

THE DEFINITION AND GOAL OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING

Biblical counseling is the personal discipleship ministry of God's people to others under the oversight of God's church, dependent upon the authority and sufficiency of God's Word through the work of the Holy Spirit. Biblical counseling seeks to reorient disordered thoughts, desires, affections, behaviors, and worship toward a God-designed anthropology in an effort to restore or establish right fellowship with God and others. This is accomplished by speaking the truth in love and applying Scripture to the need of the moment by comforting the suffering and calling sinners to repentance thus working to make them mature as they abide in Jesus Christ.

Essential Books

Adams, Jay E. *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling*. Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970. Reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986.

Without Jay Adams's book *Competent to Counsel*, it is debatable when the biblical counseling movement would have started. Some issues have been raised about Adams's writing over the years. The critical point from his book is that the fourfold model of 1 Thessalonians 5:14 puts this work in the hands of ordinary Christians. Admonish, encourage, help, be patient...we are all called and competent to counsel.

Johnson, T. Dale Jr. *The Church as a Culture of Care: Finding Hope in Biblical Community*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2021.

Dale Johnson's book will be a driving force in bringing biblical counseling ministries into most churches moving forward. Somebody said years ago that the church should be a hospital for the sick and not a museum for the saints. Johnson does the harder thing and actually builds the case for it. Students keep buying this book for their pastors. In my opinion, within five years this will be required reading in most biblical counseling programs at our seminaries.

Powlison, David. *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010.

Jay Adams founded the biblical counseling movement. Powlison came after him, and this may be an unpopular take, but no second-generation voice shaped the movement more. This book started as his doctoral dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania in 1996 under a different title, and he retitled it and added a long appendix of articles before New Growth Press published it in 2010. It traces the who, what, when, where, why, and how of biblical counseling. Powlison lays out the biblical foundation for counseling, and he keeps coming back to the sufficiency of Scripture. He also takes up the common objections and answers them plainly.

Lambert, Heath. *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

Read this one for balance. Lambert gives Jay Adams full credit for what he contributed to the development of biblical counseling, and then he turns around and critiques where the movement fell short. You come away understanding the history and the theology behind it.

MacArthur, John F. Jr., Wayne A. Mack, and The Master's College Faculty. *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

This one is clear and concise, though several contributors wrote it and MacArthur is one name among them. It is also a retitled version of *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* from 1994. The contributors work through the sufficiency of Scripture and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work in counseling, and they spend real time on heart change. Common misconceptions get answered in it too, and the answers are sound.

Shaw, Mark E. *The Heart of Addiction: A Biblical Perspective*. Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2008.

My specialty is addictions. When I first came to seminary, this was the first book I read that made me think, "Yes! This is what I've been saying for years." Shaw challenges the commonly held view that addiction is primarily a medical or psychological issue. He argues that the root is spiritual and the solution has to be spiritual too. A person coming off a substance can be in serious physical danger, so get them to a physician for an examination before you do anything else. Repentance and faith are where the change actually happens, and it gets worked out over time in discipleship.

Ganz, Richard. *PsychoBabble: The Failure of Modern Psychology and the Biblical Alternative*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book because it exposes the dangers of relying on psychotherapy and psychobabble in counseling sessions. Ganz argues that vague, undefined psychological terms mislead people and hinder real growth. He piles up the examples. Each one sits next to plain biblical language, and the psychobabble looks worse every time. Use words in your own counseling that match what God has actually said.

While Counseling, Always Remember:

Romans 3:23 "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" And Matthew 7:5 "*Hypocrite! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.*" Before we can help others with their life-dominating sin, we must ensure that we are walking with the Lord in a way that brings Him praise, glory, and honor.

If I was to pick a few verses that have helped me understand the foundation of biblical counseling, it would be 2 Timothy 3:16 and 1 Thessalonians 5:14. Biblical counselors, unfortunately, have had a reputation for focusing only on the admonishment part of 1 Thessalonians 5:14. I would plead that the encouragement, the help, and the patience in that same verse have to show up in our counseling too.

The Motivation and Goal of Biblical Counseling

1st: Glorify and honor God.

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people (Colossians 3:23).

2nd: Show God's Love.

I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:34-35).

3rd: Be Salt and Light.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

What Makes Biblical Counseling Biblical?

Biblical Wisdom: Biblical counseling relies on the Bible as the ultimate source of truth and wisdom. When a couple sits down in front of you and asks what to do about their marriage, or a mother asks why she cannot stop worrying about her son, the answer you give has to carry God's perspective and not yours.

Christ-Centered Approach: Jesus Christ is the center of the whole thing, and this is where a lot of counseling that calls itself Christian goes soft. It stops at His teaching and His example. The gospel is that He died for sinners and God raised Him, and a counselee who trusts Him is joined to Him and stands accepted by God on Christ's merits. His progress in counseling has nothing to do with that standing. Counseling that skips the cross ends up being advice, and the person already has plenty of people willing to give them that.

Biblical counselors work with people who have bodies. Scripture treats body and soul as one person, and a counselor who ignores the body will misread what is sitting in front of him. You are not a physician, and applying God's Word to the heart is different work from treating a body. Both matter. Spiritual health stands at the center of true life with God, and apart from it every other pursuit falls short.

Emphasis on the Church Community: Counseling belongs inside the local church, under its oversight, with the body of Christ involved in the person's growth. Believers support one another and the church body often plays an active role. God designed the church to be where this happens, and counseling that operates apart from one is working against that design.

The Goal Is Glorifying God: And the aim behind all of it is God's glory. Whether you are working with addictions or a marriage that is falling apart, you are after a person who honors God, and that happens as the Spirit works and the counselee obeys what God has said.

Why Must Counseling Be BIBLICAL?

Adherence to Biblical Truth: Counseling methods and content must stem from God's truth and not from man's understanding. What gets said in that room has to line up with what God has said, and fallible human ideas do not get a vote. EVERYTHING must be based on Scripture.

Protection from Man's Wisdom: Paul warns the Colossians about being taken captive by philosophy and empty deceit (Colossians 2:8). Captive is a strong word. A counselor working from borrowed categories does not usually know he has been taken. He also tells Timothy that all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Equipped for every good work covers the counseling room.

Servant of God, Not Man: The counselor's aim is to please God. I have sat across from people who wanted me to tell them their situation was fine, and the pull to do it is real, because you can watch somebody's face relax the moment you soften something. Faithfulness to Christ costs you that moment.

Biblical Truth: The Bible also holds values that will collide with what the culture around your counselee believes, and a counselor who is surprised by that collision will start hedging.

Practical Theology: How you view Scripture shapes your theology, and that theology runs straight into how you do ministry.

You are working toward a life that embraces what pleases God and turns away from what does not. Nobody arrives there in six sessions.

The Greatest Thing to Remember:

Love God and love others. Jesus said that if you love Him, you will keep His commandments (John 14:15). That love has to reach His people too. I've lived on the West Coast and in the Bible Belt. Out on the coast I watched people love each other well while the Word itself sat there mostly unopened. The Bible Belt has the opposite problem, and I say this as somebody who lives here now, because folks around here can run the whole rulebook and still be hard to be around. You do not get to pick which half you are good at and call it obedience.

ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF A BIBLICAL COUNSELOR

(Condensed from ACBC Standards of Conduct)

The Commitment to Scripture

Inspired by God, the Bible guides his people in navigating the world's challenges. When individuals face difficulties and need assistance understanding and addressing their problems, they often seek counseling. In counseling, practitioners believe that Scripture sets forth a perfect standard for living, addresses a person's spiritual struggles, and gives the process God designed for change. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Biblical counselors agree that the topics discussed are the issues addressed in Scripture.

A. In counseling, it is essential to rely on Scripture as the sufficient source of guidance. His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), so the Bible addresses the concerns that trouble people, and counselors point them to its help.

B. Biblical counselors reject any counseling approaches that contradict biblical principles. While secular institutions may offer support in cases requiring care like hospitalization, they do not contribute anything essential to comprehending and resolving counseling issues.

C. Biblical counselors emphasize careful and accurate interpretation of the Bible in their counseling practices.

D. Biblical counselors need to differentiate between the interpretation of a text and their personal opinions and applications that stem from it.

The Commitment to Jesus

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, has come in the flesh to redeem fallen humanity from all the effects of the fall. Through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension (Hebrews 1:3), He offers everlasting joy. He is the ultimate solution for all counseling problems, resolving them in part in this life and completely in the life to come. People receive these benefits through repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus (Acts 20:21). Our privilege as Christians is to guide others to Him through our conversations at all times and places. Jesus is indeed the focus of every conversation, whether casual or formal.

A. Counselors must emphasize to their counselees that faith in Jesus Christ is necessary for salvation. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Since Jesus Christ provides solutions for all our counseling challenges, it should be our goal as counselors to introduce our counselees to a saving relationship with Him.

B. Biblical counselors should also emphasize that faith in Jesus Christ is essential for sanctification. A person enters life by faith in Christ and goes on growing by that same faith for as long as he lives. As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him (Colossians 2:6).

The Commitment to Care

Inviting someone into a counseling conversation is an invitation to love him deeply. As counselors, we demonstrate the love of Christ through the guidance we provide to those who seek our help during challenging times. The counseling relationship is rooted in care, whether within a counseling setting or simply in our interactions with others. Our approach as counselors is centered on serving with love. It ensures that we do not harm those seeking counsel.

A. Biblical counselors must devote time and attention to those they are helping. While scheduled appointments often facilitate counseling conversations, our commitment to caring for others extends beyond formal meetings.

B. Biblical counselors must go beyond providing words of guidance by demonstrating care through tangible actions. James asks what good it does to tell a brother without clothes or daily food to go in peace, stay warm, and eat well, and then give him nothing his body needs. Faith without works is dead (James 2:15-17). Advice with no practical compassion behind it is that kind of faith.

C. When deciding to charge fees for counseling services, biblical counselors weigh what the counselee can bear, what the church already provides, and whether a fee would put help out of reach. That takes discernment, and it has to serve the commitment to care. The Lord commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14), and the worker is worthy of his wages (1 Timothy 5:18).

The Commitment to the Church

The church is the body of Jesus Christ, whom he has purchased with his blood and has commissioned to advance his kingdom on earth. Paul calls the church God's household, the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). A ministry that exists to communicate that truth cannot do without her. Biblical counselors proceed on the conviction that biblical change does not happen apart from the full ministry of the church.

A. Biblical counselors must be committed to the church's priority in accomplishing their counseling ministry. Biblical counselors will place themselves under the leadership of a church and pursue accountability for that leadership as it relates to their life, doctrine, and counseling practices.

B. Biblical counselors must pursue the closest possible connections between church accountability and the counseling centers where they serve.

C. Biblical counselors must seek to involve their counselees in a faithful church. By God's grace, counseling aims to conform a counselee's heart and behavior to what glorifies God.

D. Biblical counselors must seek out churches for themselves and those they counsel, which will faithfully discharge the command of Christ to show care through corrective church discipline.

The Commitment to Humanity

God created man in his own image, male and female (Genesis 1:27), as the pinnacle of his creation. Every one of them carries a dignity that cannot be measured. Biblical counseling engages these precious image bearers to show care to them according to the standards of God's Word. Biblical counselors work to show honor and care to human beings in every relevant way.

A. Biblical counselors must counsel in a way that protects life and honors the image of God in human beings. Biblical counselors never condone the taking of innocent life through murder, believing acts such as abortion, selective reduction, euthanasia, and assisted suicide are sins that hurt people and dishonor God.

B. Biblical counselors must counsel with an understanding of the importance of the heart. Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life (Proverbs 4:23), and what comes out of a person is what defiles him (Mark 7:21-23). A man is steered by what his heart wants.

C. Biblical counselors must do their work understanding the importance of care for the physical body. Human beings are whole persons. Paul asks God to sanctify the whole of a believer, spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23), so the body and what it does belong in the counseling conversation.

D. Biblical counselors must do their work understanding the importance of gender. God created the human race to exist in two equal genders, male and female, and He commanded that those genders be called to function in different capacities in home, church, and society. The biblical instruction on gender means that, while men and women should disciple one another as they live out their daily Christian lives, women should strive to avoid formally counseling men, since this generally requires teaching men with authority, which Scripture forbids (1 Timothy 2:12). Men are likewise committed to ministry to women, and they should avoid ongoing one-to-one counsel with a woman, because Scripture calls them to stay above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2) and to avoid every appearance of sin.

The Commitment to Purity

God created sex to be enjoyed in marriage between one man and one woman, who leave father and mother and become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). Marriage is to be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, and God judges the sexually immoral (Hebrews 13:4). Every other sexual expression is immorality, and it brings pain to everybody it touches. Counselors have a biblical responsibility to advance sexual purity in their attitudes, actions, and speech.

A. Biblical counselors must seek sexual purity in every area of their lives. Flee sexual immorality, because every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). Those committed to the ministry of the Word in counseling must avoid immorality in their interactions with others.

B. Biblical counselors must seek purity in their intentions with counselees. Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:28), so sinful sexual behavior starts as a sinful intention. Biblical counselors fight by grace to defeat the lustful intentions of the heart.

C. Biblical counselors must encourage sexual purity in the lives of counselees. The Bible teaches that great pain and consequences come into the lives of those guilty of sexual transgression.

The Commitment to Competency

The calling to be a biblical counselor involves more than a commitment to the sufficiency of Christ and his Word in helping people with their problems in living. It also involves a commitment to growing in the wisdom and skill that produces counseling excellence.

A. Biblical counselors must pursue the necessary education, training, and experience to do their work. The best biblical counselors have received quality instruction from wise teachers about how to counsel well, have been trained to develop excellent counseling skills, and have been supervised by mentors who know how to counsel excellently.

B. Biblical counselors must be committed to ongoing education and training to remain effective. New counselees always arrive with fresh problems, and counselors must grow in wisdom and skill. Biblical counselors, therefore, always continue learning but always seek to grow their base of knowledge concerning the truths of Scripture, information about the problems that people face, and the wisdom that comes through counseling.

C. Biblical counselors must maintain a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ because counseling runs on what is stored up in the counselor. A good person produces good out of the good stored up in his heart, and the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart (Luke 6:45).

D. Biblical counselors must seek to gain as much information about the nature of the problems faced by their counselee to provide adequate care. It is only possible to help troubled people with extensive knowledge of their problems.

The Commitment to Methodology

Wise counseling requires a commitment to understanding and following the change process as it is revealed in Scripture. Counseling is about offering help to people as they make Spirit-initiated changes in their lives that honor Him. So biblical counselors must know that biblical process and be committed to following it if they are to succeed in their work of counseling. Scripture is what equips the man of God completely for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17), counseling included, and it explains the process the relationship depends on.

