

Psalm 46

For Times Like These

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

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The Creaking on the Stairs

The Creaking on the Stairs: Finding Faith in God through Childhood Abuse by Mez McConnell is how God transformed him from a victim to a new man in Christ by grace through faith.¹ The back cover indicates that “Mez McConnell is the pastor of Niddrie Community Church near Edinburgh” and says:

This is a book that has no easy answers to the problems of childhood abuse. Instead, it tries to get behind the tough questions of why God permits such horrors to occur in this world. Using his own childhood as a Launchpad, Mez McConnell tells us about a God who is just, sovereign, and loving. A good father who knows the pain of rejection and abuse, who hates evil and who can bring hope even in the darkest place (back cover).

Rosario Butterfield² wrote the Foreword” and ends by saying: “This is the most disturbing book that I have ever

read. And I cannot recommend it highly enough.”

Cannot Recommend

Contrary to Butterfield’s high recommendation for the book and the endorsements by those we list below, **we cannot recommend this book.** Although the book has some good solid biblical teachings and testimony, it is undone by McConnell’s advice under “Next Steps.” After giving sound advice to “silent sufferers with hidden wounds,” McConnell asks and answers the following question: “So what should you do now?” (p. 227). In Steps One, Two, and Four McConnell gives sound advice for those who have suffered abuse. However, Step Three is a serious enough error and sinful enough recommendation for us to warn against it, rather than recommending the book without a serious caveat.

This book is somewhat like the bad joke in which an individual does some-
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Try, Try Again

We are apparently having only minor success with our “Hidden in Plain Sight” articles, which clearly reveal the sinful nature of the biblical counseling movement (BCM). An old adage we all know is: “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.” So, here we go with another attempt to help more people see what is “Hidden in Plain Sight.” We again remind our readers that the Institute for Nouthetic Studies states that “Dr. Adams is the founder of the modern biblical counseling movement and is the author of the groundbreaking book *Competent to Counsel*.”¹ Adams set the standard that all those in the BCM follow. It is a problem-centered standard, which

begins with questions by the counselors and ends up in sinful conversations because of what the counselors and counselees say to each other. We have used many Bible verses to expose the sinful conversations between biblical counselors and their counselees. In our book *Counseling the Hard Cases: A Critical Review* we list a number of Bible verses misused, abused, and missed by the leaders of the BCM, which compound the sinfulness of the conversations.² To simplify as much as possible, we will refer primarily to marriage counseling as practiced by all the leaders we have seen, read, and heard in the BCM, because it is
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Hello -

Thank you so much for your resources, research, and Biblical insight on the psychoheresy problem. Your materials have helped me verbalize what I vaguely felt was wrong in so many churches/seminars/so-called Christian books. It has also helped me communicate these concerns, although usually with unfruitful results - the cult of psychoheresy has unfortunately become an idol with many and they do not want to let go.

Virginia

To bobgan@pamweb.org,

I agree with you completely. To use any secular counselling is to directly challenge the Sufficiency of GOD's Word. Now that I have 'found' you, I will make use of your generous offer of free material to strengthen my own trust.

Namibia, Africa

Martin & Deidre,

Your recent letter sent out from your ministry speaking about what seems hidden in plain sight further brings me to my knees. God has had me in the prophets showing me how they point to the Laodicean church who blindly believes that they are rich while they are playing the harlot. Then in turning to the gospels as I read Jesus words, He speaks along the same lines to the Pharisaic church with hearts far from Him all the while they claim to know all about the Father whom Christ came to reveal. The fear of the Lord also has been the Holy Spirit's teaching, helping me to understand that the powers that blind our eyes deluding us, God Himself sends when we choose to live disobedient to hearing

Him and doing what He says. The hedge of His protection is brought down and He uses the powers of darkness to bring chastisement into our lives when we care nothing of learning His truth that says: Be Holy as I am Holy. Most today would never agree that our God would today do such a thing, but the remnant would and is GLAD!

I pray that you in the ministry that God has given you will continue to be sharpened by the sword of His Word in your lives so that when He gives you open doors (be it to one or a thousand) that the truths you deliver will deliver and heal those God calls you to assist.

email

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Bobgan:

Thank you so much for your ministry. We are certainly living in an age where spiritual deception is rampant. I appreciate Christians like yourselves who exercise their gift of discernment, and stand as watchmen to warn and admonish others.

