

TMSJ 9/1 (Spring 1998) 63-84

THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE IN COUNSELING¹

Wayne A. Mack
 Program Director and Professor of Biblical Counseling
 The Master's College

A belief in Biblical inerrancy entails an affirmation of Scripture's sufficiency for understanding and resolving the non-physical problems of man. Counseling that is truly Christian must be Christ-centered, church-centered, and Bible-based. Various contemporary approaches to counseling question the sufficiency of Scripture, namely the two-book, the no-book, and the filtering device approaches. All three join in affirming that the traditional biblical resources for dealing with man's problems are not enough. They fail to take into account, however, the finiteness of man's knowledge, the depravity of human nature, and the sufficiency of Scripture. Psalm 19:7-11, 2 Timothy 3:15-17, and 2 Peter 1:2-7 affirm clearly the sufficiency of Scripture and Christ in dealing with man's problems. Secular psychological principles are unnecessary and may even be harmful in trying to understand and help people.

* * * * *

The Chicago statement on biblical inerrancy states that "the authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith and conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority."

As a Christian, I wholeheartedly agree with every aspect of this general statement on biblical inerrancy and authority. For me, the inerrancy of Scripture and the authority of Scripture are like Siamese twins—they are inseparably joined to each other. Holy Scripture, being God's law and testimony, is true and should therefore serve as our standard for all matters of faith and practice (Isa 8:19-20). God's Word being both truthful (John 17:17) and authoritative calls us to humble and faithful obedience in every area of which it speaks. There is no authority that is higher than that in Scripture. Wherever and on whatever subject the Scriptures speak, one must regard them as both inerrant and authoritative.

As a Christian, it is precisely because I affirm the preceding convictions

¹This essay is adapted from the chapter "What Is Biblical Counseling?," *Totally Sufficient*, Ed Hinson and Howard Eyrich, gen eds. (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House 1997). It is used by permission.

that I believe in the sufficiency of Scripture in the area of counseling. Scripture is not silent about its own sufficiency for both understanding man and his non-physical problems and for resolving those problems. To me, those issues are crystal clear. And because this is what I understand Scripture to be teaching about itself, my profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior compels me to submit to this sufficiency teaching. As I see it, doing anything less would make me disloyal to my Master.

Many in our day and previously have affirmed the inerrancy and authority of Scripture in matters of faith and practice, but have not affirmed the sufficiency of Scripture for understanding and resolving the spiritual (non-physical) problems of man. They believe that we need the insights of psychology to understand and help people. In essence, they believe that when it comes to these matters, the Bible is fundamentally deficient. They believe that God did not design the Bible for this purpose and so we must rely on extrabiblical, psychological theories and insights. For many Christians, the Bible has titular (given a title and respected in name) rather than functional (actual, practical, real, respected in practice) authority in the area of counseling. They acknowledge it to be the Word of God and therefore worthy of our respect, but when it comes to understanding and resolving many of the real issues of life, they give it limited value.

A DEFINITION OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELING

Christian Counseling Is Christ-Centered

The attitude that many Christians have toward the Scriptures was vividly illustrated by a person who came to interview me about the kind of counseling I did. This person was traveling around the United States questioning various Christians who did counseling about their views on what constitutes Christian counseling. In the interview, I said I believed that any counseling worthy of the name "Christian" should be *conscientiously and comprehensively Christ-centered*. It will make much of who and what Christ is, what He has done for us in His life and death and resurrection and in sending the Holy Spirit, what He is doing for us right now in His session at the Father's right hand, and what He will yet do for us in the future.

In Christian counseling, the Christ of the Bible will not be an appendage, a "tack on" for surviving life in the "fast lane." He will be the center as well as the circumference of our counseling. Understanding the nature and causes of our human difficulties will include understanding ways in which we are unlike Christ in our values, aspirations, desires, thoughts, feelings, choices, attitudes, actions, responses, and other aspects of our lives. Resolving those sin-related difficulties will include being redeemed and justified through Christ, receiving God's forgiveness through Christ, and acquiring from Christ enabling

power to replace unchristlike (sinful) patterns of life with Christlike, godly ways of life.

In his book on *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, John MacArthur tells a story about a man who was shut out of a house on a cold night. He suffered some unpleasant consequences during the ordeal, all of which he could have avoided had he known the key to the house was in his pocket. Dr. MacArthur writes,

That true story illustrates the predicament of Christians who try to gain access to God’s blessings through human means, all the while possessing Christ, who is the key to every spiritual blessing. He alone fulfills the deepest longing of our hearts and supplies every spiritual resource we need.

Believers have in Christ everything they will ever need to meet any trial, any craving, any difficulty they might ever encounter in this life. Even the newest convert possesses sufficient resources for every spiritual need. From the moment of salvation each believer is in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) and Christ is in the believer (Colossians 1:27). The Holy Spirit abides within as well (Romans 8:9)—the Christian is His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). “Of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace” (John 1:16). So every Christian is a self contained treasury of divinely bestowed spiritual affluence. There is nothing more—no great transcendental secret, no ecstatic experience, no hidden spiritual wisdom—that can take Christians to some higher plane of spiritual life. “His divine power has granted us *everything* pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us” (2 Peter 1:3, emphasis added). “The true knowledge of *Him*” refers to saving knowledge. To seek something more is like frantically knocking on a door, seeking what is inside, not realizing you hold the key in your pocket.

No higher knowledge, no hidden truth, nothing besides the all-sufficient resources that we find in Christ exists that can change the human heart.

Any counselor who desires to honor God and be effective must see the goal of his efforts as leading a person to the sufficiency of Christ. The view that man is capable of solving his own problems, or that people can help one another by “therapy” or other human means, denies the doctrine of human depravity and man’s need for God. It replaces the Spirit’s transforming power with impotent human wisdom.¹

For Christian counseling to occur, the people doing the counseling must be individuals who are *conscientiously and comprehensively Christian* in their outlook on life. Truly Christian counseling is done by people who have experienced the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, who have come to Christ in

¹John MacArthur, Jr., *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Dallas: Word, 1991) 27, 72. In the last paragraph quoted, MacArthur is referring to attempts to help people based on secular humanistic theories, techniques, and therapies. He is not referring to the kind of counseling being described in this chapter, as is evidenced from many of his other writings, from his co-editing a book titled *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, as well as from the facts that the church he pastors has a very active counselor training and counseling ministry and that The Master’s College, of which he is the president, has an undergraduate major in biblical counseling and a graduate program leading to an MA in biblical counseling.

repentance and faith, who have acknowledged Him as Lord and Savior of their lives and who want to live lives of obedience to Him. Their main concern in life is to exalt Him and bring glory to His name. They believe that because God did not spare His own Son (from the cross) but delivered Him up (to the cross and death) for us (on our behalf as our substitute), He will freely give us—through Christ—all that we need for effective and productive living (for transforming us into the likeness of His Son). Truly Christian counseling is done by those whose theological convictions impact, permeate, and control their personal lives and their counseling theory and practice.

