

**Treatment Plan: The Jones Family**

Nicole Taylor

School of Behavioral Sciences, Liberty University

**Author Note**

Nicole Taylor <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6065-5111>

Nicole Taylor is the owner and lead therapist for Taylored Counseling Services.

Correspondence regarding this document should be sent to Nicole Taylor at  
[ntaylor7@liberty.edu](mailto:ntaylor7@liberty.edu).

### **Treatment Plan: The Jones Family**

The Jones family are experiencing a significant stressor, as Mrs. Jones has recently received a terminal cancer diagnosis, with a 10% chance of survival and likely four to six months to live. All five family members present to therapy and agree to participate in family, marriage, and individuals counseling sessions. The counselor will orient the family to the Allies approach to therapy – that both psychology and Christianity can work together for their needs (Entwistle, 2021), such as Christian Accommodative Mindfulness (Garzon et al., 2022) and centering prayer (Knabb, 2012). Treatment will include family sessions once per week, a couple's session once per week, and meeting with one or two family members each week, at least until the family feels to be in a better place of acceptance of Mrs. Jones' diagnosis.

#### **Family Therapy**

During the intake, it appears the family is disconnected from one another and experiencing their grief independently. Only Mrs. Jones was connected to all family members, stepping into a role of encourager and faith leader in the family. The family's treatment will focus on finding support for their suffering through their faith and in the support they have for one another. The core of the family's counseling will center on the truth found in Psalm 18:6a, 16-17,

“in my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help ... He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me.” (New International Version [NIV])

This verse may create some uncertainty with the family because there is no guarantee that Mrs. Jones will be healed from her cancer, and it will be important to educate the family on creating

space for mixed emotions during therapy. The family will also be encouraged to spend time reflecting on Jesus' promise of everlasting life in John 11:25-26, with the reminder that Mrs. Jones' faith, as well as their own, will allow them to be together in Heaven.

The counselor will provide the family with information on the grief process and normalizing this within the context of ambiguous loss. During family sessions, the counselor can ask each member which stage of grief he or she most identifies with to aid in communication and emotional expression between members. As an expressive arts technique, the family can work together to create a chart with each stage and how this looks for each member of the family. Creating normalcy within the discussion of emotions and the grief process should assist the family in acknowledging their emotions more consistently outside of session.

Sessions will prioritize communication between family members, with the counselor encouraging members to communicate directly to one another instead of to the counselor. During the last few minutes of family sessions, each family member will have an opportunity to pray for another member of the family. This type of connection is important to remind the family that they are in this experience together and to remember the power of prayer to connect with God during this difficult time. James 5:16 states "therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." (NIV). Encouraging the family to reflect of the power of prayer will provide another source of comfort to them (Whitney, 2014).

Using an integrative approach from Entwistle (2021), biblical truths will be used to provide emotional comfort to the family. The family will be encouraged to spend time each evening connecting with each other at a meal and reflecting on an identified truth from Scripture. During family counseling, the counselor will provide the family with a topic and encourage the

family to spend time reading Scripture throughout the week that is connected to this topic. Topics include God's sovereignty (Romans 8:28, Colossians 1:16-17), the purpose of trials (James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7), God's love (1 John 4:16, Romans 8:37-39), trusting God's plan (Jeremiah 29:11, Proverbs 3:5-6), hope (Isaiah 40:31, Romans 15:13) finding strength in God (Psalm 46:1, Isaiah 41:10), peace (Isaiah 26:3, Psalm 4:8), and God's healing power (Jeremiah 30:17, Jeremiah 17:14). Spending time together in the evening will encourage the family members to communicate frequently with each other and build connection and support for one another as they go through this situation. The family will be encouraged to use centering prayer methods to ground family prayer in the week's topic to improve connection with the Lord (Knabb, 2012)

The family will also choose one new tradition or activity to engage in as a family to continue building community together. Matthew 18:20 reminds believers that wherever three or more are together, God is there with them. As the family spends time in these activities, they can enjoy each other's company and make new memories together, while also reflecting on the gift God has given them to be able to spend time with each other. They will be encouraged to keep track of how these activities affect their emotions and relationships within their journals and will be provided time to share in session with one another if they have not been able to do so during the week.