I never thought I would live to see the world in the condition it is presently in. It is a perilous time when the Scriptures are our safeguard, obedience is our protection, and the Lord Jesus our only hope as the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Your insights concerning the ineffectual (and even damaging) nature of psychology as a "science" are quite right. I greatly appreciate your books, and am always delighted to see the *PsychoHeresy Awareness Letter* in my mailbox. May God richly bless you as you continue in His work!

email

Hi Martin and Deidre,

Thank you very much for the precious and holy materials you provide. As a medical doctor it has been a blessing to read your well-documented scientifically grounded reports and books which confirmed personal convictions many years ago.... My observation is that psychological (Christian or not) coun-

selling is yet so anchored in Christian minds that it is more and more difficult to find Christians ready to listen to the pure Word of God and to understand how and where to find the cure..

France

Dear Bro & Sister Bobgan,

Thank you for your continued ministry to God's people.

A while ago we had a pastoral change to a young man. One of the first things he did is bring in Jim Berg's *Quieting a Noisy Soul*. It was 27 weeks of "Biblical" psychotherapy. I strongly disagreed with him bringing it into our fellowship. I had been through Neil Anderson's *Bondage Breaker* and Finney's *Breaking up the Fallow Ground*. These systems assume we are saved. What helped me greatly was reading your book *Person to Person Ministry: Soul Care in the Body of Christ*.

In a positive way the most important thing I read was the fact that we are under a New Covenant. We cannot fix old Adam. We will have to live with the reality of the challenge of the old nature until we pass out of this world (Heb. 8:8-13; Jer. 31:33, 34).

Canada

Hello,

I have been reading your books and articles for almost 20 years. I agree wholeheartedly with your conclusions concerning psychology in the church and in society in general. You are so valuable to the church and yet, so few pastors and believers accept the truth.

email

Thank you for writing to us. We read every letter, even though we are not able to answer each one personally.



The Creaking on the Stairs (continued from page 1)

thing truly outstanding and the punch line is, "So sorry, one mistake," which undoes all that preceded it. Step Three begins by saying, "You might need some counseling." McConnell refers to seeking counseling as a sign of strength, not weakness. He describes what the counselor should be like and how the counselor will act. He then says, "We call this kind of counsellor a *biblical counsellor* because what they are doing is helping apply the truths of the Bible to some of the hurts we have experienced in this life." He then suggests that the reader can find that kind of counselling at "CCEF, biblicalcounseling.org, etc." (p. 230).

CCEF is the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation. We have often written about CCEF and been critical of the fact that they recycle psychological theories and therapies and that they are a separated-from-the-church biblical counselling organization that charges fees. In addition, CCEF has other means of generating income as their tax return form shows a total of \$4,005,406 for total revenue with the two highest paid employees receiving a total of \$280,000 together for salary and other benefits for 2018.

We have examined the counseling done by those at CCEF and found that their idols-of-the-heart counseling, fathered by Dr. David Powlison, violates biblical admonitions, prohibitions, and restrictions of Scripture and is, therefore, sinful. Because CCEF is separated from the church, charges a fee for services, making their counselees clients like their psychological counterparts, and practices sinful counseling, we cannot unreservedly endorse McConnell's book. McConnell reveals in his book how **unhelpful counselors** were to him in his plight, but evidently is convinced that biblical counseling is radically different.

Endorsers

In addition to the "Foreword" by Rosario Butterfield, the book carries numerous other endorsers. We assume that they also endorse the entire content of the book, including Step Three, and are, therefore, prime examples of how those who are considered rock-solid leaders of the evangelical faith cannot see what is "hidden in plain sight" in regard to what is called "biblical counseling." We list these prodigious evangelical leaders with only one designation after their names, even though some have multiple designations. :

Nouthetic counseling was modeled after behaviorism. Idols-of-the-heart counseling is reflective of psychoanalysis.

Endorsers of *The Creaking on the Stairs* are:

- Chris Larson, President & CEO, Ligonier Ministries
- Steve Timmis, Director of Acts29
- Ligon Duncan, Chancellor and CEO, Reformed Theological Seminary
- Mike Reeves, President & Professor of Theology, Union School of Theology, Wales
- Emily Jensen, Cofounder of Risen Motherhood
- Matthew Z. Capps, Senior Pastor, Fairview Baptist Church, Apex, NC
- Marvin Olasky, Editor in Chief, *World*
- Gavin Peacock, Associate Pastor, Calvary Grace Church of Calgary
- Erik Raymond, Senior Pastor, Redeemer Fellowship Church, Boston, MA
- J. Garrett Kell, Pastor Del Ray Baptist Church, Alexandria, VA

Phil Johnson, Executive Director of *Grace to You*

Eric Schumacher, Shepherd, Songwriter, Storyteller at emschumacher.com

Liam Goligher, Senior Minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA

Aileen Challies, Pastor's Wife

Anthony Mathenia, Pastor, Christchurch, Radford, VA

Paul Washer, President, Heart Cry Ministry, Radford, VA

Matt Smethurst, Managing Editor of The Gospel Coalition

Doug Logan, Director of the Diversity Initiative, Acts29

Brian Croft, Senior Pastor, Auburndale Baptist Church

Greg Gilbert, Senior Pastor, Third Avenue Baptist Church, Louisville, KY

If one examines every word spoken in literal live biblical counseling, one will find that such counseling depends on sinful conversations fueled and ignited by the counselor. All the live biblical counseling we have seen and described is sinful, but apparently supported by those listed above. All have missed what is "hidden in plain sight."

