing, by the word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good (Gen. 1:1, 31; Heb. 11:3). This creative act displays His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness (Ps. 104:24; Rev. 4:11). Humanity was made in God's image, possessing knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Gen. 1:26–27; Col. 3:10). Adam and Eve enjoyed communion with God, dominion over creation, and the moral capacity to obey His commands (Gen. 2:15–17). The Confession presents creation not merely as a past event, but as the foundation for understanding human dignity, responsibility, relationships, and purpose. God structured the world with order, meaning, and goodness, inviting His creatures to live within His wise design. This chapter reminds us that life has intentionality from the beginning, rooting human identity and morality in the God who created all things for His glory and for the flourishing of His image bearers (Isa. 45:18).

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of creation profoundly shapes biblical counseling by grounding every person's identity and worth in being made in God's image (Gen. 1:26–27). Counselees struggling with shame, despair, trauma, or self-condemnation need this foundational truth: they possess inherent dignity, value, and purpose because God formed them with intention and care (Ps. 139:13–16). Creation also clarifies human responsibility. Since God made humanity upright (Eccl. 7:29) and gave commands to follow (Gen. 2:16–17), moral accountability is built into human nature. Counselors can call people to righteous obedience not as arbitrary rules, but as a return to the good design God established from the beginning. This doctrine also stabilizes those facing confusion about meaning, identity, or vocation, reminding them that God placed humanity in a world ordered for work, relationships, and stewardship (Gen. 1:28; 2:15). Creation assures counselees that their lives are not accidents—they are the handiwork of a wise Creator.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of creation guards biblical counseling by protecting against distortions that undermine human dignity or responsibility. One danger is reducing people to the sum of their experiences or failures. Scripture insists they remain image bearers, even in a fallen world (Gen. 9:6; Jas. 3:9). Counselors must avoid language that dehumanizes or shames counselees beyond what Scripture warrants. Another danger is adopting cultural narratives that sever identity from God's design—whether in sexuality, purpose, or morality. God intentionally created humanity male and female (Gen. 1:27), with embodied distinctions that are good and meaningful. Counseling must uphold this design with compassion and clarity. A final danger is treating emotional or spiritual struggles as merely biological or environmental. While bodily weakness and context matter (Ps. 103:14), Scripture maintains that humans are moral, spiritual creatures accountable before God (Deut. 10:12–13). The doctrine of creation helps counselors keep a holistic, God-centered view of people.

Devotional Reflection: Read Genesis 1:26–31 and Psalm 8.

Journal: In what ways does bearing God's image affirm your worth and call you to responsible dominion today?

Personal Questions:

1. How does a denial of literal creation undermine counseling on human purpose, identity, or ethics, and what creational truths restore proper foundations?
2. In body image or sexuality struggles, how can affirming image-bearing redirect focus from cultural standards to God's design for holiness?
3. Reflect on failures in stewardship (work, relationships, environment): How does this doctrine motivate repentance and renewed dominion?
4. Assess modern therapeutic approaches: How can they erode creation's goodness, and how might biblical creation integrate body and soul in our care more faithfully?

Practical Applications:

- Encourage "Creation Walks" for counselees to reflect on God's handiwork and personal dignity.
- Consider how Genesis 1-3 informs our current situations and the counseling we might give.
- In groups, compare the creational vs. the evolutionary worldviews' impact on self-worth.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for God's beauty to shine forth in creation and trust in his good design for all that he has created.

"Most high God, the universe with all its myriad creatures is thine, made by thy word, upheld by thy power, governed by thy will. But thou art also the Father of mercies, the God of all grace, the bestower of all comfort, the protector of the saved." *Valley of Vision, Third Day Morning, God Creator and Controller*

Day 5: Chapter 5 - Of Divine Providence

Read chapter 5 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 5 teaches that God upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures and events by His wise and holy providence (Heb. 1:3; Ps. 103:19). Nothing happens by chance. God's providence extends from the greatest events to the smallest details—even the falling of a sparrow (Matt. 10:29–31). He works through ordinary means and secondary causes while remaining fully sovereign (Prov. 16:33). Providence includes His righteous allowance of sin, yet He never becomes its author or approver (Jas. 1:13; 1 John 1:5). Instead, He overrules sinful actions for just and holy purposes (Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:23). God's fatherly providence uniquely blesses His people, using trials for their discipline, refinement, and ultimate good (Rom. 8:28; Heb. 12:5–11). At times He may seem to hide His face, yet never abandons His own. This chapter reassures believers that every circumstance—joy or sorrow—is governed by a wise God who accomplishes His purposes with perfect faithfulness.

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of providence offers deep comfort in counseling by reminding counselees that their lives are not ruled by randomness or blind forces. God is intimately involved in every detail, sustaining and governing all things for His wise purposes (Ps. 121:3–8). For those facing suffering, providence affirms that trials are neither meaningless nor wasted. God uses adversity to produce endurance, character, and hope (Rom. 5:3–5; Jas. 1:2–4). When people feel abandoned, Scripture assures them that God is near and attentive (Ps. 34:18). Providence also speaks to those wrestling with guilt or shame: though God permits sin, He also provides the means for repentance and restoration (Acts 17:30; 1 John 1:9). For counselees struggling with fear or control, providence reminds them that God directs their paths (Prov. 16:9) and invites them to cast their anxieties on Him (1 Pet. 5:7). Ultimately, this doctrine encourages trust, endurance, prayer, and confident hope in God's sovereign care.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Providence must be handled carefully in counseling to avoid harmful misapplications. One danger is fatalism—assuming that if God controls everything, human effort and responsibility no longer matter. Scripture rejects this idea, affirming that God's sovereignty works through human choices and obedience (Phil. 2:12–13). Counselors must encourage active faith, repentance, and wise living. Another danger is implying that God approves of the evil actions committed against a person. Though He sovereignly permits sin, its moral blame remains fully with the sinner (Hab. 1:13; Mark 7:21–23). This distinction is essential for protecting victims from distorted views of God's character. A further danger is giving simplistic explanations for suffering. Providence calls counselors to humility, patience, and compassion (Rom. 12:15), acknowledging that God's ways are deeper than our understanding (Isa. 55:8–9). Instead of assigning quick answers, counselors must guide people toward trust, lament, prayer, and confidence in God's faithful presence amid hardship (Ps. 46:1).

Devotional Reflection: Read Genesis 50:15–21 and Romans 8:28–30.

Journal: How has God sovereignly turned past evils for your good, and what hope does this give for present uncertainties?

Personal Questions:

1. How might neglecting providence fuel anxiety or bitterness in counseling unpredictable hardships, and what biblical examples counter this?
2. In chronic or terminal illness, how does providence enable acceptance while still encouraging prayer and medical diligence?
3. Reflect on a "coincidental" event in your life: How does viewing it providentially deepen faith and dependence?
4. Distinguish providence from fatalism: How does the chapter's emphasis on secondary causes promote active responsibility in change?

Practical Applications:

- Help counselees build "Providence Journals" logging evidences of God's directing hand.
- Teach obedient and trusting prayer ("Your will be done") in uncertainty.
- Discuss in groups how providence integrates with human agency in sanctification.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for the God of all blessing and grace, to protect and strengthen you through divine providence.

"O Lord God, who inhabitest eternity, the heavens declare thy glory, the earth thy riches, the universe is thy temple; thy presence fills immensity, yet thou hast of thy pleasure created life, and communicated happiness; thou hast made me what I am, and given me what I have; in thee I live and move and have my being; thy providence has set the bounds of my habitation, and wisely administers all my affairs." *Valley of Vision, God the Source of All Good*

Day 6: Chapter 6 - Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof

Read chapter 6 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 6 teaches that God created Adam and Eve upright and able to obey His commands (Gen. 1:27; Eccl. 7:29). Yet through Satan's temptation and their own free will, they disobeyed God, bringing sin and death into the world (Gen. 3:1–6; Rom. 5:12). Adam stood as the covenant head of humanity, so his guilt, corruption, and death spread to all his descendants (Rom. 5:18–19; Eph. 2:1–3). Humanity is now wholly inclined toward evil, spiritually dead, and unable to please God apart from His grace (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 8:7–8). The Confession emphasizes that sin is not merely behavioral but a deep corruption of nature. This inherited depravity affects the whole person—mind, affections, and will—producing actual sins in every part of life (Ps. 51:5). The chapter presents humanity's tragic condition honestly, not to crush hope, but to highlight the glory of Christ's redeeming work. The darkness of the fall magnifies the brightness of grace and the necessity of the gospel (Rom. 5:20–21).

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of the fall gives biblical counseling a realistic and compassionate understanding of the human condition. Since all people inherit a sinful nature from Adam (Rom. 5:12), counselors can help counselees interpret their struggles through a biblical lens—recognizing that sin flows from the heart, not merely circumstances (Mark 7:20–23). This prevents minimizing sin or treating it as accidental and instead directs individuals toward repentance, transformation, and dependence on Christ (1 John 1:9). The fall also explains why suffering fills the world. Broken bodies, fractured relationships, trauma, and grief all stem from humanity's separation from God (Gen. 3:16–19; Rom. 8:20–23). This helps counselees make sense of their pain without despairing. Counselors can give hope by reminding them that Christ came to redeem fallen people and renew all things (2 Cor. 5:17). The doctrine of the fall prepares counselees to pursue change with humility, patience, and confidence in God's gracious work.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of the fall guards counseling from unbiblical views of sin and human nature. One danger is excusing sinful behavior as merely the result of environment, upbringing, or trauma. While external influences matter, Scripture insists that sin originates in the heart (Jas. 1:14–15). Counselors must hold counselees responsible without crushing them, pointing them toward the Savior who forgives and transforms. Another danger is despair—believing that change is impossible because the heart is corrupted. The Confession affirms human inability apart from grace, but also the power of God to renew and restore through the gospel (Ezek. 36:26–27; Phil. 1:6). Counselors must avoid both naïve optimism and hopeless pessimism. A final danger is viewing suffering as punishment for specific sins. Though the fall

brought universal brokenness, not all suffering is a direct result of personal wrongdoing (John 9:1–3). Counseling must uphold truth, compassion, and the hope of redemption in a fallen world.

Devotional Reflection: Read Romans 3:9–23 and Ephesians 2:1–10.

Consider: How does embracing total depravity magnify the wonder of grace in your salvation and daily walk?

Personal Questions:

1. How does original sin help explain recurring sinful patterns in counselees (or yourself), shifting focus from mere behavioral modification to true heart renewal?
2. In trauma or abuse counseling, how can you affirm sin's devastating effects on victims while upholding personal responsibility before God?
3. Reflect honestly on your own life: In what areas does sin still dominate, and how has grace progressively overcome it?
4. Critique secular counseling frameworks: How do they downplay or redefine sin, and how does this chapter redirect us toward Christ-centered diagnosis?

Practical Applications:

- Use "Sin Heart Diagrams" (thoughts → desires → actions) in sessions.
- Assign confession and repentance meditations/prayers from the Psalms.
- In group discussion, contrast biblical vs. therapeutic views of human nature.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for the conviction of sin, the forgiveness of sin, and the turning from sin in your life.

"Searcher of hearts, it is a good day when thou givest me a glimpse of myself; sin is my greatest evil, but thou art my greatest good; I have cause to loathe myself, and to not seek self-honour, for no one desires to commend his own dunghill." *Valley of Vision, Self-Knowledge*

Day 7: Chapter 7 - Of God's Covenant

Read chapter 7 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 7 of the 1689 Confession teaches that because humanity, after the fall, could no longer attain life by obedience to the law (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10), God graciously revealed the covenant of grace, His eternal plan to save sinners through Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 1:9–10). Though God is infinitely sovereign and self-sufficient (Acts 17:24–25), He voluntarily condescended to enter into a covenant with humanity, making promises, providing a Mediator, and giving life to those who trust in Him (Heb. 8:6). This covenant was progressively revealed throughout Scripture—first announced to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15), further unfolded to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), and fully accomplished in Christ, the true Seed (Gal. 3:16). Under the new covenant, God writes His law on the heart, forgives sins, and adopts His people as His own (Jer. 31:31–34). Chapter 7 highlights that salvation is entirely rooted in God's initiative, mercy, and covenant faithfulness, not human achievement (Eph. 2:8–9).

Informing Biblical Counseling: The covenant of grace deeply shapes biblical counseling by grounding change, forgiveness, and hope in God's commitment rather than human performance. Counselees often feel trapped by guilt, shame, or failure. The covenant promises that God forgives sins and remembers them no more (Jer. 31:34; 1 John 1:9). Because Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant (Heb. 8:6), counselees do not need to earn God's acceptance—they receive it through faith in His finished work (Eph. 2:4–5). This gives struggling believers a stable foundation for identity and transformation. The covenant also brings the gift of a renewed heart and the enabling presence of the Spirit, who writes God's law within (Ezek. 36:26–27; Phil. 2:13). Thus counselors can encourage obedience not as a burden but as the fruit of grace. The covenant of grace assures counselees that God is committed to their sanctification and will complete His work in them (Phil. 1:6).

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Understanding God's covenants,especially the covenant of grace, guard counseling from errors that distort the gospel. One danger is moralism—treating counseling as mere behavior modification. The covenant of grace reminds us that transformation flows from God's initiative, not human willpower (John 15:5). Counselors must avoid giving advice detached from the redemptive work of Christ. Another danger is antinomianism—using grace as an excuse for sin. The new covenant includes the writing of God's law on the heart (Jer. 31:33), meaning grace produces holiness, not lawlessness (Titus 2:11–12). Counseling must uphold both forgiveness and responsibility. A final danger is despair in those who feel too broken to change. The covenant assures believers that God will never abandon His people (Heb. 13:5) and will fulfill His promises despite their weakness (Isa. 42:3). Counselors should apply the covenant tenderly, helping counselees trust God's steadfast love and walk confidently in the strength He provides (Ps. 73:26).

