



Secular vs. Biblical Counseling

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

Col. 2:8

I. There are many **contrasts** between the secular approach and the biblical approach to counseling.

A. Goals of the counselor and the counseling

Secular:

1. To function in society and to be able to provide for his own care
2. To find the resources within the client to meet his own perceived needs
3. To try to find acceptance, approval and love through people and circumstances
4. To build self-esteem
5. To reduce or eliminate emotional pain
6. To experience some degree of “recovery” from addictions, compulsions, besetting weaknesses
7. To be healed from emotional trauma
8. To draw “boundaries” to protect oneself from difficult people

Biblical:

1. To identify his sin and to repent from it ~ Healing, freedom and recovery are *results* of repentance. (John 8:31,32)
2. To move toward God’s standard of holiness and to be conformed to the image of Christ (Eph. 5:1) See *Pursuing Biblical Goals, CTO* for specifics.
3. To cast his dependency on God and His resources and thus, come to know Him more intimately
4. To view painful situations, ordained by a loving God, as opportunities to be refined and purified ~ Therefore,
 - a. they are not to be eliminated, unless the governing laws are violated.
 - b. they are to be faced and dealt with through God’s grace and resources, which may include admonishing and not enabling an offender.
5. To learn to love God and his fellowman according to biblical standards

“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

1 Tim. 1:5 NASB

B. Approaches used in counseling

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Secular:

1. The field of secular psychology is in disarray.
 - a. There are many schools of psychology.
 - b. Some methods are in total disagreement with others.
2. There is no central focus on absolute truth in the secular psychological approach.
 - a. Man develops and defines his own idea of “truth.”
 - b. “Truth” is not a pinpoint, but rather is defined as each man perceives it to be.
 - c. Every expert has his own value system.
 - d. There are few absolutes; values are relative, frequently changing and fluctuating, often in relation to society’s standards.
 - e. The labeling and confronting of sin is regarded as something to be avoided since to do so will diminish self-esteem.
3. There is no realization that emotional problems are, in reality, spiritual problems, caused by personal sin.

Biblical:

1. Biblical counseling is founded on the premise that emotional or psychological problems are usually spiritual problems.
2. Biblical counseling is founded on the following principles:
 - a. Man is totally depraved and cannot save himself.
 - b. Trust in Christ alone and His atoning work on the Cross is the only means of salvation and the only way to establish a relationship with God.
 - c. Agents of change in those who trust in Christ are the indwelling Holy Spirit and the Word of God.
 - d. Submission to Christ and His Word is the solution to man’s problems, which are caused by his sin.
3. Biblical counseling is based on the directions, promises and concepts of God, imparted through His Word, the Scriptures. (Ps. 119)
 - a. The Bible is the guidebook for how to develop a proper relationship with God and with others.
 - b. The Scriptures are designed by God *to bring change* in the believer. (Heb. 4:12)
 - c. The Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God. (2 Tim. 3:16,17)
 - 1) It is unchanging.
 - 2) It presents absolute standards that do not change and are not relative.
 - 3) It is truth.
 - 4) It is authoritative, telling every man what he is to do to rightly relate to God and to his fellow man.

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- 5) It is sufficient, providing **all** that is needed
 - a) to guide, correct, sustain, comfort and fulfill.
 - b) to reveal God, His wisdom and His power.
 - c) to assure God's care in our earthly existence and to promise His continuing care for eternity.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

2 Pet. 1:3,4

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

John 17:17

4. The purposes of Scripture are given in 2 Timothy 3:16,17.
 - a. *Teaching* . . . being informed of God's truths
 - b. *Rebuking* . . . being confronted with God's view of sin
 - c. *Correcting* . . . applying God's truths to particular problems or sin
 - d. *Training in righteousness* . . . practicing the application of God's commands and learning to rely upon His promises
 - e. *Equipping*...for every good work
5. Biblical counsel and advice can be confidently given because you are imparting truth based on:
 - a. God's commands for today
 - 1) They are designed to solve problems.
 - 2) They are designed to result in a godly, fulfilled life.
 - b. God's promises for the future
 - c. God's character as revealed in Scripture

C. Comparison of methods

Secular:

1. Secular psychology is based on man's ideas.
 - a. Uses a relative value system based on the values of the world, society, client and/or the psychologist
 - b. Has no recognition of, nor need to adhere to, God's absolute value system or morals, even if the counseling is directive in nature
2. The counselor often encourages the client to seek his own solutions.
3. The counselor's approach is often “non-directive.”

