

# **Presuppositions of Biblical Counselors**

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## **Abstract**

From its inception, the modern biblical counseling movement has been rooted in the presuppositional apologetics of Cornelius Van Til and John Frame. The presupposition that the Bible is absolutely authoritative and sufficient leads to certain conclusions regarding who we are, what our purpose is, what is wrong with us, and how God can make us what we are meant to be. While we see a role for knowledge outside of the Bible, such knowledge is secondary in value and subject to the authority of Scripture. This is in contrast to those who rely on secular psychology or who believe that it is essential to integrate techniques used in secular psychology with biblical principles.

## **Keywords**

*Biblical counseling, presuppositionalism, sufficiency of Scripture, Jay Adams, Cornelius Van Til, John Frame, integration, authority, anthropology*

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## Introduction

**E**veryone operates from presuppositions, which are ultimate assumptions or beliefs.<sup>1</sup> A person's presuppositional starting place will determine how they answer the important questions addressed by psychologists and other counselors:

*Anthropology.* Who are we as human beings?

*Aim.* What is our purpose?

*Ailment.* What is wrong with us?

*Answer (or Antidote).* How can we best be helped?

*Authority.* What will guide our conclusions about the above questions?

John Frame writes, "For a Christian, the content of Scripture must serve as his ultimate presupposition."<sup>2</sup> A person who places ultimate faith in human science, human reason, or human experience will reach very different conclusions compared to the person who regards the Bible as their ultimate authority.

Jay Adams's landmark book *Competent to Counsel*<sup>3</sup> launched the modern biblical counseling movement over fifty years ago. In this book Adams explicitly builds his approach to counseling on the foundation of the presuppositionalism of Cornelius Van Til (who was his colleague at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia). In his introduction, Adams affirms Van Til's view that "all non-Christian systems demand autonomy for man, thereby seeking to dethrone God."<sup>4</sup> He continues,

The conclusions in this book are not based upon scientific findings. My method is presuppositional. I avowedly accept the inerrant Bible as the Standard of all faith and practices. The Scriptures, therefore, are the basis, and contain the criteria by which I have sought to make every judgment.<sup>5</sup>

In his conclusion Adams affirms Van Til's famous statement that "there is no such thing as brute uninterpreted fact."<sup>6</sup> There is no neutrality when it comes to truth claims. Scientists, including psychologists and psychiatrists,

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<sup>1</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., xxi.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 269.

have presuppositions that influence their interpretations of data and conclusions.

Adams adds an important caveat that while Scripture is without error our interpretations of Scripture can be mistaken. “I am aware that my interpretations and applications of Scripture are not infallible.”<sup>7</sup> He also acknowledges that the findings of science may drive the biblical counselor back to Scripture to reexamine whether his interpretation is accurate. We must remain humble and open to the possibility that our interpretation of God’s word needs to be corrected or refined. When discussing biblical counseling, it is important to distinguish between the statements of counselors and teachers who aspire to be biblical and Scripture itself. Biblical counselors may err in their interpretation and application of God’s word.

Those of us who aspire to be biblical counselors start from the presupposition that the Bible is what it claims to be, that the Bible accurately explains what it claims to explain about human nature, and that it does what it claims to do to transform lives. While we acknowledge that we can learn from sources outside of Scripture, their findings are subordinate to the authority of Scripture because we recognize that a worldview that is not in submission to the Lord will produce faulty conclusions.

### ***1. Authority: The Bible Is What It Claims to Be***

The Bible is what it claims to be in many ways and for many reasons.

*Scripture is divinely inspired.* “All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Tim 3:16a). The sixty-six books of Scripture are unlike any other human writing. God guided the human authors through their own personalities and gifts to write down the exact words he intended to reveal to humanity. “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21).

*The Bible is inerrant and infallible.*<sup>8</sup> Because God himself is the ultimate author of Scripture, we can trust not merely the big ideas but every word (Matt 4:4; 5:18). God’s character is true; thus, he cannot lie in the words he has revealed (Titus 1:2). “Let God be true though every one were a liar” (Rom 3:4a).

*Scripture is timeless.* Human science, including psychology and psychiatry, changes from generation to generation. Much of the “settled science” of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., xxi.

<sup>8</sup> The Bible is infallible in the original manuscripts, which have been remarkably preserved by God’s providence through the copies preserved throughout history.

psychology from fifty years ago has been discredited in both theory and practice. For example, homosexuality was considered a mental disorder prior to 1973. Now, a psychologist can lose his license if he attempts to change a client's homosexual orientation. In contrast, God's word reflects his eternal immutable character in that it is perfectly true and unchanging for every age: "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isa 40:8; see also Pss 19:9 and 119:160).