Devotional Reflection: Read Hebrews 8:6–13 and Jeremiah 31:31–34.

Journal: How does the new covenant's promise of heart transformation assure you of God's ongoing work in you?

Personal Questions:

1. How can covenant faithfulness inform counseling on marriage commitment, forgiveness, or reconciliation in broken relationships?
2. Where do you lean toward performance-based obedience in relating to God (covenant of works mentality), and how does the covenant of grace liberate you?
3. Reflect on a broken human relationship in your experience: How does God's covenant-keeping nature bring healing and hope?
4. Consider OT/NT continuity: How does unified covenant theology enrich applying Psalms or Proverbs to New Covenant believers in counseling?

Practical Applications:

- Incorporate covenant renewal elements (e.g., vow reaffirmation) in marriage counseling.
- Assign studies on covenant promises.
- Discuss covenant vs. contract type relationships in group settings.

Prayer Guide:

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of salvation from our covenant keeping God who breaks no promises.

"To thy grace and care of thy covenant I commit myself, in sickness, and in health, for thou hast overcome the world, fulfilled the law, finished justifying righteousness, swallowed up death in victory, and taken all power everywhere. Mark this covenant with thine own blood in the court of forgiving mercy; attach unto it thy name in which I believe, for it is sealed by my unworthy mortal hand." *Valley of Vision, Covenant*

Day 8: Chapter 8 - Of Christ the Mediator

Read chapter 8 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 8 proclaims Jesus Christ as the sole Mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim. 2:5). Appointed by the Father from eternity (1 Pet. 1:20), Christ took on true human nature while remaining fully God (John 1:14; Col. 2:9). As the God-man, He perfectly fulfilled the law (Matt. 5:17), offered Himself as a once-for-all sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:12–14), and satisfied divine justice (Rom. 3:24–26). His resurrection and ascension confirm His victory and ongoing intercession for His people (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). Through Christ's mediatorial work, believers receive forgiveness, reconciliation, adoption, and every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3–7). The Confession emphasizes that salvation is entirely through Christ's obedience and blood, not human merit (Titus 3:5). Christ's kingship ensures the subduing of His people to Himself and the final defeat of all His enemies (Ps. 110:1; 1 Cor. 15:25). Chapter 8 presents Christ as the center of redemptive history and the hope of sinners in every age.

Informing Biblical Counseling: Christ's mediatorial work is the heartbeat of biblical counseling. Many counselees battle guilt, shame, fear, or a sense of unworthiness. The gospel declares that Christ's sacrifice truly cleanses the conscience (Heb. 9:14) and brings full forgiveness to all who trust in Him (Rom. 8:1). His perfect righteousness covers believers, granting them a secure identity before God (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ also sympathizes with human weakness, having been tempted yet without sin (Heb. 4:15), which brings deep comfort to sufferers and strugglers. His intercession guarantees ongoing help and sustaining grace (Heb. 7:25). As King, Christ empowers obedience and rules the heart through His Word and Spirit (John 14:26; Col. 3:16). Counselors can confidently call people to change—not by self-reform, but through union with Christ, who provides new hearts, new desires, and new strength (Ezek. 36:26–27; Gal. 2:20). Every step of growth flows from His finished and ongoing work.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of Christ as Mediator guards counseling from errors that distort the gospel's power. One danger is pointing people to self-rescue through effort or rule-keeping. Scripture insists that salvation and sanctification rest on Christ's work, not human merit (Gal. 3:3; John 15:5). Counselors must continually direct counselees to grace, not moralism. Another danger is presenting Christ as distant or indifferent to human suffering. The Bible reveals a compassionate High Priest who understands weakness and offers mercy in every struggle (Heb. 4:15–16). Failing to emphasize His nearness can leave counselees hopeless. A third danger is minimizing Christ's kingship by treating obedience as optional. Christ saves His people and reigns over them (Matt. 28:18–20), producing holiness through His Spirit (Rom. 8:13–14). Counseling must uphold both grace and godliness. Finally, counselors must avoid making anything—techniques, insights, or self-help strategies—co-mediators. Christ alone is sufficient (Col. 1:18), and all true change flows from Him.

Devotional Reflection: Read Hebrews 4:14–16 and Colossians 1:15–20.

Journal: How does Christ's sympathetic priesthood encourage you to approach the throne boldly in your struggles?

Personal Questions:

1. In counseling authority/submission conflicts, how does Christ's kingly rule provide both correction and comfort?
2. For guilt-laden counselees, how can emphasizing Christ's priestly atonement move beyond mere forgiveness to full acceptance?
3. Reflect on your union with Christ: In what areas do you fail to live from this reality, and how can it transform our counseling practice?
4. Assess Christless moralistic advice you've given or received: How does the mediation of Christ refocus everything on him?

Practical Applications:

- Begin sessions with gospel-centered questions ("How does Christ meet this need?").
- Use Christ's threefold office in prayer guides for counselees.
- Role-play gospel mediation in conflict resolution training.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for Christ in his three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king, to give comfort and strength in times of need as he is the perfect and only mediator that brings us before God.

"O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we hope in thy word. There we see thee, not on a fearful throne of judgement, but on a throne of grace, waiting to be gracious, and exalted in mercy. There we hear thee saying, not 'Depart ye cursed,' but 'Look unto me and be ye saved, for I am God and there is none else.' They that know thy name put their trust in thee." *Valley of Vision, Sixth Day Evening, The Mediator*

Day 9: Chapter 9 - Of Free Will

Read chapter 9 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 9 of the 1689 Confession explains the nature of human will in four states: innocence, fall, grace, and glory. In creation, humanity possessed true freedom and the ability to obey God's commands (Gen. 1:27; Eccl. 7:29). After the fall, the will did not cease to be a will, but became enslaved to sin, leaving humanity unable to choose spiritual good apart from God's renewing grace (Rom. 8:7–8; John 8:34). In the state of grace, believers are enabled by the Spirit to will and do what pleases God, though they still struggle with indwelling sin (Phil. 2:13; Gal. 5:17). In glory, the will is made perfectly and immutably free to love and serve God without the possibility of falling (1 John 3:2; Rev. 21:27). This chapter clarifies that human freedom is real but conditioned by our spiritual nature: the enslaved heart chooses sin, the renewed heart chooses righteousness, and the glorified heart chooses God forever.

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of free will helps counselors understand both the responsibility and the limitations of fallen humanity. Counselees often feel confused by their own behavior: "Why do I keep doing what I hate?" Scripture teaches that apart from Christ, the will is in bondage to sin (Rom. 7:18–19; John 8:34). This explains ongoing patterns of anger, addiction, fear, or relational brokenness. Yet the Confession also highlights the hope of grace. In Christ, believers receive new desires and Spirit-given ability to obey (Ezek. 36:26–27; Phil. 2:13). Counseling can therefore call people to genuine, God-honoring choices—not by moralistic pressure, but by helping them rely on the Spirit who enables transformation (Gal. 5:16). This doctrine also helps counselees understand the tension of sanctification: real freedom, yet ongoing struggle (Rom. 7:22–25). Ultimately, chapter 9 teaches that meaningful change is possible because God renews the heart and empowers the will toward righteousness.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of free will protects counseling from two major errors. One danger is humanistic optimism, which assumes people possess the natural ability to change themselves. Scripture teaches that apart from grace, the heart is enslaved to sin (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10–12). Counselors must avoid offering strategies that promote self-rescue instead of dependence on Christ. The opposite danger is spiritual fatalism, where counselees feel powerless and hopeless. The Confession affirms that God enables His people to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12–13), giving them real ability to pursue righteousness. Counseling must therefore avoid minimizing responsibility, repentance, or obedience. Another danger is misunderstanding the believer's ongoing conflict with sin. Chapter 9 clarifies that while the renewed will can obey, indwelling sin still wages war (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:23). Counselors must prepare believers for this tension without discouragement. Properly applied, this doctrine cultivates humility, hope, responsibility, and confidence in God's empowering grace.

Devotional Reflection: Read John 8:31–36 and Romans 6:15–23.

Journal: Consider how Christ has set you free from sin, and where do you still sense bondage?

Personal Questions:

1. How does having an enslaved will inform realistic expectations in addiction or habitual sin in counseling, avoiding shame while offering hope?
2. Where do you personally excuse sin as "I couldn't help it," and how does true freedom challenge that?
3. Reflect on your conversion or growth moments: How did the Spirit's renewing work evidence itself in changed choices?
4. Evaluate common therapies: How do they assume neutral or intact free will, and how can biblical anthropology redirect them?

Practical Applications:

- Develop "Choice in Grace" exercises— showing how Scripture-based decision prompts work.
- Talk about common excuses for sin and how we might be using them in our own lives.
- In groups, discuss bondage vs. liberty testimonies.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for wisdom, grace, and discernment in everything you might face this day.

"Help me to place myself always under thy guiding and guardian care, to take firmer hold of the sure covenant that binds me to thee, to feel more of the purifying, dignifying, softening influence of the religion I profess, to have more compassion, love, pity, courtesy, to deem it an honour to be employed by three as an instrument in thy hands, ready to seize every opportunity of usefulness, and willing to offer all my talents to thy service." *Valley of Vision, Choices*

Day 10: Chapter 10 - Of Effectual Calling

Read chapter 10 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 10 teaches that God effectually calls those whom He has predestined to life, bringing them from death to life by His Word and Spirit (Rom. 8:30; Eph. 2:4–5). In this calling, God enlightens the mind, removes the heart of stone, and renews the will so that sinners freely embrace Christ (Ezek. 36:26–27; Acts 16:14). This call is not based on foreseen faith or merit but flows entirely from God's sovereign grace (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5). The Confession clarifies that effectual calling is distinct from the general gospel call that goes out to all people (Matt. 22:14). While many hear externally, only the elect are inwardly drawn to Christ with irresistible, transforming power (John 6:37, 44). Infants dying in infancy and others incapable of outwardly hearing may still be regenerated by the Spirit (Luke 1:15; John 3:8). This chapter magnifies God's initiative in salvation, showing that every Christian is a miracle of divine mercy.

Informing Biblical Counseling: Effectual calling provides immense hope for counseling because it shows that real heart change is possible—not through willpower, but through God's transforming work. Counselees often feel enslaved to habits, fears, or longstanding sins. Scripture assures that God calls people out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9) and gives new hearts that desire obedience (Ezek. 36:26–27). This means counselors can confidently encourage repentance and faith, knowing the Spirit empowers both the desire and ability to change (Phil. 2:13). Effectual calling also brings comfort for those burdened with guilt. God's call includes justification and adoption (Rom. 8:30), granting a new identity and secure standing in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). For those wrestling with despair or hopelessness, the doctrine assures that God pursues, awakens, and draws sinners with irresistible grace (John 6:37). This allows counseling to be grace-driven, Christ-centered, and confident in the Spirit's ongoing work within the believer's life.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of effectual calling guards counseling from several errors. One danger is relying on human persuasion or technique to produce spiritual change. Scripture teaches that only God opens hearts (Acts 16:14), and only the Spirit gives life (John 6:63). Counselors must faithfully speak truth while trusting God to bring transformation. Another danger is discouragement when counselees seem unresponsive. Effectual calling reminds counselors that salvation is God's work from beginning to end (Rom. 8:29–30), freeing them from undue pressure or frustration. A further danger is fostering pride in those who change. The Confession emphasizes that the call is entirely of grace, not human effort (1 Cor. 1:26–31). Counseling must point counselees to humility and gratitude. Finally, counselors must guard against excluding those who seem beyond hope. God can call the hardest heart (Ezek. 37:1–10). Effectual calling protects counseling from despair, self-reliance, and superficial definitions of change.

Devotional Reflection: Read Ezekiel 36:25–27 and Acts 16:13–15.

Journal: Consider how the Spirit sovereignly opened your heart, and what gratitude does it stir?

Personal Questions:

1. How does effectual calling comfort counselors facing resistant or seemingly unresponsive counselees?
2. Distinguish general call from effectual call: Where have you witnessed the difference in ministry or personal life?
3. Reflect on evidences of your calling: How do they strengthen assurance amid doubt?
4. In evangelistic counseling, how do we rely on the Spirit while faithfully presenting the gospel?

Practical Applications:

- Pray explicitly for the Spirit's work before/during sessions.
- Share calling testimonies to build hope.
- Train groups in Word-centered, Spirit-dependent evangelism.

Prayer Guide:

Pray that God would awaken your soul and the souls of others like only God can through his Spirit and bring them to Christ this day.

"Let me not delay to come to thee; break the fatal enchantment that binds my evil affections, and bring me to a happy mind that rests in thee, for thou hast made me and canst not forget me, let thy Spirit teach me the vital lessons of Christ, for I am slow to learn them; and hear thou my broken cries." *Valley of Vision, The Awakened Sinner*

Day 11: Chapter 11 - Of Justification

Read chapter 11 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 11 teaches that justification is God's gracious act of declaring sinners righteous through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24; Gal. 2:16). This righteousness is not based on anything within the believer—not works, obedience, or spiritual progress—but solely on the imputed righteousness of Christ, credited to them by faith alone (Phil. 3:9; Rom. 4:5–6). Christ's perfect obedience and sacrificial death fully satisfy God's justice (Rom. 5:18–19; 2 Cor. 5:21). Faith itself is a gift of grace (Eph. 2:8–9), the means by which believers receive Christ, not a virtue that earns acceptance. Justification brings complete forgiveness, acceptance with God, and peace with Him (Rom. 5:1). This declaration is once-for-all yet grounded in God's eternal decree and Christ's finished work. Chapter 11 also emphasizes that while believers may experience fatherly discipline and spiritual conflict, their justified status is unchanging because it rests entirely on the sure foundation of Christ's righteousness (Heb. 10:14).