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Biblical:

1. Biblical counseling is based on God's ideas.
 - a. Is based on an absolute value system, the Scriptures
 - b. Does not vary or change as society's views change
2. Biblical counseling is highly directive.
 - a. Is very directive because God is directive in His Word
 - b. Is confrontive as Christ and the apostles were confrontive
3. Biblical counseling is radical because God's Word is radical.

D. Qualifications of the counselor

Secular:

1. Need to have a master's or doctorate's degree in psychology or a medical degree in psychiatry
2. Need for a clinical or professional relationship with the "client," who usually pays for his services
3. No need for the one giving advice to possess a godly character
4. No need for role-modeling of the counselor to the client
5. View of counseling as an occupation, job and profession
6. Takes personal credit for any positive change in client

Biblical:

1. No emphasis upon or requirement for higher education, in accordance with human standards
 - a. Godly wisdom is the primary qualification of the discipler.
 - b. Every growing believer is in a position to "come along side" a fellow believer who needs encouragement.

***"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called.
Not many of you were wise by human standards;
not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.
But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise;
God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.
He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things –
and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are,
so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you
are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God –
that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."***

1 Cor. 1:26-30

2. Reliance upon the Holy Spirit and a desire to impart God's truth found in the Scriptures, to facilitate change in another (John 17:17)

"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom,

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and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does.”

Jas. 1:25

3. Commitment to role-modeling the truths taught to another (Phil. 4:9; 1 Cor. 4:16)
4. Willingness to confront sin and give concrete steps, which are scriptural, to encourage change (Gal. 6:1)
5. Willingness to impart one's life and God's wisdom in the context of relationship (1 Thess. 2:8)
6. Reliance on the Holy Spirit's power
 - a. to guide and instruct the counselor
 - b. to convince and convict the disciple of life-changing truths and to empower change in him
7. View of counseling/discipling as a *ministry* to God, His Kingdom and His people
8. Gives God the credit and glory for any change in disciple (1 Cor. 3:6,7)

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.”

Acts 20:24

E. Context for counseling

Secular:

1. The primary context for counseling takes place in the professional office.
 - a. There is a “professional” - “client” relationship.
 - b. There is rarely a relationship outside of the office.
 - c. Fees for counseling services are charged.
2. This context provides the opportunity for psychological “therapy.”
3. The psychological context sometimes offers group therapy and self-help groups to provide an atmosphere for vulnerability and acceptance, which encourages the sharing of struggles, anger, fears and frustrations.
 - a. This is where accountability for change is *supposed* to take place.
 - b. The groups are often focused on understanding and empathizing with each other's problems rather than focused upon solutions to problems.
 - c. The atmosphere of sharing may promote “venting” and self-pity since an emphasis may be put on feelings.
 - d. The groups tend to foster dependent relationships upon “fellow strugglers” for support and guidance.
 - e. The goal is to strive for independence and autonomy, although sinful dependency upon the counselor or the support group is often unwittingly

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fostered.

4. The individual is usually responsible for and accountable to himself.

Biblical:

1. The primary context for counseling is the Christian community within the local church.
 - a. The elders/shepherds have the *ultimate* responsibility of caring for each individual. (Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-5)
 - b. Each member of the Christian community is to “bear one another’s burdens.” (Gal. 6:2)
 - c. Many emotional/spiritual problems should be resolved through the practice of the “one another” commands of Scripture.
 - d. There should be the ongoing “body life” dynamic in the church that promotes an ultimate dependency upon Christ and His Word.
2. This context provides the opportunity for intimate discipling relationships.
 - a. There is a “life to life” dynamic larger than the “50 minute session.”
 - b. There is opportunity for multiple relationships with godly, mature believers who offer biblical support, guidance and role-modeling.
 - c. The disciple should grow into a discipler of others, passing on the truths he has learned. (2 Tim. 2:1,2; Titus 2)
3. The church may offer small groups to provide opportunity for nurturing and accountability.
4. The individual is responsible and accountable to God, as well as to godly leadership, functioning biblically within the local church setting.
5. The goal is to strive for interdependence and mutual submission within the body of believers.

