



## SUMMIT COUNSELING MINISTRY VISION & PIECES

Ephesians 4:11-13, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Tonight’s presentation will be given in three sections:

1. The Unique **Opportunities and Challenges** of Summit’s Counseling Ministry
2. How the **Pieces** of the Counseling Ministry Are **Designed to Fuel One Another**
3. What This All Means for **Individual Ministries** within the Counseling Ministry

### Opportunities and Challenges

Major life challenges and transitions are when people are open to receive (conversion) and apply (discipleship) the gospel.

We have a church full of caring, in-process people who know many hurting people looking for hope, purpose, and direction.

Area churches look to Summit to help with counseling concerns that they feel ill-equipped to handle.

Counseling-related interactions tend to be very time cumbersome and our pastoral/counseling staff will never meet this need.

Unless our counseling ministry is moving people into the community life of the church we are doing little of eternal significance.

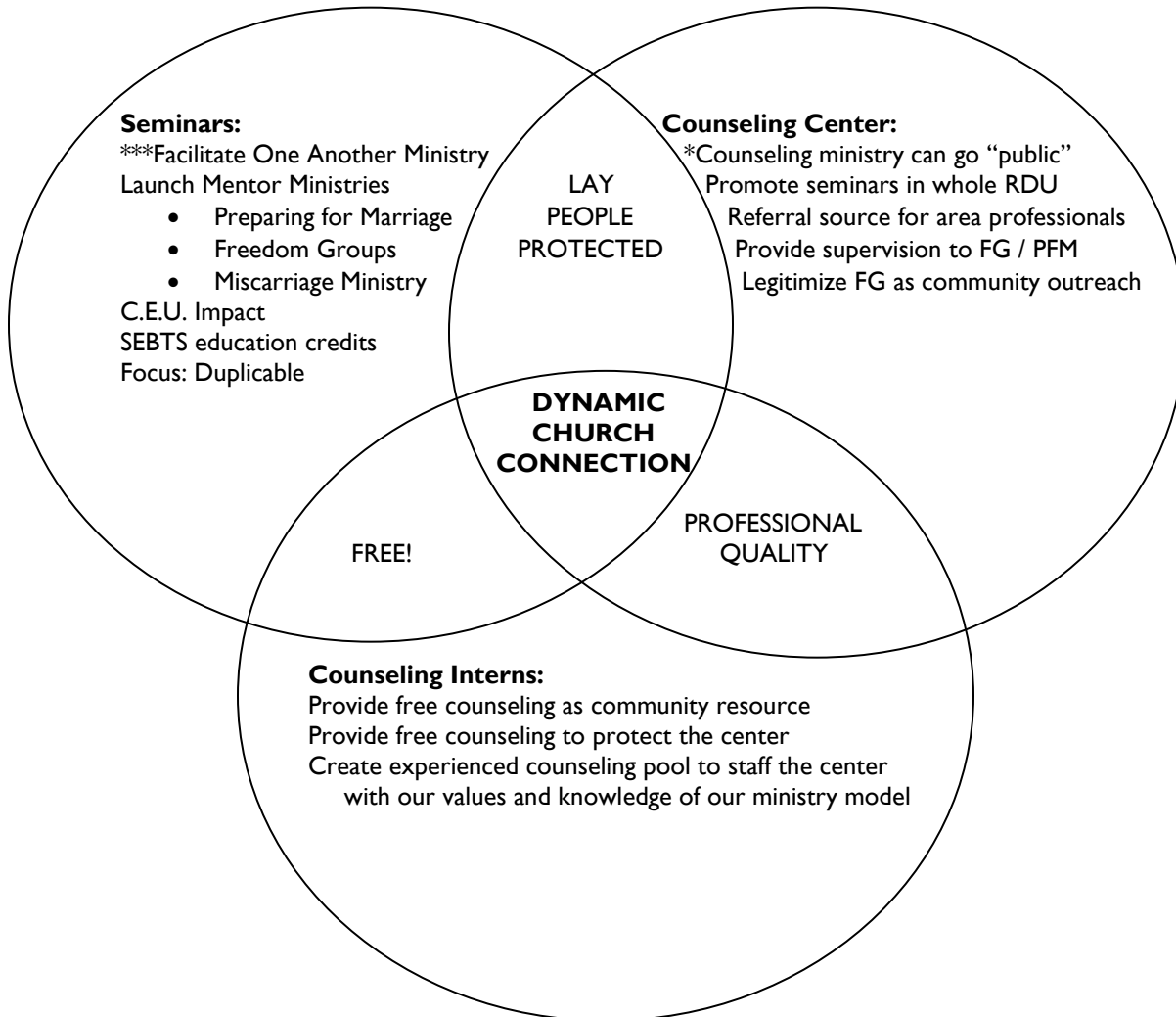
How do we stay gospel-centered and Bible-based when the secular and much of the “Christian” counseling literature is not?