A. Biblical counselors must be committed to the truth that the fundamental key to the process of biblical counseling is the person and work of Jesus Christ. We point counselees to the person and work of Jesus Christ and then teach them how to grow in his grace.

B. Biblical counselors must seek to help counselees change their sinful desires and behavior through a biblical process of putting off sinful attitudes and actions and putting on ones of righteousness. Paul tells the Ephesians to take off the old self, to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and to put on the new self created according to God's likeness (Ephesians 4:22-24). Stopping the old is half of it. New desires and new behavior that honor God are the other half.

C. Biblical counselors must help their counselees change by meeting with God in prayer. Approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (Philippians 4:6). That holds in our sin and in our suffering alike.

The Commitment to Authority

God's world is one where authority structures must be recognized and respected. The Bible teaches that authority exists between the Trinitarian relationships of the Godhead, and Paul writes that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3). That reaches every human relationship we have. Biblical counselors work to honor all biblically instituted authorities and assist their counselees in doing the same.

A. Biblical counselors must submit to the authority of God above every other authority source and help their counselees do the same. God is the supreme authority in the world and the source of every human authority, and He mediates that authority to us perfectly in the pages of his Word. Every source of authority answers to God's Word as the perfect standard.

B. Biblical counselors must help their counselees submit to legitimate authority in the context of the home. God has called husbands and fathers to exercise spiritual authority in the home, seeking the welfare of those in his care. God has also called wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord and husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:22-25), and children to obey their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1).

C. Biblical counselors must help their counselees submit to their church's authority. God has given His church ministers to shepherd the souls of his people. Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account (Hebrews 13:17).

D. Biblical counselors must help their counselees submit to the state's authority as it is discharged righteously. There is no authority except from God, and those that exist are instituted by God (Romans 13:1). Government is His provision for preserving order and righteousness.

The Commitment to Integrity

The Bible emphasizes the importance of honesty in all of our relationships, and God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). He commands the same integrity of His creatures: put away lying and speak the truth, each one to his neighbor (Ephesians 4:25). Every human relationship needs it, counseling included.

The trust a counseling relationship requires is honesty from the counselor, and deceit undermines it.

A. Biblical counselors must be straightforward about the kind of counseling they do. Counselees are served when biblical counselors communicate their intention to use the Bible as their authority for all counseling matters.

B. Biblical counselors must maintain and communicate the biblical standards for confidentiality. Trust grows in relationships where all parties have clear expectations regarding the confidential nature of private information. Biblical counselors seek to maintain trust and integrity by keeping personal information as private as possible.

C. Biblical counselors must accurately represent their qualifications. It demonstrates a lack of integrity for counselors to misrepresent their training, experience, and areas of expertise in communicating their counseling qualifications.

D. Biblical counselors must exercise care in receiving gifts from those they counsel. Such gifts may be gladly received as a token of love and gratitude for the help and care offered in counseling. Biblical counselors must be wary of gifts perceived as an exercise in manipulation or an effort to control certain counseling outcomes.

The Commitment to Reconciliation

God is concerned with pursuing peace with his creation. He possesses righteous anger regarding sin but offers to put that anger away through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. He calls his followers to this same attitude of peace. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), and blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9). To be called as a biblical counselor is to be called as a peacemaker.

A. Biblical counselors must be committed to helping counselees pursue peace with God through faith and repentance. When biblical counselors are aware of areas in the lives of counselees where they are separated from God by their sin they will always seek, with wisdom and grace, to help them repent of that sin, confessing it to the Lord.

B. Biblical counselors must be committed to helping counselees pursue peace in their relationships with other people through confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Biblical counselors take every available opportunity to help counselees achieve reconciliation in any relationship where this is possible, whether in marriage, family, friendships, or church fellowship.

C. Biblical counselors must pursue peace in relationships with all their counselees. When a conflict arises, biblical counselors will lead in reconciliation as each party confesses sin and grants forgiveness. Biblical counselors are also eager to bring in another party to help facilitate reconciliation if this should be necessary.

MANS WISDOM VS BIBLICAL TRUTH (Secular and Integration Theories)

We must be vigilant against worldly wisdom. Colossians 2:8 “Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ.” warns against being misled by human philosophy and deception, contrasting it with Christ’s teachings. Similarly, 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 “Do not be yoked together with those who do not believe. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?” warns Christians against yoked partnership with unbelief and idolatry (see v. 16). The warning applies to counseling done under a secular framework, not to every observation an unbeliever makes; the wisdom-of-the-world argument itself rests on Colossians 2:8 and 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5. The Word of God is superior to clinically-informed therapy.

Secular and Integration Theories in Counseling

Why Clarity in Counseling Models Matters

Many Christians do not realize that the foundation upon which counseling rests dramatically shapes both the process and the outcome. When someone seeks counsel, the underlying philosophy will either exalt God’s Word or subtly sideline it. The differences between secular, integrationist, and biblical models are not merely academic, they affect how people are shepherded through suffering, sin, and sanctification.

Three Forces of Psychology

1st force (Psychoanalytic), 2nd force (Behaviorism), 3rd force (Humanism)
1st Force: Freud, Jung, Adler, Erikson
2nd Force: Watson, Skinner, Pavlov
3rd Force: Rogers, Maslow, May (Ellis and Beck belong to the later cognitive school)

1st Wave Quotes from Main Theorist

Sigmund Freud “Religion is an illusion, and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in with our instinctual desires.”

“Religion is an attempt to get control over the sensory world, in which we are placed, by means of the wish-world, which we have developed inside us as a result of biological and psychological necessities. [...] If one attempts to assign to religion its place in man’s evolution, it seems not so much to be a lasting acquisition, as a parallel to the neurosis which the civilized individual must pass through on his way from childhood to maturity.”

Carl Jung “... I quite understand if it should be suggested that I am no Christian. Yet I think of myself as a Christian since I am entirely based upon Christian concepts. I only try to escape their internal contradictions by introducing a more modest attitude, which takes into consideration the immense darkness of the human mind. The Christian idea proves its vitality by a continuous evolution, just like Buddhism.”

2nd Wave Quotes from Main Theorist

BF Skinner “Science, not religion, has taught me my most useful values, among them intellectual honesty. It is better to go without answers than to accept those that merely resolve puzzlement. I like Bertrand Russell’s reply to Pascal’s wager. Pascal argued that the consequences of believing in God were so immense that only a fool would not believe; but, said Russell, suppose God values intellectual honesty above all else and that he has given us shoddy evidence of His existence and is planning to damn to hell all those who believe in Him only for the sake of the glittering prizes.”

Through his philosophy of pragmatism, William James justifies religious beliefs by using the results of his hypothetical venturing as evidence to support the hypothesis’ truth. Therefore, this doctrine allows one to assume belief in a god and prove its existence by what the belief brings to one’s life.....but is that what God intended. Are we to justify our faith in what God does for us, or is our faith based on our obedience to His word?

3rd Wave Quotes from Main Theorist.

Humanism: an outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to humans rather than divine or supernatural matters. Humanist beliefs stress human beings’ potential value and goodness, emphasize everyday human needs, and seek solely rational ways of solving human problems.

List of Well-Known Humanist: Bill Nye, Carl Sagan, Jonas Salk, John Dewey, Norman Lear, Oliver Stone, Cenk Uyger, and more.

Why is This Important to Know? Because on their website it states.... American Humanist Association: Good Without a God. They have been explicit for the last 90 years, and I argue successfully removing God from society.