F. Views of God

Secular:

1. All major systems of psychology are explicitly or implicitly atheistic.
 - a. There is freedom to make “god” anything the client wants him to be, such as a higher power, one who will not judge him or one who loves and accepts everyone.
 - b. There may be New Age philosophies taught to the client. There may be reference to, “The god in all of us.”
2. God, as revealed in Scripture, has no role or influence in the methodology.
3. Secular methodologies do not teach that the true God reveals Himself to man and functions in human lives.

Biblical:

1. God ordains man’s life and all his circumstances. See *Who’s In Charge?*

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2. He not only creates each individual, but also is completely involved with him in an intimate personal way. (Ps. 139)
3. He has given man the Scriptures, to impart knowledge of Himself and His expectations of how man is to relate to Him.

G. Views of the natural man

Secular:

1. Freud and Skinner were very prominent in developing foundational concepts of psychology.
 - a. Man is an animal, a product of evolution.
 - 1) Freud's view: Man is driven and controlled by instincts.
 - 2) Skinner's view: Man is driven and controlled by conditioning of genetics and environment.
 - b. Man is not responsible or accountable.
 - 1) **No** concept of personal sin
 - 2) **No** absolutes
 - 3) **No** validity to guilt or conviction of sin
2. Carl Rogers and A. H. Maslow also have greatly impacted the field of psychology with their views.
 - a. Man is basically good.
 - 1) He is self-sufficient with no need for God.
 - 2) His answers to life's problems lie within himself (reflective therapy).
 - b. Man is autonomous because he is not accountable to God.
 - 1) There is no concept of sin in the methodology.
 - 2) There is no concept of God's judgment.

Biblical:

1. Man is created, individually and uniquely by God. (Ps. 139)
2. Man is born sinful and evil; totally depraved. (Rom. 3:10; Eph. 2:1)
 - a. Man is spiritually dead in his trespasses and sin. (Eph. 2:1)
 - b. Man has a heart that is desperately wicked. (Jer. 17:9)
3. Sin begins within a man. (Mark 7:15)
4. Man is responsible and accountable to God for his sin. (Matt. 12:36; Heb. 4:13; Lev. 5:17)
5. The answers to man's problems lie outside himself, in God and His Word.
6. The power to change is found in the indwelling Holy Spirit.

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H. Views of the Purpose of Man's Existence

Secular:

1. To worship and glorify himself; to esteem himself; to love himself
2. To become self-sufficient, dependent upon his own resources to live a "successful life," as defined by himself or society
3. To live for his temporal pleasure and fulfillment, seeing his earthly existence as an end in itself

Biblical:

1. To worship and glorify God in his attitudes, words and deeds and in all situations
2. To find his sufficiency in God and dependency upon Him
3. To live his life for an eternal purpose, focusing on knowing God and on serving His Kingdom
4. To view this life as fleeting and a time of preparation for eternity with his Savior

I. Views of man's responsibility

Secular

1. Most schools of psychology see man as autonomous, independent and accountable to himself.
 - a. Many schools encourage blameshifting.
 - b. Most encourage ignoring guilt and one's conscience.
 - c. Most encourage a great self-focus, promoted by:
 - 1) An emphasis on identifying and expressing feelings
 - 2) An ongoing evaluation of how everyone impacts his life because he "needs" approval and acceptance to be a "whole person"
 - 3) An ongoing evaluation of his ability to meet his own needs and to build his self-esteem
 - d. Many encourage setting "boundaries" to try to prevent people who hurt him from perpetrating further hurt.
2. Many schools of psychology label their clients as "patients."
3. The clients are often labeled "mentally ill" and/or having a "disorder."
 - a. The patient is taught that his "mental illness" is beyond his control, which leads to:
 - 1) Helplessness because the solution to his problem is beyond his control.
 - 2) Hopelessness because he must wait helplessly for his "cure."
 - 3) Irresponsibility because he depends on an "expert" to bring the solution to his problems rather than learning to solve his own problems biblically.

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- b. The “patient” is taught that the solution to his problem lies outside himself. Thus he is dependent upon drug therapy, shock treatment, recovery groups or treatment by qualified “experts” in the field of mental health for recovery and/or healing.