Informing Biblical Counseling: Justification provides one of the strongest foundations for counseling because it addresses guilt, shame, and fear—the very struggles that plague many counselees. Scripture assures believers that in Christ they are fully forgiven and declared righteous before God (Rom. 8:1). Counselors can help people see that their acceptance is not based on performance but on Christ's finished work (Tit. 3:5–7), freeing them from cycles of self-condemnation. Justification also stabilizes identity. Instead of being defined by past sins, failures, or wounds, believers stand clothed in the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). This gives counselees confidence to pursue change without fear of losing God's favor. The doctrine also strengthens assurance: God justifies the ungodly who trust in Christ (Rom. 4:5), meaning believers can rest in His unchanging verdict. Counseling shaped by justification leads to freedom, joy, and renewed obedience rooted in gratitude rather than fear (Rom. 5:1–2; Gal. 5:1).

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of justification guards counseling from several dangerous distortions. One is legalism, which ties acceptance with God to performance. Scripture insists that justification rests entirely on Christ's work, not human effort (Gal. 2:21; Rom. 3:28). Counselors must avoid giving advice that implies God's favor fluctuates based on spiritual success or failure. Another danger is antinomianism, assuming that since believers are justified, obedience is optional. True justification always produces sanctification (Jas. 2:17; Rom. 6:1–4). Counseling must uphold the inseparable relationship between grace and transformation. A third danger is grounding assurance in emotions or progress rather than Christ. When counselees base acceptance on feelings, they become unstable. Counselors must point them back to the objective reality of Christ's righteousness credited to them (Heb. 10:14). Finally, justification guards against identity confusion. Believers are not defined by sin, victimhood, or performance but by God's unchanging verdict: "righteous in Christ."

Devotional Reflection: Read Romans 5:1–11 and Galatians 3:10–14.

Journal: How does imputed righteousness bring peace with God that transcends feelings?

Personal Questions:

1. How can the truth of justification heal performance anxiety or shame in high-achieving or abused counselees?
2. Where does works righteousness silently creep into your spiritual life or counseling advice, and how does sola fide correct it?
3. Reflect on a time when guilt overwhelmed you: How has grasping justification brought freedom?
4. Evaluate secular counseling theories and therapies (e.g., Cognitive Behavioral Therapy): How does the doctrine of justification reveal their works righteousness?

Practical Applications:

- Use "Justification Declarations" (Scripture affirmations) as daily reminders of Christ's work in your life.
- Consider the law/gospel distinction along with your counseling model: How do they compare?
- Teach the doctrine of imputation of sin/righteousness through 2 Cor. 5:21 meditations.

Prayer Guide:

Pray a prayer of thankfulness and hopefulness to God for his giving us the righteousness of his Son and no longer holding as guilty before him.

"Prayers and tears could not suffice to pardon my sins, nor anything less than atoning blood, but my believing is my receiving, for a thankful acceptance is no paying of the debt. What didst thou see in me?" *Valley of Vision, Freedom*

Day 12: Chapter 12 - Of Adoption

Read chapter 12 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 12 of the 1689 Confession teaches that all who are justified are also adopted into God's family through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:5). Adoption is a distinct act of grace in which believers receive the name, privileges, and inheritance of God's children (1 John 3:1–2). Through this adoption, they enjoy access to God as Father (Rom. 8:15), receive His fatherly care and compassion (Ps. 103:13), and are sealed with the Spirit as the guarantee of their inheritance (Eph. 1:13–14). Believers are disciplined for their good (Heb. 12:6–10), protected from ultimate condemnation, and given bold freedom to approach God in prayer (Heb. 4:16). Adoption highlights the warmth of salvation: God does not merely forgive; He welcomes, embraces, and delights in His people. This chapter emphasizes that adoption is not a future hope only, but a present reality shaping the believer's entire identity. In Christ, sinners become beloved sons and daughters of the living God (Gal. 4:4–7).

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of adoption profoundly reshapes counseling by grounding a believer's identity in God's fatherly love rather than in past sins, wounds, or failures. In Christ, you are not who you once were. Many counselees wrestle with shame, rejection, or the longing for acceptance and purpose. Adoption declares that in Christ, they are fully received by the Father (Rom. 8:15–16), cherished as His children (1 John 3:1), and never abandoned (Heb. 13:5). This provides deep emotional stability and security for those who feel forgotten or unloved. Adoption also reshapes how counselees understand God's discipline—not as punishment, but as fatherly care for their growth (Heb. 12:6). Counselors can help struggling believers draw near to God with boldness rather than hiding in fear (Heb. 4:16). Adoption encourages perseverance, because believers are heirs with Christ and future recipients of His glory (Rom. 8:17). This identity frees counselees from self-condemnation, empowers obedience, and roots all change in God's unchanging love.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of adoption guards counseling from several errors that distort identity and hope. One danger is allowing counselees to define themselves primarily by their past—whether sin, trauma, addiction, or rejection. Scripture insists that believers are now God's children (Gal. 4:6–7), not prisoners of old identities (2 Cor. 5:17). Counselors must help them reject lies rooted in shame and embrace God's truth. Another danger is viewing God as distant or harsh. Adoption reveals Him as a loving Father who shows compassion (Ps. 103:13), gives good gifts (Matt. 7:11), and promises His presence (Isa. 41:10). Counseling must correct distorted views of God's character. A further danger is misunderstanding discipline as rejection or anger. Scripture teaches that God disciplines those He loves (Heb. 12:6), not to harm them but to form them. Adoption also guards against hopelessness, reminding counselees that they are heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17), secure in His love and purpose.

Devotional Reflection: Read Romans 8:14–17 and 1 John 3:1–3.

Consider: How does the doctrine of adoption and a renewed identity in Christ transform your approach to God?

Personal Questions:

1. How does adoption reshape counseling on family dysfunction or parental wounds?
2. In what ways do you live more like an orphan (fearful, striving) than a son/daughter, and secured in Christ?
3. Reflect on adoption privileges: Which feels most distant, and how can Scripture make it real?
4. In identity crises or low self-worth, how do we apply sonship over secular "inner child" therapies?

Practical Applications:

- Create "Adoption Privilege Lists" for meditation, reflecting on what God has given us in Christ.
- Contrast culture's views on identity and what the Bible says.
- Discuss adoption in family counseling groups or small groups.

Prayer Guide:

Pray to the Father of mercies and thank him for bringing us into his family and giving us the privilege of being one of His own.

"O Sovereign Lord, thou art the Creator-Father of all men, for thou hast made and dost support them; thou art the special Father of those who know, love, and honour thee, who find thy yoke easy, and thy burden light, thy work honourable, thy commandment glorious…I am before thee in my trespasses and sins, have mercy on me, and may thy goodness bring me to repentance."
Valley of Vision, The Family

Day 13: Chapter 13 - Of Sanctification

Read chapter 13 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 13 teaches that sanctification is the gracious work of God by which believers are renewed in the whole person after the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:22–24). Unlike justification, which is a definitive act, sanctification is progressive, involving lifelong growth (Prov. 4:18). Through the Spirit's power, believers become increasingly able to die to sin and live to righteousness (Rom. 6:11–14; Gal. 5:16–17). Though sin's dominion is broken, its presence remains, producing ongoing conflict and struggle (Rom. 7:23–25). Yet the Spirit ensures victory as believers put sinful desires to death and pursue holiness (Col. 3:5; Phil. 2:12–13). Sanctification flows from union with Christ, grounded in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:4–5). It involves both God's work and the believer's active obedience. This chapter highlights the tension of the Christian life: real, Spirit-empowered transformation alongside continual dependence on grace. Sanctification prepares believers for glory, where holiness will be complete (1 John 3:2).

Informing Biblical Counseling: Sanctification offers tremendous clarity and hope for counseling because it explains why believers experience both meaningful change and ongoing struggle. Counselees may feel confused when sinful desires persist, but Scripture teaches that the flesh and Spirit war against one another (Gal. 5:17). This struggle does not prove failure—it proves life. Counselors can reassure believers that sanctification is a gradual process in which God patiently transforms them (Phil. 1:6; Prov. 4:18). The doctrine also strengthens resolve. Because believers are united with Christ, they can put sin to death and walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6:6–11; Col. 3:5). Sanctification highlights the importance of the means of grace—Scripture, prayer, fellowship, and the Lord's Day—as instruments God uses to form His people (John 17:17; Acts 2:42). This empowers counselors to direct people not toward self-effort alone but toward Spirit-dependent obedience. Sanctification assures counselees that growth is possible, struggle is normal, and God is faithfully at work.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of sanctification guards counseling from two opposite errors. One is perfectionism, the belief that Christians can eradicate sin in this life. Scripture insists that while sin's dominion is broken, its presence remains until glory (1 John 1:8; Rom. 7:21–25). Counselors must protect believers from unrealistic expectations that lead to despair. The opposite danger is complacency, assuming that because sanctification is God's work, believers need not pursue obedience. The Confession affirms that Christians must actively put sin to death and pursue holiness (Rom. 8:13; Heb. 12:14). Counseling should call for real repentance and Spirit-enabled effort. Another danger is misinterpreting struggle as evidence of God's displeasure. Scripture teaches that conflict with sin is part of the Spirit's sanctifying work, not proof of rejection or anger (Phil. 2:12–13). Sanctification also guards against excusing sinful

patterns as personality traits or psychological inevitabilities. Through the Spirit's power, genuine change is possible (2 Cor. 3:18).

Devotional Reflection: Read Philippians 2:12–13 and Colossians 3:1–17.

Consider: How can you actively see God working in you and through you, and how might you find a renewed effort in working out your own salvation?

Personal Questions:

1. How would you counsel believers discouraged by slow sanctification without minimizing sin or grace in their life?
2. In what areas of your life do you neglect ordinary means (Word, prayer, community), and why?
3. Reflect on sanctification progress: What are some evidences of mortification (death) of sin, and vivification (life), do you see in your life, and what remains stubborn?
4. Balance effort and dependence: Where do extremes appear in your counseling philosophy?

Practical Applications:

- Develop personalized "Sanctification Toolkits" (Scripture, accountability, habits).
- Teach sin-mortifying strategies from Romans 8.
- Use group accountability for progress/accountability tracking.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for the Spirit to continue shaping you more and more into the image of the Son and to bring transformation into your life.

"O Holy Spirit, as the sun is full of light, the ocean full of water, heaven full of glory, so may my heart be full of thee…Give me thyself without measure, as an unimpaired fountain, as inexhaustible riches." *Valley of Vision, Spiritus Sanctus*

Day 14: Chapter 14 - Of Saving Faith

Read chapter 14 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 14 teaches that saving faith is a grace worked in the heart by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of the Word (Rom. 10:17; Eph. 2:8). This faith enables sinners to believe God's revelation, trust His promises, and rest in Christ alone for salvation (Heb. 11:1; John 1:12). Saving faith involves knowledge, assent, and personal trust—embracing Christ as the only Redeemer (Phil. 3:9). While faith may be weak or strong, it is always anchored in Christ's sufficiency, not the believer's strength (Matt. 14:31; Isa. 42:3). The Confession distinguishes saving faith from temporary or superficial belief, emphasizing that true faith perseveres because it is God-given (1 Pet. 1:5). Faith produces obedience and good works, not as a basis for acceptance with God, but as evidence of genuine trust (Jas. 2:17). Ultimately, saving faith unites the believer to Christ, enabling them to receive all the benefits of His redemption (Gal. 2:20).

Informing Biblical Counseling: Saving faith transforms biblical counseling by grounding hope in Christ rather than human effort. Many counselees struggle with fear, guilt, or feelings of inadequacy. Saving faith teaches them to look away from themselves and rest in Christ's sufficiency (Matt. 11:28–30; John 6:37). Faith frees them from self-reliance and anchors them in God's promises, providing stability and courage amid trials (Isa. 41:10; Ps. 56:3). Faith also enables counselees to obey God even when feelings lag behind, because true faith trusts God's Word above fluctuating emotions (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 3:5–6). In cases of ongoing sin, saving faith motivates repentance, believing that Christ provides both forgiveness and transforming power (1 John 1:9; Phil. 4:13). For those overwhelmed by suffering, saving faith clings to God's character and relies on His sustaining grace (2 Cor. 12:9–10). Counseling shaped by saving faith helps believers live dependently, confidently, and obediently in the strength God supplies.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of saving faith guards counseling from two major errors. One is treating faith as a mere intellectual agreement. Saving faith is more than just knowing that Jesus is who he says he is (Jam. 2:19). Scripture teaches that saving faith includes trusting Christ personally, not simply affirming facts (Jas. 2:19; John 3:16). Counselors must ensure they are pointing people to Christ Himself, not to abstract knowledge or techniques. The opposite danger is reducing faith to emotional intensity. Saving faith rests on God's unchanging truth, not fluctuating feelings (Ps. 46:1–2; Rom. 10:9–11). Counselors should help individuals distinguish between weak faith and no faith, reminding them that *even trembling trust lays hold of a strong Savior* (Matt. 14:31; Isa. 42:3). Another danger is turning faith into a work—pressuring counselees to "believe harder," or muster up faith on their own. This is common prosperity gospel type teachings in our culture. The Confession emphasizes that faith itself is a gift of grace (Eph. 2:8). Counseling must direct people to Christ's sufficiency, not inward effort. Saving faith protects counseling from moralism, despair, and misplaced confidence.

Devotional Reflection: Read Hebrews 11:1–6 and James 2:14–26.

Journal: Where is your faith resting—on Christ or circumstances—and how can it grow?

Personal Questions:

1. How do we strengthen faltering faith in suffering without relying on emotional experiences?
2. Distinguish faith's components (knowledge, assent, trust): Which is weakest in your life or counselees'? Or which one seems to override the others?
3. Reflect on faith-testing seasons: What sustained you, and what strengthened your belief in Christ?
4. In counseling unbelief or doubt, how do we point to Christ's as the object of our faith rather than subjective feelings?

Practical Applications:

- Assign a journal to keep track of all the things God has done in a counselees life and reflect on those often.
- Use faith inventories (1 John tests; moral, social, doctrinal). In this moment of suffering am I walking in obedience to God's Word? Am I still loving God and loving others during this? Am I believing/trusting in Christ during this?
- In groups, talk about and celebrate the moments of seeing God work in our lives and encourage others.

