

## SESSION 1: WHY BIBLICAL COUNSELLING AND NOT PSYCHOLOGY?

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Definition:

*Biblical counselling is using the Bible in wise and appropriate ways to bring God-glorifying change to God's people.*

The definition expanded:

Biblical counselling applies the great theological truths, commands, and promises of the Bible to the problems of daily life so that believers change more and more into conformity to the character of Christ, and thus live more and more for His glory in the wisdom, righteousness, peace, stability, and strength of godly living.

Psychology, on the other hand, is an attempt to deal with man's thinking and behaviour apart from God, and apart from salvation, Scripture, biblical sanctification, and so on. In the past fifty years, many Christians have come to believe that many aspects of psychology should be integrated with the Bible to produce (according to them) a more effective form of counselling—the best of man's insights mixed with the best of God's.

### TEN REASONS CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT INTEGRATE PSYCHOLOGY INTO THEIR THINKING OR COUNSELLING PRACTICES.

#### 1) God's Word Claims That It Is Sufficient To Address People's Spiritual And Emotional Problems.

We will address the sufficiency of Scripture in detail in a separate seminar.

#### 2) All Major Psychological Systems Were Created By Unbelieving Men And Women Who Openly Rejected God And The Bible And Self-Consciously Set Out To Create A System For Explaining And Changing People That Excluded God.

Virtually all the founders of psychology (e.g., Freud, Maslow, Rogers, Jung) were either apostate Jews or apostate Christians. Unbelievers make poor theological mentors. They also make bad counselling instructors.

*Galatians 6:1. Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness ...*

#### 3) God Commands Christians Not To Be "Kidnapped" By Worldly Systems Of Thought That Are Neither From Nor About Jesus Christ (Col 2:8).

How much did you learn about Jesus Christ in your high school or university psychology class? Christ is not glorified when we attempt to *add* Him to a pre-existing worldly system of thought.

A Biblical Theology of Integration:

1. Integration is not required.

Proverbs 2:6. *The Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

Colossians 2:2-3. *... Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

1 Peter 2:2. *Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word ...*

2. Integration is forbidden.

Colossians 2:8. *See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.*

Far from encouraging the integrating of human thinking with the Bible, the Bible sternly warns against the practice of integration. We should never attempt to integrate into Christianity counselling "truths" that are neither *from* nor *about* Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:2-3; 1 Corinthians 3:18-20.

Jay Adams' summary: *Christian counselors need never ... hover around the tables of the psychological crowd, hoping to pick up crumbs. (A Theology of Christian Counseling, 35)*

#### **4) God Knows Man Better Than Man Knows Man.**

Psychology's attempts to explain man and his behaviour, such as the id, ego, super-ego, and unconscious mind of Freudianism, are pitiful guesses with no authority or credibility. God is the Creator, we go to Him to explain man: Psalm 139:1-4. Christians can be confident that the Bible is accurate when it speaks to who man is, why he does it, and which of his behaviours are good or bad.

#### **5) All Psychological Systems Have A Pre-Existing Theology That Cannot Be Interwoven With Biblical Theology.**

In fact, psychology can no more be integrated with Christianity than Mormonism, Islam, or Buddhism can.

Illustrated:

1. Psychology's theology proper

God does not exist and is unimportant to change if He does. In most cases the counselee's faith in God is counterproductive to the psychoanalytical process and must be negated or marginalised. God and belief in Him is a neurosis.

2. Psychology's Christology

Jesus Christ is not central to human history nor is faith in Him essential to stable, fulfilled living. Neither faith in Christ and His substitutionary death on the cross nor the continuing work of Christ in sanctification is essential or relevant to the process of counselling.

Christ is not glorified by being made an add-on to fundamentally Christ-less systems. He is glorified only when He is *first*. Systems that are neither *from* nor *about* Jesus Christ should not be "Christianised" and brought into Christianity.

3. Psychology's pneumatology

The Holy Spirit does not exist. If He does, He has no role in changing people or dealing with their spiritual and emotional problems.

Psychology is committed to the priority of *techniques*; therefore, the Holy Spirit is unnecessary to the process of change. That's why proponents of psychology believe that it is irrelevant whether the psychologist employing a psychoanalytical technique is a Christian or not. Technique is all; the Spirit is inconsequential.

Objection: "But doesn't psychology sometimes *work*?" Response: Define *work*.

Did the counselling glorify God by focusing on Him, Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and obedience to Christ? In that sense, even if psychological counselling "worked," it didn't work. *Relief* is not the only goal (or even the main goal) of counselling. The glory of God through Jesus Christ is.

4. Psychology's Hamartiology (view of sin)

1. The inherent goodness of man

2. The moral value of a thought or action is decided by man, not God

3. Men are victims of bad environment, genetics, input from parents, the church, or the secret, uncontrollable workings of their "unconscious mind." They are not morally responsible before a holy God.

