

Articles and Sermons :: Rediscovering Biblical Counseling - Please Read This**Rediscovering Biblical Counseling - Please Read This - posted by tjservant (), on: 2007/7/17 15:49**

Rediscovering Biblical Counseling

by John MacArthur

The November 29, 1993 issue of Time featured a series of articles on the turmoil in modern psychology. The magazine's cover featured a retouched photograph of Sigmund Freud—his head a hollow, incomplete, three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle—and the caption, "IS FREUD DEAD?"

One of the articles inside raised the question, "What if Freud was wrong?" Noting that this century has already seen the sudden collapse of Marxism, the article suggested that we might be about to witness a similarly dramatic toppling of "the complex Freudian monument." 1

Evangelicals not so long ago would have roundly cheered such news. But, alas, we live in strange times. Ironically, while the secular world has grown increasingly disaffected with the professional psychotherapy industry, the evangelical world has been frantically trying to marry secular psychology and biblical truth. While the world becomes more and more suspicious of psychology, Christians seem to be growing more and more committed to it. Perhaps it is fair to say that many in the church are addicted to psychotherapy.

The rush to embrace psychology within the church is frankly mystifying. Psychology and Christianity have been enemies from the beginning. Freud's presuppositions were atheistic and cynical. He called religion a "universal, obsessional neurosis."² To him, religion was an illusion that derived its strength from irrational wishful thinking rooted in human instinct.³ Those who followed Freud at first were uniformly hostile to biblical belief. The foundational doctrines of the movement were therefore based on blatantly anti-Christian presuppositions. To Freud and his followers the human being was nothing but an animal motivated by the sex drive and other ego needs.

The church was naturally wary of these ideas—and justifiably so. Freudianism was one of several atheistic hypotheses—along with Darwinism and Marxism—that were gaining popularity at the turn of the century. The church's greatest battlefield at that time, however, was against another insidious enemy: theological liberalism, a pseudo-Christianity that denied the authority of Scripture and questioned the supernatural. This was yet another doctrine that was contributing to the rapid secularization of society.

Among professing Christians, only theological liberals found allies among the atheistic psychologists. Carl Jung wrote much about religion. In his system, however, the human unconscious was divine. William James, father of modern pragmatism, also blended behavioral theory and religion into a humanistic creed that made lavish use of theological terminology. But these men were by no means Christians. They utterly rejected supernaturalism, repudiated the authority of Scripture, and discarded most of the central tenets of historic Christian belief.

Psychology was thus ideally suited for an increasingly secular age. By the middle of this century, the new discipline was accepted by the popular mind as a full-fledged science—even though the movement was already beginning to fragment into dozens of competing schools and philosophies—and even though its hypotheses could not be tested or its results verified through any of the traditional means of true science. None of that could slow psychology's acceptance in an age that had grown hostile to the notion of absolute truth.

Within a few short decades, the psychotherapy industry and evangelicals settled into a more or less guarded coexistence. Christians seemed intimidated by the world's overwhelming acceptance of psychotherapy as a true science. The psychotherapists believed they were privy to a higher knowledge and more effective therapies than traditional spiritual counsel could ever offer. They stated in no uncertain terms that spiritual counselors and clergymen should stay off their turf.

One textbook on pastoral psychology written in the 1950s summed up the professional therapists' attitude to pastoral counsel:

It is duty not to try to enact the role of the psychiatrist, but as quickly as possible, he must refer the sick person to the professional man. Oftentimes he must secure the judgment of the psychiatrist regarding the symptoms which a petitioner displays. Moreover, the clergyman, in such instances, must place himself under the direction of the psychiatrist, in the event that the latter believes his assistance as a religionist is helpful. Psychotherapy and religio-therapy demand consistent, patient treatment, over long periods of time, and the clergyman rarely finds the hours to furnish this. Therefore he must have a specialist as a member of the staff of his church or synagogue, to whom he can refer cases. Or if such a professional is not a member of the institution's staff, he may be a friend and advisor of the clergyman when required. All this entails the expenditure of time and money, and it must not be forgotten that while the clergyman is willing to give his time freely, the professional psychiatrist must make his hours count in monetary terms. Too often distressed persons come to the clergyman when they have been unsuccessful in their consultations with the psychiatrist, but it is an astute pastor who immediately turns them back to their psychiatrist.

Frequently the clergyman and the psychiatrist can work hand in hand, especially in the case of parishioners who, at one time, will accept guidance from the clergyman, and, at another moment, from the psychiatrist. Husbands and wives have been brought together as a consequence of this technique. Sometimes the psychiatrist will recommend to the clergyman that he accept a convalescent youth as a member of the religious institution's young people's organization, in the hope that social opportunities will accelerate the cure. Sometimes the psychiatrist will appreciate the value of attendance at divine worship, the reading of religious literature, and the performance of traditional rites and ceremonies. In every such instance, the psychiatrist must be the mentor and the director of the treatment. 4

Too many pastors capitulated to such thinking, and over the past forty years or so, counseling has steadily moved out of the church and into the clinics. Now "Christian" psychology is a billion-dollar business. Has the spiritual and emotional state of believers been improved by this trend? Surely no one would argue seriously that it has.

One of the promising trends in the evangelical world today is the emergence of a renewed emphasis on counseling that is biblical—*not* mere psychology colored with biblical words and phrases, but an earnest effort to help people solve their problems by turning them to the objective, life-changing truth of Scripture.

Scripture does, after all, claim to be the only reliable resource to which we can turn to solve our spiritual problems:

• "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word" (Psalm 119:9).

• "Thy testimonies also are my delight; They are my counselors" (v. 24).

• "Thy commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Thy precepts" (vv. 98-100).

• "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Dozens of passages like those could be quoted to demonstrate the utter superiority and absolute sufficiency Scripture claims for itself. Either we believe what God's Word teaches in this regard, or we open ourselves to all kinds of corrupt influences from worldly thinking. The choice is as simple as that.