Sinful Counseling

The biblical counseling movement was fathered by Dr. Jay Adams (nouthetic counseling) and further developed by Dr. David Powlison with his idols-of-the-heart counseling. Nouthetic counseling was modeled after behaviorism. Idols-of-the-heart counseling is reflective of psychoanalysis. The procedure of such modern-day biblical counseling follows the conversational method of secular psychological counseling with

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Ψ Psych Notes

Psych Notes are selected from numerous articles from professional journals and other publications. The ones used are chosen for their possible interest to readers, but not necessarily because this ministry recommends them.

Exercise and Depression

“Several studies in recent years have demonstrated that physical activity, including aerobic exercise and strength training, can reduce symptoms of depression. In some cases, regular exercise can be as effective as conventional treatments, such as cognitive behavioral therapy and antidepressant medications.

“Research also shows that even short bursts of activity throughout the day, such as a couple of 15-minute walks, can be helpful. The challenge, of course, is that having depression can make you less motivated or able to exercise. Depression symptoms such as weight gain and fatigue can make exercising more difficult.

“If you are able to find an exercise or sport that appeals to you, studies support the idea that any kind of activity is better at preventing and treating depression than living a very sedentary lifestyle. Just taking a few minutes to walk briskly or a ride a bike is a great start. Adding a few minutes a day or a week can eventually get you to a target of a few hours a week. And if you’re taking antidepressants or are being treated in other ways, boosting your activity level can make those other treatments more effective.

“Just how walking, dancing and swimming can battle the blues isn’t entirely understood. It’s believed, however, that improving blood flow to the brain is a key result of exercise, as is the release of mood-improving ‘feel good’ chemicals in the brain that are produced when you’re up and moving about” (excerpted from “How Exercising May

Help Prevent the Onset of Depression,” *Mind, Mood & Memory*, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 4).

“Alzheimer’s & Glucose”

“One substance that’s critical to brain function is glucose, which the brain depends on as its main source of energy. While the body is at rest, about two-thirds of the glucose in our blood gets used by the brain to power its metabolic activities. So we can think of the brain as being dependent on glucose—but the glucose must first cross the blood-brain barrier before it can be used. Researchers have reported that less and less glucose is able to cross the blood-brain barrier as we age. This is a normal development that occurs even when there’s no disease, no Alzheimer’s. In some people, enough glucose is still able to get through the blood-brain barrier to supply sufficient energy for the brain to function normally. But if the situation develops where the brain can no longer get the energy it needs from glucose, the resulting chronic energy deficiency will bring about changes in how the brain operates. My [Dr. Edward Blonz] hypothesis is that Alzheimer’s disease is a result of this problem....

“This has nothing to do with the amount of glucose in the diet or the bloodstream. It’s the inability of sufficient glucose to get from the blood through the blood-brain barrier and into the brain that’s the problem....

“Evidence suggests that the brain reacts as though it has been invaded by bacteria, a virus, or some other microbial agent, and one or more of these is using up the glucose. The immune system, our body’s defender, gets the call and responds as though the brain is under attack. Along comes its bag of disease-fighting tools and inflammation to increase circulation in the affected area. The brain also shifts its metabolism to make its own antimicrobial substances—in this case amyloid-beta,

the same substance known to build up and affect cognition in the brains of individuals with Alzheimer’s disease. It may be produced by the brain in a misguided attempt to protect itself from a nonexistent microbial attack....

“Much of our focus has been on the role of glucose as the primary fuel of the brain. Consider that during starvation there is no glucose or any source of energy being consumed. Our body is always burning fat in the form of fatty acids for energy, but in the case of starvation—or also in the case of a carbohydrate-free diet—the body is forced to burn fatty acids for its energy needs. Fatty acids themselves cannot pass through the blood-brain barrier. But when we are in that carb-free, fat-burning mode, partially metabolized fats known as ketones get produced. A unique quality of ketones is that they can effectively pass through their own passageway in the blood-brain barrier to provide energy for the brain. Ketones therefore represent an “alternate fuel” the brain can use when glucose is in short supply.

