

A Missing — & Essential — Doctrine in the Modern Church

The Sufficiency of the Bible

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The Word of God makes the man of God adequate — thoroughly equipped — for every good work (2 Tim 3.17). The Bible makes the radical yet undeniably accurate claim that it sanctifies the man of God. Man does not *need* anything in addition to Scripture. The Bible is perfect (Ps 19.7) and the great and precious promises given by God (2 Pet 1.4) are able to become partakers of the divine nature. The doctrine that must thunder out from every pulpit is the sufficiency of the Word of God. The truth that must resonate in every discipling relationship is the sufficiency of the Word of God. The essential ingredient that must gloriously grant hope to every biblical counseling meeting is the sufficiency of the Word of God. The sufficiency of the Word of God affirms that the Bible, *and it alone*, is enough both to save the sinner *and* to sanctify the man of God so as to grow him in Christlikeness.

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

1. The Bible is perfect

The Law of the Lord is perfect converting (or, restoring) the soul (Ps 19.7).
When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God (Ex 31.18).

2. The Bible is inspired

All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped (2 Tim 3.16-17).

3. The Bible is understandable

A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2.14-16).

4. The Bible is sufficient

The promises from God's Word are able to make the man of God wise unto salvation (2 Tim 3.15).
"The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have in common with grain?" declares the LORD. "Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock? (Jer 23.28-29).
God's divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence (2 Pet 1.3).

NECESSARY INFERENCES

Answer's to life's questions must begin with a thorough searching of the Bible. The Bible is God's book that not only a man reads, but the Bible reads the man. All of life's questions that relate to salvation, sanctification, and godly living have adequate and sufficient answers in the text of Scripture. God has left

nothing out. His Word lacks nothing. It does not claim to be exhaustive on every possible topic; rather, it claims to be the clear, true, reliable, and divine Word from God as to how sinful man can be reconciled to holy God.

Only a true Christian — who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him — can understand the Word, diligently apply the Word, faithfully pray for change, and perseveringly implement Scriptural principles. No nonbeliever can rightly understand or apply the Word of God. They live in the darkness. Their minds are corrupted and they cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God. When a sinner repents, believes in Christ, and has the permanent Spirit of God dwelling within him, he can then — because he is a new creation — rightly understand and apply God's Word.

Counseling life's issues should be in the context of the local church. The Bible never gives the hint that counseling matters should be reserved for the 'professionals.' The opposite occurs over and over in the Scriptures. All believers are 'able to counsel one another' (Rom 15.14). All God's people can carry each other's burdens (Gal 6.1-2). Believers must admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and be patient with everyone (1 Thess 5.14). A believer who has the Word of God dwelling within him must — and he *can* — teach and admonish other believers (Col 3.16). Thus, biblical counseling best happens in the context of a local church when believers commit to an ongoing discipling relationship where the Word of God holds the authority, emulation to Jesus Christ is sought after, the power of the Holy Spirit exists as the divine enabler, and prayerful perseverance permeates the entire counseling environment. No pastor, then, should ever refer true believers to outside psychologists, counselors, or therapists for treatment. The Word of God must reign preeminently in the local church *and* in every Christian relationship as believers relate "one with another."

Use biblical terminology for modern day "disorders" and "problems". To use modern labels such as a disorder, a disease, a mental illness, or any other of the innumerable titles in the DSM (*diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*) may cause one to think that the Bible can't treat a certain "disease" or "disorder" because that particular "disorder" cannot be found in the Bible. But to use biblical terminology is the first step to a glorious solution! When sin is called for what it is — sin! — then the help from the Word can give a *sufficient solution* by looking to Christ & His gospel, through the power of the indwelling Spirit, with fervent commitment to prayer and endurance. Again, when biblical labels and terms are used, then the Bible can diagnose, help, and provide guidance for overcoming any sin. Even though physiological factors may exist and can still be treated with the Word of God and medical assistance to treat the physiological infirmity, psychological or mental diseases (as they are often called) can be and must be treated with the power of the Word, the gospel, the Spirit, and prayer.

Psychotropic drugs often cover an internal wound with a bandaid. Someone claims to have trouble focusing, or worrying, or stressing and he thus goes to a clinically trained medical professional, he may find himself visiting a psychotherapist for behavioral therapy, medication, or other lifestyle changes (depending on the situation). A drug cannot get to the root of the issue — it just can't. If it is a real issue of the 'psyche' (lit. 'soul'), then no physical remedy can provide an adequate and sufficient solution. To treat anxiety, worry, mood-swings, anger, lack of self-control with medication is like putting a bandaid on cancer. It will not get under the surface to solve the real (=heart) problem. Only the Word of God applied to the heart of God's child with prayer, patience, and perseverance can solve the real soul-problem. The sin must be called *sin*, repented of, put off, and godly replacements must be put in order so as to ensure new habits

are formed. This only happens when a regenerated child of God takes the powerful Word of God and commits himself to diligently, patiently, and obediently following God's orders.

Discipleship in the context of the local church between Spirit-indwelt believers is essential. Commands in the NT abound for the believing community to live in frequent relationships of fellowship, discipleship, and encouragement so as to stimulate one another to love and good deeds (Heb 10.24). Paul longs for the local churches to have unity of mind (Rom 15.5) as the Word of God guides and leads the believers in the community (Rom 15.1-4). The local church community must bear one another's burdens (Gal 6.1). And all believers can do this (Gal 6.1-2). A glorious and divinely-given purpose of the local church is to stimulate conformity to Christ so that each person can grow in the knowledge of Him (Eph 3.19; Col 1.9) so that every single person will become complete in Christ (Col 1.28). This happens in the local-church context when believers admonish each other according to God's power which mightily works in each believer (Col 1.29; Eph 1.19).

The first person to go to is not the professionally licensed psychologists (or even, sadly in many cases, the so-called Christian counselors) but rather the Spirit-indwelt man of God who knows the Word of God and can apply it to specific problems, sins, situations in a believer's life. A pastor can offer biblical counsel. An elder must be able to teach and instruct from the Word of God. But Christians must also recognize that they *can* go to other believers who are walking in holiness, who know the Word of God, and who are willing to walk the Christian journey together with other like-minded believers. The goal of the secular psychiatrist, therapist, or psychologist is behavioral treatment. The goal of the Christian, however, is to bring about spiritual change, beginning with the heart as understands the truth of Scripture so as to produce heart and mind-transformation to bring glory to God, to be pleasing to Him, and also to produce a change in behavior. The goal of biblical counseling is to apply the Word of God to the Christian's heart and life so as to result in Christlikeness and the greater glory of God.

CONCLUDING AFFIRMATION

To really study psychology (lit. *the study of the soul*) requires one to hear what God says in His sufficient and clear Word. The only way that soul change can happen is when God's grace invades a sinner's life so as to show him the grave reality of his sin, the guilty standing he has before God's holy righteousness, and to glow the righteousness of Christ that is available to the penitent sinner who believes in Christ alone and His substitutionary work on the cross as He became the wrath-bearing sacrifice for His people. When a sinner repents, believes, and is genuinely converted, he has the permanent and powerful dwelling of God the Holy Spirit within him so as to enable him to live a life honoring to God. The believer *can* obey God. The believer *can* fulfill Scriptural commands. The goal of biblical counseling is for the sinner to please Christ and to increasingly become more the man that God desires him to be. When the sufficient Word of God confronts the child of God with the reality of his sin, the forgiveness available in Christ, the opportunity to change, and the Spirit-transforming power available in humbly submitting to God's truth, God is magnified. And *this* is the goal of biblical counseling.