I am encouraged to see a large movement of Christians returning to Scripture as the sole source of wisdom and correction for the human soul. I am grateful to God for the men He is using to awaken the church to this need.

Wayne Mack is one of those men who has been at the forefront of this issue for many years. Under his wise leadership, The Master's College is building a biblical counseling program that is unequalled anywhere. While carrying out that task, Dr. Mack has also found time to compile and edit this book. It is the realization of a long-time desire of mine to have a comprehensive textbook on the issues that Christian counselors struggle with—a guidebook for those who want to offer truly biblical counsel, not just warmed-over concepts from the scrap heap of secular psychology. I believe this book will effectively equip and embolden Christian counselors who have been intimidated or confused by the claims of modern psychology. It will also instruct and assist those who are already committed to biblical counseling, so that they can be more effective.

Whether you are a seasoned biblical counselor or someone just starting out, I know you will find much to help and encourage you in this volume. My prayer is that it will be a major catalyst in moving the church away from the toxic false counsel of worldly wisdom and back to the pure milk of the Word.

John F. MacArthur, Jr.

1

Rediscovering Biblical Counseling

by

John F. MacArthur, Jr. 5

Ever since apostolic times, counseling has occurred in the church as a natural function of corporate spiritual life. After all, the New Testament itself commands believers to "admonish one another" (Romans 15:14); "exhort one another daily" (Hebrews 3:13, KJV); "comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18); "encourage one another, and build up one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11); "confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

The apostle Paul wrote, "We who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves" (Romans 15:1). And, "Even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).

All those instructions apply to rank-and-file church members—not only to some priestly caste of experts. Counseling—particularly counseling that skillfully employs and applies God's Word—is a necessary duty of Christian life and fellowship. It is also the expected result of true spiritual maturity: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).

In recent years, however, there has been a strong and very influential movement within the church attempting to replace biblical counseling in the church body with "Christian psychology"—techniques and wisdom gleaned from secular therapies and dispensed primarily by paid professionals. Those who have championed this movement often sound vaguely biblical. That is, they quote Scripture and often blend theological ideas with the teachings of Freud, Rogers, Jung, or whatever school of secular psychology they follow. But the movement itself is certainly not taking the church in a biblical direction. It has conditioned Christians to think of counseling as something best left to trained experts. It has opened the door to a whole range of extrabiblical theories and therapies. Indeed, it has left many with the feeling that God's Word is incomplete, insufficient, unsophisticated, and unable to offer help for people's deepest emotional and spiritual problems. It has directed millions of Christians seeking spiritual help away from their pastors and fellow believers and into psychological clinics. It has given many the impression that adapting secular methods such as twelve-step recovery plans can be more helpful than spiritual means in weaning people from their sins. In short, it has diminished the church's confidence in Scripture, prayer, fellowship, and preaching as means through which the Spirit of God works to change lives.

If the presuppositions behind this movement were sound, we might expect that Christians today would be the most well-adjusted and mentally healthy generation who ever lived. After all, they have the benefit of several generations of psychological expertise, applied by men and women who claim to be able to synthesize such knowledge with Scripture and make it "Christian."

But clearly that is not the case. Record numbers of people are seeking psychological treatment. More Christians than ever before are lining up at the doors of clinics and professional counselors. Christian psychologists offering live counsel are now heard daily on thousands of Christian radio stations around the country. In the past decade and a half, Christian psychology has become a billion-dollar industry. Millions of evangelical Christians, it seems, are addicted to therapy.

In contrast to those trends, however, another movement has been gaining strength among evangelicals. Clear voices are beginning to call the church back to the Scriptures as a sufficient help for people's spiritual problems. A groundswell of

support has been building for a return to biblical counseling in the church. Every week I hear from pastors and church leaders who are rediscovering the importance of biblical counseling. They are realizing what they have actually always believed: that Scripture is superior to human wisdom (1 Corinthians 3:19); that the Word of God is a more effective discernor of the human heart than any earthly means (Hebrews 4:12); that the Spirit of God is the only effective agent of recovery and regeneration (Ephesians 5:18-19); and that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ Himself (Colossians 2:3).

Those truths are so basic to Christian belief that it is astonishing to think they would ever come under fire from within the church itself. But of course that is precisely what has happened over and over in church history. And it is happening even now as psychology is being peddled in the church as a necessary—and even superior—solution to spiritual problems.

I was first thrust into the forefront of the battle between psychology and biblical counseling in 1980, when our church was hit with the first ever "clergy malpractice" lawsuit. The suit charged that the pastors on our staff were negligent because we tried to help a suicidal young member of our church by giving him biblical truth. It was the first such case ever heard in the American court system. The secular media had a field day as the case dragged on for years. Some national news sources even alleged that our church had encouraged the young man to kill himself, teaching him that suicide was a sure way to heaven. Of course, that was not true. We showed him from Scripture that suicide is wrong. We urged him to let the Word of God lead him to intimate knowledge and appropriation of the resources available in the One who wanted to heal his troubled mind. Tragically, he refused our counsel and took his own life.

The case raised the question of whether churches should have the legal right to counsel troubled people using only the Bible. The plaintiffs argued that giving a depressed or suicidal person advice from Scripture is a simplistic and irresponsible approach to counseling. They brought forward several "experts" who testified that spiritual counsel is not appropriate for people who have real problems. Victims of chronic depression, suicidal tendencies, and similar emotional and mental problems should be referred to a psychological expert, they claimed. Pastors and church counselors should be required to refer such people to mental-health professionals, the lawsuit contended. Their basic charge was that attempting to counsel troubled people from the Bible amounts to recklessness and negligence for which church counselors must be held morally and legally culpable. Had they won the case, any church that practiced biblical counseling would be taking a huge liability risk.

The facts of the case that came out in court received little or no coverage on the network news. Testimony showed that this young man was under the care of professional psychiatrists. In addition to the biblical direction he received from our pastoral staff, he had sought psychiatric treatment. Moreover, our staff had seen to it that he was examined by several medical doctors, to rule out organic or chemical causes for his depression. He was receiving every kind of therapy available, but he chose to end his life anyway. We did all we could to help him; he rejected our counsel and turned his back on his spiritual sufficiency in Christ.

