



What You Should Know About Certification

BCI exists to promote the sufficiency of the Bible by providing biblical counseling and discipleship training and resources that bring practical scriptural answers to life's problems. The Bible teaches that all genuine believers are competent to counsel (Roman 15:14). There is nothing in the Bible that stipulates a need for certification.

Yet, the Bible states that this ability to counsel (GRK *noutheteo*) is dependent upon "the Word of Christ dwelling richly in you" (Colossians 3:16). Since newly converted believers would not have much scripture "in them," their competency is limited. The more one grows in the knowledge and application of Scripture and in personal holiness - the greater is his competency to counsel.

BCI's courses are designed to increase that competency, so that the average believer can fulfill at least two biblical expectations God has for him:

1. Growing as a disciple (Psalm 119:11; Romans 12:1-2). Every believer is predestined to become like Jesus (Romans 8:29) and the more his mind is renewed the more transformed he becomes. He "counsels" himself!

2. Ministering to others (Colossians 3:19; Galatians 6:1-2). Every believer should be confident in his ability to come along side a struggling fellow Christian and give God's encouraging counsel, as the Word dwells richly within him. BCI's courses should accomplish this.

We might call this a basic level of competence.

The Bible also teaches that God has gifted us all differently (1 Corinthians 12:14-31), and urges us to minister with our gifts according to the grace given us and the proportion of faith that we have (Romans 12:3-8). In other words, though all believers are competent to counsel to some degree, some believers are especially gifted at counseling. BCI's training should bring this gift out and refine it. For those with additional gifting and a desire to handle more theological concepts and content, certification is the goal of the courses. This *charisma* (graced to counsel) enables the believer to become equipped to do more formal counseling.

Organizations exist to certify this level of competency, and bestow recognition that these believers can handle counseling cases of all types. Their names are added to a referral network and the greater body of Christ can be confident in sending a friend to a certified counselor, no matter the problem. BCI is a certified training center for both the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC) and the International Association of Biblical Counselors (IABC).

Again, whether you desire to be a "counselor" or not, the Bible says you are! And, you are competent to do some counseling, even without BCI training! As you grow in spiritual maturity and in wisdom and knowledge of God's Word, you will become an even more versatile counselor. And if it is your heart's desire to excel in your gift, seek certification!

CERTIFICATION

Becoming certified is not for everyone. The process is rigorous and disciplined. The exams consist of mostly essay questions requiring the ability to write well, quote sources accurately with footnotes, etc. It is like taking college exams, and the professors do not grade on the curve! Many believers are not familiar with academic standards and find this structure difficult.

BCI's training is unique in two ways:

1. Our basic foundational live track of courses consists of 70 hours of instruction. The two certifying organizations above require a minimum of 30 hours of instruction, and most training centers provide the minimum and do a great job at it. However, we offer more than double the hours, because the additional content prepares our students better for *both levels* of competence.

2. BCI expects homework to be done to receive a Certificate of Completion (for each course). Most training centers do not give assignments or certificates of completion. They teach the minimum of what you need to know and hope that you understand. Our assignments help to insure you have a grasp of the material.

Remember, you DO NOT have to do the homework or receive a certificate to counsel others. These expectations are for those students who desire certification.

NANC certification is especially rigorous and they do not easily certify. One's competence is closely evaluated through proof of certified training (such as BCI's), character references, and the successful completion of two exams (Theology 101 and Counseling 101). The exams are open book and many students do not pass them on the first attempt. The questions that are not adequately answered are returned to be redone and the grader gives helpful suggestions (additional reading, etc.). Occasionally students are asked to redo questions more than once, or told to do additional study and retake the exams. Some students also pass the first time. Of the students who apply for certification with NANC but do not get certified, 99% simply did not persevere in additional study and rewrites of certain questions. Only 1% fail to become certified for doctrinal reasons.

NANC is very strict on doctrine. The board holds theological convictions that preclude them from certifying Pentecostals and women pastors. Their position is purely theological on both accounts, believing that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit are no longer functioning and all revelation is complete in the Scriptures. On the matter of pastors, they believe that only men are to be ordained to the pastoral ministry (elders) and a woman should not have authority over a man in church government. (This applies to women preaching and teaching elders, not women ministers in other capacities such as women's ministries.) Again, this does not mean that Pentecostals or women pastors cannot counsel or are not competent. It is a theological restriction on certification by NANC.

Also, a student's membership in certain denominations may raise a concern. For example, a student may agree with NANC's Statement of Faith but may be a member of a denomination that supports homosexuality or abortion. The NANC board will address these concerns with each student.

IABC certification is less demanding on these secondary doctrinal issues. Though they substantially agree with NANC, they will certify Pentecostals and members of other denominations so long as they can endorse IABC's doctrinal statement without reservation. Likewise, women who are referred to as "pastors" within their denominational structure may be certified if they are under the leadership of a male senior pastor. Their application is similar to NANC's; there are some differences in required reading and exam questions.

While we affirm the importance of women being gifted for many areas of ministry, BCI does not believe that the Bible permits the ordination of women.

Advanced Training Course

BCI equips its students with training sufficient for certification with either NANC or IABC. BCI offers an Advanced Training Course that meets for 12 weekly sessions in the fall, especially designed to walk students through NANC's application process.

This course is only offered to students who have completed the basic BCI courses (1-8). Each student is given a NANC application packet. We go through each form, and each question on the two exams, Theology 101 and Counseling 101. (Since few students have formal theological training, an introduction to Theology seminar is taught.) Homework each week is graded with suggested improvements to the answers, if needed. Thus, the exams are completed and graded by BCI instructors before being submitted to NANC. Students who take this course increase the likelihood of passing the exams with minimum rewrites.

BCI is currently developing an alternative Advanced Course for students who want to apply for certification with IABC.

Summary

BCI does not certify. BCI trains, equips, encourages and increases counseling competency in every believer. BCI prepares for and encourages certification, while recognizing certification is not for everyone. Some believers are gifted more than others at understanding and explaining doctrines, and discerning and counseling scripturally. Many of these believers will become certified; others may not. Of those who are not certified by NANC or IABC, BCI may choose to include them on our referral network and website with qualification.