Albert Ellis: “Religious creeds encourage some of the craziest kinds of thoughts, emotions and behaviors and favor severe manifestations of neurosis, borderline personality states and sometimes even psychosis.... In the final analysis, then, religion is neurosis. This is why I remarked, at a symposium on sin and psychotherapy held by the American Psychological Association a few years ago, that from a mental health standpoint, Voltaire’s famous dictum should be reversed: for if there were a god, it would be necessary to uninvent him.

Carl Rogers: “Experience is, for me, the highest authority.” “Neither the Bible nor the prophets--neither Freud nor research--neither the revelations of God nor man--can take precedence over my own direct experience.”

The Humanist Manifesto of 1933 Beside Scripture

The men who wrote this document did not hide anything. Each of the fifteen theses goes against something the Bible says about God or man.

First, A Self-Existing Universe: “The universe [is] self-existing and not created.” Everything else in the Christian faith depends on that Creator. Genesis 1:1 says God made the heavens and the earth, and that one sentence undoes the thesis.

Second, Man as a Product of Nature: “Man is a part of nature and ... has emerged as a result of a continuous process.” God formed man personally. Human worth rests on the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and a process that ran long enough never had anything to do with it.

Third, No Body-Soul Distinction: “The traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.” A man with no soul has no sin to answer for and nothing to be saved from, and judgment and resurrection drop out of the picture with it. Jesus told His disciples to fear the One who can destroy the soul, and not the people who can only kill the body (Matthew 10:28).

Fourth, Religion as a Cultural Product: “Man’s religious culture ... [is] the product of a gradual development.” Religion becomes something men manufactured over time. God has spoken (Hebrews 1:1–2), and faith comes from hearing His Word (Romans 10:17).

Fifth, Science Over Revelation: “Religion must formulate its hopes and plans in the light of the scientific spirit and method.” That throws out revelation and puts human investigation in its place. In His prayer Jesus said that God’s word is truth (John 17:17).

Sixth, The Time Has Passed for Theism: “The time has passed for theism, deism, modernism ...” Agreeing with that means denying the living God, and the Psalms already have a description for the man who says in his heart that there is no God (Psalm 14:1).

Seventh, Nothing Sacred: “The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained.” God sets things apart for His glory. Not everything carries the same moral weight, and the command to be holy because God is holy assumes a line the Manifesto wants erased (1 Peter 1:16).

Eighth, Self-Realization as the End of Life: “The complete realization of human personality [is] the end of man’s life.” The purpose of human existence is the glory of God, and building up the self is not that. Paul says all things are from Him and through Him and to Him (Romans 11:36).

Ninth, Worship and Prayer Replaced: “In the place of ... worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in ... social well-being.” Christianity cannot survive that trade. We are told to pray constantly (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and to worship the Lord our God and serve Him only (Matthew 4:10).

Tenth, No Religious Emotions: “There will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes.” Scripture commands reverence and godly fear (Psalm 2:11), and it commands joy in the Lord (Philippians 4:4). Those are real.

Eleventh, Crises Without God: “Man will learn to face the crises of life in terms of ... their naturalness and probability.” That one is the counseling thesis. A man faces life without God,

handles the crisis like a statistic, and never once casts his burden on the Lord who promised to sustain him (Psalm 55:22).

Twelfth, Joy in Achievement: “Religious humanists aim ... to encourage achievements that add to the satisfactions of life.” Under that thesis a man looks for joy in what he accomplishes. Scripture puts joy in God Himself, in His presence (Psalm 16:11).

Thirteenth, Institutions for Human Fulfillment: “All associations and institutions exist for the fulfillment of human life ... religious institutions ... must be reconstituted.” The church is included in that sweep. But the church exists for the glory of Christ and for the making of disciples (Matthew 28:18–20).

Fourteenth, Salvation by a New Society: “A socialized and cooperative economic order must be established.” The rescue is supposed to come from a new economy. Scripture locates the problem in the heart (Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21–23), and no system anybody builds is going to change that.

Fifteenth, A Satisfactory Life for All: “Humanism will ... endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all.” The promise is a satisfying life without God’s rule and without the saving work of Christ. Jesus said that apart from Him you can do nothing (John 15:5).

What the Manifesto Adds Up To: All fifteen together give you a complete doctrine of man, one with no Creator and no soul in it, no sin to deal with, no prayer, and self-fulfillment set up as the goal of a human life. Third force therapies inherited those commitments. That is why Paul’s warning about being taken captive through philosophy and empty deceit (Colossians 2:8) lands right in the counseling room.

The Secular Counseling Model: Built on a Human-Centered Foundation

Secular counseling is grounded in humanistic, materialistic, or naturalistic presuppositions. It views mankind as an autonomous being whose problems stem from maladjustment, trauma, or environmental failure.

Examples of Dominant Theories

Freudian Psychoanalysis: Emphasizes unconscious drives and childhood experiences.

Behaviorism: Seeks to recondition behavior through rewards and punishments.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Focuses on altering cognitive distortions and behaviors.

Secular Counseling Models: Wisdom Without God

Secular approaches, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), person-centered therapy, and psychodynamic methods—rely on human theories and psychological research. These systems

emerge from worldviews that exclude God's authority and deny Scripture's role in understanding the human condition.

Man-Centered Philosophy: Humanistic models presuppose that humans are essentially good and that personal fulfillment is the ultimate goal; psychoanalytic and behavioral models deny sin in a different way, by reducing the person to drives or conditioning.

Borrowed Truth: While some techniques mirror biblical truths (challenging distorted thinking), they do so apart from submission to God. The absence of repentance, faith, and transformation through Christ leads to methods that fail to address the heart.

Inadequate for Soul Care: Secular models often treat symptoms without identifying the sinful patterns or false beliefs beneath them. They may offer relief, but not renewal.

Where It Falls Short

Secular psychology may identify real behavioral patterns but interpret them apart from God's truth. As a result:

1. Sin becomes dysfunction.
2. Rebellion becomes a trauma response.
3. Idolatry becomes identity confusion.

By removing God from the equation, secular models offer man-made solutions for soul-deep problems.

Goals of Secular Models: Relief, Adjustment, and Self-Fulfillment

Secular counseling targets symptom relief, personal adjustment, and subjective well-being. The primary aim is to enhance a person's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral functioning within the framework of a fallen world.

1. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Reframes distorted thinking to reduce anxiety and depression.
2. Humanistic Therapy: Focuses on self-actualization and personal growth.
3. Behavioral Therapy: Seeks to replace maladaptive behaviors with socially acceptable ones.

The assumption driving these models is that man's greatest need is psychological adjustment, not reconciliation with God. Success is measured by increased self-esteem, reduced symptoms, or improved interpersonal skills, not spiritual renewal.

Where It Falls Short

While secular therapy can achieve surface-level changes, it does not diagnose the true condition of the heart. It treats symptoms without addressing sin. Secular counseling merely rearranges spiritual death, offering relief without redemption.

The Integration Model: The Bible + Psychology

Definition and Historical Roots

The integration model teaches that psychology and theology should work together as complementary sources of truth. Drawing on a nature/grace, two-tier view of truth, it assumes that general revelation (science, psychology) and special revelation (Scripture) must be harmonized.

