

SESSION 2: THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE IN COUNSELLING

Christian psychologists, with varying degrees of recklessness or caution, promote the integration of psychology into Christianity.

1. Integration defined

Integration is a process by which elements of psychologies and a Christian system of thought and practice are adapted to one another to form a somewhat new system of Christian thought and practice. (Robert Roberts, in Psychology & Christianity: Four Views, 138)

2. The integrationist position summed up

Everybody knows that the Bible is psychologically unsophisticated, reflecting the views of primitive thinking. The Bible is antiquated in its sociological theory. You can't go to an ancient document like this and expect to deal with twentieth-century social problems. The Bible ought to stay in its own environment. It needs to be updated with a contemporary understanding of psychological and sociological phenomena. (quoted in John MacArthur, Our Sufficiency in Christ, 84-85)

This captures the heart of the integrationist position: the Bible—for all its good points—is unsophisticated, antiquated, and out of step with modern psychological theories. While it may have been adequate for dealing with life in the past, the Bible isn't up to the task of facing modern problems. While good enough in its own context—salvation, worship and theology—it needs to be updated in regard to counselling.

THE BIBLE'S VIEW OF ITSELF: TEN CHARACTERISTICS

1) Inspired

2 Timothy 3:16. *All Scripture is inspired by God ...*

When they actually came to the point of putting pen to paper, the words were fully their own words, but also fully the words that God wanted them to write, words that God would also claim as his own. (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 81)

2) True

Psalms 119:128. *Therefore I esteem right all Your precepts concerning everything ... (see also Ps 119:142, 160)*

God knows everything and He never lies; therefore, His word-for-word inspired book is absolutely true or inerrant, which absolutely and categorically sets the Bible apart from every other book ever written.

3) Unchanging

Psalm 119:89. *Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.*

Psalm 119:160. *The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.*

The Bible's immutability is in stark contrast to the ideas of men. Human ideas are always changing, and none more so than the theories of psychology. In fact, there are over 250 different registered forms of psychoanalysis, and they consistently disagree vehemently with one another. In contrast to the erratic, conflicting, and transient ideas of men, God's word is gloriously *unchanging*.

4) Insightful (incomparably)

Psalm 119:99-100. *I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Your precepts.*

No teacher, professor, or psychologist has more insight than a child who knows the word of God: Isaiah 8:20. *To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.*

5) Practical

Psalm 119:105. *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

God's word is not a book of theoretical, arcane, philosophical musings, mutterings, and meditations. It deals in a highly practical manner with the real problems of daily life, as anyone who has read the book of Proverbs can readily testify.

6) Effective

One of the main arguments for the integration of psychology into Christianity is the belief that the Bible provides only superficial answers to life's problems. The really difficult problems of life, argue integrationists, need answers that go deeper than the Bible's shallow understanding of man. In contrast, the Bible teaches that, when applied by the all-knowing Holy Spirit, the Scriptures effectively deal with the deepest human problems, including life-dominating sins.

Psalm 119:133. *Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.*

John 8:31-32. *So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

Romans 6:17-18. *But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

7) Nourishing

1 Timothy 4:6. *In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.*

For those who are starving emotionally and spiritually, God's word is the source of life-sustaining nourishment. Psychology does not nourish Christians' souls, because no psychological system points people to God, Christ, the Spirit, salvation, and so on.

8) Surgical

One of the accusations frequently raised against the Bible by integrationists is that the Bible can only deal with counselling problems in a superficial manner. Using the Bible to deal with serious life problems is, allegedly, like putting a sticking plaster on a gunshot wound. Response: Hebrews 4:12-13.

The Bible's view of itself is that the Bible penetrates the deepest part of man and that it lays all things bare. Wherever integrationists got the idea that the Bible is a superficial tool for changing man, it wasn't from the Bible.

9) Accessible

Gnosticism and Christian psychology:

One of the long-standing (and perfectly true accusations) against Christian psychology is that it is a new form of *Gnosticism*. Gnosticism is the unbiblical notion that there is a higher level of knowledge not contained in the Bible that is essential for spiritual, God-pleasing living, and that knowledge can only be accessed through an elite group of people, in this case, highly trained psychological professionals.

Contrast—the Bible's accessibility: Deuteronomy 30:11-12. In contrast to the neo-Gnosticism of psychology, the Bible emphasises that the keys to successful spiritual living are accessible to every believer because the Bible is accessible to every believer.