Christian Counseling Is Church-Centered

Another major distinctive of truly Christian counseling that I mentioned to my interviewer was that it will be *conscientiously and comprehensively church-centered*. The Scriptures clearly teach that the local church is the primary means by which God intends to accomplish His work in the world. The local church is His ordained instrument for calling the lost to Himself. It is also the context in which He sanctifies and changes His people into the very likeness of Christ. According to Scripture, the church is His household, the pillar and ground of the truth, and the instrument he uses in helping His people to put off the old manner of life (pre-Christian habit patterns and lifestyles, ways of thinking, feeling, choosing, and acting) and to put on the new self (a new manner of life, Christlike thoughts, feelings, choices, actions, values, and responses—Eph 4:1-32).

Even a cursory reading of the New Testament will lead a person to the conclusion that the church is at the center of God's program for His people. Jesus Christ, who proclaimed that He would build His church (Matt 16:18), invested in it authority to act with the *imprimatur* of heaven (Matt 18:17-20) and ultimately revealed that His plan was to fill the world with local bodies of believers (Matt 28:18-20).

When trying to capture and project his conception of the role of the church in God's program and with God's people, John Calvin made this impassioned assertion:

Because it is now our intention to discuss the visible church, let us learn from the simple title "mother" how useful, indeed necessary, it is that we should know her. For there is no other way to enter life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels (Matthew 22:30). Our weakness does not allow us to be dismissed from her school until we have been pupils all our lives. . . . God's fatherly favor and the especial witness of spiritual life are limited to his flock, so that it is always disastrous to leave the church.²

²John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion* (reprint, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 2:1012.

This statement about the church by John Calvin was not specifically directed toward the issue of counseling. It does, however, indicate Calvin's perspective on the importance of the church in the lives of believers. His view concurs with the ideas that the church is responsible for providing counseling and that Christians are responsible for seeking care and guidance for their personal lives. Calvin's study of the Scriptures convinced him that the nurture, edification, and sanctification of believers was to be church-centered. I wholeheartedly agree with this emphasis because I believe this is the unmistakable teaching of Holy Scripture.³

Christian Counseling is Bible-based

As I continued to explain my views on Christian counseling, I told my visitor that truly Christian counseling will be *conscientiously and comprehensively Bible-based*, deriving from the Bible its understanding of who man is, the nature of his main problems, why he has these problems, and how to resolve them. For counseling to be worthy of the name of Christ, the counselor must be conscientiously and comprehensively committed to the *sufficiency of Scripture* for understanding and resolving all of the non-physical personal and interpersonal sin-related difficulties of man.

QUESTIONING THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

At this point, the individual who had come to ask about my views on Christian counseling responded by saying, "Well, what you're saying about all of these things is nice, but what do you think should be done when people have really serious problems?"

Now, consider what this person—who claimed to be a Christian—was implying by that question. She was implying that the factors I had mentioned might prove helpful with people who have minor problems, but certainly they are not enough for resolving the really serious problems of life. She was intimating that the approach I had described was rather simplistic. She was suggesting that the resources that God prescribes in His Word for ministering to needy people are not adequate. She was insinuating that the substantial insights necessary for ministering to people with major difficulties must come from sources other than the ones I had mentioned.

Unfortunately, at least from my perspective, her views represent the opinions of many professing Christians. In a book entitled, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, Douglas Bookman describes the way many professing

³More about the role of the church in the lives of believers may be found in the book by Wayne Mack and David Swavely, *Life in the Father's House: A Member's Guide to the Local Church* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1996).

Christians think about the sufficiency of Scripture in counseling:

Any Christian who sets out to counsel another individual is aware that the counsel offered must be true. Counseling is by definition and impulse a helping ministry. It assumes that someone is confronted with some measure of confusion, disappointment, or despair and that a second person who endeavors to help by analyzing the counselee's situation, sorting out the issues involved, and then offering helpful and healing advice and direction. But the efficacy of all that the counselor undertakes to do is dependent at least on this one thing: that his analysis and counsel is true. Thus, any thoughtful consideration of the ministry of counseling must begin with the most basic of all philosophical questions, that question articulated by a Roman procurator two thousand years ago, "What is truth?"

Ever since its genesis as a distinguishable discipline almost four decades ago, the school of thought and ministry broadly known as Christian Psychology has been convulsed by the issue of its own epistemological construct. (That is, where ought/may Christians to go to find the *truth* necessary to help people who are hurting?) Because that discipline grew up largely within the broad limits of evangelical Christianity, there has been a universal acknowledgment of the veracity of Jesus' answer to the question of truth when, as He addressed His heavenly Father in prayer, He stated simply, "Thy Word is truth."

But for most that answer alone has not sufficed. The persuasion continues—articulated, justified, and applied in various ways—that there is truth that is at least profitable and perhaps even necessary to the counseling effort. This truth is to be discovered beyond the pages of Scripture. Christians who are thus persuaded are anxious to affirm Jesus' simple but profound declaration, yet they feel compelled to qualify that affirmation with the proposition that Scriptural truths may (or even must) be supplemented by truths that have been discovered by human investigation and observation. This persuasion lies at the heart of the integrationist impulse of Christian Psychology.

By all accounts, this integrationist tendency is rather recent in origin. Throughout much of the twentieth century a spirit of mutual mistrust and even contempt existed between the worlds of secular psychology and Christian theology. But that hostility began to thaw in certain circles sometime in the middle of this century, and by this last decade of the twentieth century there exists an obvious attitude of reconciliation between Christianity and psychology in many quarters. Indeed, many devotees of Christian psychology evidence a greater measure of fraternity with the secular psychological community than with those Christians who are compelled by their theology to reject the discipline of secular psychotherapy.⁴

The Two-Book Approach

Bookman then proceeds to delineate several ways in which Christians who do not believe in the sufficiency of Scripture for counseling actually do regard and use God's Word in counseling. One approach to the integration issue

⁴Douglas Bookman, "The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling," *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, John F. MacArthur, Jr., and Wayne A. Mack, eds. (Dallas: Word, 1994) 63-65.

is called the *two-book* or the *general versus special revelation approach*. The argument that is often used to support this theory is that God reveals truth to us in two primary ways: through “nonpropositional truth deposited by God in the created order of things” which “must be investigated and discovered by mankind” and through “the propositional truth recorded in Scripture.” The idea is that since all truth is God’s truth it really does not matter where that truth is found. Those who hold to this view believe that “the truth accurately derived from the consideration of the natural order of things (general revelation) is just as true as that derived from Scripture. When applied to the area of counseling, the proponents of this approach affirm that “any defensible truth that is derived by means of psychological research into the order of mankind is truth derived from general revelation, thus truth derived from God, and thus truth as dependable and authoritative as truth exegeted from Scripture.”⁵

A representative quote from Harold Ellens, a defender of this two-book view, clearly illustrates the thrust of this position. He asserts,

Theology and Psychology are both sciences in their own right, stand legitimately on their own foundations, read carefully are the two books of God’s Revelation. . . .

