

ADULT FELLOWSHIP GROUP

BIBLICAL COUNSELING

WEEK 1: PSYCHOLOGY, CHRISTIAN COUNSELING, AND BIBLICAL COUNSELING AT A GLANCE

- February 22: Psychology, Christian Psychology/Integration, and Biblical Counseling at a Glance
- March 1: Theological Foundation – View of God & View of Man
- March 8: *Missionary Share – Daniel Herceg*
- March 15: Sanctification: How Do People Change?
- March 22: The Goal and Content of Biblical Counseling
- March 29: Preparing Our Hearts to Counsel One Another
- April 5: *No AFG – Resurrection Sunday*
- April 12: The Process of Counseling: Teaching, Conviction, Correction, and Training
- April 19: Navigating Specific Counseling Issues

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- What do you think of when you hear the term *counseling*?
 - Is it simply meeting with someone at an appointed time/place for an allotted time? Is it something that would necessitate a “professional”, someone who is properly trained?
 - What are the qualifications to counsel someone? What is the ultimate goal/aim?
 - What does the process look like? What tools are needed to counsel someone?
- If you look up counseling in Webster’s Dictionary (1979), you find the following definition: “professional guidance of the individual using psychological methods.”
 - Did you notice how this definition claims that counseling is something that only someone with a professional degree can give?
 - It also says that when you provide counseling, you are helping people by providing psychological ways of thinking, feeling, or behaving.
- This definition often reflects how Christians think of counseling: It is something done in an office, by a professional, and it is very psychological.

- Counseling is the opportunity to give advice to someone who asks for it. What makes counseling different for Christians is that *our advice is centered on God's wisdom, and not our own*. We are not giving our own opinion. Rather, we are trying to help people to view their situations from God's perspective.
- Counseling is the act of giving counsel to someone; "to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct: *admonish, warn, instruct*"¹
- For believers, the common vernacular used today is that of *Biblical Counseling*.
- The concept of biblical counseling is coming alongside one another with a biblical worldview that views God's word as the sufficient means of counseling, believers as competent to (and commanded to) counsel, and heart change as the ultimate goal of counseling.
- This biblical counseling class is a foundational 7-week series geared towards two main goals:
 - That each person would have an understanding of what biblical counseling is, and
 - That each person would understand the practical implications and outworkings within the church as it pertains to practicing biblical counseling.
- Throughout the next 7 weeks, we are going to look at many things which pass as Christianity but actually find their roots in secular thought. Some things may challenge you and your way of thinking, but, as in all areas of life, we are called to come before the word of God to challenge our own thoughts and presuppositions, so that we would know what Scripture says about counseling.
- Why does any of this matter? Why does it matter if we give people advice or counsel from Scripture or from some other source? What if we use or start with Scripture but also integrate man's wisdom?
- If you are involved in fellowship and one another ministry, you will, at some point, come head-on with many issues which will cause you seek answers.
 - That is the question you must answer...***is the Word of God sufficient for all things?***
 - Can I go to the Scriptures for any and all problems and rely solely on what God says?

We have been in a battle for the Bible for many years. First, it was a battle with liberals of the issue of inspiration. Then, it was a battle over the issue of inerrancy. Today, the battle is with those who say the Bible is not sufficient.

¹ William Arndt et al., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 679.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS AND SHIFTS IN COUNSELING

- Before we look at the various forms of counselling available for people today, let's take a brief look at the very foundation of where many of the popular views in the church came from.

