

Letter from the Editor



by KIMBERLY MONROE

Dear *JBC* readers,

This issue struck some deep chords with me. I came to faith during a very low point in my life. A friend at work had shared the gospel with me, which I balked at. But at some point, my pain was so deep that I went to him and said, “I am interested in finding out more about God, but I’m such a mess. I feel like I have to get myself together first.” My friend wisely replied, “No, no, no! This is the perfect time to come to him. This is exactly when you should.” I didn’t understand what he meant, but within a couple of months, I became a believer.

My idea of what God was like and what a relationship with him would involve was mostly wrong. I expected him to be distant and demanding. I’m so thankful I was wrong. This issue of the *JBC* reminds me of just how wrong I was about God’s character and of how much the Holy Spirit has shown me over the past four decades. God knows what we face, he knows what it is like for us to navigate life, and he cares so much about us that he helps. It is such a delight to be reminded of these truths. As you read these articles, you will undoubtedly learn about counseling, but you will also see the beautiful character of God on display.

We have five articles and a new volume of “Book Notes” to share with you.

In “Finding Refuge: Helping Those Who Re-Experience Traumatic Memories,” Darby Strickland focuses on how to recognize and help

those whose traumatic memories intrude into their everyday lives in vivid and debilitating ways. Strickland shares about God's heart for these sufferers whose episodes can be so severe that they feel like they are re-experiencing their trauma all over again.

Next, Ed Welch works through the three dialogues between Moses and God in Exodus to show how God seeks friendship with his people through back-and-forth, call-and-response interactions. Though few people in the Old Testament experienced this, Jesus has enlarged the invitation so we can all know the triune God as our friend.

Todd Stryd also writes about making a connection rooted in God's ways, though a different kind of connection. He wants you to see that what you do in counseling ministry is *not* fundamentally different from what you do in everyday ministry at your church or in your home. Rather, counseling is a more specific application of God's Word based on the needs and situation of the person you are helping. Using the biblical categories of love and humility, he shows the continuity between these two ways of ministry to help counseling feel less like an alien, intimidating endeavor.

We have two offerings for you in the Counselor's Toolbox. First, we have a practical piece from Esther Liu. She points out that many people add theological qualifiers to descriptions of their suffering so as not to appear spiritually immature. For example, "My life is so hard . . . but I know God is in control. I just need to trust him more." With counselees who make such statements, Liu uses the "You Are Here" star you find on directory maps at shopping malls to reorient them. Her point is that it's better to be honest and locate where your "star" is on the map of your journey with God.

The next topic addresses anger in married couples. The Ephesians 4:26 admonition to not let the sun go down on your anger is familiar to most of us. But in this "More Than a Proof Text" article, Aaron Sironi shows how Scripture offers another path in Psalm 4. The key is having the wisdom to know which passage is best for addressing the situation in front of you. If you do marriage counseling, be sure to read this!

To help you wade through all the books on the market, Michael Gembola's "Book Notes" column rounds out our issue. He covers books on

OCD, depression, friendships, building identity in Christ (for kids and adults), rest, and the benefits of hearing the Bible—not just reading it.

In this issue, I have been reminded that God is not distant and demanding. He cares deeply about our suffering and desires a relationship with us. He wants us to be honest with him about our struggles, and his Word contains great riches to aid us in everyday life and in the more focused work of counseling others. I am blessed to learn more about our great God in my work every day, and I hope this fruit of our labor blesses you as well.

On behalf of the *JBC* editorial team,

Kimberly Monroe

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