



Distinctives in Biblical Counseling v. Secular

Critical Reflections on Various Theories



Secular Counseling

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.



Secular Counseling

1a. --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.



Secular Counseling

1b. --Materialism is a form of philosophical monism 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.



Biblical Counseling

2. 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. see also Col 3:17, 1 Pet 4:11, 1 Cor 6:20



Biblical Counseling

2a. 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



Biblical Counseling

2b. 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. See inner man — Eph 3:16, 2 Cor 4:16; New self — Eph 4:24; Col 3:10



Standard of Truth

3a. Secular – 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.

3b. Descriptive vs. Prescriptive - Secular

a. 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.

3b. Prescriptive – prescribes its therapy. The diagnosis based on psychological theory and classification (DSM).



Standard of Truth

4. Biblical Standard of Truth – two key terms – Authority and Sufficiency.

4a. 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)



Standard of Truth- Biblical

4b. 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.



Standard of Truth- Biblical

4c. Descriptive vs Prescriptive – Biblical

- Employ Scripture, not personal experience, to determine doctrinal truth.

- Use teaching (didactic) sections of Scripture, not historical (narrative) portions, to determine what is prescriptive rather than what is merely descriptive—what is exceptional compared to what should be considered normative.



5. Scripture as providing the ultimate framework for understanding human condition, the nature of human problems, and the solution to these problems.



Scripture- Our Framework

5a. 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- Our Framework

5b. Scripture provides the framework for understanding the human condition.

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



Secular and Integration Theories



Integrational Counseling

6. 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.



General vs Special Revelation

7a. 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 vs Special Revelation

7b. 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.



General vs Special Revelation

7c. 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.



“All truth is God’s truth”

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

8a. This is a reductionistic view of the Bible by maintaining, “That as God’s statutes in scriptures are binding upon His people, His ‘statutes’ or fixed patterns within the framework of heaven and earth are binding upon the whole of the cosmos.



“All truth is God’s truth”

8b. True facts, for example, will lead to true norms, and vice versa. Indeed, true facts are true norms, from a particular perspective, for God wants us to live according to all the truth he grants us. And of course, true norms are also factual. And our inner responses are factual and, rightly evaluated, normative.

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



“All truth is God’s truth”

8c. Warning – Psychological “quasi-laws” are not to be placed on the same level as the inspired word of God.

Proverbs 30:5–6 – Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.



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

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

9b. 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).



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

9c. 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).

9d. 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.



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



Bibliography

Adams, Jay E. *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010.

Babler, John, and Nicolas Ellen, eds. *Counseling by the Book*. Revised and Expanded edition. Fort Worth, Texas: CTW, 2019.

Eyrich, Howard, and William L. Hines. *Curing the Heart: A Model for Biblical Counseling*. Fearn: Mentor, 2010.

Frame, John. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013.

Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God's Image*. 1st pbk. ed. Carlisle, U.K., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Paternoster Press ; Eerdmans, 1994.