Philosophical Commitments

Integrationists operate from several foundational commitments:

1. **"All truth is God's truth."** This slogan serves as their rallying cry.
2. **Moral Neutrality of Secular Insights.** Psychology is treated as though its discoveries are value-free.
3. **Additional Revelation about Human Nature.** They claim psychology reveals aspects of humanity not disclosed in Scripture.

Contemporary Expressions

Integration finds practical expression in a variety of settings:

1. Integrationist Christian counseling centers. Scripture is used devotionally, while psychology provides the categories for diagnosis and treatment.
2. **Integrationist Training Programs.** Students are taught Freud, Rogers, or Skinner alongside Scripture as equally valid interpretive tools.

Dangers of the Integrationist Approach

The Illusion of Compatibility

Integration assumes that secular theories and Scripture can be harmonized. In reality, they rest on opposing worldviews. Secular psychology denies sin, eternal judgment, and spiritual warfare—all realities that Scripture affirms.

The Risk of Syncretism

Blending these systems inevitably produces theological confusion:

1. Confusion about man's core problem.
2. Conflicting views of sanctification.
3. Counseling that elevates technique over truth.

Integration often redefines sin as sickness and shifts the call to repentance into self-reliance.

Why Some Christians Are Drawn to Integration

Despite its problems, integration can appear attractive:

1. It sounds humble and nuanced.
2. It promises scientific credibility.
3. It seeks common ground in compassion.

But this appeal is deceptive. Integration does not guard Scripture; it erodes it. As Paul Tripp warns, “When the Bible is one voice among many, it will soon be no voice at all.”

What Is at Stake

The consequences of integration are serious:

1. The gospel message becomes diluted.
2. The sufficiency of Scripture is subtly denied.
3. The Lordship of Christ is compromised in the counseling room.

Dr. Heath Lambert captures this danger in *Biblical Counseling and the Sufficiency of Scripture*: “The danger is not in the use of psychology per se, but in elevating it alongside or above the Bible when interpreting human problems and prescribing solutions.”

Goals of Integrationist Counseling Models

Integrationist counselors aim to merge spiritual goals with psychological objectives. They argue that using theories such as attachment models or trauma frameworks enhances their ability to help struggling people.

Key Goals:

1. **Sanctification Plus Symptom Relief.** Growth in godliness is emphasized, but managing emotional pain is often given equal weight.
2. **Counselor as Dual Steward.** The counselor is seen as stewarding both biblical truth and psychological science.

Integrationists argue that refusing to use psychological findings is irresponsible and portrays the Bible as insufficient for complex disorders.

The Hidden Cost

While their aims may appear noble, critics warn of a subtle drift. The emphasis on reducing pain can eclipse the call to repentance and faith. Over time, techniques overshadow transformation, Scripture’s authority is minimized, and man-made strategies replace God’s sufficient Word.

A Biblical Reminder

Scripture Does Not Need Help: God has given everything needed for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

The Word is given “so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

General Revelation Is Not Independent Truth: General revelation shows God’s existence and attributes but does not interpret creation itself. Only the Bible makes sense of what we see in creation and the conscience.

Only God’s Word Transforms: Secular theories can offer relief, but only Scripture produces lasting transformation. Biblical counseling aims not to manage symptoms but to shepherd souls into conformity to Christ. No theory can do what the Spirit does through the Word.

Contrast: Biblical Counseling’s God-Centered Goal

The Central Aim: Glorify God Through Christlike Transformation. Biblical counseling rejects symptom management as the chief aim. While easing suffering is a good and right desire, counseling cannot be reduced to making life more bearable. If “a more bearable life” becomes the ultimate aim, then those facing unchangeable realities such as chronic illness are left without hope. The true goal is to glorify God by helping souls grow in likeness to Christ, which provides enduring purpose and strength regardless of circumstances. The heartbeat of biblical counseling is summarized in Colossians 1:28: “We proclaim him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ”

Core Distinctions from Other Models

1. **Focus on Heart Change, Not Symptom Relief:** Biblical counseling targets the root of the problem—sin, idolatry, and misplaced worship.
2. **Sufficiency of Scripture:** It believes Scripture provides everything necessary for counseling and soul care.
3. **Ministry of the Word in the Local Church:** Counseling is not isolated from the church. It is a disciple-making ministry flowing from the body of Christ.

Biblical counselors recognize that suffering and emotional pain can be real and intense, but they refuse to treat them as the ultimate enemy. Instead, trials are seen as opportunities for spiritual growth (James 1:2–4), instruments through which God conforms believers to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

Why This Contrast Matters

The Eternal Stakes: Secular and integration models often settle for improved coping skills. Biblical counseling refuses to leave people comfortable in spiritual death. It calls them to life—eternal life—in Christ. Counseling that does not address sin and salvation risks giving people temporary hope while abandoning them to eternal ruin. True compassion demands confrontation with truth, not comfort with techniques.

A Different Standard of Success: In secular or integrationist models, success is often measured by symptom reduction, self-reported happiness, or restored functionality. In biblical counseling, success is measured by increased faithfulness, deeper repentance, greater love for God and neighbor, and endurance amid suffering.

PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification, Transformation for God's Glory: Sanctification is the work God does to set a believer apart for His own glory. The word means set apart, and the change it names works through ordinary life until that life starts to look like God's holiness. Sanctification is a cooperative effort, the work of God and the duty of man. Paul puts both in one breath. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12-13). God's work is the cause and ground of ours. Our effort is real, and it never produces the change by itself.

Divinely Ordained and Spirit-Driven: Biblical counseling leans on God's grace and the Holy Spirit's work to change people. God moves first and His work is what makes change possible, and the counselee still has real obeying to do. Counselors point people to trust God's power in what they are up against.

Beyond Moral and Religious Conduct: Moral uprightness and religious practice can both be present while nothing has changed inside. Biblical counseling is after a change in the heart and the mind so that a person actually wants what God wants. That change is sanctification, and it works on what a believer thinks and what he desires until both look more like Christ. Addictions and depression have to be met at that level.

A Lifelong Journey To Holiness: Sanctification takes a lifetime. Growth and maturity come slowly, and counseling works the same way, over months and sometimes years, with a person getting closer to God and more like Christ as it goes.

Ultimate Goal of Sanctification: The goal is personal holiness and service to God's kingdom. That is what counseling is for as well, helping somebody live in a way that brings God glory and honor.

A Community Affair: Sanctification does not happen alone. Believers are called to encourage and support one another, and a church that leaves people to grow by themselves mostly gets people who do not grow.

It Is Extensive: Sanctification is not confined to private holiness. It includes how a person serves, and the gifts God gave somebody are meant to get used. Somebody who grows and never serves anybody has stalled halfway.

It Is Progressive: Growth keeps going. A believer becomes more like Christ over time, and he understands God's character better and puts biblical truth to work as he goes. Counseling runs on that same clock. Addictions, depression, and years of anxiety take as long as they take.

It Is Abiding: The change lasts. Temporary fixes wear off, and what God does in a person holds, though it is never finished in this life. A believer keeps growing until glory, and anybody who tells a counselee the fight is over before then is setting him up.

It Is Ongoing, Yet Complete in God's Eyes: A believer still struggling with addiction or depression is already justified, declared righteous and set apart in Christ through His atoning sacrifice (1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11). He is also still being sanctified. Both are true at once, and a counselee needs to hear both.

Sanctification is one of the kindest things God does. He shapes believers into the image of Christ so they reflect His glory, and He does it by His own grace while asking for daily surrender and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

How We Are Sanctified

By the Word of God (John 17:17): Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." The Word is living and active. Anybody who actually engages it will feel it working. James compares it to a mirror. What a person sees there is himself, and usually it is the part he has been avoiding. Change in the addiction and in the depression comes as a man lines his life up with what God says.