Biblical:

1. The Bible teaches that man is responsible and accountable to God. (Gen. 3:12-20; Heb. 4:13; Rom. 2:6; 14:11,12; Ecc. 12:14)
2. The Bible teaches obedience to God’s commands and reliance upon His promises will produce positive results. (John 8:31,32; 2 Pet. 1:4)
 - a. The disciple will learn to trust in and depend on the Lord.
 - b. He will come to know God intimately.
 - c. He will learn to forgive and to love others, even his enemies.
 - d. He will learn to accept responsibility for his own sin and to seek forgiveness of God and others.
 - e. The disciple’s life will be changed.
 - f. He will not continue to *create* problems caused by his repeated sin.
 - g. The fruit of the Spirit will be manifested in the person’s life. (Gal. 5:22,23)
3. The Bible teaches that the Christian is called to suffer. (Phil. 1:29)
4. Man is responsible for *accepting* God’s ordained will and plan for his life. Therefore, he is no longer a “victim” of those who sin against him and/or his difficult circumstances.
 - a. He chooses to accept that God has divine purpose in suffering.
 - b. He will work all things for his ultimate good. (Rom. 8:28)
 - c. The result will be a victorious Christian life in the midst of difficult, unchanged circumstances. (1 Cor. 10:13)

J. Causes of Problems

Secular:

1. Society or environment
2. Parents or other offenders who have “victimized” the client
3. Conscience, which is overly strict which produces guilt or shame
4. View of oneself as “bad” or unworthy, having low self-esteem
5. Inability to identify and verbalize how he is feeling
6. Painful past or present circumstances
7. Lack of acceptance, love, affirmation, respect and encouragement of key people

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Biblical:

1. Not understanding the character of God and how to rightly relate to Him
2. Not understanding who he is before a holy God; his sinfulness and depravity
3. Not seeing his need for a Savior and finding sufficiency in Him
4. Not living by biblical principles
5. Not understanding that all will suffer in this fallen world
6. Not understanding that his suffering circumstances are linked to God's good purposes for him (Rom. 8:28,29)
7. Responding to difficult people and circumstances in sinful ways; rejecting God's sovereign plan - See *Four Approaches to a Problem* diagram, CTO.

K. Views of "Needs"

Secular:

1. Alfred Adler first theorized that man had a hierarchy of needs.
2. Abraham Maslow expanded this theory and convinced our modern society that it is true. Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes these levels:
 - a. Level 1: Physiological Needs (food, clothing, shelter)
 - b. Level 2: Safety and Security Needs
 - c. Level 3: Love and Belonging Needs
 - d. Level 4: Self-Esteem Needs
 - e. Level 5: Self-Actualization Needs
3. Man's "needs" *must be met* at lower levels before he is capable of performing at the higher levels.
4. Maslow's "needs" list has been expanded upon by other psychologists over the years to also include needs for sex, respect, affirmation, spousal needs, etc., etc.!
5. Man must be dependent upon others to meet these needs.
6. Unmet needs place a person in the position of having no means by which he can mature or find fulfillment, except to try to find those resources within himself or demand it from others.

Belief in this theory leads to the conclusion that *"...to love God and to love other people (the sum of the commandments and for that matter, the entire Scriptures) is not possible for a person until all his other needs have been met. Reaching out to other persons is a self-actualization activity that depends upon the fulfillment of needs at all lower levels.*

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But nowhere in the entire Bible is any such idea suggested, let alone set forth as a principle for life. We simply do not find any statements in either the Old or New Testaments even hinting that Christians must have other people meet their basic needs in order to make it possible for them to obey God's commandments."

The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love and Self-Image
Jay E. Adams

Biblical:

1. The Bible mentions physical needs but no emotional needs. Most concepts that have been labeled as "needs" by psychologists are actually desires. (See *Letting Christ Satisfy and Fulfill You, CTO* for an expansion on the topic of "needs.")
2. Jesus' commands require the highest levels of obedience, the *byproduct* of which is His provision of food and clothing.

***"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?'
or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'
For the pagans run after all these things,
and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.
But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well."
Matt. 6:31-33***

- a. Jesus' view is that these physical needs are not to be our focus, our concern or satisfaction, because the Christian is to pursue a much higher calling – loving God and loving others.
- b. No command in Scripture is contingent upon how perceived "needs" are or are not being met.
3. Jesus clearly does not view man as having "Self-Esteem Needs" when he commands His disciples to love God and to love their neighbor *as* they love themselves. (Matt. 22:37-40)
 - a. He *assumes* we already love ourselves.
 - b. Man's problem is he loves himself *too* much. He is self-centered, self-protective, and puts self before God and others.
4. Jesus did not consider "Love and Belonging Needs" when His followers are warned that the Christian will be
 - a. aliens and strangers in this world. (1 Pet. 2:11)
 - b. hated by the world, as He was hated. (John 15:18,19)
 - c. persecuted and rejected. (Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:20-21)
 - d. called to forsake all perceived rights.
5. God doesn't mention the needs that Maslow considers *necessary* for a blessed, mature and contented life. Consider the turbulent life of the Apostle Paul.