Wherever *truth* is disclosed it is always *God’s truth*. Whether it is found in General Revelation or Special Revelation, it is *truth* which has equal warrant with all other *truth*. Some truth may have greater weight than other *truth* in a specific situation, but there is no difference in its warrant as *truth*.⁶

In another publication, Ellens gives additional information about the nature and rationale for the two-book perspective. In keeping with this idea that *general* and *special revelation* are complementary, serving different purposes and being *equally* authoritative, he makes the following comments:

I believe the Bible to be an internally coherent testimony of the believing community throughout a 2000 to 3000 year period regarding the mighty acts of God’s redemption in the community’s experience. I believe that testimony is normative and authoritative for us in matters of faith and life because it is a warrantable testimony and is God’s universalized truth. This does not, however, force me to agree that the Bible is authoritative truth in matters which are not the focus and burden of that spirit-inspired, redemptive testimony of the historic believers. Moreover, because the Bible is a testimony incarnated in the human fabric of historical and cultural material, just as God’s testimony in the Son of God himself was incarnated in that same human stuff, it is imperative that its human limitations and historical anomalies be differentiated from its redemptively revelational material. Jesus, for example, . . . spoke quite erroneously in terms of a three-storied universe, an imminent second coming, and the like.

⁵Ibid., 69.

⁶J. Harold Ellens, “Biblical Themes in Psychological Theory and Practice,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 6/2 (1980):2, as cited by Bookman, “The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling” 71.

Humanness radically conditioned him with cultural-historical limitations as regards issues that were not central to the single truth of God's testimony in him, that is, that God is for us, not against us. Why are those who insist on inerrancy as the only foundation for authority in Scripture afraid to have a Bible that is at least as culturally bound as was the incarnate Son of God himself . . . ?

Sound psychological theory and practice genuinely enhance the patient's personhood. God designed what that is. Christians perceive it to varying degrees. Full-orbed personhood may be achieved by patients to varying levels of functionality. Sound psychology, which brings the patient, for example, out of depression to emotional resilience and stability is just as Christian at that level as at the level affording the final stages of maturity. . . . Even if that deliverance from depression is done by a secularist, it is a Kingdom act and a Christian enterprise. . . .

What makes practice in the helping professions Christian is less the imparting of biblical information or religious practices to the patient, and more the enhancement of healthy functionality of the human as person: in the direction of completeness in body, mind and spirit. That practice of the helping professions that is preoccupied with the final step of wholeness, spiritual maturity, will short-circuit the therapeutic process and put the religious dynamic of the patient or therapist straight into the religious person's pathology.⁷

The No-Book Approach

Another approach to the integration issue might be called the no-book approach, which suggests that we cannot really be sure our understanding of the Bible is accurate because our interpretive efforts are always colored by our own perspectives. Bookman explains this approach in this way:

All human knowledge is flawed by definition. There is no reason to be any more suspicious of science than of theology (i.e., of the theories and facts derived by human investigation than of supposed truths derived from Scripture) simply because Scripture is no less liable to the limitations of human participation than is any other truth source.

Regardless of the authority and/or veracity of the truth source, human knowing of truth can only approach greater and greater levels of probability; certainty is propositionally unthinkable.⁸

Though this viewpoint may seem incredulous to most Christians, it is likely to become the dominant view of so-called "Christian counseling" in the years ahead. This viewpoint already dominates post-critical hermeneutics and will most likely continue to filter down into the arena of pastoral and religious counseling.

⁷J. Harold Ellens, "Biblical Authority and Christian Psychology," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 9/4 (1981):320.

⁸Bookman, "The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling" 90.

The Filtering-Device Approach

Some Christians who are not comfortable with either of the previously mentioned perspectives assert that the Bible should be used as a rule book or filtering device for identifying counseling truth. According to the advocates of this view,

All truth claims that are the result of human cogitations, investigations, and theorizing must be subjected to the Word of God that alone will be allowed to pass judgment on the veracity and applicability of those truth claims. The Bible and the Bible alone will be granted the role of falsification; that is, if a truth-claim is discerned to contradict or compromise a truth established in Scripture, that competing truth-claim is to be adjudged false.⁹

Truth derived from the study of any segment of general revelation, whether psychology or any other field, is not as trustworthy as the truth found in Scriptures. This is the reason that the integrationist will filter psychological truth through biblical truth and will accept only that which is not contradictory to God's special revelation.¹⁰

This view is sometimes called “spoiling the Egyptians”—a phrase from Exod 12:36 used in reference to what the Israelites did when they were delivered from their Egyptian captivity. This incident is used to illustrate and give some biblical warrant to the practice of accepting and benefitting from extrabiblical insights in the realm of counseling theory and practice. The idea is that since the Israelites did not reject the silver and gold that came from ungodly Egyptians (in fact, they were commanded by God to take all of the silver and gold they could get—Exod 3:21-22), we should not reject counseling theories and practices discovered and used by unbelievers.

Though proponents of these three major approaches to Christian counseling differ on some issues, they are all agreed on one major point: the traditional biblical resources for dealing with man's problems are not enough; they simply are not adequate. We must use insights and ideas and techniques that are not taught by nor found in God's Word. Bookman and others have written excellent resources that expose the errors of such thinking, and I recommend their writings to you for further illumination and refutation.¹¹

⁹Ibid., 90.

¹⁰William F. English, “An Integrationist's Critique of and Challenge to the Bobgan's View of Counseling Psychotherapy,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 18/3 (1990):229, as cited by Bookman, “The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling” 91.

¹¹Important critiques related to integrationist attempts are found in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* 63-97; Michael S. Horton, ed., *Power Religion*, chap. 8 by David Powlison and chap. 9 by Edward Welch (Chicago: Moody, 1992) 191-218, 219-43; David Powlison, *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 12/4 (1984):270-78; Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970); Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979); Jay

**THE SHORTCOMINGS OF
EXTRABIBLICAL INSIGHTS****Limitations of Human Knowledge**

I have three reasons for rejecting the idea that Christian counselors need extrabiblical insights to do truly effective counseling. The first reason is related to the *finiteness of man's knowledge*. The fact that man is finite necessarily limits the extent and validity of his knowledge. Even Adam, the first man, was a finite human being who needed God's revelation for a correct understanding of God, himself, what was right and wrong, what was true and what was false, what should be believed and what should not be believed (Gen 1:26-28; 2:15-17, 24).