Significant People Within Secular Counseling/Psychology

- Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
 - One of the founding fathers of contemporary psychiatric thought and therapy.
 - Freud started with neurology and used opium to try and ease patients' pain.
 - He eventually became addicted to it himself, lost funding, and decided to pursue the profitable realm of psychiatric counseling.
 - Freud viewed religion as an illusion, an "obsolete cultural system of inhibitions"² rooted in psychological conflicts.
 - Freud's anthropology:
 - Freud saw man as an ***instinct-ruled beast (animal)*** dominated by sex drive and aggression.
 - Freud also believed that it was ***man's past events*** (even events he was not aware of) which ***governed his present actions***.
 - The patient would lay on the couch and say whatever came to mind...thus Freud is the father of psychoanalysis
 - Freud would tell patients they were not responsible for their behavior but that something or someone else caused them to be this way
 - There is no more damaging thought than this, as the Bible says, ***'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'*** (Rom. 3:23)
 - Man is held accountable for their own sin and any foundational thought that starts differently can only end with a detrimental outcome.
 - "In Freud's conception, therapy is indeed a mechanism for establishing self-control."³
- Carl Jung (1875-1961)
 - Jung was a disciple of Freud, but they eventually split because of Jung's involvement in the spiritual realm.
 - This is not to say Jung was a believer, or even particularly religious.
 - Carl Jung viewed the spiritual realm not as a traditional theological construct, but as a living, psychological reality rooted in the collective unconscious.
 - Jung is famously quoted for not believing in God, but rather knew God through direct experience (the unconscious mind being a source of spiritual wisdom)

² Philip Rieff. *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud*. New York: Harper & Row, 1968, 38.

³ Ibid, 36.

- He is the father of analytic psychology, where the patient is to look inside themselves through various means such as dreams, imagination, etc.
- He also pushed individuation, which describes the lifelong, dynamic process of integrating the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche to become a whole, unique, and authentic individual.
 - This counseling technique helps the client reach one’s collective unconscious.
 - In it, the goal is for the individual to become an undivided, distinct, whole person.
- This is in the church today under the guise of *visualization* where people are told to visualize something (usually healing) and then it will become true.
 - “Carl Jung’s visualization technique, known as Active Imagination, is a structured, meditative process used to consciously engage with the unconscious mind. Unlike passive daydreaming, it involves actively interacting with symbolic images, figures, or emotions to promote personal growth, integration, and healing. It is a way to dialogue with repressed, unknown aspects of the psyche.”⁴
- Norman Vincent Peale (1898-1993)
 - A Dutch Reformed pastor who brought Jung’s visualization into mainline Christianity, and his book *The Power of Positive Thinking*
 - “In this phenomenal bestseller, “written with the sole objective of helping the reader achieve a happy, satisfying, and worthwhile life,” Dr. Peale demonstrates the power of faith in action. With the practical techniques outlined in this book, you can energize your life—and give yourself the initiative needed to carry out your ambitions and hopes. You’ll learn how to:
 - Believe in yourself and in everything you do
 - Build new power and determination
 - Develop the power to reach your goals
 - Break the worry habit and achieve a relaxed life
 - Improve your personal and professional relationships
 - Assume control over your circumstances”⁵
 - Be kind to yourself
 - He transformed countless church-goers to believe that they had the power within themselves to make the changes needed or wanted.
 - He said, as a Christian minister “It’s not necessary to be born again. You have your way to God, I have mine. I found eternal peace in a Shinto shrine ... I’ve been to Shinto shrines and God is everywhere. ... Christ is one of the ways! God is everywhere.”

⁴ <https://www.enkindlecounseling.com/blogs/21rilshno7z9acnjowg0sc0gnnj8dk#:~:text=What%20is%20Active%20Imagination?,discover%20new%20aspects%20of%20themselves.>