Three different courts actually heard evidence in the case—and all three ruled in favor of the church. Twice those rulings were overturned on appeal because of technicalities, but every court that actually tried the case agreed in their verdicts absolving the church from any blame. Eventually the case was appealed to the United States Supreme Court. The High Court refused to hear the case, thereby letting stand the California State Supreme Court's ruling that finally vindicated the church.

All three times the case was heard and a ruling was given, the judges also expressed the opinion that the church had not failed in its responsibility to give proper care. Their judgment was that our staff had more than fulfilled their legal and moral obligations in how we had attempted to help this young man who had sought our counsel. But even more important, the courts affirmed every church's constitutional right to counsel from the Bible. The case established a legal precedent upholding an important First-Amendment right of freedom of religion. The court's ruling means that secular courts have no right to encroach on the area of counseling in the church.

Psychologizing the Church

That clergy malpractice trial thrust me into the midst of the debate about psychology and biblical counseling. Before that, I had noticed that "Christian psychologists," once unheard of, were becoming more and more common, more and more outspoken. Unfortunately, I had paid little attention to the trend and was not listening closely to how they were marketing psychology in the church.

But during the trial itself, a surprising number of the "experts" who were called to argue against biblical counseling were professional Christian counselors. I was startled and dismayed during the trial to hear men who identified themselves as evangelicals testifying that the Bible alone does not contain sufficient help to meet people's deepest personal and emotional needs. These people were actually arguing before a secular court that God's Word is not an adequate resource for dealing with people's spiritual problems! What is truly appalling is the number of evangelicals who are willing to take such "professionals'" word for it.

There's no denying that psychology has made incredible inroads made into evangelical culture over the past twenty-five years. The influence of psychology is reflected in the kind of sermons that are preached from evangelical pulpits, in the kind of counseling that is being offered over the radio airwaves, in the proliferation of psychologists who cater primarily to evangelical Christians, and in the books that are being offered by many evangelical publishers.⁶

Over the past decade a host of evangelical psychological clinics have sprung up. Though almost all of them claim to offer biblical counsel, most merely dispense secular psychology disguised in spiritual terminology. This can be seen clearly in the literature spawned by the movement. As Jay Adams observed, "Nearly all recent counseling books for ministers, even conservative ones, are written from the Freudian perspective in the sense that they rest largely upon the presuppositions of the Freudian ethic of non-responsibility."⁷

The rise of counseling clinics poses another problem for the church: the trend has removed the counseling ministry from its proper arena in the church body and conditioned most Christians to think of themselves as incompetent to counsel. Many pastors, feeling inadequate and perhaps afraid of possible malpractice litigation, are perfectly willing to let "professionals" take over what used to be seen as a vital pastoral responsibility.⁸ Too many have bought the lie that a crucial realm of spiritual wisdom exists outside Scripture, and that some idea or technique from that extrabiblical realm holds the real key to helping people with their deep problems.

Christian psychologists continually suggest that they have uncovered great secrets, or found some deeper truth, that unlocks the mystery of human behavior and gives them tools not available through Scripture alone to help people solve their problems. One leading author, for example, writes that the Bible "does not claim to be nor is it meant to be God's sole revelation about people-helping." He writes, "During the past century, God has permitted psychologists to develop careful research tools for studying human behavior and professional journals for sharing their findings. Perhaps hundreds of thousands of people have come for help and professional counselors have learned what makes people tick and how they can change."⁹ Does this mean that "professional counselors" (secular psychologists) with divine help have discovered something about "people-helping" that can change people more effectively than the biblical means of regeneration, sanctification, or simple growth in grace? Surely that is not what this author means to say, but it is in fact precisely the assumption made by multitudes of Christians who have been influenced by psychology.

What's Wrong with Psychology?

The word psychology literally means "the study of the soul." True soul-study cannot be done by unbelievers. After all, only Christians have the resources for comprehending the nature of the human soul and understanding how it can be transformed. The secular discipline of psychology is based on godless assumptions and evolutionary foundations and is capable of dealing with people only superficially and only on the temporal level. Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology, was an unbelieving humanist who devised psychology as a substitute for religion.

Before Freud, the study of the soul was thought of as a spiritual discipline. In other words, it was inherently associated with religion. Freud's chief contribution was to define the human soul and the study of human behavior in wholly secular terms. He utterly divorced anthropology (the study of human beings) from the spiritual realm and thus made way for atheistic, humanistic, and rationalistic theories about human behavior.

Those fundamentally antibiblical theories became the basis of all modern psychology. Of course, today's psychologists use hundreds of counseling models and techniques based on a myriad of conflicting theories, so it is impossible to speak of psychotherapy as if it were a unified and consistent science.¹⁰ But the basis of modern psychology can be summarized in several commonly-held ideas that have their roots in early Freudian humanism. These are the very same ideas many Christians are zealously attempting to synthesize with biblical truth:

• Human nature is basically good.

• People have the answers to their problems inside them.

• The key to understanding and correcting a person's attitudes and actions lies somewhere in his past.

• Individuals' problems are the result of what someone else has done to them.

• Human problems can be purely psychological in nature—unrelated to any spiritual or physical condition.

• Deep-seated problems can be solved only by professional counselors using therapy.

• Scripture, prayer, and the Holy Spirit are inadequate and simplistic resources for solving certain types of problems.

Those and other similar godless theories have filtered down into the church from the assorted stuff in the psychological tank and are having a profound and disturbing effect on its approach to helping people. Many sincere Christians are seriously off track in their understanding of what counseling is and what it is supposed to accomplish.

Some basic reminders might be helpful: Scripture is the only reliable manual for true soul-study. It is so comprehensive in the diagnosis and treatment of every spiritual matter that, energized by the Holy Spirit in the believer, it leads to making one like Jesus Christ. This is the process of biblical sanctification. It is the goal of biblical counseling.