An old fable about six blind men who all bumped into and felt different parts of the same elephant illustrates the futility of man's attempts to find absolute truth by the usual means of intuition, reason or logic, or empirical research. As the story goes, one man approached the elephant from the front and grasped his trunk and said, "An elephant is like a fire hose." A second blind man happened to touch one of the animal's tusks and said, "An elephant is like a thick spear." The third blind man felt the elephant's side and said, "An elephant is like a wall." The fourth blind man approached the elephant from the rear and, gripping its tail, said, "An elephant is like a rope." The fifth man grabbed one of the elephant's legs and said, "An elephant is like the trunk of a tree." The sixth man who was a very tall grabbed one of the elephant's ears and said, "An elephant is like a fan."

Which of these depictions of an elephant was correct? None of them! Why? Because each of them encountered or experienced only a limited portion of the whole elephant. Their knowledge of what an elephant was like was restricted and even erroneous because of the limitations of their experience and perception. And so it is and always must be with finite mortal man when it comes to the matter of discerning absolute truth apart from revelation from the living God, who knows all things and sees the whole picture clearly and perfectly.

A recent newspaper article reminded me of the futility of thinking that finite man can discover absolute truth apart from divine revelation. In the "tongue in cheek" article entitled "Education's Duplicity, Uselessness," Russell Baker writes,

Adams, *Teaching To Observe* (Woodruff, S. C.: Timeless Texts, 1995); Edward Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1993); Gary Almy, *Addicted to Recovery* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1994); David F. Wells, *No Place For Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); John MacArthur, *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, (Dallas: Word, 1991); John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience* (Dallas: Word, 1994); John MacArthur, *Reckless Faith* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1994); Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988), 3-46, 76-90, 167-82; James Owen, *Christian Psychology's War On God's Word* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: East Gate, 1993).

Pluto may not be a planet. Can you believe it? Is everything we learn in school a lie?

This Pluto business is the last straw in the duplicity and uselessness of education. Now I have to deal with Plutonic revisionism, and I haven't even recovered from the discovery that you should not eat a good breakfast.

"Always eat a good breakfast." That's what they taught us in school. They said it was good for us.

Well, you know it, I know it, we all know it: they were wrong. We now know a good breakfast is bad for you. Those eggs sunny side up, that crisp bacon, the butter-soaked toast covered with jelly—bad for you.

So now we always eat a bad breakfast because they say a bad breakfast is good for you.

And remember the milk? Remember paying the milk money and having milk served right there in the class room? What kind of milk was it?

Was it skim milk? Was it low fat milk? Hah! You know it wasn't. It was milk with all the evil left in.

And they said it was good for you. Good for you! It was clogging your arteries and hastening your trip to the grave.

And they called that an education!

The older you get the clearer it becomes that education for the young may not only be useless, but downright dangerous.¹²

At this point in the article, Baker goes on to make a few more "tongue in cheek" remarks about the way what we once considered to be truth has been revised. And then having done this, he concludes with these words:

Many people become as irked as I do about the incessant need to keep up with today's wisdom by abandoning or revising yesterday's. And of course today's wisdom will just as inevitably have to be abandoned or revised as the future bears down upon us.

You can bet the world has not faced the last revision of knowledge about Pluto, or about what constitutes a good breakfast. The revising of what we think of as knowledge goes on forever, and always has.

The truth about knowledge seems to be that its truth is only a sometimes thing, that what we accept as truth this year will have to be abandoned as the world turns.

This endless abandonment and revision is usually said to result from progress. But suppose progress is also an idea doomed to be abandoned. What if there is no such thing as progress, but only change?¹³

In this article, Russell Baker astutely identifies the tentative nature of our humanly discovered knowledge or "truth" as he asserts that "what we accept as truth this year will have to be abandoned or revised." And why is humanly

¹²Russell Baker, "Education's Duplicity, uselessness," *New York Times*, March 16, 1996.

¹³*Ibid.*

discovered “truth . . . only a sometimes thing”? One reason is that man’s finiteness necessarily limits the extent and validity of his knowledge.

Depravity of Human Nature

A second factor that causes me to reject the idea that Christian counselors should welcome and depend on extra biblical insights and therapies connects to the biblical teaching about the *depravity of man’s nature* since the fall of Adam in Genesis 3. Any biblical discussion of how man comes to know truth must include a consideration of what theologians often refer to as the “noëtic”¹⁴ effects of sin. Scripture clearly teaches that sin has affected every aspect of man’s being. Man’s character, speech, and behavior have all been perverted by sin¹⁵—as well as his emotions and desires, his conscience and will, his intellect, his thought processes, his goals and motives, the way he views and interprets life. None of man’s faculties has escaped the corrupting, corrosive, perverting, and debilitating impact of sin.

In reference to the cognitive, motivational and emotional aspects of man’s being, Scripture asserts that

The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jer 17:9).

The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understands . . . (Ps 53:2).

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. . . . Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. . . . For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. . . . And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind . . . (Rom 1:18, 22, 25, 28).

The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God . . . (Rom 8:7).

You were formerly alienated and hostile in your mind . . . (Col 1:21).

To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their consciences are defiled (Tit 1:15).

Out of the heart come evil thoughts. . . (Matt 15:19).

¹⁴The word “noëtic” is related to the Greek word *nous*, which in English means “mind.” This Greek word denotes “the seat of reflection, consciousness, comprising the faculties of perception and understanding, and those of feeling, judging and determining” (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* [Westwood, N. J.: Revell, 1957] 69).

¹⁵Cf. Rom 1:18-3:23; 8:8; 1 Kgs 8:46; Pss 14:1-13; 51:5; 58:3; Isa 53:6; 64:6; Eph 2:1-3.

In commenting on the noëtic effects of sin, Edward Reynolds wrote,

Look into the mind; you shall find it full of vanity, wasting and wearying itself in childishness, impertinent, unprofitable notions, 'full of ignorance and darkness'; no man knoweth, nay no man hath so much acknowledged, as to enquire or seek after God in the way whereby he will be found. *Nay more, when God breaks in upon the mind, by some notable testimony from his creatures, judgments, or providence—yet they like it not, they hold it down, they reduce themselves back again to foolish hearts, to reprobate and undiscerning minds, as naturally as hot water returns to its former coldness.* Full of curiosity, rash, unprofitable enquiries, foolish and unlearned questions, profane babblings . . . perverse disputes, all the fruits of corrupt and rotten minds. Full of pride and contradiction against the truth, 'oppositions of science,' that is, setting up of philosophy and vain deceits, imaginations, thoughts, fleshly reasonings against the spirit and truth which is in Jesus. Full of . . . fleshly wisdom, human inventions . . . of rules and methods of its own to . . . come to happiness. Full of inconstancy and roving swarms of empty and foolish thoughts, slipperiness, and unstableness. . . .¹⁶

What a clear description of the effects of sin on the mind of man! "But," you may ask, "what does this teaching about the noëtic effect of sin have to do with whether or not Christian counselors should accept and use extrabiblical insights in their counseling efforts?"