⁵ <https://www.amazon.com/Power-Positive-Thinking-Norman-Vincent/dp/0743234804>

- “Peale developed a fascination with psychiatry as an answer, or partial answer, to his congregant’s problems. While he was at Marble, he teamed up with a Freud-trained psychiatrist, Dr. Smiley Blanton, to begin a religious-psychiatric clinic in the church basement. They wanted to respond to the psychological needs of their congregation and especially the deep-rooted effects of the Great Depression. In 1951 this clinic was organized into the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry, with Peale as president and Blanton as executive director.”⁶
- Those who follow him today are Robert Schuller, Oprah, Joel Osteen, T.D. Jakes, Tony Robbins, and many more who seek to combine the power of the mind and faith.
- B. F. Skinner (1904-1990)
 - The father of behavioral therapy with an emphasis in positive reinforcement (Behaviorism)
 - Skinner's ideas about behaviorism were largely set forth in his first book, *The Behavior of Organisms*.
 - In it, he gives a systematic description of the manner in which **environmental variables control behavior**.
 - Methodology:
 - Controlled people by using various techniques and repetitions to have the outcome which is desired.
 - Within the school, he believed that teachers needed to modify the child’s behavior with positive reinforcement and sought to eliminate punishment.
 - Anthropology:
 - He was a humanist (emphasizes human reason, scientific inquiry, and compassion to understand the world and solve problems).
 - In his view, looking out for ‘number one’ was top priority.
- There are many other men and women who have influenced today’s thinking within the church that we must be aware of. Not everything that is in the church has Biblical roots and all forms of counselling must be viewed through the lens of Scripture.

Jay Adams and Biblical/Nouthetic Counseling

- Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, as advancements continued to come from the realm of psychology, most conservative Christians really did not talk or write about counseling.
- In the 1950’s and 1960’s, some Christian scholars began the Integration Model for counseling and psychology.
- Then, in the 1970’s, Jay Adams at Westminster Theological Seminary reacted to this trend and formulated the Biblical Counseling approach (originally called “nouthetic counseling.”)

⁶ <https://www.challies.com/articles/the-false-teachers-norman-vincent-peale/>

- He saw counseling as simply applying the Scripture to people’s hearts through exhortation and coaching, and he placed no emphasis on plumbing the depths of the person’s past.⁷
- In his book, *Competent to Counsel* (a name based off of Romans 15:14), Adams provided an introduction to nouthetic counseling, identifying weaknesses in the contemporary realm of psychiatry, touching on pertinent doctrines (man, sin, the Holy Spirit, the bible, etc.) within counseling, and diving into particular issues to show that believers are, indeed, competent to counsel one another.

It is from this historical foundation within psychology, psychiatry, and the church that we have the various forms of counseling that exist today.

CONTEMPORARY MODELS OF COUNSELING

- What are some of the forms of counseling available to us today?
 - Though we are only doing a flyover of some main schools of thought, it is important to realize that each one of these exists on a spectrum.
 - At the end of the day, we do not want to adhere strictly to a system of thought, but to what God’s word prescribes.
- However, it is helpful to understand the schools of thought within the discussion of counseling and soul care within the church.

Psychology

- “The science of psychology benefits society and enhances our lives. Psychologists examine the relationships between brain function and behavior, and the environment and behavior, applying what they learn to illuminate our understanding and improve the world around us.”⁸
- Systems/tools/therapies within the realm of psychology:
 - Behavioral therapy - Focused on identifying and changing harmful or self-destructive behaviors by replacing them with positive ones.
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
 - Dialectic Behavioral Therapy (DBT)
 - Behavioral Activation
 - Psychodynamic Therapy - Aims to increase self-awareness by exploring unconscious thoughts and patterns, often exploring how past experiences shape current behavior.
 - Psychoanalysis
 - Psychodynamic Counselling

⁷ Timothy Keller. *Four Models of Counseling in Pastoral Ministry*. Redeemer City to City, 2010, 1.