### **Marriage**

Mr. and Mrs. Jones' marriage will be another focus of treatment, to work on their connection to one another while navigating their grief. Mr. Jones appears to be in some level of denial as he is having a difficult time reconciling his religious belief with his wife's diagnosis. Marriage counseling will focus on Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, "two are better than one, because they

have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.” (NIV). It is imperative for Mr. and Mrs. Jones to remain supportive and connected to one another to strengthen their emotional connection and reduce the impact of stress on their relationship.

In addition to the family’s meetings, Mr. and Mrs. Jones will allocate their own time for connection and prayer a few times each week. This type of communication will encourage quality time together, with the reminder that God has given couples the gift of connection (Grudem, 2022). During counseling meetings, Mr. and Mrs. Jones can identify a phrase to use for centering prayer during the week, to orient more consistently towards the Lord together (Knabb, 2012). The counselor can also provide the couple with education on the benefits of oxytocin and how bonding with your spouse can bring mental, emotional, and physical comfort. As Mr. and Mrs. Jones prioritize their marriage, their children should also receive direct benefit by fostering a sense of stability and peace in the home.

In session, the counselor will take time for Mr. and Mrs. Jones to share about their fears and encourage them to reflect on the positive time they’ve been spending together. This type of activity will assist the couple with practicing healthy communication techniques to build the foundation of active listening and healthy communication outside of session. The counselor can assist them in writing a prayer for their relationship, to read together every night before bed to strengthen their communication and connection. Whitney (2014) discusses the benefits of practicing spiritual disciplines, and Mr. and Mrs. Jones can connect with one another on how they are using prayer, worship, fasting, and solitude to strengthen their faith through the challenges.

During sessions, the counselor will provide time for reflection on stories of biblical couples who have endured hardships, such as Abraham and Sarah, and Priscilla and Aquila. This can serve as a time to encourage one another and remember that God does not allow His followers to suffer alone. Spiritual unity is essential for married believers (Grudem, 2022), as God calls the man and wife to be bonded together in marriage (Genesis 2:24). The couple can write letters of hope and encouragement to one another to be a reminder and a source of support during the challenges of cancer treatment.

**Mr. Joe Jones**

Mr. Jones appears to be in shock related to his wife's cancer diagnosis, combined with what is likely emotional suppression. His sessions will focus primarily on trusting God's sovereignty during times of trials, as it appears his faith may have been shaken by his wife's illness. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (NIV). During session, Mr. Jones will have time to identify his fears and connect these to truths found in Scripture. This cognitive restructuring is beneficial to healing his heart and mind while he is caring for his family as head of the household (Colossians 3:18-19; Grudem, 2022). As Mr. Jones identifies these truths, he can be taught how to integrate these within Christian mindfulness, to foster connection with his faith and to the Lord (Garzon et al., 2022).

Mr. Jones will also be encouraged to find a spiritual mentor who can come alongside him during the upcoming weeks and months. His role as pastor means he is usually providing support for others, so this may be a challenging role for him to step into. The counselor can help him identify any belief that he must be strong and hide his grief from others, using cognitive

restructuring integrated with biblical principles to address these beliefs. The counselor can encourage Mr. Jones to reflect on verses such as Galatians 6:2, where God calls believers to support one another during times of trials, as a way of addressing feelings of doubt or uncertainty about being vulnerable with another person. Psalm 46:10a can also be used with mindful breathing to encourage and comfort Mr. Jones in his uncertainty; while he inhales, he can say ‘be still’ and while he exhales ‘and know that I am God’ (NIV).