The answer to that question is simple: Scripture teaches that the minds of unredeemed men have been adversely affected by sin and, as a result, even if they observe something accurately, they are likely to interpret it wrongly. Having the kind of mind (including all the cognitive, motivational, and emotional aspects previously mentioned) described in the previous verses, unregenerate—and even to some extent regenerate—men will tend to distort truth. The only way we can think rightly is to allow the Holy Spirit to renew our minds so that we will learn to look at, interpret, and understand life through the lens of Scripture (Pss 119:104; 36:9; Isa 8:19, 20; Rom 1:18-32; 12:2; Eph 4:23).

When he commented on the role that secular disciplines should play in biblical counseling, David Powlison vividly describes the noëtic impact of sin on man's thinking processes:

Secular disciplines may serve us well as they describe people; they may challenge us by how they seek to explain, guide, and change people; but they seriously mislead us when we take them at face value because they are secular. They explain people, define what people ought to be like, and try to solve people's problems without considering God and man's relationship to God. Secular disciplines have made a systematic commitment to being wrong.

¹⁶Edward Reynolds, *The Sinfulness of Sin* (1826 reprint, Ligonier, Pa.: Sola Deo Gloria, 1992). 123 [emphasis added].

This is not to deny that secular people are often brilliant observers of other human beings. They are often ingenious critics and theoreticians. But they also distort what they see and mislead by what they teach and do, because from God's point of view the wisdom of the world has fundamental folly written through it. They will not acknowledge that God has created human beings as God-related and God accountable creatures. The mind set of secularity is like a power saw with a set that deviates from the right angle. It may be a powerful saw, and it may cut a lot of wood, but every board comes out crooked.¹⁷

Because of our finiteness and sinfulness, our understanding of man and his problems can be trusted only as our thoughts and insights reflect the teaching of Holy Scripture. We simply are not able to ascertain truth apart from Divine revelation. In another work, I wrote,

We have no standard by which we can evaluate whether something is true or false except the Word of God. Thus while we can be confident that whatever we share with our counselees from the Word of God is true, we should have a healthy skepticism about any theory or insight that does not proceed from Scripture. If it is not taught by the Word of God alone, it may be error.¹⁸

In his book *Every Thought Captive*, Richard Pratt explains man's epistemological predicament apart from Divine revelation this way:

All that can properly be called truth, not just 'religious truth' resides first in God and men know truly only as they come to God's revelation of Himself as the source of truth . . . (Psalm 94:10). . . . This dependence on God in the area of knowledge does not mean that men are without the true ability to think and reason. . . . Men do actually think, yet true knowledge is dependent on and derived from God's knowledge as it has been revealed to man.¹⁹

"But," someone may ask, "what about those statements that finite and sinful men make that seem to be a reiteration of concepts and ideas taught by Scripture? Must we regard these observations as false because the person did not get them from the Bible?" Those questions may be answered in several ways:

1. People may have been influenced by biblical teaching through various means and not even be aware of it, nor do they give the Bible credit for their insights. But even if this occurs, they will always distort Scriptural

¹⁷David Powlison, "Frequently Asked Questions about Biblical Counseling," *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* 365-66.

¹⁸Wayne A. Mack, "Providing Instruction through Biblical Counseling," in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* 254.

¹⁹Richard Pratt, *Every Thought Captive* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979) 17.

teaching and put their own spin on it. They may, for example, talk about the importance of God, prayer, forgiveness, dealing with guilt, of taking responsibility, love, confession, or the spiritual dimension in life. On the surface, a person's teaching on these concepts may seem very biblical, but on further investigation the theologically, biblically trained person will discover that not everything that sounds the same is the same.

People may use the same words or seem to be presenting the same concepts that God does in His Word, but fill those words and concepts with completely different meanings. Inevitably, the Bible indicates that men will suppress, pervert, devalue, deny, and distort the truth even if it is staring them in the face (Rom 1:18; 1 Cor 2:14).

2. Extrabiblical statements that seem to reflect biblical truth must be regarded as false because, as Richard Pratt states, "They are not the result of voluntary obedience to God's revelation. . . ." ²⁰
3. "Beyond this," Pratt continues, "the statements are falsified by the non-Christian framework of meaning and therefore lead away from the worship of God. If nothing else, the mere commitment to human independence falsifies the non-Christian's statements." ²¹

The Sufficiency of Scripture

My third reason for rejecting the idea that Christian counselors need extrabiblical insights to do effective counseling is that the Bible says God has given us—in our union with Christ and in His Word—everything that is necessary for living and for godliness (2 Pet 1:3). Scripture clearly says that it contains all the principles and practical insights that are necessary for understanding people and their problems (as we'll see in a moment). So, apart from the question of whether it is possible to integrate the ideas of man with the truths of God's Word is the issue of whether or not it is necessary. On this matter, I am convinced the Scripture's own testimony about its sufficiency, adequacy, and superiority is abundantly plain.

To demonstrate the biblical accuracy of this third truth, I could cite numerous passages of Scripture, but for the sake of time and space, I will refer to only three representative passages: one from the OT and two from the NT. Psalm 19:7-11 makes numerous statements about the Bible that no one would ever consider making about the ideas of any man. This text makes assertions that set the Bible in a class all by itself—statements that unmistakably demonstrate the Bible's sufficiency and superiority over any of man's theories. Consider carefully what this passage declares about what Scripture is and what it can do, and then think of the counseling implications of these assertions. According to Ps 19:7-

²⁰Ibid., 17.

²¹Ibid.