⁸ <https://www.apa.org/education-career/guide/science>

- Humanistic/Experiential Therapy - Focuses on personal growth, self-actualization, and understanding one's life experience.
 - Gestalt Therapy
- Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) - Concentrates on improving interpersonal relationships and resolving issues with family, friends, and coworkers.
 - Family therapy
 - Relationship counselling
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) - A specialized therapy for treating trauma and PTSD, which reduces the emotional impact of distressing memories through rhythmic eye movements.
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) - Uses mindfulness and acceptance strategies to increase psychological flexibility and cope with unwanted thoughts.
- Others that are designed to reprogram the brain:
 - Hypnotherapy
 - Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)
- Much of psychology today is built upon the work of men such as Freud, Jung, and Skinner, and have humanistic, behavioral roots.
- The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)*, published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 2013, is the authoritative guide for diagnosing and classifying mental disorders within the realm of psychology and psychiatry.
 - Within this reference book are definitions of mental health and brain-related conditions, from a secular psychological worldview.
 - It also provides details and examples of the signs and symptoms of those conditions, which are used in diagnosing conditions/disorders, based on presenting symptoms.
- With this, then, many diagnoses that come from therapists or counselors have no basis in Scripture, have no consideration of the inner man, **but are simply describing the problem in technical terms**.
 - They will either give some general symptoms which we all suffer from, or they will simply say that there is something else wrong which is not quantifiable.
 - While perhaps psychology can identify and diagnose an issue that someone is struggling with (maybe even diagnoses believers would agree with), there is no real solution presented.
- Why? Well, let's summarize what we've seen as far as psychology's presuppositions and their implications:
 - DSM-5 is the authority, not Scripture (John 17:17; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:3)
 - No acknowledgment of the inner man/heart – therefore, only physical issues/symptoms/treatments are referenced; medication and behavior change are elevated
 - No reference to sin – therefore root issue is overlooked and man's reason is emphasized
 - No reference to salvation, sanctification, or Christ – therefore, no true solution or hope!

Christian Psychology/Integration

- “Christians who rely—to one degree or another—on the counseling insights of secular people have been called integrationists, Christian counselors, and Christian psychologists—among other things.”⁹
 - This would presuppose that biblical theology and psychology are, indeed, addressing the same thing, though with different tools.
 - The integration model, as its name suggests, would seek to combine insights from psychology and biblical theology together.
 - Most Christian Psychology or Christian Counsellors are “Christian” because of their ethics/morals or because they use Biblical principles
- Christian counseling may include pastoral counseling, psychology, discipleship, training, therapeutic counseling, family counseling, career counseling, as well as other approaches to the helping process.
- The *potential* concern with this model would lie in where the weight of integration leans.
 - Speaking of this, MacArthur states, “the integration movement of Christian psychotherapists increasingly employs the adjective ‘biblical’ and calls for theological renewal with their point of view. While we applaud any genuine increase of biblical consciousness and practice among integrationists, it remains to be seen whether the Bible talk, God talk, and Jesus talk represents a substantive shift.”¹⁰
- Areas Where Biblical and Christian Counselors Agree
 - Both are generally conservative and are brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - Both seek to care for and comfort people who are genuinely hurting.
 - Both believe that psychologists can make accurate observations.
- Areas Where Biblical and Christian Counselors Disagree
 - The *necessity* of secular counseling techniques
 - The assumption that it is necessary to add secular counseling techniques to biblical ones in order to provide the best help for struggling people.
 - That the Bible is a sufficient counseling resource
 - Some Christian counselors believe that secular counseling strategies are a *necessary* adjunct to the Bible. They do not believe that the Scriptures are a sufficient counseling resource.
- While there is some nuance here, the differences in practice comes down to what it means that Scripture is sufficient.
 - If God’s word and the ministry of the Holy Spirit is sufficient in salvation, should we not also have this conviction in our sanctification?
 - Does the Bible need support from secular techniques to authenticate its message?

⁹ <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/biblical-counseling-vs-christian-counseling-whats-the-difference/>

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, 26-27.