Journaling will be encouraged to assist Mr. Jones in expressing his thoughts and emotions outside of session, particularly after he reads verses that were identified or recommended through therapy. This practice can bring about self-awareness and how God is working in ways that may not be clearly seen without daily reflection (Whitney, 2014). Journaling may also provide space for Mr. Jones to begin expressing his concerns or fears in a safer, less vulnerable way than speaking them aloud in therapy. As counseling progresses, Mr. Jones will likely become more willing to share these with minimal prompting as rapport with the counselor builds. Some journal prompts may include reflecting on God’s faithfulness in his life, in the way that Job reflects on this in Job 29:2-3. Mr. Jones will also be encouraged to journal his thoughts after spending time reading verses of encouragement, such as Matthew 11:28-30 and Psalm 46:1-3. Other prompts will include reflecting on how even Christ asked for his suffering to end in Matthew 26:39, or the desperation of David in Psalm 22. It will be important for Mr. Jones to remember that in God’s sovereignty, not all bad things can be taken from believers. All this time in Scripture will provide a source of direction and comfort to Mr. Jones, to make him more like Christ as he leads his family during these challenges (Whitney, 2014).

A part of counseling must also center on the role of Mr. Jones following Mrs. Jones’ death, including remaining present and supportive of the children through their grief. Ephesians

6:4 and Proverbs 23:24 provide encouragement and reminders of the important role of fathers in their children's lives. Family meetings will provide Mr. Jones a time to bond with his children, and he can use his counseling time to also discuss the connections he is making with his children. Knowing his role as head of the family further supports the idea that Mr. Jones would benefit from having a support system in place so that he is not alone if Mrs. Jones succumbs to her cancer.

### **Mrs. Jessica Jones**

Due to her comforting behavior during the intake, Mrs. Jessica Jones will be encouraged during session to find time for her own feelings related to her diagnosis and how she is feeling about the idea of death. It appears her faith is a significant source of support to her, and she is leaning into the truths of Scripture about God's goodness and faithfulness through this trial. Together, she and the counselor can discuss how she is comforting each of her family members, while reminding her that she is also allowed time to take care of herself and acknowledge her own feelings – as is the calling in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. She will be encouraged to check in with her physical self to ensure she is prioritizing wellness to be as healthy as she can. If she is spending a lot of the time supporting her family and their emotional needs, she will not be able to take care of herself and make time for her physical health needs.

Mrs. Jones will be encouraged to memorize Isaiah 41:10 and 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 and use mindfulness techniques to reflect on the truths of this Scripture (Garzon et al., 2022) – that God is always with her and will provide her strength during the upcoming months. This time for herself can also include time to focus on God through worship and expressing her emotions through prayer. Psalm 62:8 calls believers to, “trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your

hearts to him, for God is our refuge” (NIV), and can create a foundation for a visualization technique of handing her needs over to God.

The counselor will also recommend that Mrs. Jones continue to find hope in her life, as Proverbs 17:22 encourages believers to have a cheerful heart and mind as this can encourage natural healing. Since bibliotherapy can be a useful therapeutic tool, Mrs. Jones will be encouraged to pick a devotional to use during her own personal time with the Lord and spend time in reflection of what she is being taught or what she is learning about herself. Suggestions include *Praying Through Cancer: Set Your Heart Free from Fear* (Sorensen & Geist, 2022), and *Carried Through Cancer* (Harms, 2025). She also may benefit from a cancer support group in her area, and the counselor can help her find this resource during session.

During sessions, the counselor can also help Mrs. Jones identify and challenge any negative beliefs or fears that have been created through this trial. The Bible has multiple examples of believers who underwent suffering and calls believers to find joy in suffering as God’s glory is revealed (1 Peter 4:12-13). With this, it will also be important to acknowledge the pain and loss associated with cancer and allow time for Mrs. Jones to wrestle with the idea of her death and leaving her family members behind. Outside of session, Mrs. Jones will be encouraged to journal her thoughts, fears, hopes, and dreams and bring to session to discuss with the counselor. She can then practice communicating these to her family either in family sessions or during family meetings, to provide them the opportunity to support and encourage her in the coming weeks.