1. Is *perfect* (whole, complete, sufficient, lacking nothing) and therefore able to restore (transform, renew, restore) the soul (the inner man, the real self)—v. 7.
2. Is a *sure* (trustworthy, reliable, dependable) witness and therefore able to make wise the simple (people who lack a proper understanding of life, of God, of themselves, of others)—v. 7.
3. Contains the precepts (principles, guidelines, rules for character and conduct) that are *right* (correct, in accord with what is just and good, appropriate and fitting) and therefore able to cause the heart (the totality of man's inner non-physical self) to rejoice (to experience a sense of well being, serenity, tranquility, and peace)—v. 8.
4. Is *authoritative* (it gives mandates and directives that are always correct) and pure (clear, untainted with evil or error) and therefore able to bring light into man's chaos and confusion, to replace man's ignorance and lack of understanding with clear direction, perspective and insight—v. 8.
5. Is *clean* (uncontaminated, free from impurity, defilement) and *enduring* (permanent, unchanging, relevant, up to date, never outdated, never in need of alteration) and therefore able to produce the fear of the Lord (a wholesome and incredibly practical and positive reverence for God)—v. 9.
6. *Provides insights* about God, man, life, and everything needed for living and godliness that are altogether true (they correspond to and accurately reflect reality, they tell it like it really is) and righteous (they reflect that which is right, good and holy, that which is truly just and fair) and therefore lead men to understand and practice what is truly real and right—v. 9.
7. Being "more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold" is able to produce in us a kind of *prosperity* that is more valuable than all the material riches of the world—v. 10.
8. Being "sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" is able to remove the sourness, acidity, and bitterness caused by sin and to produce in us a *sweetness* of life that surpasses anything the world can provide—v. 10.
9. Possessing all of the previously noted qualities, is able to infallibly *warn and protect* us from the numerous dangers and disasters of life caused by ignorance of what is truly right—v. 11.
10. Possessing all of the previously noted characteristics, is able to *preserve* us from temptation, sin, error, false teaching, and every other threat to the health and well being of our inner man—our thoughts, emotions, affections, and attitudes—v. 11.

Believing as I do in the inspiration and inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures, Ps 19:7-11 settles the sufficiency issue for me. If words mean anything, how could I come to any other conclusion? But there's more—much more. And some of that “more” is found in 2 Tim 3:1-17. In the first thirteen verses of this chapter, Paul delineates a host of problems representative of what counselors often encounter in their attempts to help people. Many people who require counseling do so because they are struggling with difficulties that stem from one or many of the sinful attitudes, desires, and actions that Paul mentions in this rich passage.

Some people seek counseling because of problems that are associated with being “lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, lacking in self control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (vv. 2-4). Some individuals need counseling because they are “holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power” (v. 5). Some are struggling because they are “weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses” (v. 6). Many experience severe difficulties in their lives that are related to pride, opposition to and rebellion against God's truth, ungodly thoughts, deceitful patterns of living, and people-relationships. Unpleasant, distressing difficulties that motivate people to seek counseling occur because they are “always learning and never able to come to the truth” or because they live in the midst of a society of people who are evil and hypocritical, people who are going “from bad to worse” (vv. 6-13). People need counseling either because they are personally experiencing and manifesting sinful attitudes, desires, and behaviors or they are personally suffering from the impact of associating with people who manifest the sinful patterns depicted in this passage.

Where do we turn for resources to minister to these kinds of people? What do we need for understanding and resolving their problems? Paul answers those questions in verses 14-17. At this point in his epistle, he turns from a description of the kinds of problems that people experience in this sin-cursed world to a description of the resources Christians have for ministering to the people he has just described in the first thirteen verses. In clear and unmistakable words, Paul tells us that Scripture contains the resources we need for ministering to people who live in a 2 Tim 3:1-13 society. In concise and direct terms, he extols the Bible's total adequacy for ministering to people whose lives are characterized and/or affected by the things mentioned in verses 1-13.

WHY IS SCRIPTURE ADEQUATE?

Paul emphasizes the total adequacy of God's Word in 2 Tim 3:14-17 in the following manner:

1. *It is holy or sacred* (v.15). It is set apart from any other writing or literary production; it is unique; it is in a class all by itself. No other writing can compare with what is written in the Scriptures.
2. *It is able* (v.15). It has power to do things to and in people. "It is," as Jay Adams has written, "the Holy Spirit's tool for working in the minds and hearts of men and women to make them like Christ. Being peculiarly associated with the Spirit both in its composition and in its use, the Bible is powerful, able to transform our lives."²²
3. *It is inspired by God* (v. 16). Literally, the Greek word translated "inspired" means "God-breathed." So Paul is telling us that the Bible is unique and able because its truths had their origin in God; they are not merely some man's opinions or discoveries or insights. As Peter said, "No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:20-21). That is why when quoting a portion of Psalm 2—a psalm written by David—the early Christians said that the truth found in this psalm came by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David (Acts 4:24-26). To the early Christians, the words of Scripture were authoritative and sufficient because, though coming through the agency of holy men, they ultimately had their origin in God.
4. *It is profitable or useful* (v. 16). It has utilitarian value; it enhances life; it is profitable in every way—for time and eternity, for our relationship with God and our relationship with our fellow man, for our spiritual and emotional and mental well-being, for our marriages and families, for our goals and motivations, for guidance and direction, for comfort and challenge, for preventing and resolving our inner and interpersonal problems, for all of life. It is useful for teaching; it is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to provide for us a standard of what is right and wrong, good and bad, true and false about all of the truly important matters of life. Scripture is useful for reproof; it is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to convict us of sin, to show us where and how we are wrong in our thinking, motives, desires, attitudes, feelings, values, actions, and reactions. It is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to bring us under conviction and motivate us to want to repent and change.

God's Word is useful for correction; it is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to point us in the right direction and correct our sinful thoughts, motives, feelings, actions, and speech. Scripture not only shows us where and how we need to change, but actually tells us how to change and what to change to. And Scripture is profitable for training; it is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to help us develop new patterns of

²²Jay Adams, *How to Help People Change* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 23-24.

life. It makes that which is unnatural—living righteously—natural and makes that which is difficult—living God’s way—easier. It helps us develop strength in the areas in which we are weak.

5. *It can thoroughly equip the man of God for every good work* (v. 17). Through Scripture, the Holy Spirit thoroughly equips His servants—people of God—to do everything He wants them to do in the kind of society described in 2 Tim 3:1-13. Do God’s people need anything more than the Scripture to minister effectively to the people living in the world he has described? Is anything else really necessary? Absolutely not! Scripture can thoroughly equip every believer. In Scripture, Christians have everything they need to understand people and their problems and to help them resolve the same.²³

John Murray draws the following conclusion from 2 Tim 3:15-17: “There is no situation in which we (as men of God) are placed, no demand that arises for which Scripture as the deposit of the manifold wisdom of God is not adequate and sufficient.”²⁴

OUR SUFFICIENCY IN CHRIST

Perhaps there is no better summary of the Bible’s teaching about our complete sufficiency in Christ than the one given by the apostle Peter when he wrote that by His divine power God “has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3). “Life” has to do with everything that we experience on the horizontal plain—in terms of what it takes to live effectively and biblically in our daily activities and relationships with our environment and other people. “Godliness” has to do with our relationship with God—with living a God-centered, God-conscious life marked by godly character and conduct.

Peter proceeds to define “everything pertaining to life and godliness” as “*becom[ing] partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Pet 1:4-8, emphasis added). It involves being born again or from above, becoming a new creation in Christ Jesus, receiving from God a new nature with new dispositions, desires, interests, potential, and power; putting on the new self; and being renewed in the image of God (John 3:1-8; Rom 6:1-11; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 3:10; 1 Pet 1:23; 2 Pet 1:4). It involves the capacity to “escape the corruption that is in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Pet 1:4). It involves developing the qualities of faith, moral excellence, true knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly

²³ See Jay Adams’ book, *How to Help People Change*, for a fuller explanation and application of 2 Tim 3:14-17.