Prayer Guide:

Pray a prayer of thankfulness that faith is the gift of God and not something within our frail and broken selves that we must build up on our own.

"My God, I bless thee that thou hast given me the eye of faith, to see thee as Father, to know thee as covenant God, to experience thy love planted in me; for faith is the grace of union by which i spell out my entitlement to thee: faith casts my anchor upwards where I trust in thee and engage thee to be my Lord." *Valley of Vision, Faith*

Day 15: Chapter 15 - Of Repentance Unto Life and Salvation

Read chapter 15 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 15 teaches that repentance unto life is a saving grace, inseparably joined with faith yet distinct from it (Acts 20:21). Through the Spirit's work, sinners awaken to the reality of sin's guilt and defilement, leading them to turn from sin to God with grief and hatred for evil (Ps. 51:3–4; Ezek. 36:31). Repentance is not merely regret or behavior modification but a heartfelt turning that seeks mercy in Christ and pursues obedience (Isa. 55:7; Luke 15:18–20). Though repentance is commanded of all people everywhere (Acts 17:30), the Confession emphasizes that it is produced by God's grace, not human effort alone (2 Tim. 2:25). Believers continue to repent throughout life because sin remains, yet repentance flows from hope in God's mercy, not fear of condemnation (Rom. 8:1; 1 John 1:9). This chapter highlights repentance as a gift, a lifelong practice, and an essential fruit of genuine faith in Christ.

Informing Biblical Counseling: Repentance is central to biblical counseling because it provides a pathway for genuine change. Many counselees feel stuck—ashamed of past sins or trapped in present patterns. Repentance offers hope that transformation begins with turning to God, not with fixing oneself (Ps. 32:5). True repentance acknowledges sin honestly, without excuses or blame shifting (Prov. 28:13), and looks to Christ for forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). This frees counselees from despair by reminding them that God welcomes the broken and contrite (Ps. 34:18). Repentance also moves individuals toward renewed obedience; it is not only sorrow but a change of direction empowered by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). Counselors can help believers connect repentance with God's kindness, which leads to deeper heart change (Rom. 2:4). This doctrine assures counselees that repentance is not a one-time act but a daily grace that brings freedom, joy, reconciliation, and restored fellowship with God and others.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of repentance guards counseling from several harmful extremes. One danger is false repentance, expressed as emotion without transformation. Scripture warns that worldly grief produces death, while godly sorrow leads to true change (2 Cor. 7:10). Counselors must help counselees move beyond remorse to genuine turning from sin. Repentance is more than a mere apology for getting caught doing something. Another danger is penance—seeking to earn God's forgiveness through effort or self-punishment. The gospel declares that forgiveness is grounded in Christ's finished work, not human performance (Eph. 1:7; Titus 3:5). Counseling must resist pressures that place burdens on people that Christ has already removed. A third danger is minimizing ongoing repentance, as if believers no longer struggle. Scripture shows that confession and repentance remain daily practices for Christians (1 John 1:8–10). Finally, counselors must guard against despair, reminding counselees that God delights to receive repentant sinners (Luke 15:20). Repentance is not a path to shame but a doorway to grace and freedom from sin.

Devotional Reflection: Read Psalm 51 and Luke 15:11–32.

Journal: Contrast the worldly sorrow of today with that of godly sorrow, and where might we be stuck in worldly sorrow?

Personal Questions:

1. What biblical signs distinguish true godly repentance from mere remorse or behavior adjustment?
2. Where in your life do you settle for regret instead of full turning, and what hinders deeper repentance?
3. Reflect on a recent failure: How did (or could) repentance lead to restoration rather than despair?
4. In counseling unrepentant patterns, how do we confront lovingly while at the same time offering gospel hope?

Practical Applications:

- Use repentance worksheets (sin confessed, sorrow felt, turning planned).
- Use accountability partners and have regular check-ins.
- Teach 2 Corinthians 7 distinctions in groups and discuss the differences.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for the gift of repentance and a life of ongoing repentance before the Lord of life.

"If I sin and am rebellious, help me to repent; then take away my mourning and give me music; remove my sackcloth and adorn me with beauty; take away my sighs and fill my mouth with songs; and when I am restored and rest in thee, give me summer weather in my heart." *Valley of Vision, Repose*

Day 16: Chapter 16 - Of Good Works

Read chapter 16 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 16 teaches that good works are those actions God commands in His Word, not those invented by human tradition or imagination (Mic. 6:8; Matt. 15:9). True good works flow from a heart renewed by the Spirit and united to Christ (John 15:5; Eph. 2:10). They are the necessary fruit of saving faith, though they contribute nothing to our justification (Jas. 2:17; Titus 3:8). Believers perform good works out of gratitude, strengthened by the Spirit, and for God's glory (Col. 1:10; 1 Cor. 10:31). Though imperfect and mingled with weakness, their works are acceptable to God through Christ's mediation (Heb. 13:20–21; 1 Pet. 2:5). The Confession also teaches that even the best works cannot earn favor but demonstrate genuine faith and obedience. God uses good works to bless others, adorn the gospel, and confirm the believer's calling (Matt. 5:16; 2 Pet. 1:10). Chapter 16 emphasizes that good works are grace-driven, Christ-centered, and essential to the Christian life.

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of good works clarifies that obedience flows from grace, not self-reliance. Many counselees believe they must change to earn God's acceptance; Scripture counters that believers are saved by grace and created for good works afterward (Eph. 2:8–10). This frees counselees from performance-driven spirituality and motivates joyful obedience rooted in gratitude (Rom. 12:1). Good works also give practical structure to counseling. Counselors can help counselees walk in righteousness through concrete acts such as renewing their minds, confessing sin, pursuing reconciliation, and practicing generosity (Rom. 13:14; Col. 3:12–14). The Spirit empowers these works, so change is possible even when habits seem entrenched (Gal. 5:16). Good works offer hope to those stuck in passivity or despair; Scripture promises that labor in the Lord is never in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). Counseling shaped by this doctrine emphasizes obedience, dependence on the Spirit, and the beauty of a transformed life that honors Christ.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 16 guards counseling from two major errors. One danger is legalism, which subtly teaches counselees that God's acceptance is tied to their performance. Scripture clearly states that works cannot justify or earn favor with God (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:21). Counselors must continually point back to grace as the foundation. The opposite danger is license, where counselees believe obedience is optional because salvation is by grace. Yet Scripture warns that faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17) and that believers must pursue holiness (Heb. 12:14). Counseling must strike a balance: calling for obedience while rooting it in Christ's finished work. Another danger is discouragement when good works feel weak or inconsistent. The Confession reminds believers that imperfect works are accepted through Christ (1 Pet. 2:5), not measured by human perfection. Counselors can comfort weary Christians by assuring them that God delights in sincere, Spirit-enabled obedience offered in faith (Heb. 13:20–21).

Devotional Reflection: Read James 2:14–26 and Titus 3:4–8.

Journal: How do your works point others to the gospel or away from the gospel? Do you struggle to see the good works in your life?

Personal Questions:

1. How do good works serve as evidence of faith without becoming grounds for assurance?
2. Where in your life or counseling do works lack gospel motivation, becoming dutiful or prideful?
3. Reflect on barren seasons: What revealed underlying issues, and how did grace produce fruit?
4. In counseling or in small groups, teach salvation by faith alone, but also teach James 2, "faith without works is dead."

Practical Applications:

- Help counselees reflect on the fruit in their life and how grace enables it.
- Discuss what grace-fueled obedience looks like and how we can achieve that.
- In groups try to examine works with simple questions: "Why did you do that? What was it for? How does it glorify God?"

Prayer Guide:

Pray that God would continue to work in you and through you for the good works which have been planned from eternity past that you should walk in them.

"Lord God Almighty, I ask not to be enrolled amongst the earthly great and rich, but to be numbered with the spiritually blessed. Make it my present, supreme, persevering concern to obtain those blessings which are spiritual in nature, eternal in their continuance, satisfying in their possession. Preserve me from a false estimate of the whole or a part of my character."
Valley of Vision, True Religion

Day 17: Chapter 17 - Of the Perseverance of the Saints

Read chapter 17 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 17 teaches that all true believers will certainly persevere to the end, not because of their strength, but because of God's unchanging love and preserving power (John 10:28–29; Phil. 1:6). Those united to Christ are kept by the Father's decree, the Son's intercession, and the Spirit's indwelling presence (Rom. 8:30; Heb. 7:25). Though believers may fall into grievous sins and experience seasons of darkness, sorrow, or discipline (Ps. 32:3–4; 2 Sam. 12:13–14), God does not abandon them. Their perseverance rests on God's covenant faithfulness, not on their performance (Jer. 32:40). The Confession emphasizes both the reality of struggle and the certainty of preservation. Sin may wound assurance, obscure joy, and bring consequences, yet it cannot overthrow God's sustaining grace (Rom. 8:38–39). Ultimately, Chapter 17 magnifies God's steadfastness—He keeps His people through trials, temptations, and weakness and ensures that they reach glory (1 Pet. 1:5; Jude 24).

Informing Biblical Counseling: The perseverance of the saints provides profound comfort for counselees who fear failure or doubt their ability to endure. Many struggle with cycles of sin, discouragement, or spiritual instability. This doctrine reassures them that their security rests not on their grip on God, but on His grip on them (John 10:28). When believers feel overwhelmed or weak, Scripture promises that God completes the work He began (Phil. 1:6) and that He will not let them be tempted beyond what He provides strength to endure (1 Cor. 10:13). Perseverance also encourages counselees facing long-term trials: God sustains faith even in suffering (Isa. 41:10). It gives hope to those battling shame or setbacks, reminding them that though they fall, they rise by God's mercy (Prov. 24:16; Ps. 37:23–24). Counseling grounded in this doctrine helps believers press on in dependence, endurance, and confidence—trusting that God's preserving grace is stronger than their weakness.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of perseverance guards counseling from two harmful extremes. One is presumption, where counselees assume that a mere profession of faith guarantees salvation. Scripture warns that true believers persevere in faith and obedience (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 3:14). Counselors must lovingly call for examination and genuine fruit without undermining grace. The opposite danger is despair, where counselees fear that repeated failures mean God has abandoned them. Scripture teaches that nothing can separate believers from God's love (Rom. 8:38–39) and that Christ intercedes continually for His people (Heb. 7:25). Counselors must gently restore the weary, pointing them to God's covenant faithfulness (Jer. 32:40). Another danger is treating perseverance as self-effort instead of Spirit-enabled endurance. True perseverance flows from abiding in Christ (John 15:5). Counseling should avoid crushing people with demands and instead direct them to strength in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). Properly applied, this doctrine fuels humility, hope, and steadfast faith.

Devotional Reflection: Read Jude 24–25 and Hebrews 6:4–12.

Journal: How does God's keeping power comfort you and create endurance, strength, and willingness to continue on?

Personal Questions:

1. How does the doctrine of perseverance bring hope to counselees struggling with repeated failure without excusing sin?
2. Where do Scripture's warnings most awaken you personally, and how do they complement promises?
3. Reflect on past "falls": What are evidences of God's preserving grace in restoration?
4. In apparent apostasy cases, how do we counsel biblically—discerning, warning, yet hopeful?

Practical Applications:

- Make a list and memorize perseverance promises.
- Develop restoration steps for wanderers. How do we bring people back toward God?
- Study warning passages in groups. These are often uncomfortable truths, but necessary for our understanding.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for the strength, endurance, and will to keep moving forward in the faith and thank God, the giver of life, that he sustains you through everything.

"King of Glory, Divine Majesty, every perfection adorns thy nature and sustains thy throne; the heavens and earth are thine, the world is thine and its fullness, thy power created the universe from nothing; thy wisdom has managed all its multiple concerns, presiding over nations, families, individuals. Thy goodness is boundless; all creatures wait on thee are supplied by thee, are satisfied in thee." *Valley of Vision, Fourth Day Evening, God All-Sufficient*

Day 18: Chapter 18 - Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation

Read chapter 18 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 18 teaches that believers may attain a true, Spirit-given assurance of salvation—not by extraordinary revelation, but by resting on God's promises, observing the Spirit's work in their lives, and hearing His inward witness (Rom. 8:15–16; 1 John 5:13). This assurance is not infallible in its intensity, nor is it equal in all believers. Some may struggle for a season due to weakness, sin, spiritual neglect, or God's sovereign purposes (Ps. 51:12; Isa. 50:10). Yet assurance is real, attainable, and designed to produce humility, holiness, and joy (Rom. 5:1–2). The Confession also teaches that true assurance cannot lead to careless living; rather, it strengthens obedience and perseverance (1 John 2:3–6). Even in times when assurance is dimmed, God preserves His people, and the Spirit eventually restores their comfort (Ps. 94:18–19). Chapter 18 emphasizes that assurance is a gift rooted in Christ's finished work and confirmed by the Spirit's ongoing ministry.

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of assurance brings profound comfort to counselees wrestling with doubt, fear, or a sense of unworthiness. Many believers assume that assurance requires spiritual perfection, yet Scripture teaches that assurance rests on Christ's finished work, not human achievement (John 10:28–29; Heb. 10:14). Counselors can gently direct counselees to the promises of God, helping them see that salvation belongs to all who trust in Christ (Rom. 10:9–11). The Spirit also uses evidences of grace—growth in holiness, sincere repentance, and love for God's people—to strengthen confidence (1 John 3:14; Gal. 5:22–23). Assurance stabilizes counselees experiencing anxiety or guilt by anchoring them in God's unchanging character (Lam. 3:22–23). It also fuels perseverance, as believers learn to walk in obedience from a place of security rather than fear (2 Pet. 1:10). Counseling shaped by this doctrine helps believers move from shame to confidence, from uncertainty to hope, and from fear to joyful trust in God's grace.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Assurance must be handled wisely in counseling to avoid harmful distortions. One danger is offering false assurance, comforting someone who professes Christ but shows no fruit. Scripture warns against empty confidence without repentance or obedience (Matt. 7:21; 1 John 2:4). Counselors must lovingly call for self-examination while holding forth the gospel. The opposite danger is withholding comfort from sensitive believers who genuinely trust Christ but struggle emotionally. Scripture teaches that weak faith still unites to a strong Savior (Matt. 14:31; Isa. 42:3). Counselors should avoid harshness and help the anxious look to Christ's sufficiency, not their performance. A third danger is tying assurance to fluctuating feelings instead of God's promises (Ps. 42:5; Heb. 6:17–19). Counseling must help believers distinguish truth from emotion. Finally, counselors must guard against suggesting that loss of assurance means loss of salvation; Scripture promises God preserves His people (1 Pet. 1:5). Properly applied, this doctrine protects both truth and tender consciences.