By God's Discipline (Hebrews 12:4-11): God's discipline is love and never condemnation (Romans 8:1). Correction is the point. Counselees run into hard things, and some of those hard things are God's hand doing exactly this work. Hebrews says discipline seems painful at the time and later yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

By Fellow Believers (Proverbs 27:17): Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another. Other believers are a means God uses, and the sharpening happens in ordinary conversation more than in any program. You give and you get in the same exchange.

By Prayer (Psalm 51:10): David asks God to create a clean heart for him and renew a steadfast spirit within him. He is asking for what he cannot do for himself. Regular prayer pulls a person closer to God, and over time his wants start lining up with God's.

Those four run together. The Word, God's discipline, other believers, and prayer are how He does this work, and He does it in the whole person and in the whole body at once. It is grace all the way through, and the people it works on end up looking more like Christ.

What We Must Be Cautious About

Insulting the Spirit (Hebrews 10:26-31): Scripture warns the person who receives the knowledge of the truth and then deliberately and finally rejects Christ. That is described as trampling the Son of God underfoot and treating His blood as something common, and it insults the Spirit of grace. The passage is about final repudiation, not a believer's ongoing struggle with sin (1 John 2:1). Somebody who walks away for good was never held by God to begin with. In counseling this is a warning against hardening, and it is not a verdict on the struggler in front of you.

Grieving the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30): Paul says do not grieve God's Holy Spirit, who sealed you for the day of redemption. The next verse names what does it. Bitterness, anger, wrath, shouting,

slander, and malice (Ephesians 4:31). Those things wound the Spirit who lives in a believer and is working to make him like Christ, the way they would wound anybody who loves you.

Stifling the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19): The CSB reads, “Don’t stifle the Spirit.” Other translations say quench, and the picture is putting out a fire. A believer does this by ignoring what God has already said in His Word and by refusing to use the gifts he was given. The Spirit leads through Scripture. A counselee waiting on an inner nudge should be opening his Bible.

Respect and obedience are what the Spirit is owed. These cautions keep a person watching what he thinks and what he says, and they let the Spirit do His work of making somebody look like Christ. Live that way and you honor God, and you start wanting what God wants.

What This Means To Our Counseling

Spirit-Filled Counseling: Ask for the Holy Spirit’s help before every session and during it. He gives wisdom and discernment, and without those a counselor is a man handing out his own opinions. Yielding to Him is what makes words and actions carry grace.

A counselor’s effectiveness rests on his own walk with Jesus Christ. Daily prayer, consistent Bible study, worship, and obedience are not optional here, and a counselor who lets those slide will feel it in the room within a month. Truth spoken by somebody rooted in Christ’s love does not come out cold.

The Holy Spirit’s Work in Counselees’ Lives: For counselees, growth in Christ is spiritual work before it is anything else. Get them praying, and get them into the Bible far enough that they are memorizing and meditating on verses that speak to what they are actually facing. Anchor them there. Then help them submit to the Holy Spirit’s leading and depend on Him for change that lasts.

Collaborative Work: Counseling is a three-way thing between the counselor, the counselee, and the Holy Spirit. That makes it spiritual work and not only human work, so seek God’s wisdom and His power out loud. Symptom relief is too small a goal. Aim at the counselee’s growth and a deeper commitment to what God is after.

Tailored Approach: Every counselee brings his own set of struggles and history. Understanding that takes time. With the Spirit’s help a counselor builds an approach that fits this person, and it has to go past the presenting problem into what he actually believes and where he actually stands with God.

Ultimate Dependence on God: Lasting change comes from God. Strategies and techniques can help and they are not where the change comes from, so the counselor and the counselee both end up leaning on the Holy Spirit. God changes hearts and renews minds by His own sovereign work. Keeping that in view is what keeps biblical counseling from turning into technique.

Real change is supernatural work and God’s Word is what directs it. Counselor and counselee both practice the habits that make a person sensitive to His leading, and over months that changes how the sessions feel. What happens between them carries God’s grace and His truth.

What the Bible Says

Genesis 1:26-27: *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.”*

Everything in counseling depends on this verse. People are made in God’s image, and human dignity and moral responsibility both rest on that fact. It also frames what a person struggles with and what he reaches for. Sanctification is God restoring that image in a believer, and as somebody grows in Christ the image shows in how he thinks and how he treats people.

James 3:9: *“With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God’s likeness.”*

The tongue shapes how a person stands with God and with everybody else. Counseling puts a believer’s speech under God’s character, because words either honor or dishonor people God made in His image. Taming the tongue is part of Christian maturity and part of sanctification. Get counselees using words that build people up.

In Counseling: Every person in front of you has worth that does not depend on how his life is going. That awareness changes the tone of a session. Whatever somebody has done or come from, he still carries his Creator’s imprint, and care that honors that will address the struggle without reducing him to it.

The same truth shapes how you treat family, friends, and strangers. Scripture tells believers to be kind and compassionate, forgiving one another as God forgave you in Christ (Ephesians 4:32). People carry God’s image whether or not they act like it, and remembering that changes how you talk to them.

In Society: These truths hold up justice. They also rule out the favoritism and division the world runs on, and Christians are supposed to be salt and light in the middle of it (Matthew 5:13-14). Treat people like the image-bearers they are, starting with the ones who are hard to be around.

Sin Separates

The Bible is clear that sin separates us from God. It creates a barrier that disrupts our relationship with Him.

Man’s Deceitful Heart (Jeremiah 17:5-6, 9-10): Jeremiah says the heart is more deceitful than anything else and incurable, and he says a man who trusts in human strength is cursed. That kills the idea that we can fix ourselves with enough effort. God examines the mind and tests the heart (Jeremiah 17:10), so He is the one who actually knows what is in there. Seeing your own heart clearly and leaning on God’s grace is what growing in Christlikeness looks like. Sanctification is that growth, and counseling aims at it.

Man Sins, But God Loves (Romans 5:8, John 3:16): These verses show God's love and grace toward people who did nothing to earn it. Romans 5:8 says, "*God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" His love rests on His own merciful nature and not on our righteousness. John 3:16 says, "*For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*" Sanctification is growth in a relationship with the God who loved us while we were still sinners, and perfection in this life was never the promise.

God Offers Forgiveness and Redemption (Ephesians 1:7, 1 Corinthians 6:20, 1 Peter 1:18-19): In Christ we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of our trespasses (Ephesians 1:7). You were bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20), and the price was the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). A counselee who understands that stops trying to earn his way and starts depending on grace. He works hard at putting off sin, and he does it as somebody whose victory was already secured, though the work will not be finished until glory. Gratitude comes out of that, and so does a real wanting to honor God with his life.

PROCESS OF BIBLICAL CHANGE

Biblical change is Spirit-led work grounded in God's grace. Surface adjustment is not what it does. It reshapes the heart, the mind, and what a person does, so that all of it reflects Christ. This process, central to biblical counseling, involves a believer's position in Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and practical growth steps, leading to a life that glorifies God.

Position for Change: Union with Christ

Biblical change rests on a believer's union with Christ. His identity and his capacity for change both come from that union. Through faith he is united with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:5), which makes him a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), his sins forgiven and himself accepted by God. Change starts from there.