²⁴ John Murray, *Collected Writings*, 3:261, cited by Michael Green, *Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 64.

kindness, and Christian love (2 Pet 1:4-7) so that you might live a useful life for Christ (2 Pet 1:8-10).

Life and godliness also involves being able to deal successfully with issues that are present in the lives of people who seek counseling. People who need counseling lack the qualities that Peter mentions in 2 Pet 1:4-7 and need help in developing them. It is interesting to observe that people whose lives reflect these qualities do not need much formal counseling. This passage is pregnant with counseling implications.

Notice that Peter says that God has, by His divine power, “granted to us *everything* pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3, emphasis added). *Everything* that is needed to develop this kind of life and acquire this kind of life and acquire the qualities in verses 4-7 has been granted to us by God. And how do we tap into these powerful, all-sufficient resources? Peter declared that these divine resources become ours through the true knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord and through the medium of His precious and magnificent promises (2 Pet 1:2-4). In other words, the repository of the *everything* we need for life and godliness is found in our glorious and excellent God and His precious and magnificent word (2 Pet 1:2-4).

Our sufficiency in Christ is found in a deeper, fuller, applicatory, life-changing knowledge of the glory and excellence of God and the magnificence and preciousness of His promises. According to Green, God has called us to share “something of His moral excellence in this life, and of His glory hereafter. . . . The triple agency of the promises, the power and the Person of the Lord regenerate a man and make him a sharer in God’s own nature, so that the family likeness begins to be seen in him.”²⁵

WORTHY OF FULL CONFIDENCE

In light of what we have learned from Ps 19:7-11, 2 Tim 3:15-17, and 2 Pet 1:3-7, I ask this question: Could God have stated more clearly the sufficiency of our resources in Christ and in His Word? What more could He have said to get the message through to us that we do not need any extrabiblical resources to understand people and their problems and help them to develop the qualities, attitudes, desires, values, feelings, and behavior that are proper for relating to and living before God in a way that pleases and honors Him.

A consideration of the truths presented in these three passages and many other sections of Scripture forces me to draw three conclusions:

1. The inerrant Bible to which Christians are committed as an authority in life teaches that God has provided for us in His Word whatever is true

²⁵Michael Green, *The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 64.

and necessary for successful living. It declares that God has given us, in the Bible, everything we need for being in right relationship with God, ourselves, and other people.

2. Because this is true, professing Christians have two options: either they must yield to its teaching on this matter or they must abandon the idea that the Bible is inerrant and authoritative. It is either inerrant and authoritative and also sufficient or it is none of these things. If the Bible claims to be sufficient in the ways and for the purposes previously delineated and it is not, then you cannot say it is inerrant and authoritative. Given what the Bible teaches about itself, you simply cannot have it both ways.
3. This final conclusion is a natural concomitant of accepting the truthfulness of the first conclusion: Because the Bible asserts its own sufficiency for counseling-related issues, secular psychology has nothing to offer for understanding or providing solutions to the non-physical problems of people. When it comes to counseling people, we have no reason for depending on the insights of finite and fallen men. Rather, we have every reason to place our confidence in the sure, dependable, and entirely trustworthy revelation of God given to us in Holy Scripture. That is because it contains a God-ordained, sufficient, comprehensive system of theoretical commitments, principles, insights, goals, and appropriate methods for understanding and resolving the non-physical problems of people. It provides for us a model that needs no supplement. God, the expert on helping people, has given us in Scripture counseling perspectives and methodology that are wholly adequate for resolving our sin-related problems.

THE NEED FOR CAUTION

David Powlison has stated well the danger of including extrabiblical ideas in the counsel offered to or by Christians:

Let us clarify first what we mean by counseling methodology. A counseling methodology is a *system* of theoretical commitments, principles, goals, and appropriate methods. It is a set of interconnected things; it is not a collection of random and eclectic bits of observation or technique. A counseling methodology is an organized, committed way of understanding and tackling people's problems.

Do secular disciplines have anything to offer to the methodology of biblical counseling? The answer is a flat no. Scriptures provide the system for Biblical counseling. Other disciplines—history, anthropology, literature, sociology, psychology, biology, business, political science—may be useful in a variety of secondary ways to the pastor and the biblical counselor, but such discipline can never provide a system of understanding and counseling people.

God is the expert when it comes to people, and He has spoken and acted to

Secular psychology may play an *illustrative* (providing examples and details that, when carefully and radically reinterpreted, illustrate the biblical model) or *provocative* (challenging us to study the Scriptures more thoroughly to develop our model in areas we have not thought about or have neglected or misconstrued) function, but, because of man's finiteness and fallenness, the insights, methodologies, and practices of secular psychology are in many instances dangerously unbiblical and dishonoring to God and harmful to people. Other aspects of secular psychology are at best neutral and therefore unnecessary.

None of the illustrations, observations, or details that secularists present are really necessary for the task of understanding and helping people. We already have all we need—the authoritative, indispensable, perspicuous, sufficient, and superior revelation of God in His Word (Isa 8:19-20). Why then would any Christian think that we must turn to or place our dependence on the extrabiblical theories or practices of men for understanding and promoting change in people?²⁷

In these resources, you will find in

²⁶Powlison, "Frequently Asked Questions about Biblical Counseling" 365-66.

²⁷The purpose of this article has been to demonstrate that the Bible asserts its sufficiency for understanding and resolving the kinds of issues that counselors (Christian or non-Christian) deal with in their attempts to help people. It has not been my intention in this article to demonstrate *how* the Scriptures are sufficient, i.e., to provide specific examples of how they actually help to understand man and his problems and provide details about a biblical methodology for resolving the variety of problems that people encounter. For those who want to pursue this 'how to' aspect more fully I will list some representative resources: John F. MacArthur, Jr., and Wayne A. Mack, eds., *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* (Dallas: Word, 1994), chaps. 10-16, 20; I have developed many books and audio and video tapes of counseling courses plus tapes dealing with a biblical approach to counseling on a variety of specific issues (a catalog listing these materials is available by writing to the author at 21726 W. Placerita Canyon Road, Newhall, CA 91322); The Master's College offers an undergraduate emphasis leading to a BA and a graduate program leading to an MA in biblical counseling (P.O. Box 278, 21726 W. Placerita Canyon Road, Newhall, CA 91322); Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation West has video tapes of several counseling courses, plus they offer numerous training courses (3495 College Avenue, San Diego, CA 92115); Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation East offers courses on biblical counseling and produces an excellent journal, *The Biblical Counseling Journal*, for biblical counselors (1803 East Willow Grove Avenue, Laverock, PA 19118); the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC) sponsors conferences, produces a biblical counseling publication, and has audio and video tapes on numerous 'how to' issues (NANC, 5526 State Road 26 East, Lafayette, IN 47905); Jay Adams has written numerous books and produced many audio and video tapes on various biblical counseling issues (Woodruff, S. C.: Timeless Texts); Gary Almy, *Addicted to Recovery* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1994); Edward Bulkley, *Only God Can Heal the Wounded Heart* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1995); David Powlison, *Power Encounters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); Edward Welch, *Counselor's Guide to the Brain and Its Disorders: Knowing the Difference Between Sin and Disease* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991); Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (1877; reprint, Pittsburgh: Solo Deo Gloria); William Playfair, *The Useful Lie* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991); William Bridge, *A Lifting up of the Downcast* (reprint, Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1979); Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (reprint, Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1979); D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Its Cure* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965); Michael Bobick, *From Slavery to Sonship: A Biblical Psychology for Pastoral Counseling* (available