Devotional Reflection: Read 1 John 5:1–13 and 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Journal: What evidence confirm your standing with God, and where do doubts remain and linger?

Personal Questions:

1. What biblical means most strengthen assurance in your experience, and which are neglected?
2. Where does sin or affliction most obscure assurance, and how can gospel promises prevail?
3. Reflect on assurance fluctuations: What causes them, and how does Scripture stabilize them?
4. In counseling chronic doubters, how do we guide self-examination without morbid introspection?

Practical Applications:

- Use 1 John assurance tests as homework. Similar to day 14 of this guide.
- Create evidence journals. Reflecting often on the work God has and is doing.
- Teach promise meditation in groups. Find a few key promises that fit with your group and work to memorize and pray those promises often.

Prayer Guide:

Pray that God might use your sufferings and trials to reveal his own heart for you and remind you that you are His and He is yours.

"But o God, I could not long after thy presence if I did not know the sweetness of it; and such I could not know except by thy Spirit in my heart, nor love thee at all unless thou didst elect me, call me, adopt me, save me. I bless thee for the covenant of grace." *Valley of Vision, Assurance*

Day 19: Chapter 19 - Of the Law of God

Read chapter 19 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 19 teaches that God first revealed His moral law in creation, writing it on Adam's heart (Rom. 2:14–15). After the fall, He delivered this law more clearly in the Ten Commandments, summing it up as loving God and neighbor (Exod. 20:1–17; Matt. 22:37–40). The moral law continues to bind all people in every age, not as a way to earn life, but as a perfect expression of God's righteous character (Ps. 19:7–9). The Confession also distinguishes the ceremonial law, fulfilled in Christ (Col. 2:16–17), and the judicial laws given to Israel, which have expired except for their general equity (1 Cor. 9:8–10). While believers are not under the law as a covenant of works (Rom. 6:14), the law remains a rule of life, guiding obedience, exposing sin, and driving believers to Christ (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:24). Chapter 19 highlights the ongoing goodness, relevance, and spiritual usefulness of God's moral law for the Christian life.

Informing Biblical Counseling: The law of God provides clarity and direction in counseling by revealing God's unchanging standard for righteous living. Many counselees feel confused about right and wrong, or overloaded by cultural messages. Scripture provides a steady guide, teaching believers how to live wisely and love well (Ps. 119:105; Rom. 12:9–21). The moral law exposes sinful patterns of thought, desire, and behavior, helping counselees see their need for repentance and grace (Rom. 7:7). At the same time, the law directs them toward life-giving obedience—honesty, purity, forgiveness, self-control, and compassion (Eph. 4:22–32). For those weighed down by guilt, the law becomes a tutor leading them to Christ, not a hammer crushing them (Gal. 3:24). Counselors can show how God's commands reflect His love and promote flourishing (Deut. 10:12–13). Far from legalism, using the law biblically gives counselees a framework for genuine transformation rooted in grace, guided by truth, and empowered by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16).

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 19 guards counseling from two serious errors. One is legalism, treating God's law as a ladder to earn acceptance. Scripture is clear that no one is justified by law-keeping (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:20). Counselors must prevent turning moral instruction into a works-based system that fuels shame and self-righteousness. The opposite danger is lawlessness, where counselees dismiss God's commands because they are "under grace." Scripture teaches that grace trains believers to obey (Titus 2:11–12) and that love fulfills the law (Rom. 13:8–10). Counseling must uphold obedience without slipping into condemnation. Another danger is misusing the law to address matters of preference or personal conviction. The moral law—not human tradition—defines righteousness (Matt. 15:9). Counselors must distinguish between God's commands and human expectations. Finally, the law must never be presented without the gospel. Its purpose is to reveal sin and guide holiness, but only Christ gives the power to change (John 15:5).

Devotional Reflection: Read Psalm 119:1–16 and Romans 7:7–25.

Journal: How does delighting in and meditating on God's law reveal both your failure and Christ's fulfillment?

Personal Questions:

1. How does the law function in counseling to expose idols behind behaviors without crushing hope?
2. Where do you lean antinomian (disregarding law) or legalistic (using it for merit), and how do we correct it?
3. Reflect on Christ's law-fulfillment: How does it free you to obey joyfully?
4. Apply specific commandments to modern issues (e.g., coveting in consumerism): How does this guide our counsel?

Practical Applications:

- Use law meditations for heart examination.
- Teach law-gospel distinction to our counselees and explain its fruit in our lives.
- Discuss the three uses of the law in groups.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for understanding in matters of moral and ethical dilemmas, for true obedience according to the words of our Lord.

"Teach me to be resigned to thy will, to delight in thy law, to have no will but thine, to believe that everything thou dost is for my good. Help me to leave my concerns in thy hands, for thou hast power over evil, and bringest from it an infinite progression of good, until thy purposes are fulfilled." *Valley of Vision, Divine Promises*

Day 20: Chapter 20 - Of the Gospel and the Extent of Grace Thereof

Read chapter 20 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 20 teaches that while the light of nature and God's works reveal His existence and moral demands (Ps. 19:1–4; Rom. 1:19–20), only the gospel reveals the way of salvation through Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16–17). The gospel is a divine mystery once hidden but now fully revealed through Christ and the Scriptures (1 Pet. 1:10–12; 2 Tim. 1:10). It proclaims God's grace, Christ's person and work, and the promise of forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe (John 3:16; Acts 4:12). Faith comes through the Spirit's inward work and the outward preaching of the Word (Rom. 10:14–17). The Confession affirms that the gospel call is to be proclaimed to all nations, extending God's grace widely, yet savingly applied only to the elect (Matt. 28:18–20; John 6:37). Chapter 20 highlights God's mercy in revealing the gospel and His purpose to gather a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation through its message (Rev. 5:9).

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of the gospel shapes biblical counseling by making the good news of Jesus Christ the center of hope, identity, and change. Many counselees struggle with guilt, shame, bitterness, or despair. The gospel declares that God saves sinners by grace—not works (Eph. 2:8–9)—offering full forgiveness and new life through Christ's death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1–4). Counselors can continually point counselees to the gospel's power to free them from condemnation (Rom. 8:1) and to give them a new identity as God's beloved (2 Cor. 5:17). The gospel also motivates obedience, reshaping desires and empowering change through the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). When counselees feel hopeless, the gospel reminds them that Christ delivers from bondage and restores the brokenhearted (Luke 4:18). The gospel offers both comfort for sufferers and transformation for sinners. Counseling rooted in the gospel avoids moralism and instead helps people rest in Christ's finished work and walk in Spirit-enabled renewal.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 20 guards counseling by protecting the gospel from distortion. One danger is reducing counseling to self-help advice or moral improvement. Scripture teaches that true change comes only through the gospel's power (Rom. 1:16) and the Spirit's work (2 Cor. 3:18). Counselors must resist offering principles detached from Christ. Another danger is adding requirements to the gospel—whether emotional experiences, personal achievements, or spiritual performances. The gospel is received by grace alone through faith alone (Gal. 2:16). Counseling must never burden counselees with works that Christ has already fulfilled. A third danger is softening the gospel by avoiding sin, repentance, or the exclusivity of Christ. Scripture affirms there is salvation in no other name (Acts 4:12). Finally, counseling must avoid cultural versions of "good news" that promise comfort without holiness or forgiveness

without transformation (Titus 2:11–12). Properly guarded, the gospel remains the source of life, hope, and lasting change.

Devotional Reflection: Read Romans 1:16–17 and Isaiah 55:1–7.

Journal: How does the gospel's power shame your unbelief and fuel confident trust and joy in Christ?

Personal Questions:

1. How can the gospel permeate non-salvific counseling (e.g., anxiety, marriage) without forcing conversion talks?
2. Where do debates on grace's extent affect your evangelism or counsel to unbelievers?
3. Reflect on your gospel reception: What hindered you, and what grace overcame your hindrances?
4. In resistant counselees, how do we present the free offer faithfully and prayerfully?

Practical Applications:

- Develop concise gospel summaries for sessions. Use a gospel chart if needed.
- Role-play free-offer presentations. Practice sharing the gospel with others.
- Train groups in gospel-centered counseling and evangelism.

Prayer Guide:

Pray that you might better understand the gospel of grace more clearly in your heart and that you might be willing to take the message to the ends of the earth.

"O thou Most High, Creator of the ends of the earth, Governor of the universe, Judge of all men, Head of the church, Saviour of sinners; thy greatness is unsearchable, thy goodness infinite, thy compassions unfailing, thy providence boundless, thy mercies ever new. We bless thee for the words of salvation." *Valley of Vision, Sixth Day Morning, The Gospel*

Day 21: Chapter 21 - Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience

Read chapter 21 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 21 teaches that Christian liberty flows from Christ's redeeming work and frees believers from guilt, the curse of the law, and the fear of condemnation (Rom. 8:1–2; Gal. 3:13). Through the gospel, believers are delivered from the dominion of sin, the tyranny of Satan, and the oppressive requirements of human traditions (Rom. 6:14; Col. 2:20–23). This liberty is not license but the freedom to serve God joyfully, with a clear conscience and by the power of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; Ps. 119:32). The Confession emphasizes that God alone is Lord of the conscience, binding it only by Scripture (Jas. 4:12; Isa. 33:22). Therefore, it is sinful to demand obedience to human rules as if they were divine commands. Christian liberty also protects believers from coercion in matters of worship and life. Yet this liberty must never be used as an excuse for sin, but exercised in love for God and neighbor (Gal. 5:13–14).

Informing Biblical Counseling: Christian liberty transforms counseling by freeing counselees from the crushing weight of fear, guilt, and performance-based spirituality. Many believers struggle under self-imposed burdens or human expectations. Scripture teaches that Christ has set His people free from condemnation and legalistic bondage (Rom. 8:1; Gal. 5:1). Counselors can help counselees discern the difference between God's commands and man-made pressures (Matt. 11:28–30). Liberty also empowers believers to obey God from the heart, motivated by gratitude rather than fear (Rom. 6:17–18). This doctrine helps those plagued by perfectionism, anxiety, or shame by showing them that their conscience is cleansed through Christ's blood (Heb. 9:14). It also encourages those overwhelmed by others' expectations, reminding them that God alone is Lord of the conscience (Jas. 4:12). In relational struggles, liberty fosters patience and humility, teaching believers to forbear with one another in disputable matters (Rom. 14:1–5). Counselees learn to live freely, joyfully, and responsibly before the Lord.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Christian liberty protects counseling from two opposite errors: legalism and license. Legalism binds the conscience with rules God never commanded, burdening believers with fear and shame. Scripture warns against adding man-made laws to God's Word (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:20–23). Counselors must avoid equating personal preferences with biblical obedience. The opposite error is using liberty as an excuse for sin. True liberty never cancels God's moral law or undermines holiness (1 Pet. 2:16; Gal. 5:13–14). Counseling must call for Spirit-empowered obedience while upholding grace. Christian liberty also guards against coercive or manipulative counseling practices. Only Scripture has authority over the conscience, not personal opinion or cultural trends (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Another danger is pressuring counselees to adopt others' convictions in disputable matters; Scripture calls believers

to charity and patience (Rom. 14:5–13). Properly applied, Christian liberty fosters freedom, humility, love, and joyful obedience grounded in God's Word.

Devotional Reflection: Read Galatians 5:1–15 and Romans 14:1–12.

Journal: How does gospel liberty free you to serve in love rather than insist on your own rights?

Personal Questions:

1. In addiction recovery or disputable matters, how does liberty enable wise boundaries without legalism?
2. Where have others (or you) bound consciences wrongly, and what damage resulted?
3. Reflect on liberty abuses in your life: How does love limit freedom for others' good?
4. In counseling gray-area conflicts, how do we apply Romans 14 principles pastorally?

Practical Applications:

- Conduct conscience-training sessions using Romans 14.
- Discuss areas of Christian liberty where love and sacrifice for others happens within counseling conversations.
- Discuss areas of Christian liberty and how they can quickly become legalistic in groups.

Prayer Guide:

Pray that you might forever use your freedom in Christ to love and serve God and his people through the church.

"I marvel that the finite can know the infinite, here a little, afterwards in full-orbed truth; now I know but a small portion of what I shall know, here in part, there in perfection, here a glimpse, there a glory. To enjoy thee is life eternal, and to enjoy is to know, keep me in the freedom of experiencing thy salvation continually." *Valley of Vision, Freedom*

Day 22: Chapter 22 - Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

Read chapter 22 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 22 teaches that worship is appointed by God and must be regulated by Scripture, not human imagination (Deut. 12:32; John 4:23–24). God alone determines how He is to be approached, and acceptable worship includes prayer, reading and preaching of the Word, singing, ordinances, and sacred assemblies (Acts 2:42; Col. 3:16; Matt. 28:19). Worship must be offered to God through Christ the Mediator, in the power of the Spirit, with reverence and sincerity (Heb. 10:19–22; Eph. 6:18). The chapter also emphasizes the Christian Sabbath—the Lord's Day—which is set apart for rest, worship, and holy delight in God (Exod. 20:8–11; Rev. 1:10). Believers are called to turn from worldly employments and recreate themselves in the things of God (Isa. 58:13–14). This rhythm of weekly worship reflects God's design for renewal, communion, and devotion. Ultimately, Chapter 22 highlights that worship is both duty and privilege, anchoring the believer's life in God's presence and Word.