*Scripture is authoritative.* When God speaks, all people must listen and submit: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you [Moses] from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to him all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him" (Deut 18:18–19). God's word must be believed and obeyed. Refusal to submit to what Scripture teaches is intellectual and moral rebellion against God: "As it is said, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion'" (Heb 3:15).

*The Bible is self-authenticating.* There is no higher standard of truth above the Bible by which it can be proven or disproven. It is the standard by which all other truth claims are judged. The Holy Spirit makes the perfection and beauty of Scripture plain to God's people. God's word cannot be appreciated or properly understood by those who approach it in unbelief (1 Cor 2:14).

*Scripture is sufficient.* God's word contains all the wisdom we need to live well, that is, according to God's purpose. Scripture is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16b–17). While the Bible does not give us exhaustive information, it gives us sufficient and comprehensive wisdom to guide us in all things. As theologian John Murray writes, "There is no situation in which we are placed, no demand that arises for which Scripture as the deposit of the manifold wisdom of God is not adequate and sufficient."<sup>9</sup> Frame adds, "Scripture contains all the divine words necessary for any aspect of human life."<sup>10</sup> Our belief in the sufficiency of Scripture distinguishes biblical counselors from Christian counselors who might believe in the inspiration of the Bible but also believe that the Bible is limited in its usefulness and thus that other sources of knowledge are authoritative and necessary if they are to faithfully help God's people with problems of the soul.

<sup>9</sup> John Murray, "Holy Scripture," in *Life; Sermons; Reviews*, vol. 3 of *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 261.

<sup>10</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 220.

## **II. *The Bible Accurately and Authoritatively Explains What It Claims to Explain***

Scripture focuses on the vertical—everything about humanity is correctly understood in relationship to God. This contrasts with the view of secular psychologists, which merely focuses on the personal and the horizontal. Their distorted view of who we are, what our purpose is, and what is wrong with us leads to wrong psychological interpretations and solutions.

*Anthropology: Scripture reveals who we are.* It is impossible to understand human nature apart from understanding ourselves in relation to God. We have been created by God in his image (Gen 1:27a). This teaching implies that one must know God before one can accurately know oneself. We are not merely highly evolved animals. God has created us as male and female (Gen 1:27b), which has important contemporary implications, as the Bible teaches that God defines and regulates gender and marriage (Gen 2:18–25; Matt 19:4–5). We do not autonomously create our own identities. The Bible also teaches that we are duplex beings. Human nature consists of both body and soul. This contrasts with those who claim that we are merely physical beings. For example, Joseph Henrich writes, “The best available science says that our minds are produced entirely by our bodies and brains so they can’t have an independent existence.”<sup>11</sup> The apostle Paul confirms that we have both a physical body and an immaterial soul: “We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8; see also Phil 1:21–23 and Rev 6:10). Our thoughts and desires cannot be explained merely by brain activity. We have an immortal soul that chooses between sin and righteousness and worships either God or the creation (Rom 1:18–32; Mark 7:20–23). Refusing to submit to what Scripture reveals about human nature—and instead presupposing that we have evolved over time by chance and that we are merely physical beings—leads to significant and sinful errors in the theory and practice of psychology.<sup>12</sup>

*Aim: Scripture reveals our purpose.* We are designed by God to be in relationship with him and to thus worship, glorify, and please him, which is humanity’s supreme good. This is in sharp contrast to the view of secular psychology, which assumes human autonomy and focuses on human happiness as its goal. We are not autonomous. We are accountable to our Creator, to whom we owe worship and obedience. Our every thought, word, and act are either

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Henrich, *The Weirdest People in the World* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2020), 129–30.

<sup>12</sup> Edward T. Welch, *Blame It on the Brain? Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998).

acts of worship in glad submission to our Creator or autonomous sinful acts of rebellion against him. The greatest commandment addressed to all of humanity is, “You shall love the LORD your God with all of your heart and all of your soul and with all of your might” (Deut 6:5). All of life is to be lived with an awareness of his presence and consciously for his glory: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). Our ultimate goal should be to please him, both in this life and beyond. “So, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him” (2 Cor 5:9). As the Westminster Shorter Catechism declares, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever” (WSC 1). The Bible also teaches that living for the glory of God results in the greatest possible human happiness. “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps 16:11). A psychology that does not see worship and God’s glory as man’s primary purpose is actively rebellious against God and can never lead to ultimate human happiness. “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food” (Isa 55:2).

