

Biblical Counseling Fundamentals Course

Critical Reflection on Various Theories in Counseling

September 29, 2026

Critical Reflection on Various Theories in Counseling

- Counseling History**
- Secular and Integration Philosophy and Theories**
- Distinctives of Biblical Counseling**

How Did We Get Here?

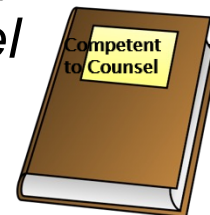
The **home of soul care is in the church**. This has always been God's intent, though **the church has often failed to follow it**. Too often the **church has abdicated its role in shepherding God's children**, giving the work to other authorities.

The failure of the Church – **After 1900 years, the church drifted away from pastoral counseling** with the rising **popularity of emerging psychology and psychiatry** in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Worldly perspectives, theories, and pragmatism were allowed to influence how the church defined soul care and the ailments common to mankind. “**Whatever defines the problem also sets the parameters for the solution.**”

A breakdown in society - the religion of secular humanism in 20th century.

The **emergence of the Biblical Counseling Movement** - Jay Adams: 1970s
Competent to Counsel



Secular and Integration Theories

The chief goal in secular counseling is to **help clients achieve their personal goals and improve their overall well-being.**

This approach is grounded in evidence-based treatments and techniques from psychology and research, **focusing on the client's needs without imposing any specific values or beliefs.**

The aim is to **provide a neutral, supportive environment** where clients can explore their issues and develop strategies to thrive.

There is **no absolute standard of truth** in secular counseling. **Truth is self-derived**; in other words, it comes from **one's own power of reason.**

Secular Counseling

Secular psychology **removes the personal God of Scripture** from its counseling model and therefore views people and their problems through a purely **human-centered lens**.

Materialism - Man is a being composed of material elements, his mental, emotional, and spiritual life being simply by-products of his material structure. Human beings have not been created in the image of God—in fact, the very existence of the Creator is denied.

Materialism is a form of philosophical monism (oneness) which holds that matter is the fundamental substance in nature, and that all things, including mental states and consciousness, are results of material interactions of material things.

Standard of Truth

Descriptive Causes and Interpretation vs. Prescriptive Remedy and Treatment – Secular Philosophy

Descriptive –In secular counseling the data is described by observation. The descriptive approach to psychology or psychiatry is based on the study and classification of behavior without attempts to explain why the behavior occurs.

Prescriptive – prescribes its therapy (multiple and varied). The diagnosis based on psychological theory and classification – Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM).

Standard of Truth



Descriptive Causes and Interpretation vs. Prescriptive Remedy and Treatment – Biblical

Descriptive - Scripture, not mere observation or personal experience, determines truth (the Fall, the Curse, Covenant blessings and curses, etc.

- Scripture describes what happened/happening, and why!

Prescriptive - Scripture determines what is prescriptive (10 Commandments; Sermon on the Mount; Romans 12-14, etc.)

- Scripture provides the ultimate framework for understanding human condition, the nature of human problems, and the solution to these problems.

Integration Counseling

Integrational Counseling is a part of the **evolution of pastoral care, blending traditional Christian practices with modern psychotherapeutic approaches**. The shift towards therapeutic language and humanistic psychology has influenced the field, leading to different counseling approaches within evangelical circles.

Integration Christian counseling **denies sufficiency of Scripture**.

Psychology and humanistic philosophy is **“integrated”** into Christian counseling. **Psychology and humanism are often given priority** with Scripture and prayer applied to support the secular practices.

“All truth is God’s truth”

“All Truth Is God's Truth” is a phrase emphasizing that every piece of genuine knowledge, whether discovered through Scripture, nature, science, history, or any other realm of inquiry, ultimately comes from the same divine Author. The concept is that God is the creator of all things and thus the origin of all that is true. Since God is the embodiment of truth (cf. John 14:6), nothing legitimately true stands outside His sovereignty.

“While it is certainly true that “all truth is God’s truth,” it is also true that “all error is the devil’s error.” – Jay Adams

Reductionistic view of the Bible -

For something to be declared true, it must be discoverable, transcultural, unchanging, unaffected by attitude, absolute, and knowable.

“All truth is God’s truth”



Truth reflects reality and God is the Architect of all reality. Truth is grounded in reality; as such truth is always discovered, never invented or manufactured. Truth reflects God - Jesus is truth incarnate (John 14:6);

Secular theories, philosophy, humanistic reasoning, or subjective assumptions are not established truth by definition.