The Puritans, by the way, referred to the counseling ministry as "soul work." They spoke of the minister's responsibility as "the cure of souls." They understood that the only reliable help for the human soul is the infallible truth of Scripture applied by the Spirit of God. They knew that the only genuine, effective, or permanent cure for the soul's maladies is the transformation wrought by God's grace in the heart of a believer.

Are Psychological Techniques Ever Advisable?

Does that mean the modern behavioral sciences offer nothing of value in treating emotional or behavioral problems? Don't medication, shock therapy, group therapy, and other techniques help in some cases? Aren't some soul-sicknesses actually medical problems that should be treated by skilled psychiatrists?

Certainly it is reasonable for people to seek medical help for medical problems. We would send someone to the doctor for a broken leg, dysfunctional kidney, tooth cavity, or other physical malady. And it is true that certain kinds of depression actually have physical causes requiring medical treatment. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, best known for his powerful expository preaching ministry, was actually trained as a physician. He pointed out that depression and certain mental illnesses often have causes that are physical rather than spiritual. Pernicious anemia, arteriosclerosis, porphyria, and even gout are all examples Lloyd-Jones suggests of physical diseases that can cause dementia or produce depression.¹¹ It is entirely appropriate—even advisable—for the counselor to advise the counselee suffering from such symptoms to seek medical advice or get a thorough physical examination to rule out such causes.

It is also sensible for someone who is alcoholic, drug addicted, learning disabled, traumatized by rape, incest, or severe battering, to seek help in trying to cope with their trauma. Certain techniques of human psychology can serve to lessen trauma or dependency. In extreme situations medication might be needed to stabilize an otherwise dangerous person.

It must be noted that these are relatively rare problems, however, and should not be used as examples to justify the indiscriminate use of secular psychological techniques for essentially spiritual problems. Dealing with the psychological and emotional issues of life in such ways is not sanctification. That is why such techniques are equally effective in modifying behavior in both Christians and non-Christians.

What About "Christian psychology"?

"Christian psychology" as the term is used today is an oxymoron. The word psychology employed in that expression no longer speaks of studying the soul; instead it describes a diverse menagerie of therapies and theories that are fundamentally humanistic. The presuppositions and most of the doctrine of psychology cannot be successfully integrated with Christian truth.¹² Moreover, the infusion of psychology into the teaching of the church has blurred the line between behavior modification and sanctification.

The path to wholeness is the path of spiritual sanctification. Would we foolishly turn our backs on the Wonderful Counselor, the spring of living water, for the sensual wisdom of earth and the stagnant water of behaviorism?

Our Lord Jesus reacted in a perfect and holy way to every temptation, trial, and trauma in life—and they were more severe than any human could ever suffer. Therefore, it should be clear that perfect victory over all life's troubles must be the result of being like Christ. No "soul worker" can lift another above the level of spiritual maturity he is on. So the supreme qualification for psychologists would be Christlikeness.

The truly Christian counselor must be doing soul work in the realm of the deep things of the Word and the Spirit—not fooling around in the shallows of behavior modification. Why should believers choose to do behavior modification when we have the tools for spiritual transformation (like a surgeon wreaking havoc with a butter knife instead of using a scalpel)? The most skilled counselor is the one who most carefully, prayerfully, and faithfully applies the divine spiritual resource to the process of sanctification—shaping another into the image of Jesus Christ.

There may be no more serious threat to the life of the church today than the stampede to embrace the doctrines of secular psychology. They are a mass of human ideas that Satan has placed in the church as if they were powerful, life-changing truths from God. Most psychologists epitomize neo-gnosticism, claiming to have secret knowledge for solving people's real problems. Though many psychologists call their techniques "Christian counseling" most of them are merely using secular theory to treat spiritual problems with biblical references tacked on.¹³

Even those who tack on Scripture references sometimes do so reluctantly. One well-known evangelical therapist advises counselors to "interject Scripture" with caution: "Proper timing and readiness are important. Once the counselee knows the counselor really cares, Scripture can usually be shared without any offense. The Scripture must meet the specific need of the individual, and a few verses are preferable to many."¹⁴

Unfortunately, such thinking dominates most of the counseling theories that have pervaded contemporary evangelicalism. The distressing result is that pastors, biblical scholars, teachers of Scripture, and caring believers using the Word of God have been made to feel they are not qualified to counsel people.

That very opinion is often at the heart of the message conveyed in some of the most widely read textbooks on Christian counseling. One bestseller claims that Christian counselors who believe the Bible is a sufficient guide for counseling are frequently guilty of "a nonthinking and simplistic understanding of life and its problems."¹⁵ Thus those who attempt to limit their counsel to the questions Scripture answers are disdained as naive, superficial, and altogether inadequate counselors.

The literature of Christian psychology commonly belittles Bible reading and prayer as pat answers or incomplete solutions for someone struggling with depression or anxiety. Scripture, the Holy Spirit, Christ, prayer, and grace—those are the traditional solutions Christian counselors have pointed people to. But Christian psychology now tells us that none of them really offers the cure for people's woes.

In fact, many would have us believe that secular psychology can help people more effectively than the counselor armed only with spiritual weapons. The same popular Christian bestseller I quoted above claims the church "promote superficial adjustments while psychotherapists, with or without biblical foundations, . . . do a better job than the church of restoring troubled people to more effective functioning."¹⁶ Later that same author adds, "Secularists sometimes seem to have a corner on honestly facing the disturbing complexity of life while Christians recite clichés that push away real questions of the heart. As a result, nonbelievers often help people with emotional problems more effectively than Christians."¹⁷

How Scientific Are the Behavioral Sciences?