The Sufficiency of Scripture in Counseling 85

such as incest, homosexuality, transvestism, transexualism, slavery to pornography and lust; depression; anxiety; anger; bizarre, schizophrenic behavior; drug abuse, including slavery to alcohol; and what secularists would call obsessive, compulsive disorders. You will find biblically based information on counseling and the problems of the past, self-esteem problems, chronic fatigue, demon possession, chemical imbalance, victimization, suffering, human defensiveness, women in menopause, women and PMS, confidentiality in counseling, crisis counseling, guilt, panic attacks, inordinate fears, psychological testing, ADHD, rebuilding a marriage after adultery, counseling various kinds of marriage and family problems, and many other counseling issues.

from Grace Book Shack, 13248 Roscoe Boulevard, Sun Valley, CA 91352); Sound Word Cassettes (430 Boyd Circle, P.O. Box 2035, Mail Station, Michigan City, IN 46360) carries many audio and video tapes on counseling various problems biblically; Westminster Theological Seminary (Chestnut Hill, P.O. Box 27009, Philadelphia, PA 19118 and 1725 Bear Valley Parkway, Escondido, CA 92027) offers many counseling courses that provide a biblical approach on various counseling issues.

The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture lies at the heart of what it means to be a Protestant. Protestantism and Roman Catholicism share much in common in terms of basic theology, such as a commitment to the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. When it comes to matters of authority, however, there are major divergences. One of these is on the matter of Scripture: is Scripture sufficient as an authority for the church or not? Scriptural sufficiency is, of course, a doctrine that stands in positive connection to a number of other theological convictions, such as inerrancy, the extent to which Scripture informs the question of Scripture's sufficiency in counseling? Sufficiency does not mean that Scripture provides a script for all occasions. That would oppose my dependence on Christ and essentially put me under an endless series of detailed laws. It also doesn't mean that I keep my nose in Scripture and don't get help from anywhere else. Instead, I hope to be a desperate learner who looks anywhere for ideas and help. Then I consider those ideas that illustrate true humility and love, and ideas that suit my marriage. Scripture reveals the ways of God and life within his Kingdom. The sufficiency of Scripture can be simply defined as follows: In the Bible alone God has given humanity all things that are necessary for the proper understanding of who He is, who we are, how He has acted in the past and what He expects from us. The basic idea behind the sufficiency of Scripture is that nothing else needs to be revealed to humanity about God or His plan for the human race. The Bible is the record of all of the things that God thought humanity needed to know about Him. In other words, Scripture is complete and sufficient for belief and behavior. Nothing needs to be added to it. The doctrine of the sufficiency of the Bible has a number of important implications for believers. They include the following

Using the Scriptures in Counseling 1 Running Head: USING THE SCRIPTURES IN COUNSELING. Guidelines for the Effective Use of the Bible in Counseling. Philip G. Monroe Biblical Theological Seminary. Using the Scriptures in Counseling 2. Some authors tout the power and sufficiency of the Word as well as its purpose and scope (e.g., Baker, 1986, Hindson & Eyrich, 1997; MacArthur, 1993, 1991; Mack, 1998; Powlison, 1999, 1993, Welch & Powlison, 1997). The Bible may not speak. 1 Admittedly, I make the assumption that counselors can and should use the Scriptures in the therapeutic environment since the Scriptures are not merely technique, but avenue to the presence of God. This is not to denigrate the importance of Christians counseling each other. There certainly is a crucial need for biblically sound counseling ministries within the Church, and this need is met by those who are spiritually gifted to offer encouragement, discernment, comfort, advice, compassion, and help to others. In fact, one of the very problems that has led to the current plague of bad counsel is that churches have not done as well as they could in equipping people with those kinds of gifts to minister effectively. A Psalm on Scripture's Sufficiency Psalm 19:7-9 is the most monumental and concise statement on the sufficiency of Scripture ever made.

Create. Make social videos in an instant: use custom templates to tell the right story for your business. For Hire. Post jobs, find pros, and collaborate commission-free in our professional marketplace. Enterprise. Get your team aligned with all the tools you need on one secure, reliable video platform. Stock. Browse and buy exceptional, royalty-free stock clips, handpicked by the best. The sufficiency of Scripture is the biblical teaching that the Bible is all the revelation that is needed to equip believers for Christian life and service. Scripture reveals who God is, who we are, our broken status before God, our way of redemption, and the way we are to live as those redeemed by God. Management skills, counseling techniques, and other methods may provide some degree of help, yet only Scripture addresses the ultimate issues of fallen humanity, God's salvation through Jesus Christ, and the principles for Christian living by God's Spirit that allow for living the abundant life (John 10:10). Another important aspect of the sufficiency of Scripture is the affirmation that God's ways are superior to our own. The sufficiency of Scripture can be simply defined as follows: In the Bible alone God has given humanity all things that are necessary for the proper understanding of who He is, who we are, how He has acted in the past and what He expects from us. The basic idea behind the sufficiency of Scripture is that nothing else needs to be revealed to humanity about God or His plan for the human race. The Bible is the record of all of the things that God thought humanity needed to know about Him. In other words, Scripture is complete and sufficient for belief and behavior. Nothing needs to be added to it. The doctrine of the sufficiency of the Bible has a number of important implications for believers. They include the following How does this inform the question of Scripture's sufficiency in counseling? Sufficiency does not mean that Scripture provides a script for all occasions. That would oppose my dependence on Christ and essentially put me under an endless series of detailed laws. It also doesn't mean that I keep my nose in Scripture and don't get help from anywhere else. Instead, I hope to be a desperate learner who looks anywhere for ideas and help. Then I consider those ideas that illustrate true humility and love, and ideas that suit my marriage. Scripture reveals the ways of God and life within his Kingdom. I