Mrs. Jones will also be encouraged to write letters of encouragement to each family member, to provide a source of comfort following her death. Depending on her desire and interest, she could also consider writing letters for important moments she may miss out on, such

as her children's weddings or the birth of a grandchild. Although this does not replace her presence, this may provide her with comfort knowing she can still connect with her family after her death. This type of activity may provide her with some closure and should be discussed early in counseling in case her health declines.

**Jim Jones (Son, 19)**

Jim appears to be focusing on a cause-effect relationship between behavior and suffering, unsure of why his good behavior has not protected the family from suffering. As the oldest child, it will be important for him to recognize his own needs and the role he should or should not play in supporting his siblings at this time. These boundaries may be important in the coming weeks as his family is navigating therapy and he is managing requirements at college.

In therapy, the counselor will work with Jim to identify his worldview assumptions and find support or contraindications for these belief systems in Scripture (Entwistle, 2021). Jim's counseling will center on Romans 5:1-5, to encourage his reflection on God's grace and sovereignty during challenges. He can use this verse as a foundation for comfort as he works through his uncertainty and reestablishes a solid framework for his faith.

Jim will be encouraged to journal his thoughts and reflections to share in therapy and can also practice sharing his thoughts and fears with his family during family counseling or during their family meetings. In addition to these journal entries, Jim will also be encouraged to write at least one of his or the family's blessings at least twice a week, to encourage him to reflect on the positive things they are experiencing. He and the counselor can also work together to practice sharing these with the family during family meetings to share hope with other family members. These blessings can be incorporated into family prayer, to give thanks to God (Grudem, 2022) building examples of positive experiences for the family to reflect on during times of challenges.

The therapist will work with Jim to determine what he would like to say to God in connection to his mother's illness and normalize emotional expression within this context. It can be difficult at times for believers to trust that they can share their raw emotions with the Lord, for there is no emotion that He has not experienced or is unfamiliar to Him. 1 Peter 5:7 calls believers to cast all anxieties on God; this image is not one of gently giving God our fears, but instead it is like throwing them towards God in surrender. If Jim is receptive, the counselor can integrate worship music in a portion of his session to encourage Jim to surrender his fears to God, and visualize God being with him through trials (Psalm 23). Worship can be used outside of session as a spiritual discipline (Whitney, 2014), to also encourage communication and connection with God.

Jim would also benefit from social connection and will be encouraged to remain active in Eagle Scouts as a leader to provide a sense of purpose and reduce isolation. The counselor can also help him identify a support group for grieving students at his college, or other mental health resources that are available on campus. If it is available, Jim could also connect with other believers on campus through a faith-based social group to provide additional support while his faith is being challenged by his mother's health.

### **Jana Jones (Daughter, 17)**

Jana may be experiencing anger and depression, but her behavior in the intake suggests she may be repressing her emotions. She is likely at the highest risk for self-harm or suicidal ideation given her behavioral expression of her emotions and should be monitored for both. Part of her counseling will include normalizing her response within the context of grief and encouraging her to make room for her emotions. The counselor can use Christian mindfulness techniques to encourage Jana to check in with her physical self and where she may be storing

tension in her body. She will be encouraged to memorize Psalm 34:18 which says, “the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (NIV) and will use Christian mindfulness to identify and surrender her worries and fears to God in prayer (Garzon et al., 2021).

Jana will also be encouraged to use journaling to express her emotions, to express her inner thoughts and bring them before God (Whitney, 2014). In addition to the discussion of emotions during sessions, Jana will spend time outside of session journaling her thoughts on the expressions of grief found in Scripture – those of Jesus, David, Job, Jacob, and Naomi, just to name a few. It is important for Jana to know that God is not too big or too small to hear her emotions and comfort her through these challenges. During sessions, the counselor can encourage Jana to identify and express her emotions, and role play can be used to practice communicating these to her family.