As we noted earlier, psychology is not a uniform body of scientific knowledge, like thermodynamics or organic chemistry. When we speak of psychology, we refer to a complex menagerie of ideas and theories, many of which are contradictory. Psychology has not even proved capable of dealing effectively with the human mind and with mental and emotional processes. Thus it can hardly be regarded as a science. Karl Kraus, a Viennese journalist, made this perceptive comment: "Despite its deceptive terminology, psychoanalysis is not a science but a religion—the faith of a generation incapable of any other."¹⁸

Most advocates of psychology simply assume that psychology is a true science.¹⁹ But it is not. It is a pseudo-science—the most recent of several human inventions designed to explain, diagnose, and treat behavioral problems without dealing with moral and spiritual issues. Little more than a century ago debate was raging over a different kind of "behavioral science" called phrenology. Phrenology held that personality characteristics were determined by the shape of someone

's skull. You've probably seen old phrenologists' diagrams; they were maps of the head with specific areas labeled, showing which zone of the brain determined a particular emotion or characteristic. A phrenologist would feel people's skulls, diagnosing their problems by the location of bumps on their head.

If you think behavioral science has advanced greatly since then, ask yourself how reasonable it is to surround an adult in the fetal position with pillows so he can get back in touch with his prenatal anxieties. Or consider the type of treatment suggested by those who advocate primal scream therapy, a methodology that teaches people to let out their frustrations by screaming mindlessly at the top of their lungs.²⁰ Combine that idea with group therapy and imagine the result! Group members hold hands and shriek at each other to work out their problems. Believe it or not, some psychologists are already using precisely that form of therapy—and arguing that it is the most dramatically effective treatment psychology has yet discovered!²¹ Given the choice, I believe I would opt for a phrenologist poking around on my head!

Jay Adams quoted a paper written for a Harvard symposium more than twenty-five years ago. The author of the paper raised the question, "Where will psychoanalysis be even 25 years from now?" His bold prediction: "It will take its place along with phrenology and mesmerism."²² Unfortunately, the prediction proved overly optimistic. And strangely enough, psychology seems to owe its survival to an unholy alliance between the church and popular culture.

At about the same time the church was becoming infatuated with "behavioral science," those who know psychology best were beginning to voice aloud the question of whether it is a science at all. Eleven years ago, Time magazine ran a cover story called "Psychiatry on the Couch." It said this:

On every front, psychiatry seems to be on the defensive. . . . Many psychiatrists want to abandon treatment of ordinary, everyday neurotics ("the worried well") to psychologists and the amateur Pop therapists. After all, does it take a hard-earned M.D. degree. . . to chat sympathetically and tell a patient you're-much-too-hard-on-yourself? And if psychiatry is a medical treatment, why can its practitioners not provide measurable scientific results like those obtained by other doctors?

Psychiatrists themselves acknowledge that their profession often smacks of modern alchemy—full of jargon, obfuscation and mystification, but precious little real knowledge. . . .

As always, psychiatrists are their own severest critics. Thomas Szasz, long the most outspoken gadfly of his profession, insists that there is really no such thing as mental illness, only normal problems of living. E. Fuller Torrey, another antipsychiatry psychiatrist, is willing to concede that there are a few brain diseases, like schizophrenia, but says they can be treated with only a handful of drugs that could be administered by general practitioners or internists. . . . By contrast, the Scottish psychiatrist and poet R.D. Laing is sure that schizophrenia is real—and that it is good for you. Explains Laing: it is a kind of psychedelic epiphany, far superior to normal experience.

Even mainline practitioners are uncertain that psychiatry can tell the insane from the sane.²³

The article went on to chronicle the failures of psychiatry, noting that "of all patients, one-third are eventually 'cured,' one-third are helped somewhat, and one-third are not helped at all."²⁴ But as the article further stated,

The trouble is that most therapies, including some outlandish ones, also claim some improvement for two-thirds of their patients. Critics argue that many patients go into analysis after a traumatic experience, such as divorce or a loved one's death, and are bound to do better anyway when the shock wears off. One study shows improvement for people merely on a waiting list for psychoanalytic treatment; presumably the simple decision to seek treatment is helpful.²⁵

The article concludes with a pessimistic forecast by Ross Baldessarini, a psychiatrist and biochemist at the Mailman Research Center. He told Time, "We are not going to find the causes and cures of mental illness in the foreseeable future."²⁶

Several years later, a conference in Phoenix, Arizona, brought together the world's leading experts on psychotherapy for what was billed as the largest meeting ever on the subject. The conference, called "The Evolution of Psychotherapy," drew 7,000 mental-health experts from all over the world. It was the largest such gathering in history, billed by its organizer as the Woodstock of psychotherapy. Out of it came several stunning revelations.

The Los Angeles Times, for example, quoted Laing, who "said that he couldn't think of any fundamental insight into human relations that has resulted from a century of psychotherapy. 'I don't think we've gone beyond Socrates, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, or even Flaubert by the age of 15,'" he said.²⁷ Laing added,

"I don't think psychiatry is a science at all. It's not like chemistry or physics where we build up a body of knowledge and progress."

He said that in his current personal struggle with depression, humming a favorite tune to himself (he favors one called "Keep Right On to the End of the Road") sometimes is of greater help than anything psychotherapy offers."²⁸

Time magazine, reporting on the conference, noted that in a panel discussion on schizophrenia, three out of four "experts" said there is no such disease.²⁹

R.D. Laing, the favorite shrink of student rebels in the '60s, retains his romantic opinion of schizophrenics as brave victims who are defying a cruel culture. He suggested that many people are diagnosed as schizophrenic simply because they sleep during the day and stay awake at night. Schizophrenia did not exist until the word was invented, he said. . . . At a later panel, a woman in the audience asked Laing how he would deal with schizophrenics. Laing bobbed and weaved for 27 minutes and finally offered the only treatment possible for people he does not view as sick: 'I treat them exactly the same way I treat anybody else. I conduct myself by the ordinary rules of courtesy and politeness.'³⁰

One truth came out clearly in the conference: among therapists there is little agreement. There is no unified "science" of psychotherapy; only a cacophony of clashing theories and therapies. Dr. Joseph Wolpe, a leading pioneer of behavioral therapy, characterized the Phoenix conference as "a babel of conflicting voices."³¹