10) Sufficient

1. The Bible's sufficiency for spiritually stable living: Psalm 1:2-3
2. The Bible's sufficiency for life and godliness: 2 Peter 1:3
3. The Bible's sufficiency for counselling: Psalm 119:24
4. The Bible's sufficiency for ministry: 2 Timothy 3:16-17
5. The Bible's sufficiency for ministering to the soul:

Some Christian psychologist's assert that the *soul* is a deep part of man that is inaccessible to those who use only the Bible; therefore, it is necessary to integrate psychology into Christianity. However, hundreds of verses in the Bible indicate that the soul can be addressed by God's Word and God's Spirit.

- Psalm 19:7. *The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul.*
- Psalm 119:25. *My soul cleaves to the dust; revive me according to Your word.*
- Psalm 62:5. *My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him.*
- Psalm 94:19. *When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations delight my soul.*
- Hebrews 6:19. *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast ...*
- Matthew 11:29. *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

6. The Bible's sufficiency to address the difficult issues of modern life:

Problems the Bible knows all about:

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| ● trauma counselling | Lamentations, Job |
| ● depression | Cain, Elijah, David, Jonah, Jeremiah, Paul |
| ● dysfunctional families | Abraham and his descendants in Genesis |
| ● sibling conflict | Joseph and his brothers |
| ● rebellious children | Eli, Samuel, David; Deut 21 |
| ● raising children | Deut 6; Ps 78; Eph 6 |
| ● unloving husbands | 1 Peter 3 |
| ● infertility | Sarah, Rebekah, Hannah |

- sexuality Genesis 1-2; Song of Solomon
- homosexuality Gen 19; Lev 18, 20; Rom 1; 1 Cor 6
- incest Lot/daughters; Lev 18
- sexual abuse by a family member Amnon and Tamar
- sexual "addiction" woman at the well, John 4
- restoring an adulterous marriage Hosea 1-3
- murderous anger Cain
- jealousy, anger, revenge, demonic activity, attempted murder King Saul
- bizarre behaviour Nebuchadnezzar, demonic of the Geresenes, David
- anger at God Job
- divorce and remarriage Malachi 3; Matt 5, 19; 1 Cor 7
- temptation Matt 4
- racial enmity Eph 2
- anxiety attacks Matt 6; Phil 4
- failure Peter (John 21)
- guilty pasts Zaccheus, Paul, the woman at the well
- rejection man born blind (John 9)
- bereavement Mary/Martha (John 11)
- conflict resolution Acts 6, 11
- occult practices Acts 19; Deut 18; Lev 19
- mind-altering drugs Prov 23; Eph 5

Is modern life more complicated than what God's men faced in the Psalms?

- death Ps 23, 90
- real or irrational fear Ps 27:1; 55:4-8, 16
- family abandonment Ps 27:10; 69:79
- bad health Ps 30, 91
- depression Ps 31, 32, 38, 42, 102
- devastating guilt Ps 32, 51, 103, 130
- crushed spirit Ps 34, 147
- overwhelming circumstances Ps 33, 131
- betrayal by a family member Ps 3
- enemies Ps 57, 59, 64
- spiritual/emotional weakness Ps 6:1-3
- inability to sleep Ps 3
- doubting God Ps 73
- ancestor worship Ps 106
- loneliness Ps 116:1-2; 145:18
- grief Ps 119:28; 6:6-7

- physical danger

Ps 119:109

Modern technology simply allows us to sin more efficiently. It does not change the sins we do—nor their God-given consequences and biblical solutions.

Conclusion:

Adams:

[The man of God] need never feel inadequate so long as he has the Bible. If he is inadequate, it is not because the Bible is inadequate but simply because he does not know his Bible adequately. (How to Help People Change, 30)

I cannot exhort you strongly enough to remain ever mindful of the usefulness of the Bible for changing Christians. It will do the job, if only given the opportunity. (202)

Arguments that one does not use the Bible as a textbook for architecture or for mechanical drawing beg the question. The Scriptures do not purport to give shipbuilders or architects or electrical engineers detailed information for pursuing their arts, but they do claim to equip ministers adequately for theirs. (Lectures on Counseling, 183)

MacArthur:

Since Scripture itself claims to be a sufficient resource for meeting emotional and spiritual needs, I suggest that those who are saying it is not are in serious error. (MacArthur, in MacArthur and Mack, Introduction to Biblical Counseling, 324)