Psychological studies, theories, philosophy, catalogued observations are not to be placed on the same level as the inspired word of God (Proverbs 30:5–6)

Truth is objective, not subjective because reality is objective. God is ultimate reality. He created all reality (John 1:3).

When we have a settled view that Scripture teaches x, then we must believe “x”, over against any claim that “x” is false.

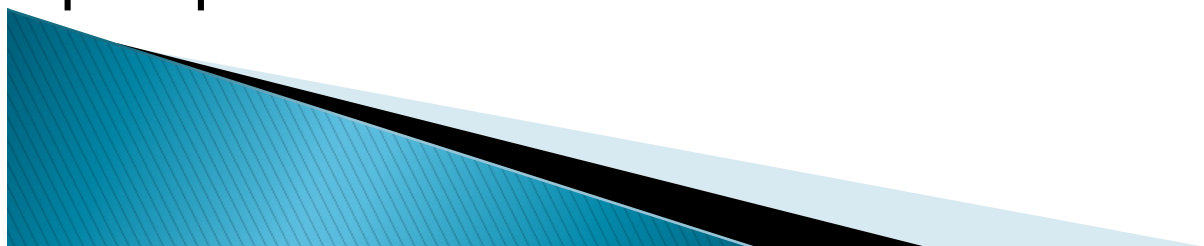
Psychology and Secular Philosophy

Harmful errors of modern psychology.

Is psychology a science in the same way that medicine is?

Should the pastor deal with the spiritual problems while the “mental health professional” deals with the emotional and mental problems?

Psychology and theology both deal with the same fundamental issues of meaning and value from widely differing perspectives.



Psychology and Secular Philosophy

Harmful errors of modern psychology.

Unscriptural presuppositions and practices of certain schools of psychology.

A faulty view of man.

- a. Man is only an advanced animal
- b. Man is basically good, or at worst a blank slate.
- c. Man is autonomous: able to solve his own problems without God's help.

Excuses sin and denies personal responsibility.

- a. Blame shifting: parents, teachers, society, etc.
 - b. The medical model: calling sin sickness ("mental illness").
 - c. Is there such a thing as "mental illness"?
- 

Unscriptural presuppositions and practices of psychology (cont).

A faulty view of man.

Excuses sin and denies personal responsibility.

No fixed moral values: relativism.

- a. Non-directive counseling (Rogers).
- 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.
- e. **No place for God!**

World Philosophies

Col 2:2-8



- **Humanism:** Attaches prime importance to human rather than divine matters. Stresses the potential values and goodness of humans. Seeks rational ways to solve human problems
- **Materialism** - Man is a being composed of material elements, his mental, emotional, and spiritual life being simply by-products of his material structure. Human beings have not been created in the image of God—in fact, the very existence of the Creator is denied.
- **Naturalism** - refers to the view that nature is the “whole show.” There is no supernatural realm and/or intervention in the world. In the strict sense, all forms of nontheisms are naturalistic, including atheism, pantheism, deism, and agnosticism.
- **Rationalism:** Opinions and actions should be based on reason and knowledge rather than on religious belief or emotional response.
- **Modernism** - truth is discovered through rational and scientific exploration Ultimate reality is the physical world, and whatever can be reduced to the physical. Seekers of truth are urged to be objective and independent of the community.
- **Post-Modernism:** No absolute truth; relativism - each one of us defines truth or we discard any definition of truth and are intolerant of a definition of truth.

Note – move from modernism to postmodernism includes move from rationalism to irrationalism as truth is seen as relativistic - “What is truth?”

TENETS OF HUMANISTIC METHODS OF SOLVING MAN'S PROBLEMS

The Tenet	The Rationale	The Biblical Response
Man is basically good	Man's basic problem is that he does not live up to his inner potential. He is intelligent and rationale and has within him the resources to effect his own transformation.	Romans 3:10-18, 23
Man can effect his own transformation	Man's bad behavior for which he is not responsible, is the cause of his problems; but he can change his behavior and overcome his problems.	Jeremiah 13:23 Romans 7:18
Man is a victim	He is a victim of his conscience, the victim of other's abuse, the victim of his environment, and/or the victim of his subconscious drives and is therefore not responsible for his actions. Therefore, he must identify those who victimize him, identify who is to blame, and must be re-socialized.	1 Timothy 4:1-2 Romans 1:18-25
Man is an animal	Man, the superior animal must meet his needs any way he can, so long as in doing so he does not violate others.	Ezekiel 18:20-21
Man is a negotiator	The politics of happiness describes man's negotiating problems concerning interpersonal relationships. The quality of life is enhance by the equality of balance. But bargaining means my priority is ME; therefore, I am willing to give you some of what you want so that you will give me what I want. But negotiation from this selfish perspective is not God's way.	James 3:14-16 Philippians 2:3-4 Isaiah 55:9