**6) The Talk Therapy Aspects Of Psychology Are Not Scientific; Therefore, Christians Should Not Accept Psychological Doctrines As They Might Accept The Laws Of Physics Or Chemistry Formulas.**

*Psychology is not a true science. It does not deal with objective, measurable data that can be subjected to reliable tests and confirmed by the scientific method. It is a pseudo-science, and most of its cardinal doctrines are mere speculations, not reliable truth. (MacArthur, in MacArthur and Mack, Introduction to Biblical Counseling, 368)*

*Throughout Fromm's works, his atheism and materialism, his political views, and other values so permeate his psychology that it is hard even to identify those contributions which might reasonably be considered scientific. (Vitz, Psychology as Religion, 7)*

What is scientific about dream analysis, the inherent goodness of man, the notion that the counselee himself always knows the best thing to do, and the unproven (and unprovable) Freudian speculations about the constituent parts of man like the id, ego, and the unconscious mind?

In fact, talk therapy can never be scientific, because counselees often forget, misinterpret, and lie about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings, meaning that no scientific truth can ever be discovered in a therapy session.

**7) The "Mental Illnesses" Of Psychology Are Not Medical Conditions; Rather, They Are Inaccurate And Deceiving Names For Behaviours And Choices That The Bible Calls Sin.**

The term *mental illness* does not refer to brain conditions, such as Alzheimers, brain tumours, or trauma-induced damage. Such problems are treated by neurologists because they are genuine physiological illnesses. What, then, is a *mental illness*?

We are told that a *mental illness* refers to a *non-organic sickness*. However, a *non-organic sickness* is a contradiction in terms. While the brain can be diseased or damaged, your *mind*, which is a non-physical entity, cannot be sick.

*Typhoid fever is a disease, but spring fever, cabin fever or love-sickness is not. (Tyler and Grady Deceptive Diagnosis, 53)*

The term *mental illness* is a metaphor, a figure of speech—a mere trick of rhetoric. It is *as if* the person is sick. However, psychology has convinced people that their quasi-medical descriptions of behaviour refer to a real, "non-organic" sickness.

It is easy to illustrate the difference between a mental illness and a genuine illness. A person can choose to stop gambling. No one can choose to stop having leukaemia. In short, you can be sad, angry, happy, jealous, or hateful, but your *mental* cannot be sick. *Emotional pain is not a disease.* (Fitzpatrick and Hendrickson, *Will Medicine Stop the Pain?*, 31)

In fact, psychology deals with *moral*, not *medical* issues. *The psychiatrist—under the guise of medicine—attempts to change values and beliefs. That is not medicine.* (Adams, *Lectures on Counseling*, 71)

#### **8) Psychologists And Psychiatrists Are Actually Less Effective At Helping People Than Caring Friends Or Family Are.**

Studies by the psychological community itself have repeatedly proven that psychological professionals are consistently *less* successful in helping people than caring non-professionals. Christians do not need to be afraid of counselling even the most difficult spiritual and emotional issues with the Scripture.

#### **9) The Bible Addresses The Deepest Problems Of Life; Therefore, Psychology Is Not Necessary.**

Christians who are committed to psychology often argue that psychology is necessary to deal with the "deep" problems of life. However, what issues are deeper than our sin and our rebellion against God? and hopes, lusts and self-control. To assert that the Bible does not address the deepest issues of life is simply to disbelieve the Bible.

#### **10) The Motto, "All Truth Is God's Truth" Is Deceptive, Since Jesus Identified The Truth He Intends His People To Use To Address The Moral, Relational, Spiritual, And Emotional Problems Of Life.**

John 17:17. *Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*

No two Christian psychologists agree on what to integrate into Christianity. Freud? Rogers? Adler? Maslow? Skinner?. In fact, integration is a subjective process of *personal choosing* based on preference and training. It is decidedly not a process of identifying truth. Ultimately, each psychologist decides for himself or herself what is "true." Integration makes man, not God, the arbitrator of truth, and can only corrupt Christianity with humanistic views of man and morality.

### **CONCLUSION**

Why *biblical* counselling? Five answers:

1. All psychological systems have an underlying theology, and that theology is as incompatible with biblical theology as the doctrines of Islam, Buddhism, or Mormonism.
2. The talk therapy aspects of psychology and psychiatry are speculative, not scientific.
3. The Bible teaches that it is completely sufficient to deal with life's emotional and spiritual problems. To disbelieve this is simply unbelief.
4. The Bible's clear instructions not to integrate God's word with the doctrines and philosophies of men make it wrong to attempt to integrate psychology into Christianity.
5. No psychological system gives the full, right, and preeminent place to Jesus Christ that He deserves. Systems that are neither *from* nor *about* Christ cannot be called Christian, nor can they be adapted into Christianity.

The motto of biblical counselling:

We believe that a sufficient *God* has given us a sufficient *Christ*, a sufficient *Holy Spirit*, and a sufficient *Bible*: we will live out our confidence in them as we strive to mature in Christ and as we help others deal with life's deepest and most difficult emotional and spiritual problems.