*Ailment: Scripture reveals what is wrong with humanity.* We have a broken relationship with God (vertical), which then leads to personal brokenness and brokenness in relation to others (horizontal). The present miserable condition of humanity and the world in which we live is not as it is meant to be. Humanity fell when our representative Adam chose his way over God’s way (Gen 3), resulting in our physical and spiritual corruption. Our bodies, including our brains, are subject to decay and death (Gen 2:17; 3:19; 1 Cor 15:21–22; 2 Cor 4:16). Our desires are perversely opposed to God’s holy law (Rom 8:5–8; 3:12; John 3:19; Matt 15:18–19). Our thinking is twisted (Eph 4:18; Rom 3:11; 1 Cor 2:14) as we actively suppress the knowledge of God, which is displayed in creation and is revealed in our own hearts (Rom 1:19–23, 28–32). At the heart of sin is misplaced worship that elevates self and created things above God our Creator (Rom 1:21–23). We choose our own way instead of God’s way (Isa 53:6), thus falling short of God’s glory (Rom 3:23).

In contrast to secular psychology, which in effect promotes false worship of self, biblical counseling confronts idolatry, calling all people to repent of and turn from our sin (Acts 17:30). It understands our conflicts with other people as the bad fruit of our broken relationship with God and our sins against others as primarily sins against God (Ps 51:4; Gal 5:14–6:1; Jas 4:1–2). We cannot blame our environment or our genetics for our wrongdoing. These may be influences that should be understood, but they are not



determinative (1 Pet 1:18; Gal 5:16; 1 Cor 10:13; Ps 27:10). We are fully responsible for our sinful choices (Jas 1:13–15; Mark 7:20–23). Our biblical belief in human sin and responsibility is in sharp contrast to that of psychologists who label sinful behaviors as diseases (e.g., drunkenness as alcoholism) or disorders and excuse them as being caused by nature or nurture. In addition to being sinners, human beings are sufferers in this fallen world. We are harmed by the sins of others, including oppression and abuse (Gen 50:20; 2 Sam 13; Gen 37, 39). We are also affected by the fallenness of the creation, as we experience the effects of the fall through natural disasters and bodily problems (including brain malfunctions).<sup>13</sup> God’s revealed word also speaks to us in our suffering and teaches us how to endure and glorify God in the midst of trouble (Jas 1:2–5; Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:16–18).

### **III. *The Bible Does What It Claims to Do***

Scripture not only reveals who we are, what our purpose is, and what is wrong with us, but it also provides the means by which our lives may be transformed out of the misery caused by sin.

*Answer or Antidote: Scripture reveals the gospel, which is the only solution to the human problem.* “The law of the LORD is perfect; reviving the soul” (Ps 19:7a). Because human brokenness is rooted in our sinful alienation from God, we must be reconciled with God so that we can be restored as image bearers who glorify God. The Bible alone shows the way of reconciliation and restoration through faith in Jesus Christ, who redeems us from the guilt and power of our sin. When we turn from our sinful idolatry to Christ (1 Thess 1:9), we are transformed from being God’s enemies to being reconciled to him through Jesus’s blood (Col 1:21–22; Rom 5:8). Our sins are forgiven (1 John 1:8–2:2). Our fellowship with God is restored (1 Pet 3:18). The Bible is the means by which God’s Spirit regenerates spiritually dead men and women and brings them to saving faith in Christ. “You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pet 1:23; see also Rom 10:17 and Jas 1:18). When unbelievers come to us for counsel, we direct them to the gospel, which is the only means by which they can fulfill God’s purpose for their lives and enjoy true happiness. Troubled believers also need more of the gospel as the source of help during their struggles.

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<sup>13</sup> See Jeff Forrey and Jim Newheiser, “The Influences on the Human Heart,” in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, ed. James MacDonald, Bob Kelleman, and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 123–38.