Schools of Modern Psychology and Presuppositions

School of Thought	Freud (Freudian)	Ego Psychology (Freudian)	Rogers (indirect; human potential)	Skinner (Behaviorism)	Existentialist (Human potential)	Third Force (Human potential)
Man	Self-gratifying animal	Basically good	Basically good	Man is a zero	Man is absurd	Man has great potential
Problem	Inner anxiety and drives create conflict between the id and super-ego	Weak ego	Inhibition and anxiety	Environmentally programed improperly	Anxiety (angst) from dealing with own absurdity	The awareness of not reaching his potential
Responsibility	Person is responsible to live out his drives without social conflict	Same as Freud	Person is responsible for not being himself, i.e., being free	Society, not the individual	Rests with the counselee	Rests with the counselee
Guilt	Result of the super ego having had society's values forced upon it or the conflict between the id and super ego	Same as Freud	No guilt, but rather an incorrect learned negative evaluation	No such thing	Man	Bad feelings for not having achieved potential
Treatment	Gratification of desires in society in socially acceptable ways	Strengthen ego through self-determinism; Strong ego-guiltless and no angst	Reflection and insight	Reengineer the environment	Projecting reality (a self-fulfilled prophecy) create mood!	Change environment – learn how to reach potential
Counselor	Explores the past where frustrations occur – make advisements; help to exercise acceptance	Guide strengthening process	Mirror reflection	Environmental engineer	One who enables counselee to reestablish hope in projection.	Facilitates what is pragmatically closest to potential

Biblical counseling

– The chief goal of biblical counseling is to glorify God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 – *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

Biblical counseling is dependent upon the authority and sufficiency of God's Word through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Biblical counseling seeks to reorient disordered desires, affections, thoughts, behaviors, and worship toward a God-designed anthropology, to restore people to a right fellowship with God and others.

Sanctification goal- The counselor and counselee are fellow believers seeking to grow together toward Christ-likeness, which is the goal of the Christian life and thus the goal of biblical counseling. Col 1:28, Eph 4:13, Col 3:16, 1 Cor 2:6

Sanctification – being conformed to the likeness of Christ from the inner man (heart) to outer person in speech and behavior.

Dichotomy — A view of human nature that identifies two distinct aspects of a person (material and immaterial), usually regarding both as essential to human nature.

Eph 3:16, 2 Cor 4:16; New self – Eph 4:24; Col 3:10

Biblical Standard of Truth

Two key terms – Authority and Sufficiency

Authority - The Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the inerrant and complete Word of God, the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. (2 Pet 1:19-21; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Psalm 19:7-14)

Sufficiency - God's Word is sufficient to meet every need of the human soul. Scripture is comprehensive, containing everything necessary for one's spiritual life. Scripture is surer than a human experience that one may look to in proving God's power and presence.

2 Peter 1:3-9, John 17:3, Phil 4:8, 1 Pet 1:15.

Necessity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit for the counseling task

Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. (Eph 2:8,9)

The power of the Holy Spirit comes only to those who put their trust in Christ as the Savior and Lord. (Rom 10:9-10 cf. John 14:17, Rom 8:9-11, Gal 5:16-23).

Only the Holy Spirit can work fundamental changes in the human heart. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the necessary agent in all effective biblical counseling (John 15:26).

Unless the Holy Spirit is working in the heart of the counselee, any apparent change will be illusory, superficial, or temporary—and the same problems or worse ones will soon reappear.

Scripture as our framework

Disciplines such as psychology, sociology, history and medicine are, at best, able only to make general observations. They cannot answer the why of the human condition.

When they try to explain the why of human behavior their guess is no better than the untrained or unlearned because they are, in the final analysis, simply making observations based on general revelation.