Biblical Basis (2 Corinthians 5:15-17): *"And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!"* This passage emphasizes that union with Christ shifts the believer's purpose from self-centered to Christ-centered. In counseling, this truth helps a person see that his identity rests on where he stands in Christ. Past failures and present struggles do not decide it.

Counseling Application: Counselors encourage individuals to rest in their identity as God's children, which gives them hope and a reason to change. Someone carrying guilt over past sin can be reminded that he is forgiven, and that he is free to live differently in Christ because of it. This position in Christ is the starting point for addressing issues like shame, addiction, or relational conflicts.

Power to Change: The Holy Spirit and Motivation

Human effort alone does not produce biblical change. The Holy Spirit works within believers and produces it, supplying both the ability and the desire to grow in godliness and bringing the heart into line with God's purposes.

Biblical Basis (Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 5:18): Galatians 5:16 instructs believers to *"walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh,"* highlighting the Spirit's role in overcoming sinful patterns. Ephesians 5:18 calls believers to *"be filled by the Spirit,"* indicating a continual reliance on His guidance. The Spirit convicts, teaches, and empowers, enabling believers to live out God's will.

Motivation for Change (Ephesians 3:14-21): Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 reveals that the Spirit strengthens believers to grasp the depth of Christ's love, which fuels transformation. Knowing God's love is what moves a believer to pursue holiness, and gratitude carries him further than obligation ever does.

Counseling Application: Counselors guide individuals to depend on the Holy Spirit through prayer, Scripture, and obedience. Someone battling anxiety can be pointed to the Spirit's peace and

to God's promises (John 14:26-27). The counselor also helps uncover motivations, whether love for God or fear of consequences, ensuring the desire for change aligns with biblical values.

Process of Change: Practical Steps

The process of biblical change involves intentional, Spirit-empowered steps that transform the believer's thoughts, desires, and behaviors. These steps include confession and repentance, renewing the mind, and putting off sinful habits while putting on godly ones.

Confession and Repentance:

Biblical Basis: James 1:21 urges believers to "*ridding yourselves of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, humbly receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*" Repentance involves acknowledging sin, avoiding it, and embracing God's truth.

Counseling Application: Counselors help individuals identify specific sins, such as bitterness, pride, or lust, and confess them to God (1 John 1:9). Repentance is turning toward obedience, and feeling sorry is not the same thing. Someone struggling with anger might confess his outbursts and commit to responding patiently, leaning on God's grace.

Renewing the Mind:

Biblical Basis: Romans 12:2 calls believers to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind," a renewed perspective rooted in God's truth by which the Spirit enables us to "put to death the deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13). Colossians 3:16 instructs, "*Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you,*" and it is Scripture that does the shaping of a believer's thoughts.

Counseling Application: Renewing the mind involves replacing worldly or destructive thought patterns with biblical truth. Counselors encourage regular engagement with Scripture, such as memorizing verses that counter lies (e.g., Philippians 4:8 for anxiety). For someone who struggles with fear of man, meditating on the fear of the Lord and on God's acceptance of them in Christ (Proverbs 29:25; Galatians 1:10; Romans 8:31-39) can reshape their perspective.

Put Off/Put On:

Biblical Basis: Ephesians 4:22-24 tells believers "*to take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires,*" *to be renewed in the spirit of their minds,* and "*to put on the new self,* the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth." Colossians 3:5 commands, "*put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.*" This process involves replacing sinful behaviors with Christlike ones.

Counseling Application: Counselors guide individuals to identify specific habits to "put off" (lying, envy) and corresponding virtues to "put on" (e.g., truthfulness, contentment). Someone addicted to pornography might put off impure thoughts by avoiding triggers and put on purity through accountability and prayer. This step is practical, it is measurable, and the growth shows.

Ongoing Transformation (2 Corinthians 3:18): *“We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.”* This verse captures the progressive nature of change, assuring believers that the Spirit keeps this work going for the whole of a life.

Counseling Application: The process is tailored to each individual’s needs. A counselee dealing with depression might confess hopelessness, renew their mind with God’s promises (Romans 8:28-30), and put on habits like gratitude and community involvement. Counselors provide accountability and encouragement, ensuring steps are rooted in Scripture and empowered by the Spirit.

A Lifelong Journey

Biblical change is a continuous process of becoming more like Christ, and it is never finished in a single moment. Titus 2:12 teaches that God’s grace instructs us *“to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age.”* It asks for daily surrender, since Jesus calls a believer to “take up his cross daily” (Luke 9:23), putting God’s will ahead of his own.

Counseling Application: Counselors emphasize perseverance, reminding counselees that setbacks do not negate their progress. Growth is the goal, and nobody arrives at perfection here, so we trust that God is at work (Philippians 1:6). Someone overcoming addiction may stumble but is encouraged to continue repenting and renewing their mind, relying on the Spirit’s strength.

Community Support: The change process thrives in the context of the church community, where believers encourage and equip one another (Ephesians 4:11-15). Fellowship provides accountability, wisdom, and support, reinforcing individual efforts.

Counseling Application: Counselors integrate the community into the process, encouraging counselees to seek small group/life group/Sunday School. A person struggling with isolation can connect with a church family to ensure they are not alone.

Cautions in the Process

Believers must guard against pitfalls that hinder change.

Self-Reliance (Romans 8:13): Attempting change without the Spirit leads to frustration.

Neglecting Scripture (James 1:21-27): Ignoring God’s Word stalls transformation.

Isolating from Community (Ephesians 4:15-16): Change is harder alone.

Implications for Biblical Counseling

Spirit-Led Guidance: Counselors seek the Holy Spirit's wisdom to address each counselee's unique needs, ensuring prayerful and Scripture-driven sessions.

Empowering Identity: By grounding counselees in who they are in Christ, counselors instill confidence that change is possible through God's grace.

Collaborative Effort: Counseling involves the counselor, counselee, and Holy Spirit working together, acknowledging God as the source of all real change.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING STRATEGY (Providing Instruction)

Step 1: Discover the Person's Relationship with Christ (Salvation)

Counseling That Stops Short of Conversion Can Only Produce Behavior Change: Without a relationship with Christ, counseling can change what a person does and nothing more.

Must See His/Her Behavior as Sin: Recognizing sinful behavior is key to understanding the need for redemption. This realization allows a person to see their need for Christ's forgiveness.

Must Acknowledge, Confess, and Repent: Freedom comes through these three steps.

Acknowledge: Accepting the sinful nature of certain behaviors.

Confess: Admitting those sins to God.

Repent: Turning away from sin and turning to Christ.

Luke 15:11-24 (Parable of the Prodigal Son): This parable illustrates God's love and forgiveness to those who turn to Him.

Step 2: Provide Hope

Hope in the Sufficiency of God's Word (2 Peter 1:3-4):

Share that God has given us everything we need for life and godliness through His power.

Emphasize that God's Word is sufficient and contains all the wisdom and guidance needed for the situation.

Hope that There Is a Solution: Assure the counselee that their struggle is not unique and that there are biblical solutions to their problems. Help them see that God is in control and has a plan for their growth.

Hope that the Sin Is Listed in Scripture with Other Behaviors That Can Be Overcome (1 Corinthians 6:9-11): Highlight that the Bible addresses various sins and that others have overcome similar struggles through Christ. Point them to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, where Paul talks about different sins and how believers were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus.

Hope by Introducing Him/Her to Others Who Have Been Transformed (Romans 12:2): Share stories or testimonies of those who have been transformed by renewing their minds through faith in Christ. Encourage them to join a community or support group within the church where they can witness and experience this transformation.