*The Bible reveals life-transforming wisdom.* “The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Ps 19:7b). Scripture provides wisdom and help so that we can gain victory in our struggle with our own remaining sin and the suffering we experience in a fallen world (Ps 19:7–10). After reviving us from spiritual death, God continues to work in our lives through the Bible to progressively sanctify us, conforming us to Christ (Phil 1:6). We who were formerly in the flesh and unable to please God (Rom 8:6–8) are given a new nature (2 Cor 5:17). In union with Christ we have been set free from sin (Rom 6:1–23) so that we can fulfill God’s purpose for us by loving and worshiping him. We are now able to glorify him by putting off our sinful behavior and replacing it with works of righteousness (Eph 2:10; 4:17–29). Our relationships with others are transformed because we are empowered by the gospel to forgive and love as we have been forgiven and loved (Eph 4:31–5:2). We are enabled to patiently endure suffering as we walk in Jesus’s steps (1 Pet 2:21–25) and anticipate coming joyously into his presence when he returns (Rom 8:18).

*Redemption is the central theme of Scripture.* Biblical counseling is not merely about morality and rule keeping. Adams writes, “Jesus Christ is at the center of all truly Christian counseling.”<sup>14</sup> Paul Tripp adds, “We need Christ. Only His person and work can free us from slavery to self and our tendency to deify the creation.”<sup>15</sup> David Powlison likewise declares,

God’s story is not about finding refuge and resources in yourself or in other people or in psychopharmacology. It’s about finding Christ in real times and places, the only Savior able to deliver you from what is really wrong within you and your world.<sup>16</sup>

Any system for helping people with their psychological (soul) problems that excludes the divine answer to humankind’s brokenness is woefully deficient.

*There is nothing human wisdom offers that compares to Scripture.* “More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb” (Ps 19:10). Our counseling must be saturated with biblical wisdom. “The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Ps 19:8). When people come to us seeking wisdom, we want to give them

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<sup>14</sup> Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 269.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 28.

<sup>16</sup> David Powlison, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2005), 180.



the best possible answers. We do not want to send needy souls who are seeking the bread of life away with a stone (Matt 7:9). In our training of biblical and pastoral counselors we expect them to use God's word in every session as they feed the spiritually hungry with the bread of life.

#### **IV. *How Do Biblical Counselors Use Sources of Knowledge Outside of the Bible?***

A major difference between biblical counselors and other Christian counselors is the precedence we give to Scripture over what we believe to be the often-flawed conclusions of varying psychologies based on unbiblical presuppositions. This does not mean that we disregard science. Rather, we interpret and utilize scientific findings under the authority of God's word.

*All truth is God's truth because truth is always properly related to him.* We acknowledge that psychologists can offer useful descriptions of human behavior. However, their interpretation of their observations will be influenced by their presuppositions and worldviews. Those who deny the authority of God's word have faulty underlying beliefs about who we are, what our goal is, and the source of our problems, which will be the lens through which they arrive at their conclusions. Adams adds,

Data are collected and related and presented by *men*, all of whom are sinners, and subject to the noetic effects of their sin. In God's world all men are related to him as covenant breakers or covenant keepers (in Christ). The judgments of unbelievers, therefore, are arrived at and presented from a point of view which attempts to divorce itself from God.<sup>17</sup>

*Natural revelation contains truth, but it is insufficient for counseling.* Many Christian counselors claim that the insights of natural revelation should be valued alongside insights gained from Scripture. According to Scripture, God's revelation of himself in creation is designed to reveal his existence and attributes (Ps 19:1–6; Rom 1:19–20). The effect of general revelation is that believers worship God's glory as it is displayed in his creation. Unbelievers suppress the knowledge of God in the creation and in their consciences, thus rendering them without excuse (Rom 1:21–22, 32). We can only come to truly know God through the special revelation of Scripture (Rom 10:14). Often what is called “natural revelation” by Christian counselors who rely upon secular psychology includes interpretations that are corrupted by antibiblical presuppositions.

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<sup>17</sup> Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 269.

*We learn from common grace insights of psychology.* The way biblical counselors may benefit from psychology is analogous to how common grace wisdom informs the public ministry of the word in preaching. The Bible does not explicitly teach homiletical principles addressing issues such as how sermons should be organized (one clear purpose developed in approximately three main points) or how to keep the hearers' attention (mix in relevant stories and illustrations). Nor does the Bible explicitly teach principles for sermon delivery (eye contact, gestures, etc.).<sup>18</sup> We benefit from common grace wisdom, which one might learn in a college speech class. But the content of the message of the preacher is to be God's word (2 Tim 4:1–5), not secular wisdom. In the same way, biblical counselors may learn valuable counseling techniques such as listening skills and communication techniques from the common grace wisdom of secular psychologists. But the message we aspire to deliver is God's word.