We have a large number of church members and graduate counseling students eager to participate.

The more things we launch the more we have to announce, perpetuate, cultivate / grow leaders, supervise and resource.

Each ministry has to be conducive to the volunteer’s life schedule and the church’s event schedule.

## How the Pieces Fuel One Another



### Tentative Upcoming Schedule

First Four Seminars (2011)	Next Five Seminars (2012)	Next Three Seminars (2013)	Next Seminars (2014)
Anger (e)	Marriage Foundations (m)	Depression (e)	Substance Abuse (a)
Grief (e)	Communication (m)	Anxiety (e)	Codependency (a)
Sexual Sin (a)	Budgeting (m)	Post-Traumatic Stress (e)	Eating Disorders (a)
Betrayal of Sexual Sin (a)	Decision Making (m)		<i>Plenty after than....</i>
	Romance/Intimacy (m)		

**SEBTS Credit Schedule:** Each Spring offer **M**arriage & Pre-Marital Counseling (ETA Spring 2013). Each Fall alternate between offering Counseling Problematic **E**motions (ETA Fall 2014) and Counseling **A**ddictions (ETA Fall 2015).



## What This All Means for Individual Ministries

The biggest implication of all that has been said is that each ministry within the counseling ministry must function as a “part of the whole” and not just with “independent excellence.” As a church with thousands of members, multiple sites, and trying to use counseling to reach the community, an “island ministry” (as we will call them) will not be effective at creating a **sustainable** overall counseling ministry. Excellence without cohesion would be like a great engine with no oil, the engine (lay leaders) would get overheated and burn up. The design of the counseling ministry is intended to protect our lay leaders by providing a healthy system for each counseling ministry to operate within.

It should be said clearly what island ministries do is most often good, and frequently excellent. The term “island” is not meant to speak negatively about the quality or importance of the ministry that is being done. The term island is being used to assess the sustainability of that ministry within a setting like The Summit Church. For reasons that will be explained below, it is particularly important that counseling ministries not be created or executed as island ministries.

What follows are eight descriptions of an island ministry. Each will be discussed in three paragraphs. The first paragraph will define that mark of an island ministry. The second paragraph will describe the dangers of creating a ministry with this mark. The third paragraph will describe how the Summit counseling ministry (as described above) is designed to avoid this particular weakness.

1. **An island ministry lacks a clear and overt push towards general small group participation.** Much can be done to help someone with a relational, emotional, or situational crisis that does not clearly highlight God’s intent that the continuing care for this person should occur within the life of the church. The same can be said for ministries that walk with people, couples, or families through major life transitions. When this happens, the ministry is operating as an “island” because it is not connected to the “main land” of where God intends the ongoing care of souls to occur.

**Dangers:** The major danger is that our care can be excellent in its quality, but lead to greater dependence upon counseling specific resources (personal meetings, groups, conferences, or literature) than on living in Christian community. When this occurs it tends to reinforce or build skepticism about the church’s willingness to care, ability to understand, and desire to be involved in “messy” situations. This weakness also builds a mounting sense of pressure on those who serve in these ministries because the longer they serve, the more people become dependent upon them for help and guidance.

