

**2. Describe the sufficiency of Scripture. Relate the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture to the practice of biblical counseling. Research and respond to the arguments of at least one integrationist or Christian Psychologist regarding the insufficiency of Scripture for counseling.**

**I. Why is this question important?**

- A. “The church has been engaged in an ongoing debate over the resources necessary for counseling. Most do not agree with the conviction that Christians have sufficient resources to inform counseling conversations.”<sup>1</sup>
- B. “If Scripture is an overflowing source of wisdom for all counseling, then the pressing task for Christians is to be busy mining the text of Scripture for an understanding of the manifold problems people experience and for the wisdom to help them.”<sup>2</sup>
- C. How we answer the question about the sufficiency of Scripture ultimately describes our understanding of the content of Scripture and defines the kind of literature counselors should use to help in their work . . . ”<sup>3</sup>

**II. Describe the sufficiency of Scripture:**

A. Definition

- 1. “We can define the sufficiency of Scripture as follows: *The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.*”<sup>4</sup>
  - a. “This definition emphasizes that it is in Scripture alone that we are to search for God’s words to us. It also reminds us that God considers what he has told us in the Bible to be enough for us, and that we should rejoice in the great revelation that he has given us and be content with it.”<sup>5</sup>
  - b. “But the truth of the sufficiency of Scripture is of great significance for our Christians lives, for it enables us to focus our search for God’s words to us on the Bible alone and saves us from the endless task of searching through all the writings of Christians throughout history, or through all the teachings of the church, or through all the subjective feelings and impressions that come to our minds from day to day, in order to find what God requires of us.”<sup>6</sup>

B. Scripture References

- 1. 2 Timothy 3:14-17
- 2. 2 Peter 1:16-21

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Scott & Heath Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases*, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 127.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

3. Hebrews 4:12-13
4. Psalm 19:7-11
5. 2 Peter 1:3-4

### III. Relate the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture to the practice of biblical counseling.

- A. “The sufficiency of Scripture should encourage us as we try to discover what God would have us to *think* or to *do*. We should be encouraged that *everything* God wants to tell us about that question is to be found in Scripture. This does not mean that the Bible answers all the questions that we might think up, for ‘The secret things belong to the Lord our God’ (Deut 29:29). But it does mean that when we are facing a problem of genuine importance to our Christian life, we can approach Scripture with the confidence that from it God will provide us with guidance for that problem.”<sup>7</sup>
- B. “The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that *we are to add nothing to Scripture*, and that *we are to consider no other writings of equal value to Scripture*.”<sup>8</sup>
  1. “Those armed with God’s word, the sword of the Spirit, are free from the tyranny of human opinion!”<sup>9</sup>
  2. 2 Peter 1:16-21
- C. “The sufficiency of Scripture shows us that *no modern revelations from God are to be placed on a level equal to Scripture in authority*.”<sup>10</sup>
  1. “At various times throughout the history of the church, and particularly in the modern charismatic movement, people have claimed that God has given revelations through them for the benefit of the church. However we may evaluate such claims, we must be careful never to allow (in theory or in practice) the placing of such revelations on a level equal to Scripture.

### IV. Research and respond to the arguments of at least one integrationist or Christian Psychologist regarding the insufficiency of Scripture for counseling.

- 2 Timothy 3:14-17
  - Argument
    - “Christian counselors have argued, however, that this text merely shows that Scripture is sufficient to make us wise for salvation, not that it is adequate to address the many different counseling-related problems we might face.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 130-131.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 622.

<sup>10</sup> Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 131-132.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Scott & Heath Lambert, Counseling the Hard Cases, 10.