And indeed it was. One specialist, Jay Haley, described what he called his "shaggy dog" technique. Evidently he means it is like a fluffy animal that appears to be fat until it gets wet—there seems to be more substance than really exists. This is his approach to therapy:

Get the patient to make an absolute commitment to change, then guarantee a cure but do not tell the patient what it is for several weeks. "Once you postpone, you never lose them as patients," he said. "They have to find out what the cure is." One bulimic who ate in binges and threw up five to 25 times a day was told she would be cured if she gave the therapist a penny the first time she vomited and doubled the sum each time she threw up. Says Haley: "They quickly figure out that it doubles so fast that they can owe the therapist hundreds of thousands of dollars in a few days, so they stop."³²

Jeffrey Zeig, organizer of the conference, said there may be as many as a hundred different theories in the United States alone. Most of them, he said, are "doomed to fizzle."³³

Not only do psychologists sell supposed cures for a high price, but they also invent diseases for which the cures are needed. Their marketing strategy has been effective. Invent problems or difficulties, harp on them until people think they are hopelessly afflicted, then peddle a remedy. Some of the supposed problems of our culture are pathetically trite. Self-image, looks, co-dependency, emotional abuse, mid-life crisis, unfulfilled expectations—today's "infirmities" were once seen more accurately as the pains of selfishness. Egocentricity has become a major market strategy for psychotherapists. By fostering people's natural tendency toward self-indulgence, psychology has sold itself to an eager public. And the church has witlessly jumped on the bandwagon.

Psychology is no more a science than the atheistic evolutionary theory upon which it is based. Like theistic evolution, "Christian psychology" is an attempt to harmonize two inherently contradictory systems of thought. Modern psychology and the Bible cannot be blended without serious compromise to or utter abandonment of the principle of Scripture's sufficiency.

Though it has become a lucrative business, psychotherapy cannot solve anyone's spiritual problems. At best it can occasionally use human insight to superficially modify behavior. It succeeds or fails for Christians and non-Christians equally because it is only a temporal adjustment—a sort of mental chiropractic. It cannot change the human heart, and even the experts admit that.

The Failure of "Christian" Psychology

Meanwhile, however, the attitude within the church is more accepting of psychotherapy than ever. If the Christian media serve as a barometer of the whole church, a dramatic shift is taking place. Christian radio, for example, once a bastion of Bible teaching and Christian music, is overrun with talk shows, pop psychology, and phone-in psychotherapy. Preaching the Bible is passé. Psychologists and radio counselors are the new heroes of evangelicalism. And Christian radio is

the major advertising tool for the selling of psychology—which is pulling in money by the billions.

The church is thereby ingesting heavy doses of dogma from psychology, adopting secular "wisdom" and attempting to sanctify it by calling it Christian. Evangelicalism's most fundamental values are thus being redefined. "Mental and emotional health" is the new buzzword. It is not a biblical concept, though many seem to equate it with spiritual wholeness. Sin is called sickness, so people think it requires therapy, not repentance. Habitual sin is called addictive or compulsive behavior, and many surmise its solution is medical care rather than moral correction.³⁴

Human therapies are embraced most eagerly by the spiritually weak—those who are shallow or ignorant of biblical truth and who are unwilling to accept the path of suffering that leads to spiritual maturity and deeper communion with God. The unfortunate effect is that these people remain immature, held back by a self-imposed dependence on some pseudo-Christian method or psycho-quackery that actually stifles real growth.

The more secular psychology influences the church, the further people move from a biblical perspective on problems and solutions. One-on-one therapists are replacing the Bible, God's chief means of sanctifying grace (John 15:3; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Hebrews 4:12). The counsel these professionals dispense is often spiritually disastrous. Not long ago I listened aghast as a Christian psychologist on live radio counseled a caller to express anger at his therapist by making an obscene gesture at him. "Go ahead!" he told the caller. "It's an honest expression of your feelings. Don't try to keep your anger inside."

"What about my friends?" the caller asked. "Should I react that way to all of them when I'm angry?"

"Why, sure!" this counselor said. "You can do it to anyone, whenever you feel like it. Except those who you think won't understand—they won't be good therapists for you." That's a paraphrase. I have a tape of the entire broadcast, and what the counselor actually suggested was much more explicit, even to the point of being inappropriate to print.

That same week, I heard another popular Christian broadcast that offers live counseling to callers nationwide. A woman called and said she has had a problem with compulsive fornication for years. She said she goes to bed with "anyone and everyone" and feels powerless to change her behavior.

The counselor suggested that her conduct is her way of striking back, a result of wounds inflicted by her passive father and overbearing mother. "There's no simple road to recovery," this radio therapist told her. "Your problem won't go away immediately—it's an addiction, and these things require extended counseling. You will need years of therapy to overcome your need for illicit sex." The suggestion was then made for the caller to find a church that would be tolerant while she worked her way out of the "painful wounds" that were "making" her fornicate.

What kind of advice is that? First, the counselor in effect gave that woman permission to defer obedience to a clear command of Scripture: "Flee immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18; see also 1 Thess. 4:3). Second, he blamed her parents and justified her vengeance toward them. Third, he seemed to be suggesting she could taper off gradually from her sin—under therapy, of course.

Furthermore, he gave his nationwide audience the clear message that he has no real confidence in the Holy Spirit's power to immediately transform a person's heart and behavior. Worse, he encouraged churches to tolerate a person's sexual sin until therapy begins to work.

Contrast both of those radio counselors' advice with the profound simplicity of Galatians 5:16: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." Do we really think years of therapy can bring people to the point where they walk by the Spirit? Certainly not if the therapist is someone who recommends obscene gestures, delayed repentance, and churches tolerant of chronic immorality! There is no biblical justification for such counsel—in fact, it flatly contradicts God's Word. The apostle Paul told the Corinthian church to turn an adulterer over to Satan, putting him out of the church (1 Cor. 5).

I thank God for men and women in the church who depend on the Bible when counseling others. I am grateful for godly counselors who urge troubled people to pray and who point them to Scripture, to God, and to the fullness of His resources for every need.