Step 3: Identify Idols of the Heart

The Ruling Motives Behind the Actions that Are Not of God: Help the counselee understand that their actions may be driven by desires that have taken precedence over their relationship with God. Engage in thoughtful conversation and prayer to discern what these idols might be.

The Person May Not Be Able to See It Because of the Deceitfulness of the Heart (Jeremiah 17:9). Recognize that self-deception can make it challenging to identify these idols. Share Jeremiah 17:9, where the heart is more deceitful than anything else and incurable, to help them understand this challenge.

You Help Him Discover These Through His Words and Actions (Matthew 12:33-37). Listen attentively to the person's words and observe their actions to identify what might be taking precedence over God in their life. Share Matthew 12:33-37, where Jesus teaches that our words reveal our hearts to guide this discovery process.

Warn the Person About the Results of Such Idol Worship: Explain the severe consequences of allowing idols to rule the heart, including a strained relationship with God and potential harm to self and others. Offer biblical examples of those who faced adverse outcomes due to idolatry.

Help Them to See the Choice They Must Make (Hebrews 11:24-26): Assist the counselee in understanding the choice before them: to continue in idolatry or turn to God. Share Hebrews 11:24-26, which speaks of Moses choosing to suffer with God's people rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin, to illustrate the importance of making godly choices.

Step 4: They Must Understand Who God Is

Understanding God's Love and Forgiveness (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-10): Emphasize that God loves them and sent Jesus to provide forgiveness and eternal life. Share the amazing grace of God and His rich mercy to us.

Understanding God as the All-Powerful Changer of Lives (2 Corinthians 5:17): Share how Christ can make anyone a new creation, transforming their lives.

Understanding the Spiritual Battle (Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 6:10-14): Discuss the battle between the flesh and the Spirit and the need to put on the full armor of God.

Understanding the Need for God's Help (John 15:5; Philippians 4:13): Emphasize reliance on God and the fact that we can do nothing without Him, but through Him we can be content and endure in every circumstance (Philippians 4:11-13).

Understanding the Goal of Christlikeness (2 Corinthians 5:9): Set the aim of becoming more like Christ, living to please Him.

Understanding God's Holiness and Hating Sin: Teach about God's absolute holiness and abhorrence of sin. Reinforce understanding behavior as sin and the need to acknowledge, confess, and repent.

Understanding Repentance: Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change in the direction of a life.

Elements of Repentance: Comprehension: Understanding the sin. **Confession:** Acknowledging the sin and the hurt it caused. **Address all Involved:** This includes accepting the consequences

and avoiding excuses. **Ask for Forgiveness:** From God and those wronged (1 John 1:9; Luke 17:3-4). **Commitment to Alter Behavior:** Resolving to change by God's grace (Isaiah 1:16-17; Ephesians 4:22-24; Matthew 3:8).

Step 5: Restructure Their Lives

Understanding the Key to Overcoming Sin: Progressive Sanctification: Overcoming sin is a process of becoming more like Christ through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. It takes a lifetime, and it is never finished in one moment.

Ingesting Scripture (Colossians 3:16): Encourage the counselee to fill mind and heart with God's Word, since Colossians 3:16 tells us to let the word of Christ dwell richly among us. Share practical ways to study, meditate on, and apply Scripture daily.

Setting Goals for Reading God's Word and Spending Time in Prayer (Joshua 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17): Help them establish realistic and achievable goals for regular Bible reading and prayer. Point to Joshua 1:8, which speaks of meditating on God's Word day and night, and 1 Thessalonians 5:17, which encourages continual prayer, as guides for these practices.

Additional Tips for Restructuring Their Lives:

Accountability: Connect them with a mentor or accountability partner who can support and encourage them in these new habits.

Create a Plan: Help them develop a specific plan for daily devotion, including a Bible reading schedule, prayer journal, or other resources.

Encourage Involvement in Church Community: Encourage participation in church activities and small groups where they can grow with other believers.

Step 6: Structure Their Environment

Eliminate Negative Contributing Factors (Romans 13:14; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:8-9):

Eliminate Contributing Social Factors: Encourage the counselee to distance themselves from unhealthy relationships that may lead them into sin.

Eliminate Contributing Places: Guide them in avoiding places that may tempt or ensnare them.

Eliminate Contributing Visual Material: Assist in identifying and avoiding material that might provoke sinful thoughts or behaviors.

Eliminate Contributing Activities: Help them recognize and abstain from activities that might lead them away from godliness.

Eliminate an Undisciplined Mind: Teach the importance of taking control of thoughts and focusing on what is true and godly.

Increase or Add Positive Factors (Ephesians 4:23-24; Colossians 3:10; cf. Matthew 12:43-45 as illustration):

Replace with Growing Christian Friends: Encourage the formation of godly friendships that will support and edify them.

Replace with Involvement in a Bible-Believing Church: Guide them to a sound church community where they can grow in faith.

Replace with Christian Growth Essentials: Suggest resources and practices that advance spiritual growth, like Christian books, podcasts, or seminars.

Replace with New Activities: Help them find wholesome activities that align with their Christian values and interests.

Replace with a Disciplined Mind: Emphasize the cultivation of a mind focused on God's Word, prayer, and godly thoughts.

Step 7: Provide Accountability

Understand the Importance of Accountability (Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12): Proverbs 27:17 discusses how iron sharpens iron, emphasizing the need for strong, edifying relationships. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 speaks about the value of companionship and how two are better than one. This stresses the importance of having others to support and uplift you.

The Counselor's Role in Accountability: As the counselor, you have a unique role in holding the counselee accountable, monitoring their progress, and providing guidance and encouragement.

Involving Other Strong Christians: Encourage the inclusion of other mature Christians who can disciple and provide additional support. These individuals can offer wisdom, guidance, and encouragement, helping the counselee stay committed to their goals.

The Spouse as an Accountability Partner: If applicable, the counselee's spouse can be a natural and highly effective accountability partner. The closeness and trust inherent in a marital relationship make the spouse a valuable ally in this process.

Creating a Structure for Accountability

Regular Check-Ins: Schedule meetings to review progress, discuss challenges, and encourage continued growth.

Clear Expectations: Establish clear expectations and goals, ensuring everyone involved understands their role in the accountability process.

Encouragement and Correction: Encourage progress and lovingly correct when needed, always pointing back to Scripture and God's grace.

Step 8: Deal with Others They Have Affected

Understanding the Need for Reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24; James 5:16): Matthew 5:23-24 teaches that reconciliation with others is a priority, even before offering a gift at the altar. James 5:16 encourages confessing sins to one another and praying for one another, highlighting the importance of communal restoration.

Making Right What Has Been Done (Acts 26:20): Guide the counselee in identifying those they have affected and assist them in finding ways to make amends. This might involve confession, apology, restitution, or other actions.

Counseling Family and Friends on Forgiveness: Recognize that those affected might also need guidance and support in forgiveness. Offer to meet with them or provide resources to help them understand and practice biblical forgiveness.

Steps to Facilitate Reconciliation:

Assessment: Help the counselee evaluate who has been affected and how.

Planning: Assist in formulating a plan for approaching those affected, considering the unique dynamics of each relationship.

Support: Offer support, encouragement, and prayer as the counselee takes these often-challenging steps to reconciliation.

Follow-Up: Monitor the progress and provide ongoing counsel to ensure the reconciliation process continues.