Jana would also benefit from finding an additional outlet for her physical frustrations, such as exercise or art. The counselor could support Jana in completing an art exercise encouraging her emotional expression, with the support of worship music to encourage connection with God (Whitney, 2014). This can be followed with a time of prayer to surrender her emotions to the Lord and ask for additional grace to be extended as she works through her complex feelings. Jana can also reflect on 1 Peter 5:6-9, which reminds believers to surrender all cares to God, and to be mindful of the lies that Satan may tell her during her suffering. The counselor can support Jana by identifying any false beliefs that she may have related to her mother’s diagnosis or God’s sovereignty and grace and correcting them with truths found in Scripture.

**John Jones (Son, 16)**

John appears to be using video games to cope with or avoid his emotions, especially since his time spent on games significantly increased after his mother's diagnosis. He will be encouraged to limit the time he is spending on video games to a certain amount of time each week and instead will be encouraged to spend time with the Lord in prayer, by reading Scripture, or engaging in worship (Whitney, 2014). He also will be encouraged to take time connecting with friends to reduce isolation and continue building a support network as his family faces this trial.

In session, the counselor will work with John to address his misconception about how a better faith could've prevented his mother's illness. Time can be spent reflecting on Paul's thorn in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, or the suffering of believers in Hebrews 11:35-40. In John 9:3, Jesus tells the disciples a man's blindness was not a result of any action of the man or his parents; likewise, nothing John did or did not do caused his mother's cancer. The counselor can educate John on how time spent in Scripture is a spiritual discipline and can connect him more deeply to God (Whitney, 2014). Creating a space for John to communicate his emotions in a safe way without fear of judgement will help strengthen his self-awareness and provide him with the space to express himself even when it's messy. As he practices these skills in session, John can be encouraged to practice sharing at family meetings or during family sessions.

John may also be assigned time reading the book of Job, or about Jesus' suffering as He prepared for death on the cross. Understanding even Jesus asked for the Lord to take the burden from Him (Matthew 26:39), but was not granted as His death served a larger purpose may provide John with another perspective of his mother's diagnosis. John can be encouraged to write a letter to God expressing his frustrations or fears, to help continue building connection and

improving his ability to identify and express his emotions appropriately. As with other members of the family, it will be important for John to know that emotional expression is okay and is welcomed by God as his Father (Grudem, 2022).

The counselor will help John connect with a mentor at his church or community to provide additional support outside of the immediately family; if John is in youth group, then his youth pastor could be a source of support. The youth pastor could provide additional guidance and assistance with John's faulty belief system about his actions playing a role in his mother's illness or healing. John will also be encouraged to continue participating in existing social connections to reduce isolation and be reminded of the blessing of strong relationships (Proverbs 17:17; Whitney, 2014).

### **Outcomes**

For the family to be successful in therapy, each member must be willing to show up and have some sort of vulnerability. Building connection both between members and with the counselor will be important for members of the family to feel safe enough to express things that may not perfectly align with their Christian worldview. As this transparency increases, the family can support one another in their doubts and fears, guiding each other towards the truths of Scripture. The increased emotional connection, normalization of grief responses, and increased time together as a family will strengthen the family's bond and acceptance of one another.

For Mr. and Mrs. Jones to have success in counseling, they must be willing to be open with each other about their hopes and fears and be willing to be vulnerable in their faith journey. As strong believers, it is important to normalize a period of uncertainty and questioning and provide both individuals the opportunity to support each other in the faith. They also will need guidance on how to best support their children and recognize when their mental health may

decline, and when it is appropriate to intervene. As they progress in therapy, their improved communication and emotional intimacy will provide additional buffer against stress if Mrs. Jones' health declines.