Biblical Counseling

- Biblical counseling, also referred to as nouthetic counseling, stems from the principles championed by Jay Adams in the mid-twentieth century, yet has strengthened its view and purpose over time to emphasize heart change, rather than behavioral change, as the ultimate goal.
- “Counseling conversations are focused on the goal of *sharing wisdom* with people about how to respond to the challenges of living life when problems abound. The *Bible is a sufficient source of wisdom* to inform these conversations such that the resources of secular psychology are completely *unnecessary* to those who wish to accomplish counseling success. *This does not mean that secular psychologists never say anything true or helpful.* It means that their findings are *not necessary* for counseling faithfulness, and that, when their findings oppose the Christian worldview, they are often at odds with counseling faithfulness. *This also does not mean that biblical counselors reject medical science* since many problems that human beings face are physical in nature, and so fall outside the bounds of the subject matter of Scripture and the competency of biblical counselors.”¹¹
- For our purposes in this class, we are going to define Biblical counseling as *using the Bible in wise and appropriate ways to bring God-glorifying change to God’s people.* (Joel James).
 - This definition is helpful because of its simplicity, focus and scope of intent.
 - Simple, using the Bible.
 - Focus, to bring God-glorifying change.
 - Scope of intent, God’s people.
 - If this is our working definition, then we need to fully understand these three aspects *before* we begin counselling.
- **Firstly, using the Bible.**¹²
 - Doctrine of inspiration
 - The Holy Spirit worked through the individual personalities and different styles of the human authors so that they composed and recorded God’s inspired Word to man. Inspiration extends to the very selection of the words of Scripture (2 Pet 1:20-21, 2 Tim 3:16-17).
 - Doctrine of inerrancy
 - The Scriptures are absolutely without error in any part in the original (Ps 19:7-9; Is 30:8; Matt. 5:18, John 10:35; 17:17; 2 Tim 3:16). As a result, the Word is alive (Heb 4:12), what God uses to accomplish His purposes (Is 55:10-11), and that which saves souls (James 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23) and changes lives (2 Tim 3:16-17).
 - Interpretation of the Word
 - Each passage of Scripture contains only one correct interpretation, namely that intended by the author (2 Pet 3:16). This meaning must be determined by employing

¹¹ <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/articles/biblical-counseling-the-sufficiency-of-scripture-and-the-use-of-extra-biblical-information-part-i/?srsId=AfmBOopMs21Cm8FAkyqBG61dhkfagWT4SrfKBygQs0k14OJ778S2BJ0>

¹² <https://www.mbcmi.org/about-maranatha/doctrinal-statement/>

the literal-grammatical-historical method of interpretation through diligent study (2 Tim 2:15) and dependence on the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:12; 1 John 2:27). Any legitimate application of a passage of Scripture, of which there are many, must be based on the one correct interpretation.

- Sufficiency (authority) and potency of scriptures.
 - The Word is completely sufficient for all of life and ministry (2 Pet 1:3) and is that which alone determines what to believe and how to live to the glory of God (Acts 17:11). It stands as absolute truth to be known and applied in every area of life. As such, Scripture is the very foundation upon which the church is built and comprises not only the content of the message that the church proclaims but also the methods by which the church operates.

- **Secondly, bring God-glorifying change**

- Biblical counseling is about sanctification.
 - *...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.* (2 Peter 3:18)
 - What Peter was trying to get his readers to understand is that in order to grow in their faith it takes grace and knowledge—both, of course, applied to daily living—in order to grow. And growth, as one learns more about Christ and becomes more like Him, is what sanctification is all about.¹³
- Growth comes about as a believer learns more of the Christian faith and is helped by God to practice it. More and more he progressively comes to walk as he should (not, in this life without failures, of course). But if one is a true believer, he grows. He will change. He can because he is a new creation. Sanctification is not “on the spot,” as one modern preacher recently said. Nor does it come about without effort: studying and prayerfully applying scriptural truth. It is the result of knowing God’s truth about putting off the old sinful ways and replacing them with new biblical ones that please God. Growth is a sign of life—in this case spiritual life. No growth—no life.¹⁴

- **Thirdly, Biblical counseling is meant for God’s people**

- *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.* (1 Cor 2:14)
 - If we truly believe that the natural man cannot understand the things of God, then it is critical to make sure someone is born again *before* Biblical counseling.
 - If we attempt to use/teach Biblical principles to those who are unsaved, we are simply attempting to reform the flesh and will fall into legalism.
 - The regenerate person will (though it may take time) respond to Scripture as the Holy Spirit will bring conviction upon the person.

¹³ <http://www.nouthetic.org/blog/?cat=93>

¹⁴ Ibid