**Alternative:** Every resource produced by the Summit counseling ministry has clear and overt calls (written and verbal) to join a small group with an explanation of the unique benefits of Christian community for that particular subject. Because the seminars are always church-wide events, we can explain that our people do care, are informed with the resource that was beneficial, and want to be involved by continuing the care provided by “doing life with” them.

2. **An island ministry lacks an internal, self-perpetuating leadership development mechanism.** Leadership development can take as much time and effort as the ministry itself. There can be one set of meetings to be equipped to lead, another set of meetings to learn your ministry curriculum, and then you begin to lead by participating in another set of meetings. Each of the equipping and curriculum meetings must be regularly offered by lead-leaders who also have a desire to be involved in the actual ministry. At other times, ministries may launch based upon the expertise of a single leader with no leadership development mechanism in place because the first generation leader is pre-trained.

**Dangers:** This ministry development cycle heavily burdens and often burns out the lead-leaders, requires many meetings away from home at times when schedules must coordinate, and can lose many potential new leaders in the process. The level of commitment and schedule compatibility required can unnecessarily reduce the leadership pool and make long-term viability of the ministry hard to sustain. This is especially difficult when a new ministry is launched by a uniquely gifted or experienced individual. When his/her ministry needs to expand because of demand there is no mechanism in place to raise up new leaders. When demand expands beyond supply an expectation has been created that either produces disappointment with the church or the demand for one-on-one counseling service with the ministry that is beyond capacity.

**Alternative:** The majority of training for lay leaders in the counseling ministry will be attending the subject-based seminars in the area(s) of desired ministry. The supplemental leadership training needed will be offered through the EQUIP Leadership Forum meetings or on-line video resources. The internal, self-perpetuating leadership training would generally look like (1) attend a seminar you have interest in and connect with existing leaders, (2) go through brief supplemental leadership training at your convenience, and (3) begin serving as an apprentice leader in your area of interest.



- 3. An island ministry is designed to only serve one sub-population of the church through a single venue.** This approach seeks to create a specific, self-contained ministry for each need, gender, and age bracket within the church or community. An entire ministry system (curriculum, leadership structure, and meeting time) is created for each sub-population.

**Dangers:** Ministry quickly becomes too elaborate to be effectively accessed or communicated. Various ministries begin to compete over the same resources of time, space, and public announcement. Volunteers begin to feel unsupported or disenfranchised because the ministry framework does not allow for the level of access or promotion the value of their ministry legitimately deserves.

**Alternative:** By basing new ministries out of church-wide seminars that equip small group leaders and train graduate counseling interns we are able to provide subject specific ministries that serve and equip broad segments of our church and community. Appendixes, supplemental resources, and annotated bibliographies are created for each seminar to expand the population impact of each resource.

- 4. An island ministry requires ministry-specific explanation to the church in order to be utilized.** In the absence church-wide familiarity of any overarching ministry models or materials, each ministry must be described to the church in significant detail. Promotional materials or public announcements have to be repeatedly made in order to keep each ministry in the consciousness of the congregation.

**Dangers:** When the church does not understand a ministry the people will either not utilize it or use it poorly by referring people who do not fit that ministry's services well. The result is that those who mustered the courage to seek help quit seeking after a failed attempt, and it discourages leaders who feel like no one understands or cares about how they are trying to serve God. When each island ministry has to be explained then church members begin to assume that it is too complicated for them and back away from involvement or referral.

**Alternative:** By basing counseling ministries out of regular church-wide events, the congregation will begin to learn the multiple variations of three lay ministry structures we offer (marriage mentoring, recovery groups, personal mentoring) and two professional level resources (graduate intern counseling and counseling center). As members attend the subjects in their areas of need or interest, they will become more familiar with the content and style of the seminars and the ministries that flow from them. Having a counseling center with a vested interest in promoting these events throughout RDU will allow an additional level of community awareness and outreach for these resources.

- 5. An island ministry requires a high degree of live re-teaching of its core material.** If an island ministry is teaching based, then its core lessons must be offered repeatedly in order to expose new participants to the material. The teaching component usually comprises at least half, usually more, of the gathered time.