Scripture provides the framework for understanding the human condition.

Proverbs 4:20-23, Matt 12:34, Luke 6:45

General and Special Revelation

General revelation points to a higher power, while **special revelation** personally introduces this higher power as the triune God of Scripture, who created the world and all that is in it (see Isaiah 40–48).

General revelation is **insufficient** for salvation. By general revelation we receive some knowledge of God, of His power, goodness, and wisdom, but we do not come to know Christ, the highest revelation of God, in His redemptive work and in His transforming power.

Special revelation **reveals** the divine greatness of God, His absolute power and infinite wisdom.

Special revelation reveals with increasing clearness the triune God in His personal distinctions, and the divine economy of redemption. It is a revelation of the way of salvation.

A Biblical View of Man: An Accurate Anthropology

An Accurate Anthropology: what one believes about man is the cornerstone of every counseling model.

Abraham Maslow believed that man is basically good and with the continuing satisfaction of his self-needs/felt-needs he may achieve self-actualization and progress to greater levels – his anthropology!

The basic biblical worldview as to man and to which biblical counseling is based is as follows:

1. Man is created in God's image – Man is an image bearer! This means we are able to communicate with God and with others; we have the ability to love, obey, and to serve God; and we are self-conscious and reasonably able to understand existence.

A Biblical View of Man: An Accurate Anthropology

2. Mankind is totally depraved – He is fallen, contaminated with sin and idolatry. Man was created in God's image to glorify God, but because of sin, he seeks to glorify himself

- On his own he cannot do good (Rom. 3:10-18).
- His heart is deceitfully wicked (Jer. 17:9-10).
- His goal in life is selfishness and only evil (Gen. 6:5).
- He is physically dying and psychologically confused.

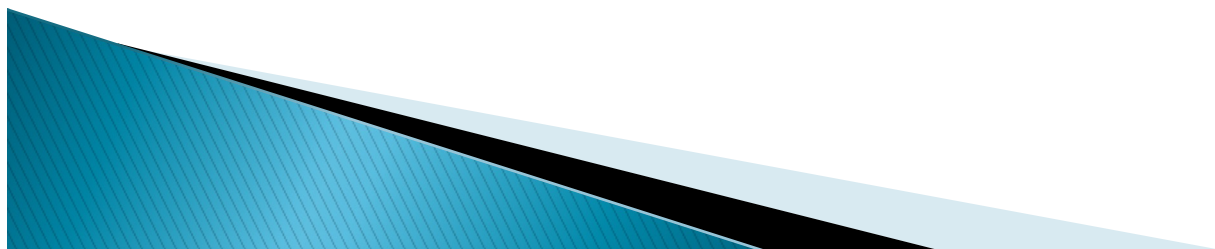
3. A sinner is alienated from God, and as a result, he will seek fulfillment from the world's system (1 John 2:15-17). Implications:

- Christ will not be seen as the only solution to man's problems.
- People will try to provide substitutes that promise fulfillment.
- The focus is on dealing with felt needs instead of real needs.

A Biblical View of Man: An Accurate Anthropology (cont)

4. Mankind needs to be reconnected by God's grace – new birth – born again. Man needs a Savior and only through Christ will he be reconnected to God, understand his life, receive healing and be saved.

5. Man is called to holiness and sanctification – the meaning of life is to walk in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord – in all respects be pleasing to God!

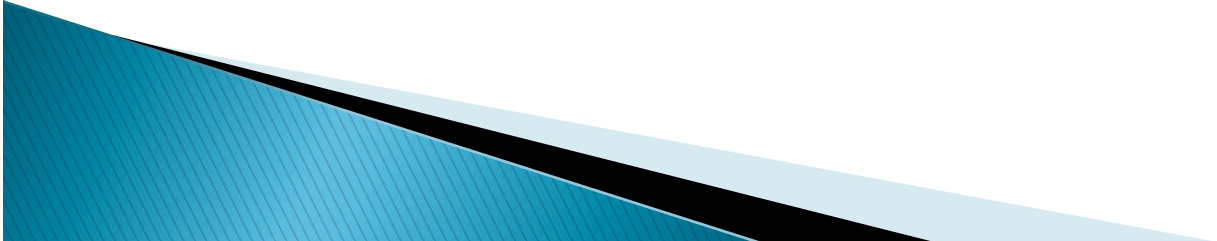


The Church and Biblical Counseling - Reclaim the church as a culture of care.