I have no quarrel with those who use either common sense or social sciences as a helpful observer's platform to look on human conduct and develop tools to assist people in getting some external controls in their behavior. That may be useful

I as a first step for getting to the real spiritual cure. But a wise counselor realizes that all behavioral therapy stops on the surface—far short of actual solutions to the real needs of the soul, which are resolved only in Christ.

On the other hand, I have no tolerance for those who exalt psychology above Scripture, intercession, and the perfect sufficiency of our God. And I have no encouragement for people who wish to mix psychology with the divine resources and sell the mixture as a spiritual elixir. Their methodology amounts to a tacit admission that what God has given us in Christ is not really adequate to meet our deepest needs and save our troubled lives.

God Himself doesn't think very highly of counselors who claim to represent Him but rely instead on human wisdom. Job 12:17-20 says:

He makes counselors walk barefoot ,

And makes fools of judges.

He loosens the bond of kings,

And binds their loins with a girdle.

He makes priests walk barefoot,

And overthrows the secure ones.

He deprives the trusted ones of speech,

And takes away the discernment of the elders.

God's wisdom is so vastly superior to man's that the greatest human counselors are made into a spectacle. Verses 24-25 add,

He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth's people,

And makes them wander in a pathless waste.

They grope in darkness with no light,

And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

If anyone had to endure the folly of well-intentioned human counselors it was Job. Their irrelevant, useless advice was as much a grief to him as the satanic afflictions he suffered.

The depth to which sanctified psychotherapy can sink is really quite profound. A local newspaper recently featured an article about a thirty-four-bed clinic that has opened up in Southern California to treat "Christian sex addicts."³⁵ (The reason for beds in this kind of clinic escapes me.) According to the article, the clinic is affiliated with a large and well-known Protestant church in the area. Its staff comprises specialists described as "real pioneers in the area . These are all legitimate, licensed psychotherapists who happen to have a strong Christian orientation to therapy," according to the center's director.³⁶

Does their "Christian" orientation happen to be solid enough to allow these psychotherapists to admit that lasciviousness is sin? Evidently not. Several were interviewed for the article. They consistently used the terms illness, problem, conflict, and compulsive behavior, treatment, and therapy. Words with moral overtones were carefully avoided. Sin and repentance were never mentioned.

Worse, these so-called experts scoffed at the power of God's Word to transform a heart and break the bondage of sexual sin. The article quoted the center's program director, who explained why he believes his treatment center specifically for Christians is so crucial: "There are some groups of Christians who believe the Bible is all you need."³⁷

That statement is the echo of neo-gnosticism. Belittling those who believe the Bible is sufficient, these latter-day "clouds

without water" (Jude 12) insist that they are privy to a higher, more sophisticated secret knowledge that holds the real answer to what troubles the human soul. Don't be intimidated by their false claims. No higher knowledge, no hidden truth, nothing besides the all-sufficient resources that we find in Christ exists that can change the human heart.

The church must recover her confidence in the spiritual resources God provides. We must return to the conviction that Scripture alone is "inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). I am convinced that far more is at stake than the average Christian realizes. If evangelicals do not rediscover biblical counseling and reinstate God's Word to its rightful place as the supreme discernor and mender of the thoughts and intents of the heart (cf. Hebrews 4:12), we will lose our testimony to the world and the church itself will die. These matters are that critical.

7

The Work of the Spirit and Biblical Counseling

by

John F. MacArthur, Jr.

A recent book titled *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional*, by Wendy Kaminer, debunks much of the mystique of modern psychology.³⁸ The author does not purport to be a Christian. She describes herself as "a skeptical, secular humanist, Jewish, feminist, intellectual lawyer."³⁹ Yet she writes as a bitter critic of the marriage of religion and psychology. She notes that religion and psychology have always more or less deemed one another incompatible. Now she sees "not just a truce but a remarkable accommodation."⁴⁰ Even from her perspective as an unbeliever, she can see that this accommodation has meant a change in the fundamental message Christians convey to the world. She writes:

Religious writers would minimize or dismiss the effect of psychology on religion, fiercely denying that it has made doctrinal changes, but it does seem to have influenced the tone and packaging of religious appeals. . . . Christian codependency books, like those produced by the Minirth-Meier clinic in Texas, are practically indistinguishable from codependency books published by secular writers. . . . Religious writers justify their reliance on psychology by praising it for "catching up" to some eternal truths, but they've also found a way to make the temporal truths of psychology palatable. Religious leaders once condemned psychoanalysis for its moral neutrality. . . . Now popular religious literature equates illness with sin.⁴¹

Some of the criticism Kaminer levels against evangelicals is unwarranted or misguided, but in this respect, she is right on target: evangelicalism has been infiltrated by a worldly anthropology-psychology-theology that is diametrically opposed to the biblical doctrines of sin and sanctification. As a result of this accommodation, the church has compromised and hopelessly muddled the message we are to proclaim.

Visit your local Christian bookstore and notice the proliferation of books on addiction recovery, emotional therapy, self-esteem, and other psychology-related topics. The language of such books carries a common theme: "look within your self"; "get in touch with your inner child"; "explore the recesses of your past fears, hurts, and disappointments"; and "find the real answers to your problems within your own heart." Why? Because "the answers lie deep within."

Those books may sport logos from Christian publishers, but that kind of advice is not biblical and is unworthy of being labeled Christian. In fact, it sums up the very worst advice secular psychology offers.

Nowhere does Scripture advise people to seek answers by looking within. In fact, Scripture explicitly teaches us we are sinners and should distrust our own hearts: "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind" (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Those who look within themselves to find answers are in a hopeless situation. Instead of answers, they get lies.