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- a. Maslow's hierarchy of needs were sadly lacking in Paul's life, yet he was one of the most godly, mature men that ever lived.
- b. Paul lacked self-esteem and realized he had no inner resources to meet his life's relentless demands.
 - 1) He considered himself "worst" among sinners. (1 Tim. 1:15)
 - 2) He realized he was weak and inadequate. (1 Cor. 2:3; 4:10; 2 Cor. 3:5)
 - 3) He realized that all that he had formerly relied on to esteem himself was to be considered rubbish and loss. (Phil. 3:1-9)
- c. He often lacked even basics – food, sleep, protection, as well as being rejected and persecuted. (See *Persevering in Tribulation, God's Call to Brokenness* for a further explanation of Paul's life and trials.)

"Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything."

2 Cor. 6:4-10

- d. Paul found freedom in relinquishing his right to himself.
 - e. Paul experienced the abundant life because he was anchored into Christ's life and drew from His endless bounty and resources.
 - f. He had the high and holy privilege of intimately *knowing* the Living God.
6. Jesus said to Martha, "***...you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.***" (Luke 10:41,42)
- a. He was saying the *primary need* is to learn from Him and be devoted to Him, as Mary was.
 - b. He teaches that earthly needs for sustenance will pass, but the need for Christ is eternal.
 - c. He asks that the believers invest their lives in what cannot be taken from them.
 - d. He teaches that the Christian's earthly existence is to be focused on eternal realities.

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L. Means to Change

Secular:

1. To learn to rely upon himself and, if possible, his circumstances and others for strength
2. To build his self-trust, self-confidence, self-esteem and self-love
3. To ignore his sin and depravity; to eliminate his guilt
4. To learn to identify his feelings and express them
5. To eliminate *causes* for emotional pain as much as possible by drawing “boundaries” on difficult people or by eliminating difficult relationships

Biblical:

1. To turn to God in confession, brokenness and repentance
2. To depend on the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit
3. To be transformed through the power of the Word of God
4. To rely upon God’s spiritual resources and dependency on Him
5. To accept God’s sovereign control over all suffering
6. To learn to forgive and love his enemies (Luke 6:27-38)

M. Views of guilt and how to handle it

Secular:

1. There is no recognition of Christ’s death on the cross and God’s forgiveness to take away the guilt of sin. (Ps. 32:5)
2. Guilt is believed to be environmentally-induced by overly strict parents, strong religious influences, etc., or self-induced by too strict a conscience.
 - a. There is no correlation between guilt and the violation of God’s law.
 - b. There is no recognition that the violation of God’s value system should cause guilt.
3. Guilt is viewed as a root problem, which causes other problems, such as depression or low self-esteem.
 - a. Therefore, it needs to be eliminated.
 - b. Then, the problems manifested by the guilt can be eliminated.
4. The therapist attempts to eliminate the client’s guilt through the realization that it is not important or it is not valid. They do not understand the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as the primary means for dealing effectively with guilt.
5. The following are commonly used methods to eliminate guilt in the client:
 - a. The client is told, “You are not responsible,” by the therapist.
 - 1) Often encouraged to blame others or his circumstances for his problems
 - 2) Often encouraged to view himself as a “victim”