*We appreciate that psychology can sometimes contribute to human happiness and relieve suffering.* We appreciate medical interventions for certain problems, and we attribute the benefits these provide to God's common grace for humanity. For example, a person who is having a panic attack may be helped by performing breathing exercises. We also acknowledge the benefits the use of medications and other therapies to relieve psychological suffering in some cases. These interventions often provide symptomatic relief, but they do not address spiritual causes. They cannot satisfy the ultimate need of humanity, which is to know God and to be rightly related to him through Jesus Christ (John 17:3). "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36).

*We are wary of assertions of "truth" that are rooted in unbiblical presuppositions.* Scripture teaches that there is no neutrality when it comes to truth. Either our thinking is under God's lordship as expressed through Scripture, or we imbibe the false ideologies of the world (Rom 12:2).

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. (Col 2:8–10)

While psychologists who do not submit to the authority of Scripture can make profound observations of human behavior, their interpretations of this behavior and their solutions to human problems are tainted by their unbelieving worldview.

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<sup>18</sup> But see Nehemiah 8:4.

## Conclusion

To summarize:

*Authority.* Secular psychology relies on empirical data and experience. Biblical counselors point out that their “science” is actually interpreted based upon their unbelieving presuppositions. Our authority is God’s infallible revealed word, by which we approach all of the issues listed below (2 Tim 3:16–17).

*Anthropology.* Secular psychology typically sees people as merely physical beings who are the product of evolution. The Bible teaches that we have been created in God’s image (Gen 1:27) and that we have both a body and a soul. God breathed life into Adam (Gen 2:7). The apostle Paul tells us that at death our souls will be with the Lord while our bodies are in the grave awaiting the resurrection. “Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8).

*Aim.* The primary aim of psychology is human happiness (usually defined by the counselee or client). The aim of biblical counseling is that we please and glorify God (2 Cor 5:9; 1 Cor 10:31).

*Ailment.* Secular psychology typically sees our problems as coming from nature (i.e., genetic disposition to alcoholism) or nature (growing up in an alcoholic or abusive family). While biblical counselors take the influences of nature and nurture seriously (because the Bible does), the underlying human problem is sin. We are fallen creatures born in sin and personally guilty of rebelling against God. We set our will above his (Isa 53:6; Rom 3:23) and need redemption.

*Answer (or Antidote).* Secular psychology has a variety of approaches to human problems, including different forms of talk therapy and medications. Scripture teaches that the only way for a person to fulfill their ultimate purpose of glorifying God is for them to be reconciled to him through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 8:6–8; Heb 11:6), through whom their sins are forgiven and they receive a new nature (2 Cor 5:17). Then they are enabled to glorify God through worship, service, and obedience.

Because we believe the Bible is what it claims to be, that it accurately answers the questions it claims to answer, and that it does what it claims to do, the goal of biblical counseling is to give wise instruction from the Bible so that the counselee can achieve God’s goals in his or her life. Just as God uses the public ministry of the word to transform lives, so does biblical counseling the private ministry of God’s word. “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present

everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me” (Col 1:28–29).

As Frame writes, “The Word does things that only God can do.”<sup>19</sup> Human beings, through common grace, may discover in creation various useful means (medical and psychological) that may reduce the harmful effects of sin. However, without Scripture, their best efforts will result only in temporary symptomatic relief, what Ed Welch and Powlison refer to as “David’s harp.”<sup>20</sup> While we are thankful that common grace wisdom offers some relief from suffering, it grieves us to see Christian counselors whose faith in God’s word is so limited that they devote little time to studying it and applying it to their counselees. Instead, they put their hope in sophisticated earthly wisdom, which cannot transform the heart and mind as only Christ can (Col 2:8–10). God’s word alone has the power to expose our sin and renew our hearts as it points us to Christ. There is no earthly wisdom more sophisticated or powerful than that of God’s revealed word. “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12).

We do not oppose common grace psychological techniques, which may relieve human suffering or contribute to human happiness. But we want our fellow Christian counselors to come to a greater appreciation of the wisdom and power of Scripture for helping people, not merely in a few limited circumstances but in all the challenges of life. There may be cases in which both Scripture and common grace methodologies will be helpful. There will never be a case in which Scripture is not essential.

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<sup>19</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Word*, 67.

<sup>20</sup> Edward Welch and David Powlison, “Every Common Bush Afire with God: The Scripture’s Constitutive Role for Counseling,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 16.4 (Winter 1997): 315. (David’s harp playing helped Saul only in a limited and temporary way and did not deal with his real spiritual problem.)