

View

Thanks to all who
signed up to
teach, assist and learn!

Is Christ Sufficient?

BY DAVID POSEY

Does the bible really have the answers to our problems, even our emotional and psychological ones? Is the grace of God all we need for total peace of mind? Or is something more required, something found outside God's word? "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

Some time ago, *Moody Monthly* analyzed the "Christian" counseling movement in America, a movement which is "drawing

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increasing influence and controversy." According to the article, Americans have more hang-ups than any other nation. One-third of the world's psychiatrists are Americans and over one-half of all clinical psychologists live in the United States. There are more professional therapists in America than librarians,

firefighters, or mail carriers. Professional counselors outnumber dentists and pharmacists by nearly two to one.

Among these are so-called "Christian" counselors. But observers note that there is no standard of "Christian counseling," estimating that there are at least 250 distinct approaches to "Christian psychology" or "biblical counseling."

Many religious leaders are disturbed by the growth of this movement toward the science of Sigmund Freud, who had dismissed religion as the "obsessional neurosis of mankind." These critics see the integration of psychology and scripture as nothing more than another seduction of Satan.

A well-known evangelical author, John MacArthur, is one such outspoken critic and has written a book about it (*Our Sufficiency in Christ*). "I'm convinced that what we're seeing is one of the most subtle and effective attacks Satan has ever mounted against the church," he says. "By substituting an artificial simulation... of sanctification, he is turning Christians away from the real source of power and victory."

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Some of MacArthur's concerns derive from a trial in which he was involved in 1980. He and the elders where he preaches were sued when someone they counseled subsequently committed suicide. They won the case, but during the trial he heard many supposedly "Christian" psychologists testify on behalf of the plaintiffs that the Bible alone is not an adequate resource for counseling people about emotional problems. He observes in his book that evangelical psychological clinics claim to offer biblical counsel, but merely dispense secular psychology disguised in spiritual terminology.

"Bible reading and prayer are commonly belittled as 'pat answers.' Scripture... Christ, prayer, and grace – those are traditional solutions Christian counselors pointed people to. But the average Christian today has come to believe that none of them really offers the cure for the people's deepest woes."

He feels this attitude amounts to a "practical denial of the faith." "If we don't believe the solutions to our problems are in the Word, what does it matter what we say we believe? Psychology is a mass of human ideas that Satan has placed in the church as if it were powerful, life-changing truth from God. Think about it. What could Satan do to try to destroy the church that would be more effective at undermining God's word, shifting the focus off Christ, and minimizing holy living? All those things are happening slowly, steadily within the church right now." (Keep in mind that MacArthur's concept of the "church" is quite different from

ours; but these problems seem to be affecting us as well).

One counselor, Henry Brandt, who has written a book entitled, *When You're Tired of Dealing with Symptoms and You Want a Cure, Call Me*, will listen to you long enough to determine which biblical standards you are violating. He practices what is called "directive biblical counseling," which means getting right to the core of the psychological problem, which he identifies as either a sinful behavior or a sinful attitude.

"If relief is your goal," he says, "then you can get relief through psychotherapy." But if your goal is to get right with the Lord, then I'm going to point out where you need to repent." Brandt dismisses the popular notion that our hang-ups are caused by what happened to us during our upbringing, regardless of how traumatic those events may have been. "My question is, 'How are you handling that trauma?' With bitterness? With anger? Rebellion? Now we're talking about sin."

He believes counselors should be cautious about using secular psychological methods in their practices because of the temptation to soft-pedal sin. "If you're not up-front about sin and if you don't introduce the Lord, all you're having is a heart-to-heart discussion. I would not want to help people get through life comfortable with their sins. That would be like telling a cancer patient he has some other illness that isn't deadly. You might help him feel relief, but you won't help him get cured."