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- b. The therapist encourages the client to alter his existing value system to accommodate his transgressions, so guilt will no longer be experienced.
Examples:
- 1) Homosexuality is not sin; it's an "alternative lifestyle."
 - 2) Killing an unborn baby is not sin; it is the "right" of the mother to have control over her own body.
 - 3) Living out of wedlock is not sin; it is a responsible way to prepare for marriage.
 - 4) Divorce is the valid means of extracting oneself from painful circumstances, which should not be endured since elimination of pain is a primary goal.
- c. The client is taught that, in some cases, his sin is a *disease* which is beyond his control.
- 1) Bitterness, guilt, fears, selfishness, etc. that lead to deep emotional problems may be labeled "mental illness," a disease.
 - 2) Frequent drunkenness is labeled "alcoholism," a disease.
 - 3) Compulsive gambling is labeled a disease.
 - 4) Drug addiction is labeled a disease.
 - 5) Phobias (controlling fears) are labeled as a form of mental illness.
 - 6) Codependency (a sinful desire to control or to be controlled by another) is labeled a disease.
- d. The client is also taught that his *sins* are addictions, weaknesses, compulsions, disorders, obsessions, flaws or mistakes in order to alleviate guilt.
- 1) Euphemisms are used to reduce guilt.
 - 2) Euphemisms are used to relieve conviction and eliminate responsibility for viewing sin, as God views it, a very serious matter!
- "To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance,
evil behavior and perverse speech."***
- Prov. 8:13**
- e. Most schools of psychology promote self-esteem in a client to mask guilt. The humanistic belief system includes the following, in regard to self-esteem:
- 1) "Bad feelings" about oneself create guilt and low self-esteem.
 - 2) "Bad feelings" about oneself are considered detrimental to emotional stability, even though they are often an accurate evaluation.
 - 3) "Bad feelings" must be eliminated by trying to put on positive attitudes about oneself.
 - 4) "Good feelings" and attitudes about oneself are promoted to eliminate negative attitudes, pain and guilt.

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- 5) “Good feelings” about oneself, regardless of the depth of sin they mask, are supposed to release the person to handle whatever difficulties or losses he may experience.
- 6) “Good feelings” about oneself are a *need* that must be met to become mature and to be able to reach out to others.

“Blessed is the man...in whose spirit is no deceit.”

Ps. 32:2

- f. The client is encouraged to “forgive himself” for whatever is making him feel guilty.
 - 1) This method teaches that he has the power and the ability to forgive himself, usurping God’s role and eliminating his need for Christ and the cross.
 - 2) This methodology completely excludes man’s need for salvation and his ongoing need to confess his sin to God and to receive His forgiveness. (Ps. 32:1-5; 1 John 1:9)
 - 3) There is no realization that forgiving oneself is not a biblical principle; there is no mention of it in Scripture. Unfortunately, some Christian counseling methodologies are embracing this unbiblical concept and are spreading their influence to believers.
 - a) This is a concept created by modern psychology as a means to deal with legitimate guilt for which they see no solution.
 - b) It is a man-centered concept and eliminates the Christ-centered solution.
- g. The psychiatrist often resorts to prescribing mind-altering drugs
 - 1) to try to eliminate depression and/or other deviant behaviors which may be manifestations of guilt.
 - 2) to try to alleviate guilt, fear and bitterness, which cause depression.
 - 3) to try to *mask* or cover the sin, which causes the depressed state.

***“He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper,
but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.”***
Prov. 28:13 NASB
- h. The therapist may use shock therapy
 - 1) to obliterate the memory, including guilt and bitterness.
 - 2) to obliterate the work of the conscience until the memory returns and shock therapy is required again.

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Biblical:

1. Guilt is God-induced.
 - a. The conscience in the unbeliever is given by God. (Rom. 1:18,19; 2:15)
 - b. The conviction of the Holy Spirit is given to the believer. (John 16:7,8)

***“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight.
Everything is uncovered and laid bare before
the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”***

Heb. 4:13

2. Guilt, in most instances, is not a problem, but a *warning signal* from God that we have transgressed His Holy Law. Guilty feelings are usually an accurate assessment, which reveal who man really is and point him to his initial and ongoing need for a Savior and repentance.
 - a. God uses guilt as a means to bring the unbeliever to salvation through repentance. (2 Cor. 7:10)
 - b. God uses guilt as a tool for spiritual growth in the believer’s life to bring him to confession and repentance. (Ps. 32:1-5)
3. Guilt is to be handled in accordance with God’s Word by the biblical counselor.
 - a. Not ignoring the disciple’s sin
 - b. Helping the disciple to comprehend the depth of his sin more fully, including his sinful attitudes, thoughts and motivations.
 - c. Teaching about the work of the Cross and God’s forgiveness to the disciple
 - d. Encouraging ongoing confession and repentance in the disciple (Ps. 51)
 - e. Encouraging the disciple to seek forgiveness of those whom he offended