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of worship deeply shapes biblical counseling by grounding transformation in communion with God rather than self-effort. Many counselees live hurried, distracted lives, overwhelmed by anxiety or burdened by guilt. Regular worship reorients their hearts toward God's character, promises, and grace (Ps. 27:4; Ps. 73:16–17). Gathering with God's people provides encouragement, accountability, and spiritual nourishment (Heb. 10:24–25). Prayer becomes a place for honest lament, confession, and dependence (Ps. 62:8). Corporate singing forms the heart with truth and hope (Col. 3:16). The Lord's Day offers counselees a God-given rhythm for rest, recalibration, and renewal (Isa. 58:13). Worship teaches them to place God at the center of life, shaping how they face suffering, temptation, relationships, and responsibilities. Counseling that emphasizes worship helps counselees draw near to God in Spirit-enabled devotion, discovering that true change flows from beholding His glory and being transformed by His presence (2 Cor. 3:18).

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 22 guards counseling from errors that distort worship or misuse conscience. One danger is reducing worship to emotional experience or personal preference. Scripture teaches that worship must be regulated by God's Word, not by cultural trends or human creativity (Deut. 12:32; John 4:24). Counselors must help counselees discern between biblical worship and self-focused spirituality. Another danger is neglecting corporate worship, often due to shame, fear, or prolonged discouragement. Yet God calls believers to gather for mutual strengthening (Heb. 10:25). Counseling must encourage return to the means of grace rather than isolated spirituality. A third danger is treating the Lord's Day legalistically or dismissively. Scripture presents it as a gift for rest and devotion (Mark 2:27), not a burden. Counselors must avoid binding consciences beyond Scripture while also guarding against

careless neglect. Properly applied, this doctrine helps counselees embrace worship that is sincere, biblical, restorative, and essential for spiritual growth.

Devotional Reflection: Read John 4:19–26 and Hebrews 10:19–25.

Journal: What does it look like to worship in spirit and truth and how does it satisfy your soul's deepest needs?

Personal Questions:

1. How can Sabbath observance combat modern busyness and burnout in counseling advice?
2. Where has worship become formalistic or neglected in your life, and what hinders renewal?
3. Reflect on Lord's Day blessings: How has corporate worship strengthened you?
4. In counseling spiritual dryness, how do we prescribe biblical worship/Sabbath rhythms?

Practical Applications:

- Develop Sabbath rest plans.
- Examine your own and counselees worship participation.
- Teach family worship practices in groups.

Prayer Guide:

Pray and ask God to slow you down from the overwhelming busyness of the world and everything going on. Pray for rest, and a joyful worship experience with your church community.

"O God most high, most glorious, the thought of thine infinite serenity cheers me, for I am toiling and moiling, troubled and distressed, but thou art for ever at perfect peace. Thy designs cause thee no fear or care of unfulfillment, they stand fast as the eternal hills. Thy power knows no bond, thy goodness no stint. Thou bringest order out of confusion, and my defeats are thy victories: the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." *Valley of Vision, Resting in God*

Day 23: Chapter 23 - Of Lawful Oaths and Vows

Read chapter 23 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 23 teaches that a lawful oath is a solemn act of worship in which a person calls upon God as witness to the truth of what is spoken and as judge of any falsehood (Deut. 10:20; Heb. 6:16). Such oaths must be taken reverently, truthfully, and only in matters of weight and righteousness (Jer. 4:2). Scripture forbids rash, deceitful, or unbiblical oaths (Matt. 5:33–37). A lawful vow is a voluntary promise made to God alone, not to secure His favor but as a grateful expression of devotion (Ps. 76:11; Eccl. 5:4–5). The Confession warns that vows must not bind believers to sin or to practices contrary to Scripture. Both oaths and vows require integrity, sobriety, and fulfillment according to God's Word (Num. 30:2). Chapter 23 ultimately highlights the importance of truthfulness, reverent speech, and wholehearted devotion—reminding believers that God takes our words seriously and calls us to walk in sincerity before Him (Prov. 12:22).

Informing Biblical Counseling: This chapter informs counseling by emphasizing integrity, truthfulness, and seriousness in speech. Many counselees struggle with broken promises, self-deception, or patterns of dishonesty that damage relationships. Scripture teaches that God delights in truth in the inner being (Ps. 51:6) and calls His people to let their "Yes" be "Yes" (Matt. 5:37). Counselors can help individuals understand that commitments—to spouses, churches, employers, or accountability partners—are made before God (Col. 3:23–24). This produces a sober mindfulness about words and a renewed commitment to faithfulness. Lawful vows also inform counseling when counselees make intentional commitments to pursue obedience, reconciliation, or spiritual disciplines. While such commitments do not earn God's favor, they can be expressions of gratitude and intentionality (Rom. 12:1). This doctrine encourages integrity, accountability, and consistency—key components in overcoming destructive habits and rebuilding trust. Counseling grounded in Chapter 23 helps believers speak truthfully, keep promises, and reflect God's faithful character (Eph. 4:25).

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 23 guards counseling from harmful approaches to commitments and speech. One danger is pressuring counselees into unwise promises or emotionally driven commitments. Scripture warns against rash vows that lead to guilt or bondage (Eccl. 5:2–5). Counselors must encourage thoughtful, biblically grounded decisions rather than impulsive pledges. Another danger is treating human oaths or traditions as binding the conscience, when only God's Word has that authority (Matt. 15:9; Jas. 4:12). Counseling should avoid creating man-made rules disguised as spiritual obligations. A third danger is minimizing dishonesty or broken promises. Scripture condemns falsehood and calls believers to truthful speech that builds trust (Prov. 12:22; Eph. 4:25). Counselors must help counselees repent genuinely where deceit has taken root. Finally, this doctrine guards against using vows as attempts to manipulate God or earn His favor—an unbiblical approach that misunderstands grace

(Gal. 2:21). Properly applied, Chapter 23 protects the conscience and promotes wise, truthful, God-honoring commitments.

Devotional Reflection: Read Matthew 5:33–37 and Psalm 15.

Journal: How does integrity in speech reflect our hearts' obedience to God?

Personal Questions:

1. How can biblical teaching on oaths enhance trust-building in counseling and personal relationships?
2. Where have rash vows or broken promises caused harm in your life with others?
3. Reflect on commitments: How do we make them thoughtfully and keep them faithfully?
4. In counseling commitment issues (e.g., marriage, ministry), how do we apply this doctrine?

Practical Applications:

- Review commitments with integrity checklists.
- Examine current commitments with counselees and how to remain faithful in them?
- Discuss examples of godly commitments and cultural standards on commitments.

Prayer Guide:

Pray that through the Spirit all of our actions, words, and thoughts are taken captive by the holiness of our God and filled with his wisdom and grace.

"Thou art the end of all means, for if they lead me not to thee, I go away empty. Order all of my ways by thy holy word and make thy commandments the joy of my heart, that by them I may have happy converse with thee. May I grow in thy love and manifest it to mankind." *Valley of Vision, Christian Love*

Day 24: Chapter 24 - Of the Civil Magistrate

Read chapter 24 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 24 teaches that God has ordained civil authorities for His glory and the public good (Rom. 13:1–4). Magistrates are appointed to maintain justice, protect the innocent, restrain evil, and promote societal peace (1 Pet. 2:13–14). Christians are commanded to pray for rulers (1 Tim. 2:1–2), honor them, and obey their lawful commands for conscience' sake (Rom. 13:5–7). The Confession also emphasizes that the civil magistrate has no authority over the church in matters of worship or doctrine (Matt. 22:21). While believers must submit to governing authorities, they must obey God rather than men whenever human laws contradict divine commands (Acts 5:29). The magistrate wields real authority, yet a limited one; Christ alone is the King and Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22). Chapter 24 clarifies God's design for civil government, the believer's responsibilities within society, and the boundaries that protect the church's spiritual independence under the rule of Christ.

Informing Biblical Counseling: This chapter informs counseling by providing a biblical framework for understanding authority, justice, and submission. Many counselees struggle with fear, anger, or bitterness toward institutions or authority figures. Scripture teaches that civil government is part of God's good design to restrain evil and preserve order (Rom. 13:3–4). Counselors can help individuals process their experiences through this lens, encouraging trust in God's sovereignty while acknowledging real injustices (Prov. 29:2). For those overwhelmed by social instability, this doctrine reminds them that God rules over the nations and directs kings' hearts like watercourses (Prov. 21:1). It also teaches believers to live peaceably, obey lawful authority, and maintain a godly witness (1 Pet. 2:12–17). In cases of trauma or abuse by authorities, counseling must emphasize that God does not condone wicked rule and calls His people to righteousness and truth (Ps. 72:1–4). This doctrine helps counselees navigate civic responsibilities with wisdom, courage, and faith.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 24 guards counseling from extremes in how believers relate to government and authority. One danger is unbiblical rebellion—encouraging counselees to reject all authority or respond to hardship with hostility. Scripture calls believers to respect and pray for rulers (1 Tim. 2:1–2) and to submit to lawful commands unless they contradict God's Word (Acts 5:29). Counselors must avoid stoking sinful anger or fear. The opposite danger is unquestioning compliance, treating civil authority as ultimate. Civil magistrates are limited and accountable to God (Ps. 82:1–4); they must not intrude upon the church's worship or the believer's conscience (Matt. 22:21). Counseling should help individuals discern unjust commands or overreach. Another danger is politicizing spiritual struggles—reducing personal sin, relational conflict, or suffering to political categories. The gospel remains the center (Phil. 3:20). Properly applied, this doctrine helps counselees navigate civic life with humility, discernment, integrity, and unwavering loyalty to Christ.

Devotional Reflection: Read Romans 13:1–7 and 1 Timothy 2:1–4.

Journal: How does praying for authorities glorify and reflect trust in God's sovereignty?

Personal Questions:

1. In counseling with submission struggles (e.g., abusive authority), how do we balance honor with resistance to sin?
2. Where does personal rebellion against authority reveal deeper heart issues?
3. Reflect on citizenship: How does the gospel shape engagement with civil life?
4. Address church-state tensions: How to counsel biblically amid cultural conflicts?

Practical Applications:

- Lead prayers for leaders in sessions and community.
- Teach submission/obedience principles.
- Discuss civic duties and the gospel in groups.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for local authorities, state authorities, and national authorities and elected officials. Pray for salvation to come to the nations and to be a light in your local community.

"Let faith stride forth in giant power, and love respond with energy in every act. I often mourn the absence of my beloved Lord whose smile makes earth a paradise, whose voice is sweetest music, whose presence gives all graces strength. But by my unbelief I often keep him outside my door. Let faith give entrance that he may abide with me forever." *Valley of Vision, Faith and the World*

Day 25: Chapter 25 - Of Marriage

Read chapter 25 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 25 teaches that marriage is a creation ordinance designed by God for mutual help, the increase of humanity, and the prevention of immorality (Gen. 2:18; Mal. 2:15; 1 Cor. 7:2). Marriage is between one man and one woman, joined together as one flesh by God's design (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4–6). The Confession rejects any unions contrary to Scripture, including polygamy and marriages within prohibited degrees of kinship (Lev. 18:6–18). Marriage is a covenantal relationship requiring fidelity, love, and self-giving devotion (Prov. 5:18–19; Eph. 5:25–28). Husbands are called to sacrificial leadership that imitates Christ's love for the church, while wives are called to respectful submission patterned after the church's relation to Christ (Eph. 5:22–33). While marriage is honorable (Heb. 13:4), it is not for all, as some are gifted for singleness (1 Cor. 7:7). Chapter 25 presents marriage as a sacred, God-ordained institution meant for joy, holiness, and the flourishing of family and society.

Informing Biblical Counseling: Marriage plays a significant role in counseling because it shapes identity, relationships, and daily life. Scripture teaches that marriage exists for companionship, unity, and spiritual growth (Gen. 2:18; Eccl. 4:9–12). Counselors can help couples see their relationship not merely as emotional partnership but as a covenant before God (Mal. 2:14). Understanding the biblical roles within marriage encourages husbands to love sacrificially and gently (Eph. 5:25) and wives to respond with respect and trust (Eph. 5:22). This fosters healing in marriages marked by conflict, neglect, or selfishness. The doctrine also helps individuals navigate expectations, communication, and forgiveness. Since marriage reflects Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32), counseling can draw attention to how the gospel shapes relational health. Additionally, Chapter 25 helps counselees discern whether marriage or singleness is wise in their season, both being honorable callings from God (1 Cor. 7:7). Biblical marriage theology gives clear guidance and hope for relational transformation.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 25 guards counseling from distortions regarding marriage's purpose and boundaries. One danger is embracing cultural definitions of marriage that contradict Scripture. Counselors must uphold God's design of one man and one woman united in covenant (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4–6). Another danger is treating marriage as a contract grounded in personal happiness rather than a covenant rooted in faithfulness (Prov. 2:16–17). Counseling must resist encouraging divorce except where Scripture permits (Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:15). Additionally, counselors must avoid promoting abusive or domineering interpretations of marital roles. Husbands are called to sacrificial love, not tyranny (Eph. 5:25), and wives to willing respect, not subservience (Eph. 5:22). Counseling must also guard the consciences of singles, affirming the goodness of their calling and resisting the idea that marriage is spiritually superior (1 Cor. 7:32–35). Properly applied, this doctrine protects marriage's holiness, encourages sacrificial love, and maintains biblical boundaries with compassion and clarity.

Devotional Reflection: Read Ephesians 5:22–33 and Genesis 2:18–25.

Journal: How does marriage reflect Christ's sacrificial love for His bride the church?