**Dangers:** The bulk of the ministry time is spent in the lowest-touch form of interaction—presentation. For counseling ministries, this results in a great deal of energy being put into raising up teachers and hosting classes which precludes these same times and energies from being devoted to interaction with the people being served. Scheduling becomes twice as difficult because time must be found for both the instructive and interactive portions of the ministry.

**Alternative:** The low-touch, presentation component of the counseling ministry will be offered live only when it is fulfilling several other ministry functions (church-wide awareness, campus level impact, strategic outreach, academic credit, etc...) and be available via video at any time. This will allow for the time when a ministry gathers to focus on trust / relationship building, personal application, accountability, prayer, etc...

- 6. An island ministry lacks overt connection points to known, trained, and adequate supervisors.** When a situation in an island ministry is more than the lay leader is prepared to handle, it is either unclear who the case should be referred to, how the referral should be made, or the referral is made to someone without the adequate time or training to handle the case.

**Dangers:** The most obvious dangers is that when lay leaders in the counseling ministry do not know when, where, and how to refer to adequate supervisors then (1) people who came to the church for help get hurt, and (2) our lay leaders get hurt in the process of trying to help. The less obvious problem is that this dilemma makes it harder to recruit lay leaders, because they can sense being placed on an "island" and are rightly uncomfortable with the implications.



**Alternative:** Resources produced by the Summit counseling ministry have multiple internal assessments that reveal (if the participant is honest) when a case is beyond a lay level involvement and what type of resource would be situationally-appropriate. The lay leader is not asked to make this assessment, but merely to reinforce the message of the written materials. Also, the Summit counseling ministry is developing a leadership structure of graduate counseling interns and full time counselors to handle the one-on-one case load and be available for consultation with our lay leaders.

7. **Island ministries may lack a fluid connection with the doctrine and culture of the larger church.** Island ministries tend to be disproportionately defined by the personality of their leader or their curriculum. The longer an island ministry exists the stronger this tendency becomes.

**Dangers:** Particularly in the arena of counseling, where even Christian resources vary greatly in the doctrine they teach and the culture they seek to create, this is an important concern. It is possible to “help” people in a way that makes it less comfortable for them to be involved in the larger church. Counseling literature has a strong tendency towards messages of self-reliance, providing inaccurate views of God, or creating community that reinforce that your struggle is your identity.

**Alternative:** Summit counseling resources draw upon and point people to those resources that are most consistent with our values and culture on a given subject. When other resources provide valuable insight or application, but have less compatibility with our doctrine or culture, we will reference those points while contextualizing them within our vision for church life and the gospel.

8. **Island ministries resist making sacrifices for what benefits the church as a whole.** Functioning as part of a whole is always more cumbersome than accomplishing something alone. Out of passion for their subject or people group, island ministries seek to alleviate this hindrance by functioning independently and, thereby, unplug from structural elements necessary to gain the strength, impact, and sustainability provided by operating within a larger ministry.

**Dangers:** These island ministries either: (a) launch and fizzle or (b) start, grow beyond their sustainability, and struggle, fizzle, or crash. In the first possibility an excellent ministry is created but struggles to get off the ground because adequate awareness cannot be generated. In the second possibility an excellent ministry is created, it is utilized and grows, but the inability to expand the ministry to facilitate this growth strains the lay leaders to the point they eventually burnout and feel “used” by the church. It is believed that whatever good thing was created should receive the attention necessary to sustain it even when that ministry does not have the design elements to benefit from the resources available to it.

**Alternative:** The Summit counseling ministry tries to present a compelling vision and clear guidelines for “main land ministry,” passion-specific ministry and define the “island ministry” dangers that our God-given passion can easily blind us to. The Summit counseling ministry is fervently working (admittedly, we’re in process) to create a multi-level ministry structure that can birth, train, and sustain the full breadth of ministries necessary to facilitate our members caring for one another and reaching our community with the life-transforming power of the gospel.