

## Psychology and Christian Counseling

### I. Introduction and review.

- A. A breakdown in society - the religion of secular humanism.
  
- B. The failure of the Church.
  
- C. The emergence of the Biblical Counseling Movement.
  - 1. Jay Adams: 1970s Competent to Counsel.

### II. Harmful errors of modern psychology.

- A. Is psychology a science in the same way that medicine is?
  - 1. Should the pastor deal with the spiritual problems while the “mental health professional” deals with the emotional and mental problems?
  
  - 2. Psychology and theology both deal with the same fundamental issues of meaning and value from widely differing perspectives.
  
- B. Unscriptural presuppositions and practices of certain schools of psychology.
  - 1. A faulty view of man.
    - a. Man is only an advanced animal: naturalism/materialism. Gen. 1:26-27
  
    - b. Man is basically good, or at worst a blank slate. Rom. 3:10-18, 23 Ps. 51:5
  
    - c. Man is autonomous: able to solve his own problems without God’s help. John 15:5 II Tim. 3:2
  
  - 2. Excuses sin and denies personal responsibility.
    - a. Blame shifting: parents, teachers, society, etc. I John 1:8-10 Js. 1:13-15 Ps. 32.3f
  
    - b. The medical model: calling sin sickness (“mental illness”).
  
    - c. Is there such a thing as “mental illness”?

**3. No fixed moral values: relativism. II Tim. 3:16-17**  
**a. Non-directive counseling (Rogers). Pr. 14:12 Col. 1:28 Js. 5:19-20**

**b. Sinful behaviors and desires legitimized.**

**c. Promotion of “socially acceptable” gratification of carnal appetites (ventilation).**

**d. Often attempts to relieve God-given guilt by destroying conscience.**

**4. No place for God.**

**C. Secular psychology is powerless to bring about meaningful change. Jer. 17:9 Rom. 8:5-8**

**D. What about those cases in which people seem to get better?**

**1. Often symptoms (i.e. bizarre behavior) go away with or without treatment.**

**2. The most serious (spiritual) problems remain. Luke 11:24-26**

### **III. Christian approaches to counseling.**

**A. Radical separation: the pastor and psychologist are professionals working in different realms.**

**1. Pastors refer cases dealing with emotional problems to qualified counselors.**

**2. Psychology and biblical Christianity address the same human problems from very different viewpoints.**

**3. Who is qualified to counsel? Gal. 6:1 Rom. 15:14**

- B. Integration: psychologists who happen to be Christians are best suited to helping people with their problems.**
- 1. These people tend to use their psychological training as a starting place, with Scripture being applied to support the psychological ideas. Mk. 12:31 II Tim. 3:2**
  - 2. They tend to accept psychological findings uncritically while neglecting sound, in-depth Bible teaching.**
  - 3. The danger of integration. II Cor. 6:14-18**
- C. Synergism/spoiling the Egyptians: since “all truth is God’s truth”, Christians should add the best of psychology to what the Bible teaches.**
- 1. They claim to use Scripture to critically examine the findings of psychology.**
  - 2. They have the same problems as the integrationists.**
  - 3. Their system is unusually built around an extra-biblical concept.**
  - 4. That which was taken (spoiled) from the Egyptians was silver, gold, and garments, not ideas and beliefs. Col. 2:3, 8-10 Lev. 18:3f I Cor. 3:19**
- D. Biblical counseling: the Bible is the sole and sufficient authority in counseling. II Tim. 3:16-17 II Pet. 1:3 Heb. 4:12 Ps. 19:7-14**
- 1. The Bible is a fully sufficient textbook for counseling. I Cor. 10:13**
  - 2. The goal of Biblical Counseling is to give instruction from the Bible so the counselee can achieve God’s goals in his/her life. I Tim. 1:5 Col. 1:27-29**
  - 3. Counselor qualifications are spiritual, not merely academic. Gal. 6:1-2 I Tim. 4:12, 16**
  - 4. Counseling is not the responsibility of an elite group of professionals, but of every member of Christ’s Church. Rom. 15:14 Heb. 10:24-25 Js. 5:19-20**

5. Ultimately counseling is God's work. Rom. 15:13 I Cor. 10:13 Ph. 4:13 Is. 9:6 11:1f
  - a. It is only in Christ that people have hope.
  
  - b. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate counselor. John 14:16-17 Gal. 5:16-25

**IV. Other critical concerns.**

- A. Is there any value to secular psychology?
  1. Isn't all truth God's truth? Yes, and all error is the devil's error.
  
  2. Relying upon secular psychology is a denial of the sufficiency of Scripture.
  
  3. Is there any case in which outside help is needed?
  
  4. Why might it be useful for Christians to know something of psychology?
  
- B. How should unbelievers be counseled?
  1. A non-Christian is incapable of seeking after God's goals or doing God's will.  
Rom. 8:7-8 Gal 5:18 Heb. 11:6
  
  2. Unbelievers require pre-counseling: evangelism.
  
- C. Does Biblical Counseling ever fail? Luke 18:18-25 Gen. 4:6ff

**V. Conclusion: you are competent to counsel: biblically.**

Jay Adams, Competent to Counsel. The Christian Counselor's Manual, Ready to Restore.