Personal Questions:

1. How does marriage as a gospel picture inform counseling on roles, submission, and sacrificial love?
2. Where do cultural distortions of gender/roles affect your views or counselees' marriages?
3. Reflect on singleness or marriage: How does this doctrine bring contentment either way?
4. In marital conflict or divorce consideration, how do we apply biblical truths faithfully?

Practical Applications:

- Use Ephesians 5 to conduct role studies in premarital/marriage counseling.
- Discuss the differences between a covenantal view and a contractual view of marriage.
- Discuss marriage as a picture of the gospel in relation to Christ and the church in groups.

Prayer Guide:

Pray your marriage specifically and pray often that it is protected and being sanctified. Let our marriages be a picture of the beautiful gospel for the whole world to see.

"O God, I cannot endure to see the destruction of my kindred. Let those that are united to me in tender ties be precious in thy sight and devoted to thy glory. Sanctify and prosper my domestic devotion, instruction, discipline, example, that my house may be a nursery for heaven, my church the garden of the Lord, enriched with trees of righteousness of thy planting, for thy glory; let not those of my family who are amiable, moral, attractive, fall short of heaven at last; grant that the promising appearances of a tender conscience, soft heart, the alarms and delights of thy word, be not finally blotted out, but bring forth unto victory in all whom I love." *Valley of Vision, The Family*

Day 26: Chapter 26 - Of the Church

Read chapter 26 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 26 teaches that the universal church consists of all the elect who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one body under Christ, its Head (Eph. 1:22–23; Col. 1:18). This invisible church is the fullness of Christ's redeemed people. Yet Christ also established local churches, visible congregations of professing believers who gather for worship, fellowship, discipline, and mission (Acts 2:41–42; Heb. 10:24–25). These churches are governed by Christ through His Word and are led by qualified elders and served by deacons (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Acts 20:28). Members are called to mutual care, accountability, and encouragement (Rom. 12:4–5). The church administers the ordinances, proclaims the gospel, and guards sound doctrine (Matt. 28:18–20; 1 Tim. 3:15). The Confession also highlights the necessity of church discipline for holiness and restoration (Matt. 18:15–17). Ultimately, Chapter 26 emphasizes the church as God's household—a redeemed community centered on Christ, shaped by truth, and empowered by the Spirit for His glory.

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of the church profoundly shapes biblical counseling by rooting spiritual growth in community, not isolation. Many counselees struggle alone with guilt, fear, addiction, or relational wounds. Scripture teaches that believers grow together as members of one body (Eph. 4:15–16) and are called to bear each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2). The church provides teaching, shepherding, accountability, and encouragement through Word-centered ministries (Acts 2:42; Heb. 13:17). Counseling done within the context of the local church reinforces God's design for communal care, where pastors and mature believers walk alongside the hurting (1 Thess. 5:14). The ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper—strengthen faith and identity (Rom. 6:3–4; 1 Cor. 11:26). Corporate worship reminds counselees of God's character and anchors them in truth (Ps. 73:16–17). The doctrine of the church helps individuals see that change happens through belonging, discipleship, and covenant community. Counseling rooted in Chapter 26 calls people out of isolation and into Christ's body for spiritual health and growth.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 26 guards counseling from errors that ignore the essential role of the church or misuse its authority. One danger is individualistic Christianity, where counselees attempt to grow apart from regular worship, fellowship, and shepherding. Scripture teaches that believers need the body and cannot function alone (1 Cor. 12:14–21). Counselors must lovingly call people back into active church life. Another danger is abusive or authoritarian leadership. The Confession affirms that elders must shepherd willingly, humbly, and according to God's Word (1 Pet. 5:1–3). Counseling must challenge spiritual manipulation and protect the vulnerable. A third danger is neglecting church discipline, which God designed for restoration and purity (Matt. 18:15–17). Counselors must uphold discipline as a loving, biblical means—not as punishment, but as pursuit of repentance. Finally, counseling must guard

against treating the church as optional rather than essential. Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), making it central to spiritual health, accountability, and perseverance.

Devotional Reflection: Read Ephesians 4:11–16 and 1 Corinthians 12:12–27.

Journal: How does belonging to Christ's body through a local church foster mutual care and maturity?

Personal Questions:

1. How does church membership enhance personal counseling and accountability?
2. Where has church discipline been neglected or misused, and what biblical balance corrects it?
3. Reflect on your church involvement: How actively do you contribute to its edification (encouragement)?
4. In counseling church hurts or isolation, how do we direct others toward biblical ecclesiology (doctrine of the church)?

Practical Applications:

- Encourage membership commitments. Discuss different views on church membership.
- Teach Matthew 18 discipline process. How does it relate to the church and within our personal lives?
- Build small group care structures. Develop a means for small groups to graciously and lovingly care for one another.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for your local church gathering, that God would bring people as he pleases, soften hearts, and create a community of love and care for one another.

"O Lord my Lord, this is thy day, the heavenly ordinance of rest, the open door of worship, the record of Jesus' resurrection, the seal of the sabbath to come, the day when saints militant and triumphant unite in endless song." *Valley of Vision, The Lord's Day*

Day 27: Chapter 27 - Of the Communion of Saints

Read chapter 27 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 27 teaches that all true believers are united to Christ and, by virtue of that union, united to one another in love (1 Cor. 12:12–13; Eph. 4:4–6). This communion flows from their shared participation in Christ's grace, benefits, and Spirit (1 John 1:3). As members of one body, Christians share gifts, graces, burdens, and blessings for mutual good (Rom. 12:4–5; Gal. 6:2). The Confession emphasizes that this communion expresses itself in worship, prayer, service, generosity, and practical support (Acts 2:42–47; Heb. 10:24–25). While believers must show love to all, they bear a special responsibility toward fellow Christians, especially those in their local church (Gal. 6:10). Communion of saints does not erase personal boundaries or possessions, but encourages cheerful sharing out of love (2 Cor. 8:1–5). Ultimately, Chapter 27 highlights the beauty and duty of spiritual fellowship: believers belong to Christ and therefore belong to one another, reflecting God's love in tangible, mutual care.

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of the communion of saints profoundly shapes counseling by reminding counselees that Christian growth is never meant to happen alone. Many struggle with isolation, shame, or fear that keeps them from seeking help. Scripture shows that believers are called into a body where they are known, supported, and strengthened (Eph. 4:15–16). This means counseling can intentionally involve the church—pastors, small groups, mature believers—who offer encouragement, accountability, and prayer (Heb. 10:24–25). Communion of saints provides a framework for bearing burdens together (Gal. 6:2), confessing sins in safe, gospel-centered relationships (Jas. 5:16), and sharing practical help during trials (Acts 2:44–45). It assures lonely or overwhelmed counselees that God provides care through His people. This doctrine also teaches that each believer's gifts contribute to the healing and growth of others (1 Pet. 4:10). Counseling rooted in Chapter 27 helps individuals step into community, receive support, and experience transformation through Christ's body.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 27 guards counseling from errors related to isolation, unhealthy dependency, or misused community. One danger is encouraging counselees to pursue change apart from the church. Scripture teaches that believers need the body's support, wisdom, and correction (Prov. 11:14; 1 Cor. 12:21). Counselors must gently resist hyper-individualism and call people into fellowship. Another danger is fostering unhealthy dependence on counselors or friends. Communion of saints emphasizes mutuality—not relational idolatry (Gal. 6:5; Ps. 118:8). Counseling must direct people to Christ as their ultimate refuge. A third danger is violating boundaries in the name of community. While believers share generously, Scripture does not teach communal ownership or coercive sharing (Acts 5:4). Counselors must guard consciences from guilt-driven pressure and ensure that care is voluntary and loving. Finally, this doctrine protects against gossip or misuse of personal information; love "covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). Properly applied, Chapter 27 fosters a healthy, gospel-shaped community.

Devotional Reflection: Read Hebrews 10:24–25 and Galatians 6:1–2.

Journal: How has love and good works been stirred up within you within the local church and even outside of it?

Personal Questions:

1. How does the communion of the saints (community) practically counter loneliness or self-reliance in counseling?
2. Where do you resist vulnerability or fail to bear others' burdens?
3. Reflect on mutual edification (encouragement) experiences: What strengthened your faith the most?
4. In counseling disconnected believers, how do we encourage biblical fellowship?

Practical Applications:

- Create care groups within your local church to specifically care for a group of people.
- Assign "one another" ministry challenges. How can we challenge people to care for one another well?
- Start a discipleship group where each person gets to talk about their struggles and how to deal with it.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for the saints who will come together in worship and praise. Pray for the word being preached, the gospel being proclaimed, and the hearts who might hear it.

"Let me before the broken elements, emblems of thy dying love, cry to thee with broken heart for grace and forgiveness. I long for that blissful communion of thy people in thy eternal house in the perfect kingdom; these are they that follow the Lamb; may I be of their company." *Valley of Vision, Lord's Day Morning*

Day 28: Chapter 28 - Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Read chapter 28 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 28 teaches that Christ ordained two gospel ordinances—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—to be observed by His church until His return (Matt. 28:19–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–26). These ordinances do not work automatically or confer grace apart from faith; rather, they are means of grace appointed to strengthen believers through the Spirit (Rom. 4:11; Acts 2:41–42). Baptism publicly identifies a believer with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–4), while the Lord's Supper proclaims Christ's atoning sacrifice and nourishes believers spiritually as they commune with Him and one another (1 Cor. 10:16–17). The Confession emphasizes that only those who are regenerate and walking in obedience should partake meaningfully (Acts 8:36–38). These ordinances belong to the church—not to individuals or private gatherings—and must be administered according to Christ's commands (1 Cor. 11:18–20). Overall, Chapter 28 highlights the beauty of God's appointed signs that confirm His promises, strengthen faith, and unite believers to Christ and each other.

Informing Biblical Counseling: Baptism and the Lord's Supper play a powerful role in biblical counseling because they ground believers in visible, tangible reminders of the gospel. Baptism anchors identity: counselees struggling with guilt, shame, or confusion are reminded that they have died with Christ and risen to new life in Him (Rom. 6:4,11). Counseling can call them back to the reality that they belong to Jesus, not to their past failures. The Lord's Supper provides ongoing nourishment, reinforcing Christ's love, forgiveness, and sustaining grace (1 Cor. 11:24–26). Brokenhearted counselees find hope at the Table, where Christ assures them of His presence and covenant faithfulness (Matt. 26:28). These ordinances also strengthen community connection—many who suffer do so silently and alone, yet the ordinances remind them they are part of a body (1 Cor. 10:17). Counseling informed by Chapter 28 directs people to these God-given means of grace as anchors for identity, assurance, perseverance, and spiritual renewal.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 28 guards counseling by preventing misunderstandings about the ordinances. One danger is treating baptism or the Lord's Supper as automatic fixes for spiritual problems. Scripture teaches that without faith, these actions profit nothing (Rom. 2:28–29; 1 Cor. 11:27–29). Counselors must avoid offering the ordinances as rituals that magically remove guilt or transform behavior. Another danger is neglecting the ordinances, leaving counselees disconnected from God's appointed means of strengthening faith. The Lord's Supper especially guards believers against despair by directing them repeatedly to Christ's finished work (Luke 22:19–20). Counseling must not overlook the church's role in healing, accountability, and sacramental nourishment. A third danger is letting counselees approach these ordinances casually or unexamined. Scripture calls for self-reflection and sincerity (1 Cor. 11:28). Properly applied, Chapter 28 helps counseling avoid ritualism, neglect, or misuse, instead encouraging believers to engage Baptism and the Lord's Supper as Christ-appointed gifts for ongoing spiritual health.

Devotional Reflection: Read 1 Corinthians 11:23–32 and Romans 6:3–5.

Journal: How do these signs strengthen our remembrance of Christ's death and your union with him?

Personal Questions:

1. How can ordinances serve as means of grace in counseling spiritual renewal?
2. Where has participation become routine or unworthy, and how do we repair this rightly?
3. Reflect on baptism/Supper experiences: What truths did they reinforce?
4. In counseling ordinance preparation or misunderstanding, how do we teach it biblically?

Practical Applications:

- In membership classes teach these ordinances.
- Guide self-examination before Supper. Direct people to examine their hearts before the Lord.
- Discuss symbolic meanings in groups. What are the different views on these ordinances and what is correct?

Prayer Guide:

Pray for the Spirit to convict, reveal, and bring to repentance all people within the Lord's community that they may be healed and find rest for their souls.

"Lord, teach me the nature of a sacrament as a seal and a pledge of love, that Christ is faithful to make himself a present reality to his own who are guests at his table…As I come to the feast, help me to recall my neglect of duties towards myself, my family, church, friends, by not instructing, exhorting, being an example." *Valley of Vision, The Minister before Sacrament*

Day 29: Chapter 29 - Of Baptism

Read chapter 29 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 29 teaches that baptism is an ordinance of the New Covenant, instituted by Christ as a sign of a believer's union with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:3–4). Baptism symbolizes cleansing from sin (Acts 22:16), the believer's new identity, and entrance into the visible church (1 Cor. 12:13). The Confession affirms that baptism is for those who actually profess repentance and faith in Christ (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36–38). It rejects infant baptism as lacking biblical warrant, insisting instead on the baptism of disciples alone. Baptism does not save or convey grace automatically, yet it is an act of obedience through which believers publicly declare allegiance to Christ (1 Pet. 3:21). Immersion in water best represents the biblical symbolism of burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). Ultimately, Chapter 29 portrays baptism as a joyful, visible confession of faith, a covenantal sign of belonging to Christ and His people.

Informing Biblical Counseling: Baptism provides a powerful anchor for counseling because it grounds a believer's identity in Christ rather than in past sin or present struggles. Many counselees wrestle with guilt, shame, or confusion about who they are. Baptism reminds them that they have died to sin and risen to new life (Rom. 6:6–11). Counselors can call them back to this foundational identity when they feel defined by failure. Baptism also strengthens assurance: those who trust Christ publicly declare their union with Him and His saving work (Gal. 3:27). When counselees feel isolated or spiritually adrift, baptism reminds them they were welcomed into a community—the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). It also motivates obedience, encouraging believers to walk in the newness of life they have professed (Col. 3:1–3). In counseling, referencing baptism helps individuals remember that transformation is not self-powered but rooted in the new creation God has already begun in them (2 Cor. 5:17).