If all the counselors my brethren were turning to were like Mr. Brandt, I'd feel much

more comfortable. Of course, I might wonder what he is doing (for \$75+ an hour) that any preacher who knows his Bible couldn't do (Brandt probably agrees; maybe the problem is that few "preachers" really know their Bibles; I know some who spend more time counseling than preaching, albeit often out of the goodness of their hearts). In any case, with a few exceptions (learning disabilities, chemical imbalances, mental disease), counselors are most often consulted in order to deal either with relationship problems or the problem of guilt. I doubt if I would get any argument from my fellow Christians that the Bible, which is God's word, has the answers to these problems. In almost every case, the problem is based in sin and the answer is found in repentance, forgiveness and grace.

But not everyone, even those who proclaim their love for God's word, accepts the answers that God gives. As MacArthur says, "Many people won't tolerate God's solutions to their problems because His solutions don't make us feel good about ourselves." He makes the following insightful comment: "In 2 Timothy 4:1-4, we are reminded to preach the word of God consistently, even when it is not tolerated. When we doubt that God's resources are adequate for meeting all of our needs, we begin to tolerate error."

Personally, when I hear about a brother or sister getting therapy, I do my best to be understanding and give them the benefit of the doubt. They may be dealing with some traumatic experience and I don't want to second guess their motives. In any case, I have no dominion over a brother or sister's faith (2

Cor. 1:24). Ultimately, what people do is their business and they will answer to God for themselves. I realize they are seeking help and trying to solve a problem. It is commendable whenever a person recognizes that he has a problem.

But we should not be ignorant of the devil's schemes (2 Cor. 2:11). It is his specific purpose to make void the grace

of God in the life of one Christian at a time, if necessary. The worst thing we can do, as far as the devil is concerned, is repent. And he does not want us to forgive ourselves or anybody else. He hates terms like confession, repentance, forgiveness and grace. He thrives on words like bitterness, conflict, and anger.

The danger is this: when we avoid the consequence of our sin (for awhile) by running to those who will indulge us in them, we frustrate the purpose of God's grace in us and play into the devil's hand. In the end, we will be lost, because the purpose of God, as revealed in the Bible, from cover to cover, is to deal with sin. If we were all better acquainted with the grace of

Politics and the Christian

Politics is one of the touchiest of subject for Christians. It has the potential to divide people who are otherwise united religiously. But it is important because politics is part of life. If we are serious about applying Scripture to life, we will be involved in the political process to some degree.

I'm not naive enough to think that any political party has ever acted strictly out of obedience to Scripture; both parties are primarily concerned with secular matters and govern accordingly. However, when it comes to the individuals who are running for an office, especially President, we must examine their record and their beliefs in light of Scripture and vote for the man who will implement Scripture-honoring policies. There will never be a perfect candidate running for any political office, but we should choose those whom we feel will make decisions that are most in line with Christ's teachings.

With that in mind, the primary issue that Christians ought to be concerned with is LIFE. Practically speaking, we're talking about abortion and euthanasia issues. Abortion is clearly the most urgent of these during this election season. The candidates running for President are light years apart on this issue.

Facts

1. As of July 2008, 22% of all pregnancies in the United States end in abortion. 40% of unintended pregnancies end in abortion.
2. In 2005, there were 1.2 million abortions in the US, down from a high of 1.6 million in 1990.

STATISTICS FROM THE GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE

These days, almost universally, a vote for a Democratic candidate is a vote for one who supports the right of a woman to choose to have an abortion. I refuse to use the term "pro-choice" to describe them because the child in the womb has no choice. They support abortion rights and thus contribute to wiping 1.2 million children off the face of the earth. This is even sadder, if possible, when we realize how many potential parents there are who would gladly adopt these children. If the government made it easier and less expensive to adopt, there would be plenty of homes for children unwanted by their biological parents.

"WHO WILL SPEAK FOR THE
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The President's Role

When it comes to life issues, the President plays a major role. He is responsible for appointing judges and he has the ability both to introduce bills and to veto bills. Regardless of where a candidate stands on economic, immigration or other issues, as Christians, it seems we should ask which candidate will support LIFE. Who else will speak for the unborn, if Christians do not? At the very least, by electing pro-LIFE candidates, we send a message that being pro-life is not fatal to one's political aspirations, and that's a good thing.

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