Psychology cannot solve this dilemma. Virtually all psychotherapy turns people inward, studying feelings, groping for suppressed memories, seeking self-esteem, scrutinizing attitudes, and generally listening to one's own heart. But emotions are hopelessly subjective, and our own hearts are deceitful. Only biblical counseling can offer reliable, authoritative, objective answers. And the objective truth of Scripture is the only tool God uses in the process of sanctification. Jesus Himself prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Unfortunately, psychology and worldly therapies have usurped the role of sanctification in some Christians' thinking. Psychological sanctification has become a substitute for the Spirit-filled life. The notion is abroad within the church that psychotherapy is often a more effective change agent—particularly in dealing with the most difficult cases—than the Holy Spirit who sanctifies.

But can psychotherapy possibly accomplish something that the Holy Spirit cannot? Can an earthly therapist achieve more than a heavenly Comforter? Is behavior modification more helpful than sanctification? Of course not.

The Paraclete

To understand the crucial role that the Holy Spirit plays in meeting people's inner needs, we must go back to what Jesus taught His disciples when He first promised them He would send the Holy Spirit. It happened on the night Jesus was betrayed. His crucifixion was drawing near. The disciples were fearful and confused. Jesus was speaking to them about His going away (John 14:2). Their hearts were troubled (v. 1). In that hour of turmoil, they feared being left alone. Jesus assured them that they would not be left to fend for themselves. He comforted them with this wonderful promise:

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also. In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."

Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:16-26).

"Helper" in verse 16 is the Greek word *paraklētos*, meaning someone called to another's aid. First John 2:1 applies the same term to Jesus Himself: "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The word is sometimes transliterated into English as "Paraclete." It describes a spiritual Attendant whose role is to offer assistance, succor, support, relief, advocacy, and guidance—a divine Counselor whose ministry to believers is to offer the very things that so many people vainly seek in therapy!

The promises Jesus made with regard to the Holy Spirit and His ministry are staggering in their scope. Let's look at some of the key elements of this text:

A Divine Helper

The word translated "another" is a key to understanding the nature of the Holy Spirit. The Greek text carries a precision that is not immediately evident in English. Two Greek words can be translated "another." One is *heteros*, which means "a different one, a different kind" as in, "If that style isn't what you want, try another." *Allos* is also translated "another" in English, but it means "another of the same kind," as in, "That cookie was tasty; may I have another?"

Jesus used *allos* to describe the Holy Spirit: "another Helper." He was promising to send them a Helper exactly like Himself—a compassionate, loving, divine Paraclete. They had grown dependent on Jesus' ministry to them. He had been their Wonderful Counselor, taught them, led them, befriended them, and shown them the Father. From now on, they would have another Paraclete—One like Jesus—to meet the same needs He had met.

Here Jesus was for the first time giving the disciples extensive teaching about the Holy Spirit and His role. Note that our

Lord speaks of the Spirit as a Person, not an influence, not a mystical power, not some ethereal, impersonal, phantom force. The Spirit has all the attributes of personality (mind—Romans 8:27; emotions—Ephesians 4:30; and will—Hebrews 2:4) and all the attributes of deity (cf. Acts 5:3-4). He is another Paraclete of exactly the same essence as Jesus.

But there was a significant difference: Jesus was returning to the Father; the Holy Spirit would "be with you forever" (v. 16). The Holy Spirit is a constant, sure, trustworthy divine Paraclete graciously given by Christ to His disciples to be with them forever.

A Guide to Truth

It is noteworthy that Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of truth" (v. 17). As God, He is the essence of truth; as a Paraclete, He is the One who guides us into truth. Apart from Him, it is impossible for sinful beings to know or understand any spiritual truth. Jesus said, "The world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him" (v. 17). Paul, echoing that, wrote, "To us God revealed through the Spirit. . . . Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God But 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" (1 Corinthians 2:10, 12, 14).

The unregenerate have no facility for spiritual perception. They cannot comprehend spiritual truth. They are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), unable to respond to anything except their own sinful passions.

Believers, on the other hand, are actually taught spiritual truth by God Himself (cf. John 6:45). In fact, much of the Holy Spirit's ministry to believers involves teaching (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 John 2:20, 27), guiding them into the truth of Christ (John 16:13-14); and illuminating the truth for them (1 Corinthians 2:12).

This promise of a supernatural Teacher had a special application for the eleven disciples. Jesus' teaching was often difficult for them to understand immediately. Much of what He told them meant nothing to them until after His resurrection. For example, in John 2:22 we read, "When . . . He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken." John 12:16 says, "These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him." In John 16:12, Jesus said, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

After Jesus ascended, one of the crucial ministries of the Holy Spirit was to bring to their minds what Jesus had said, and teach them what He meant: "These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (vv. 25-26). That means, of course, that the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to recall the precise words Jesus had spoken to them—so that when they recorded them as Scripture, they would be perfect and error free. This assured that the gospel accounts would be recorded infallibly, and that the apostolic teaching would be unadulterated.

But this promise of our Lord also reveals the Holy Spirit as a supernatural Teacher who ministers truth to the hearts of those whom He indwells. The Spirit guides us into the truth of God's Word. He teaches us, affirms the truth in our hearts, convicts us of sin, and often brings to mind specific truths and statements of Scripture that are applicable to our lives. As we noted, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him to us God revealed them through the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10, emphasis added).

As a divinely indwelling Teacher, the Spirit of Truth fills a function that no human counselor can even approach. He is constantly there, pointing the way to truth, applying the truth directly to our hearts, prompting us to conform to the truth—in short, sanctifying us in the truth (John 17:17).

The Indwelling Presence

Look a little more closely at Jesus' words at the end of John 14:17: "He abides with you, and will be in you." Our Lord was promising that the Holy Spirit would take up permanent, uninterrupted residence within His disciples. It was not only that the Spirit would be present with them; the greater truth was that He would be permanently resident within them.

This truth of the permanently indwelling Spirit is one of the wonderful New Covenant realities. Ezekiel 37:14 foretold it: "I

will put My Spirit within you, and you will come to life." In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was often present with believers, but He did not indwell them. Moreover, His presence seemed to be conditional; so David prayed, "Do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11).

In the New Testament era, however, believers have a permanently resident

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