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 29 guards counseling from misunderstandings that can lead to spiritual confusion. One danger is treating baptism as a source of salvation rather than a sign of it. Scripture teaches that salvation is through faith alone, not through water or ritual (Eph. 2:8–9; Rom. 3:28). Counselors must ensure counselees do not place confidence in the act instead of in Christ. Another danger is giving false assurance to individuals baptized without genuine repentance or faith. The New Testament consistently links baptism with personal belief (Acts 8:36–37). Counseling should emphasize heart transformation, not mere ceremony. A third danger is minimizing baptism's significance. Neglecting baptism deprives believers of a God-given means of strengthening faith and identity (1 Pet. 3:21). Counselors must encourage obedience without coercion, helping individuals understand baptism's rich meaning. Properly applied, Chapter 29 protects counselees from ritualism, presumption, and neglect—rooting their hope in Christ while honoring the ordinance He has given.

Devotional Reflection: Read Romans 6:1–11 and Matthew 28:18–20.

Journal: How does baptism symbolize your death to sin and life in Christ? What new identity have you been given?

Personal Questions:

1. How can baptism's symbolism strengthen identity and obedience in counseling new believers?
2. Where do misunderstandings (e.g., mode, subjects) affect practice or assurance?
3. Reflect on your baptism: What truths did it declare, and how does it continue to speak?
4. In preparing baptism candidates, how do we ensure gospel-centered understanding?

Practical Applications:

- Conduct baptism classes with testimony prep.
- Share baptism stories. Share your baptism story with someone who is wanting to get baptised.
- Teach symbolism in discipleship. Ordinances are symbols that point us to the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for those being baptized and those who might soon become baptized that they find their rest and strength in the Lord of their salvation.

"O Lord, for ever will thy free forgiveness live that was gained on the mount of blood; in the midst of a world of pain it is a subject for praise in every place, a song on earth, an anthem in heaven, its love and virtue knowing no end. I have a longing for the world above where multitudes sing the great song, for my soul was never created to love the dust of earth." *Valley of Vision, Calvary's Vision*

Day 30: Chapter 30 - Of the Lord's Supper

Read chapter 30 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 30 teaches that the Lord's Supper is a New Covenant ordinance instituted by Christ to proclaim His death, nourish believers spiritually, and strengthen their communion with Him and one another (1 Cor. 11:23–26; 1 Cor. 10:16–17). In the Supper, believers feed on Christ by faith—not physically, but spiritually—as they meditate on His sacrifice and enjoy His real, gracious presence (John 6:35; Heb. 10:19–22). The bread and cup remain ordinary elements, symbolizing Christ's body and blood, yet through the Spirit they become a means of grace to believers (Matt. 26:26–28). The Confession firmly rejects transubstantiation and any physical presence in the elements. Participating unworthily brings judgment, so believers must examine themselves, repent of sin, and partake with reverence (1 Cor. 11:27–29). The Supper is a family meal given to baptized, professing Christians within the gathered church. Ultimately, it is a joyful proclamation of Christ's death, a foretaste of glory, and a reminder of His unfailing covenant love.

Informing Biblical Counseling: The Lord's Supper profoundly shapes counseling because it directs struggling believers back to Christ's finished work. Many counselees wrestle with guilt, shame, fear, or spiritual dryness. The Table reminds them that Christ's body was broken and His blood shed for full forgiveness (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:14). It is not a reward for the strong but nourishment for the weak. Through the Supper, believers experience reassurance that Christ is truly for them, sustaining their faith amid trials (Ps. 34:8; 1 Cor. 10:16). The Lord's Supper also fosters community healing, reminding counselees that they are part of a body and not alone in their struggles (1 Cor. 10:17). When relationships are strained, the Table calls believers to reconciliation, forgiveness, and unity (Matt. 5:23–24). For those discouraged by slow progress in sanctification, the Supper anchors them in Christ's unchanging grace. Counseling that incorporates this doctrine helps people return again and again to the gospel's comfort and power.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 30 guards counseling from misunderstandings that can harm spiritually vulnerable people. One danger is turning the Table into a ritual of merit—as if participation itself cleanses sin. Scripture teaches that forgiveness comes through Christ alone, not through the act of eating and drinking (Rom. 3:24–26). Counselors must point counselees to grace, not superstition. Another danger is the opposite: treating the Supper casually, without self-examination or repentance. Scripture warns that unworthy participation invites discipline (1 Cor. 11:27–30). Counseling should encourage sober reflection while avoiding crushing guilt. Counselors must also guard against withholding the Supper from genuinely repentant believers who feel unworthy. Christ welcomes contrite hearts (Ps. 51:17). Finally, counseling must resist isolating the Supper from the local church. It is a corporate ordinance meant for gathered believers (1 Cor. 11:18–22). Properly applied, Chapter 30 helps counseling avoid legalism, fear, and ritualism, guiding believers to Christ's grace displayed at His Table.

Devotional Reflection: Read Luke 22:14–20 and 1 Corinthians 10:14–22.

Journal: How does the Lord's Supper deepen communion with Christ and His body (the church)?

Personal Questions:

1. How can the Lord's Supper participation nourish faith amid counseling struggles?
2. Where has unworthy participation occurred, and what self-examination prevents it?
3. Reflect on the Lord's Supper benefits: remembrance, unity, proclamation—which most impacts you?
4. In counseling table fellowship, how do we "fence" (guard) rightly while inviting worthy receivers?

Practical Applications:

- Provide Pre-Supper meditations and prompts of self-examination.
- Teach the worthy manner 1 Corinthians 11, vs unworthy manner.
- Discuss in small groups the different views of the Lord's Supper and why the confession denounces transubstantiation (physical presence of Christ in elements).

Prayer Guide:

Pray for healthy self-examination for sins that go unnoticed, and our rebellious nature that we might find forgiveness and repentance.

"God of all good, I bless thee for the means of grace; teach me to see in them thy loving purpose and the joy and strength of my soul. Thou hast prepared for me a feast; and though I am unworthy to sit down as guest, I wholly rest on the merit of Jesus, and hide myself beneath his righteousness; when I hear his tender invitation and see his wondrous grace, I cannot hesitate, but must come to thee in love." *Valley of Vision, The Lord's Supper*

Day 31: Chapter 31 - Of the State of Man After Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead

Read chapter 31 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 31 teaches that at death, human bodies return to dust while their souls continue consciously in an intermediate state (Gen. 3:19; Eccl. 12:7). The souls of the righteous enter the presence of the Lord in joy and rest (Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:23), while the souls of the wicked experience misery apart from God (Luke 16:22–26). There is no second chance for salvation after death (Heb. 9:27). At the last day, Christ will return and raise all the dead bodily (John 5:28–29). Believers will be raised incorruptible, glorified like Christ (1 Cor. 15:42–44; 1 John 3:2), and reunited with their souls. The wicked will be raised to dishonor and eternal judgment. The final resurrection will inaugurate the eternal state, where righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13). Chapter 31 anchors the believer's hope in a future resurrection and final restoration, affirming God's justice, Christ's triumph, and the certainty of eternal life.

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of death and resurrection offers profound comfort in counseling by addressing fears, grief, suffering, and questions of eternity. For counselees facing loss or mourning deeply, Scripture assures that believers who die are immediately with the Lord in conscious joy (Phil. 1:23; Rev. 14:13). This truth brings hope in seasons of sorrow. For those battling illness or chronic pain, the promise of a resurrected, glorified body encourages endurance (Rom. 8:18–23). The certainty of resurrection reassures anxious counselees that death is not the end but the doorway to everlasting life (John 11:25–26). This doctrine also motivates holiness, reminding believers that their labor is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). In counseling, emphasizing eternity helps counselees reorient their priorities, overcome fear, forgive others, and persevere through trials. Chapter 31 shapes counseling with a hope anchored beyond this life—hope that strengthens faith, steadies the heart, and lifts the eyes toward Christ's return.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 31 guards counseling from errors that confuse death, eternity, and the resurrection. One danger is false hope, such as believing in post-death repentance, purgatory, or a second chance. Scripture teaches that judgment follows death (Heb. 9:27), making this life the time for repentance (2 Cor. 6:2). Counselors must guide counselees away from wishful thinking and toward the gospel's urgent call. Another danger is minimizing the reality of grief, offering superficial comfort or spiritual clichés. Scripture validates sorrow—even Jesus wept at the tomb (John 11:35). Counselors must join counselees in lament while holding out genuine hope. A third danger is fearing death in a way that paralyzes faith. Christ has conquered death (1 Cor. 15:54–57), and counseling must point believers to this victory. Finally, counselors must avoid speculative teaching about the intermediate state or end times. God's Word provides clear, sufficient truth. Properly applied, this doctrine cultivates sober hope, courageous faith, and eternal perspective.

Devotional Reflection: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 2 Corinthians 5:1–10.

Journal: How does the hope of a future resurrection and eternal glory lighten present burdens?

Personal Questions:

1. How does afterlife doctrine reframe counseling on death, grief, or chronic suffering?
2. Where do fears of death or the "unknown" persist, and how can Scripture comfort?
3. Reflect on the resurrection body: What hope does it give for current physical/mental struggles?
4. In mourning counselees, how do we offer biblical hope without platitudes?

Practical Applications:

- Teach counselees what grief is, looks like, and how to grieve well with confidence in the work of Christ.
- Prepare your funeral counsel biblically. Be ready for these conversations.
- Discuss eschatology's comfort in groups.

Prayer Guide:

Pray for the peace and security only God can offer through Christ might reign in our lives and especially as we get closer to being in glory with our Lord.

"O Son of God and Son of man, Thou wast incarnate, didst suffer, rise, ascend for my sake; Thy departure was not a token of separation but a pledge of return; thy word, promises, sacraments, show thy death until thou come again. That day is no horror to me, for thy death has redeemed me, thy Spirit fills me, thy love animates me, thy word governs me." *Valley of Vision, The Second Coming*

Day 32: Chapter 32 - Of the Last Judgment

Read chapter 32 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

Chapter Summary: Chapter 32 teaches that God has appointed a specific day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). All people—righteous and wicked—will stand before Christ to give an account for every thought, word, and deed (2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 12:36). The righteous, clothed in Christ's righteousness, will enter everlasting life and joy in God's presence (Matt. 25:34; Rev. 21:3–4). The wicked, who refused the gospel, will face eternal punishment (Matt. 25:41,46). This judgment will vindicate God's justice, display His mercy, and bring final order to all things (Rom. 2:5–8). The Confession emphasizes that the certainty of judgment should deter sin, strengthen obedience, and cultivate watchfulness and hope (2 Pet. 3:10–14). For believers, the Last Judgment is not a day of dread but of ultimate redemption, when Christ removes all evil and establishes His everlasting kingdom in perfect righteousness and peace (Rev. 22:3–5).

Informing Biblical Counseling: The doctrine of the Last Judgment offers deep comfort and clarity for counselees wrestling with fear, injustice, suffering, or uncertainty. For those overwhelmed by evil or wrongs that seem unresolved, Scripture assures that God will bring perfect justice (Rom. 12:19; Ps. 98:9). This frees counselees from bitterness and helps them entrust vengeance to the Lord. For the anxious or guilt-ridden, the Last Judgment reminds believers that they stand before God covered in Christ's righteousness (Rom. 8:1; John 5:24). Counseling can help them replace fear with confidence in Christ's finished work. The coming judgment also motivates holy living, encouraging counselees to walk in obedience and sincerity, knowing their labor is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Pet. 3:11). For the suffering, the final judgment offers hope: God will wipe away every tear and make all things new (Rev. 21:4). This doctrine helps counselees endure trials with courage and eternal perspective.

Guarding Biblical Counseling: Chapter 32 guards counseling from distortions regarding fear, justice, and motivation. One danger is using the Last Judgment to intimidate believers or manipulate behavior. Scripture teaches that Christ's perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18) and that believers face the judgment seat with confidence because of His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). Counselors must avoid fear-based spirituality. The opposite danger is minimizing the seriousness of judgment, which can lead to apathy or indifference toward sin. Scripture warns that every believer will give an account (Rom. 14:10–12), so counseling must uphold holiness without fostering dread. Another danger is assuming earthly injustice will always be resolved in this life. The Last Judgment assures that God sees, remembers, and will act perfectly (Heb. 4:13). Counselors must guide counselees away from vengeance or despair and toward hope in God's timing. Properly applied, this doctrine cultivates sobriety, comfort, humility, perseverance, and deep trust in Christ's righteous rule.

Devotional Reflection: Read Revelation 20:11–15 and Matthew 25:31–46.

Journal: How does standing before Christ's throne one day, shape present priorities?

Personal Questions:

1. How can judgment truth motivate accountability and perseverance without morbid fear?
2. Where do thoughts of rewards (or lack) inspire greater faithfulness in small things?
3. Reflect on justice: How does final reckoning comfort victims of injustice?
4. In counseling end-times anxiety or complacency, how do we apply eschatology pastorally?

Practical Applications:

- Conduct life audits in light of the judgment seat. Consider what we are doing now and if it lines up with Scripture.
- Emphasize gospel urgency in evangelism. Teach evangelism methods and help encourage people to share their faith.
- In groups, discuss the different eschatological views and why they matter.

Prayer Guide:

Pray that the Lord of judgement might be merciful and gracious to us sinners as we approach his throne and answer for ourselves.

"Let angels sing for sinners repenting, prodigals restored, backsliders reclaimed, Satan's captives released, blind eyes opened, broken hearts bound up, the despondent cheered, the self-righteous stripped, the formalist driven from a refuge of lies, the ignorant enlightened, and the saints built up in their holy faith. I ask great things of a great God." *Valley of Vision, The Great God*