***“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in
whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was
heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.
Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’— and you forgave
the guilt of my sin.”***

Ps. 32:1-5

***“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-
edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and
marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”***

Heb. 4:12

SECULAR VS. BIBLICAL COUNSELING

- II. Both secular and biblical approaches agree that physical conditions or problems can affect behavior and thinking.
- A. If the following are problems, they may affect the disciple's emotional state:
1. Brain damage from birth, accident, stroke or brain tumor
 2. Chemical imbalances
 3. Nutritional imbalances in diet, such as vitamin and mineral deficiencies
 4. Hormonal imbalances due to pregnancy, menopause, premenstrual syndrome
 5. Disorders such as fetal alcohol or drug syndrome, attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity
 6. Dysfunction of thyroid and other glands
- B. If a physical problem is eliminated, then, according to the biblical approach, emotional problems can be attributed to:
1. Sinful attitudes, responses and behaviors
 2. Guilt
 3. Demonic influences, which can afflict the believer (Eph. 6:11,12)
- C. In most cases, except for brain tumors and damage, *sin plays a large part* in the person's problem, regardless of the imbalances or disorders.
1. Sin may even *cause* the imbalances.
 2. The individual is still held responsible by God to obey regardless of his physical difficulties.
- III. There are many Christian counselors who are using *secular approaches* to their counseling.

“Some have...turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.”

1 Tim. 1:6,7

- A. Uninformed Christians wrongly believe they are receiving true biblical counseling.
1. There may be a few scriptures and biblical principles mentioned, but the basic thrust of the counseling remains secular and humanistic.
 - a. The so-called Christian counselor
 - 1) sees little correlation between emotional problems and the violation of God's law.
 - 2) doesn't fully realize that psychological and emotional problems *are* spiritual problems, and Christ and His Word are the *only* solutions.
 - b. The so-called Christian counselor doesn't implicitly trust the Bible to be the all-sufficient source for solving man's problems.
 2. The methods usually attempt to deal with *symptoms* rather than the root problems.
 - a. Therefore, little significant progress is made.

SECULAR VS. BIBLICAL COUNSELING

- b. Therefore, the counselee does not repent and is not truly set free emotionally and spiritually.
3. The depth of sin is often minimized, ignored or not addressed.
4. There are usually few concrete ways to help the disciple turn away from sinful habit patterns and to replace them with righteous ones.
5. The truth may be taught, such as his identity in Christ, as a means to help him feel better about himself, while ignoring
 - a. the depth of his sin, which, in turn, leaves him with little comprehension of the magnitude of God's grace.
 - b. his need for confession and repentance.
 - c. the basic fact that he *deserves* to burn in hell.
 - d. the fact that he won't *experience* his identity in Christ when his life is characterized by rebellion against God's commands.
- B. The radical nature of God's Word is "watered down" and therefore, the changes in the believer may be none or minimal.
- C. These methods, while perhaps well-meaning, often cause the disciple to lose hope in God and His Word.
 1. The believer, who is seeking help, usually does not realize he has not received true biblical methods for solving problems.
 2. He may believe that God and His way have failed. Hope is lost.
 3. He may become angry with God since he sees no results.
- IV. *Any person claiming to be a Christian or a biblical counselor and discipler has an enormous responsibility to be faithful in imparting God's Word to his disciple.*

"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."

Jas. 3:1

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene."