Mr. Jones will have success in counseling if he takes the opportunity to learn more about himself and possible errors in his belief system regarding God and the persecution of believers. By challenging doubts in his faith, he can build trust and stability in God's faithfulness and the truths found in Scripture. His vulnerability in therapy and his ability to connect with his own emotions will likely provide emotional safety to the children as they navigate their own experiences. If he remains consistent in therapy, he is likely to have improved success navigating his responsibilities as father and husband while his family navigates this challenging situation.

Mrs. Jones will likely have success in therapy, as she appears most open to her faith at the time of intake. As she learns to balance the support of her family with making space for her own emotional needs, the family will be able to step further into a caretaking role for her. Giving her the opportunity to write letters to each family member provides the ability for future connection even in her death. If she is open to the integrative practices mentioned, she should find a source of healing and comfort in the unknown as she prepares for the possibility of leaving her family.

Each of the children's success is highly dependent on how invested the parents are in therapy and how well each member participates in family sessions and the weekly family meetings. Jim generally is likely to have a positive outcome through therapy, although it will be important to monitor his motivation to act in a way that would encourage God to bless his family. As he becomes more aware of his emotions and connects more deeply to his faith, he can build mental, emotional, and spiritual resilience. If his mother's health declines, it will also be

important to monitor his behavior and belief system to see if he is taking on a sense of responsibility for her wellness. By practicing cognitive restructuring in therapy, Jim will likely be able to challenge this more consistently on his own.

Jana will have a positive outcome in counseling if she can remain consistent with her use of mindfulness techniques and safe emotional expression through exercise or art. Providing a safe space in counseling to navigate complex emotions that she may perceive as shameful will be important to build a strong spiritual foundation for future resiliency. As the most reserved during the intake, rapport building will be essential for Jana's willingness and success in therapy.

John will likely have success in counseling if he engages in the cognitive restructuring process to remember the truths of God's hand in the healing process. Through Christian mindfulness and prayer, John can connect with Scripture and unlearn theological assumptions that are not based in truth. By practicing emotional vulnerability with family members, John creates the foundation for support and connection that will be necessary for the family to have some sense of stability in the coming weeks.

The Jones family is navigating one of the most difficult scenarios a family can experience but has the foundation of support that can be provided in faith. Through integrated counseling, the family can learn how to navigate their experiences of grief, challenge misbeliefs about God's behavior and sovereignty, and learn how to communicate and support one another. Whatever the outcome of this crisis, the family will know more of how to navigate future challenges with vulnerability connection, and the steadfast love of God.

### References

- Entwistle, D. (2021). *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity: An introduction to worldview issues, philosophical foundations, and models of integration* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cascade Books.
- Garzon, F., Benitez-DeVilbiss, A., Turbessi, V., Darko, Y.T.O., Berberena, N., Jens, A., Wray, K., Bourne, E., Keay, J., Jenks, J., Noble, C., Artis, C. (2022). Christian accommodative mindfulness: Definition, current research, and group protocol. *Religions*, 13(1), 63-75.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010063>
- Grudem, W. (2022). *Bible doctrine* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (A. Grudem, Ed.). Zondervan Academic
- Harms, K. (2025). *Carried through cancer: 70 days of spiritual strength from cancer fighters, survivors, and caregivers*. B&H Publishing Group.
- Hook, J. N., Worthington, E. L., Davis, D. E., Jennings, D. J., Gartner, A. L., & Hook, J. P. (2010). Empirically supported religious and spiritual therapies. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 66(1), 46-72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20626>
- Knabb, J. J. (2012). Centering prayer as an alternative to mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression relapse prevention. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 51, 908-924.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-010-9404-1>
- Sorensen, S., & Geist, L. (2022). *Praying through cancer: Set your heart free from fear*. Thomas Nelson Inc.
- Whitney, D. (2014). *Spiritual disciplines for the Christian life*. NavPress.