- Response
  - “Scripture proclaims itself as that which makes us ‘wise unto salvation.’ This is a comprehensive description of transforming human life from all that ails us. This same passage goes on to speak of the Spirit’s words as purposing to *teach* us. The utter simplicity and unsearchable complexity of Scripture enlightens us about God, about ourselves, about good and evil, true and false, grace and judgement, about the world that surrounds us with its many forms of suffering and beguilement, with its opportunities to shed light into darkness. Through such teaching, riveted to particular people in particular situations, God exposes in specific detail what is wrong with human life. No deeper or truer or better analysis of the human condition can be concocted.”<sup>12</sup>
  - “Full salvation that Jesus brings is not instantaneous. It grows slowly over time. This is why the rest of the 2 Timothy passage is vitally important. Salvation happens in a process . . . The Scriptures impart instruction (teaching). The Bible makes us aware of our problems (reproof). The Scriptures are profitable for pointing in the direction of positive change (correction).”<sup>13</sup>
    - “All counseling theories possess some apprehension of what is wrong with people (a ‘diagnosis’ or version of reproof); what should be right (a goal of healthy humanness—a version of correction); some process of communicating that understanding; and some theory of what the change process might look like (‘teaching’ and ‘training’). All counseling theories take this form even though the contents are radically divergent.”<sup>14</sup>
- **2 Peter 1:3-4**
  - Argument
    - This passage of Scripture is an illegitimate defense for the sufficiency of Scripture because it doesn’t explicitly mention the Bible.
  - Response
    - They are correct, this passage does not explicitly mention the Bible.
      - “Peter explained that this power comes through the knowledge of Christ manifested in his precious and great promises. The word ‘Scripture’ is not used here, but no faithful Christian interpretation of Peter’s words could conclude that a person has access to this knowledge of Jesus Christ and his promises *apart from Scripture*.”<sup>15</sup>
- **Lack of Comprehensiveness and therefore incomplete and insufficient.**
  - Argument (Stan Jones)

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<sup>12</sup> David Powlison, “Is the Adonis Complex in *Your Bible*?” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 22, no. 2 (2004): 43.

<sup>13</sup> Stuart Scott & Heath Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

- “A second criticism against the biblical sufficiency view of 2 Pet 1:3-4 is that the Bible, rather obviously, does not include the reams of information that come on the table during counseling. Stan Jones wrote, ‘There are many topics to which Scripture does not speak-how neurons work, how the brain synthesizes mathematical or emotional information, the types of memory, or the best way to conceptualize personality traits.’”<sup>16</sup>
      - Response
        - It is not the declaration of biblical counselors that the Scriptures contain all known and still yet to be known information about everything in the existence.
          - “The carefully developed view of the biblical counseling movement is not that the Scriptures provide Christians with all of the information we *desire* but rather with the understanding we *need* to do *counseling ministry*.”<sup>17</sup>
        - “The fact that Scripture doesn’t mention abortion, or nuclear war, or financial disclosure, or conflicts of interest, or parking meters, therefore, never means that we may abandon Scripture in considering these issues. There is always a principle of Scripture that is relevant. The only question is: specifically how does that principle apply?”<sup>18</sup>
- **Requiring the Bible to resemble a text book or scientific piece of literature.**
  - Argument (Eric Johnson)
    - “The extreme sufficiency position would seem to entail that the Bible is adequate as a scientific text, that it is scientifically sufficient, having the same level of precision, specificity and comprehensiveness regarding psychological and soul-care topics that one finds in good contemporary psychological textbooks and journal articles, and that is obviously not the case.”<sup>19</sup>
  - Response
    - “Biblical counselors have not argued that the Bible is adequate as a scientific text. They have argued that the Bible is adequate *as it is*. The demand that the Bible be scientific in order to be sufficient originates with the various *insufficiency* positions. Such views betray a fundamental dissatisfaction with the form of Scripture, and those who express this dissatisfaction reveal their partiality to scientific modes of discourse.”<sup>20</sup>
    - Ed Welch teaches, “Given the degree to which God has revealed himself and ourselves, we can assume that the Bible’s counsel speaks with great breadth, addressing the gamut of problems in living. It is certainly able to speak to the common problems we all encounter, such as relationship conflicts, financial pressures, our responses to physical health or illness, parenting question, and loneliness. But is also speaks to distinctly modern problems such as depression,

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>18</sup> John Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 621.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, *Foundations*, 122.

<sup>20</sup> Stuart Scott & Heath Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases*, 16.

anxiety, mania schizophrenia and attention deficit disorder, just to name a few. Of course, the Bible doesn't speak to each of these problems as would an encyclopedia. It doesn't offer techniques for change that look like they came out of a cookbook. But through prayerful meditation on Scripture and a willingness to receive theological guidance from each other, we find that the biblical teaching on creation, the fall, and redemption provide specific, useful insight into all the issues of life."<sup>21</sup>

**Recommended Reading:**

Stuart Scott & Heath Lambert, *Counseling the Hard Cases*, pgs. 1-24 (chp. 1)

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pgs. 127-135 (chp. 8).

John Frame, *Systematic Theology*, pgs. 615-629.

Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams*, pgs. 121-137 (chp. 5)

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<sup>21</sup> Ed Welch, "What *Is* Biblical Counseling, Anyway," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 1 (1997): 3.