Sufficiency of Scripture defines the problems and solutions of mankind and is indispensable for soul care.

A proper ecclesiology is required to understand how soul care is biblically designed to happen. **Soul care is not a periodic task of the church but must be woven into everything the church does.**

There may be an **occasional need for specialized care**, but the church is to embrace that **each follower of Christ is called to counsel** according to God's Word wherever He has placed them.



The Church and Biblical Counseling

The church must again be the primary place where those who struggle can receive lasting hope and healing.

Must present **the church as the primary haven for answers to deep-seated human problems**. God has designed every function of the church to be an integral part of soul care. **God has provided the church with the necessary resources for us to care well for one another. Prayer, the Word, the work of the Holy Spirit, and Christian community are God's provisions to lead all of us to Christ even those with the deepest struggles.**

Counselors, ministers, and lay leaders are **empowered to have confidence** in God's purpose for the church, the power of his Spirit, and the sufficiency of his Word for soul care.



A Biblical View of Man: Summary



1. Common grace/revelation.

- a. Man can know God's eternal power and divine attributes by common grace (Romans 1:18-23)
- b. Man can know he is guilty and suffer the effects of conviction (John 16:7-11, 1 Timothy 4:10)
- c. Man cannot search for wisdom (skill to live for God's glory) within self (Jeremiah 17:9-10, 1 Corinthians 2:11).

2. Special grace/revelation (Jeremiah 17:9, Hebrews 4:12).

- a. The Word of God is required for man to know his inner self (Hebrews 4:12).
- b. It is only through relationship with Jesus Christ and revelation of the Holy Spirit that man can understand how to live in wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:18).
- c. God is unchanging and constant, and the standard for understanding humanity must come from the subjective standard of His Word, which is sufficient and comprehensive for all that man needs to know to understand the human experience (1 Peter 1:3-4, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 13:8).

3. Secular/integration psychology can provide partial descriptions or provoke questions, but cannot prescribe hope or explain the inner man.

A Biblical View of Man: Summary (cont)

III. Based On And Growing Out Of A Biblical View Of Man, What Implications Affect Biblical Counseling?

- A. All biblical counseling is God-oriented and considers how God is using the situation in the sanctification process (Psalm 73:25, Romans 11:36).
- B. Guilt is taken seriously and handled biblically (Psalm 51:4, 32:1-2, 1 John 1:9).
- C. The responsibility of the counselee is recognized (Ezekiel 18:4, Romans 14:10,12, Jeremiah 31:29-30).
- D. Behavior change is possible by obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:13, Ephesians 4:22-24, 2 Corinthians 5:17).
- E. Counselee is accepted as God's creation, in light of the biblical agenda provided by God's love and for His glory (Isaiah 43:7, Luke 6:27-35).

The Lord is good to all and His mercy is over all that He has made.

Doctrine of common grace - **God's mercy, His kindness toward all people. God's non-saving, undeserved kindness that He shows to all people.** It's manifested through the delay of His final judgment, the restraint of sin and the bestowal of these external blessings and creation.

Psalms 145:9 – “The Lord is good to all”

Matthew 5:45 – “for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

2 Thessalonians 2:3-8 – “And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.”

Common Grace - Nothing salvific in nature or even a precursor of something that is salvific.

Common grace is the display of the glory of God, in His mercy and kindness toward all.



Common Grace – God's delay of final judgment, restraint of sin, and His bestowing of external blessings.

No secular knowledge, insights, interventions, nor applications that biblical counselors **must** harvest to care for people holistically

Some claim that common grace, through general revelation, gives theological justification for insight, intervention, and redemption in secular theories. Claim that common grace provided those insights and those resources.

Suggestion - the unbeliever knows through enhancement or empowerment or revelation as an operation of the Holy Spirit. Does the Holy Spirit empower unbelievers to discover things that we need to turn to and use in our counseling care of souls?

Noetic effect of sin on the mind - “**man can use his mind adequately but not properly**,” Man’s rationality is stained by sin. Unbelievers can make observations and understand aspects of creation. But those observations are never neutral, and when they move into interpretation they’re based upon a worldview and presuppositions that are antithetical and inconsistent with a biblical worldview.



20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1 Corinthians 1:20-25

14 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. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2: 14-16