2 Tim. 2:15-17a

SECULAR VS. BIBLICAL COUNSELING

SECULAR VS. BIBLICAL COUNSELING

CONTRASTS	SECULAR	BIBLICAL
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To esteem self; to “feel good ” -To eliminate pain, guilt -To be healed; recover -To become self-sufficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To worship God; glorify Him -To repent of sinful attitudes/behaviors -To become Christ-dependent -To love God and others
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Many “schools” of psychology with no consensus -No central focus--No absolutes -No acknowledgment of emotional problems caused by personal sin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Based on the direction, promises and concepts of God found in the Bible -Values based upon what God values -Emotional problems are really spiritual problems
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Client is to seek his own solution within himself and his abilities -Based on Man’s ideas - relative value system -Often “non-directive” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Solutions are in the resources found in a relationship with Christ -Based on God’s ideas - absolute value system -Very directive, often confrontive
Qualifications of the Counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Professional degrees in psychology or psychiatry required -Understanding of psychological principles -Clinical/professional relationship with “client” -Character of counselor is not important -No role-modeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evidence of godly wisdom / godly lifestyle -Understanding of God’s truth -Life to life discipling relationship with “brother/sister” in Christ -Character is crucial -Role-modeling necessary
Context for Counseling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Professional office -Professional - client relationship -Practice of psychological “therapy” -No relationship outside of the office -One-on-one isolated relationship -Group therapy or self-oriented support groups -Strive for independence and autonomy -Responsible/accountable to self -Client views counselor as “expert” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Primary context - Local Church -Intimate discipling relationship -Practice of the “one another” commands - Ongoing “body life” dynamic of the church -Multiple relationships with godly, mature believers -Nurturing/accountable small group relationships -Strive for interdependence and mutual submission -Responsible/accountable to godly leadership in the context of the Christian community
View of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -View of God irrelevant -Atheistic or however you define Him -Impersonal and uninvolved -New Age - “god in all of us” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creator and sustainer of life as revealed in the Bible -God ordains man’s life and all his circumstances -Involved in a very personal way

SECULAR VS. BIBLICAL COUNSELING

CONTRASTS	SECULAR	BIBLICAL
View of Man	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No personal sin--basically good -Man is an animal; a product of evolution -Controlled by instincts or environment -Not responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Totally depraved, sinful and evil -Man is created individually/uniquely by God -Controlled by sin
Man's Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To glorify himself -To become self-sufficient -To live for temporal pleasure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To glorify God -To find his sufficiency in God and dependency upon Him -To live for eternal, Kingdom purpose
Man's Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No personal responsibility/accountability -Autonomous - no concept of God's judgment -It is not man's fault - he is a victim -Encourages blame-shifting -Self-centeredness encouraged in forms of "venting," anger, boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Man is responsible/accountable to God -Dependent - answer to man's problem is outside of himself - in God and His Word -Obedience to God and reliance upon Him produces positive results -Freedom comes through confession, repentance and forgiving others
Causes of Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Problems are defined as "disease" or "addiction," "disorder" -Parents/others who have victimized -Guilt or shame -Poor self-image -Disadvantaged circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Problems are caused by personal sin & the reality of living in a fallen world -Not understanding the character of God -Not repenting of personal sin -Not seeing one's need of Christ -Not living by biblical principles
View of Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Greatest need = to love self -Hierarchy of needs must be met -Self-esteem needs must be met -Self-fulfillment is a legitimate need -"Needs" are met through people and circumstances -Almost any desire can be classified as a "need" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Greatest need = to love God -Very few legitimate "needs" -Godliness and maturity possible without "perceived needs" met -No "self-esteem" need -Physical needs of food and clothing provided by God in response to obedience
View of Guilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Environmentally or self-induced -Sin rationalized-values changed to accommodate sin -Result of mental "illness" or disease -Root problem that must be eliminated -Minimized or invalidated -Euphemisms used to soften sin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Guilt is God-induced -Result of sin -Guilt is warning that one has transgressed God's law. -Guilt is resolved through facing one's sin and experiencing the provision of the Cross of Christ.
Means to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Turn to self to build reliance, confidence -Build self-acceptance/self-love -Find freedom from moral restraint -Learn to ignore/deny sin -Use of mind-altering drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Turn to God in confession, brokenness and repentance -Depend on the power of the Holy Spirit -Rely on God's spiritual resources



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Secular psychology based on humanistic presuppositions has greatly influenced many counseling approaches today. This study is designed to help you see the contrast between the foundational principles of each and the implications to your approach to counseling.

SECTION ONE: FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

1. What are some of the foundational beliefs that distinguish the secular from the Biblical approach?
2. How does one's view of the nature of man affect his approach to counseling?
3. What are some evidences of secular thinking that have crept into the church and "Christian" counseling?
4. Why has this become so pervasive?
5. Do you believe these secular views have had a negative impact on the church? Explain your answer.
6. Why is the questioning of the psychological approach so threatening to many?

SECTION TWO: THE CONTEXT FOR COUNSELING

1. Describe the type of person to whom you would go for counsel?
2. If asked what your qualifications are to counsel, what would you say?
3. How would you describe the Body of Christ as the context for healing?
4. What are some of the things necessary for the body to function in this manner?
5. Should you ever refer your disciple to a “professional”? To whom would you refer and under what circumstances?