“Another situation in which the body can produce ketones is when it’s being fed a high-fiber diet. For a long time, scientists thought that the main role of dietary fiber was to increase fecal bulk, help with regularity, and decrease the risk of colon cancer. But we have also learned that the microorganisms that normally live in our large intestine can ferment dietary fiber into certain short-chain fatty acids that become ketones after they are absorbed into the body. Alzheimer’s-modeling research in dogs has shown that putting them on a high-fiber diet improved cognition when compared to the same types of dogs fed a low-fiber diet, which provides support for the ketone hypothesis.

“Population studies also support this concept, with evidence showing that cultures that eat higher-fiber diets have

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a very low incidence of Alzheimer's disease. More recent research has reported that groups who shift over to a Mediterranean-type diet, which is typically higher in fiber than the typical U.S. diet, tend to experience a beneficial effect on cognition" (excerpted from Edward Blonz, PhD, interviewed by Jeanine Barone for *Berkeley Wellness* about his article "Alzheimer's Disease as the Product of a Progressive Energy Deficiency Syndrome in the Central Nervous System: The Neuroenergetic Hypothesis," published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5676979/>), www.berkeleywellness.com).

"Music Therapy for Depression"

"In a research paper published in *Frontiers in Psychology* in 2017, German researchers analyzed findings from 28 studies of music therapy, which included 1,810 participants. The studies took very different approaches, from having depressed patients simply listen to music to encouraging them to participate in singing or instrumental group music therapy. The trials also employed different styles of music. Overall, 26 of the 28 studies found statistically significant reductions in depression levels associated with music therapy. Among studies that used the Geriatric Depression Scale to measure depression, music therapy was associated with a 43 percent improvement in symptoms.

"Because the studies varied so widely, drawing conclusions about the best form of music therapy was difficult. Group music therapy sessions were slightly more effective at easing depression than individual sessions. Participants ages 60 and older had greater improvements in depression scores than younger participants, according to

the authors" (excerpted from *Berkeley Wellness Letter*, article published online 7/25/18, <http://www.berkeleywellness.com/healthy-mind/mood/article/music-therapy-depression>).

Memory Problems?

"When you first notice changes in your ability to recall information clearly, pay attention, or make decisions, you may assume Alzheimer's disease or some other form of dementia may be taking hold. But it's worth taking stock of your overall health to see if something else may be affecting your cognition....

"While some age-related thinking-skills changes and physical changes are unavoidable, you can do plenty to help reduce your risk of health problems that may contribute to cognitive decline. The key is to be proactive and aware of what conditions need screening and monitoring.

"Your annual blood work, for example, can reveal some potentially serious health challenges that could also affect brain function.

"**Anemia:** Low levels of red blood cells, hemoglobin, and hematocrit can indicate anemia, which can cause impaired memory and other changes in your cognition.

"**Vitamin B12 deficiency:** Low levels of B12 are associated with nervous system disorders and reduced cognition, and other complications.

"**Thyroid disorder:** A blood test that checks your thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) levels helps screen for both overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism) and underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism), both of which can lead to changes in cognition.

"**Body and Mind:** Countless physical and emotional factors determine how well you can focus from day to day or remember old and new information. The same is true for your ability to make plans and decisions.

"Your emotional state, for example, affects how clearly you can think. You can probably recall moments where you were very upset, and the decisions you made at that time may not have been as well thought-out as they would have been if you were calmer. That's why making decisions when you're impatient or worried about other things isn't the best strategy.

"Likewise, being sleep-deprived, even for one night, can have a huge effect on your ability to pay attention or keep track of your schedule. In fact, getting at least seven or eight hours of quality sleep with few interruptions may be one of the most important aspects of cognitive health that can usually be controlled by an individual. Poor sleep due to age-related changes, however, is all too common" (excerpted from "Don't Assume It's Dementia: Medications, Illnesses Can Also Affect Memory," *Mind, Mood & Memory*, Vol. 16, No. 4, p 4).



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Try, Try Again *(continued from page 1)*

a most often sought-after form of counseling. We begin with two Bible verses from Ephesians, because **they are the most violated verses in the marriage counseling done by those in the BCM.**

Ephesians 5:22 and 25

Ephesians 5:22 and 25 give clear instructions for marriage: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.... Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” These verses are all imperatives—commands. They are not optional suggestions. We hope we can all agree that Christians should follow biblical guidelines and, yes, admonitions concerning what they say and the emotions they express. For instance, in ordinary conversations Christians are disobeying the Lord if they engage in gossip or say rude things about others. In fact, all conversations should honor the Lord—at least not dishonor Him! Further, we hope that we can all agree that conversations between believers must conform to Scripture, particularly when one is attempting to help a fellow believer. If the words used in counseling by either the counselors or counselees are contrary to the admonitions, prohibitions, and restrictions of Scripture, the counseling is sinful.

Ephesians 5:22 instructs the wife to submit to her husband “as unto the Lord.” God’s order of governance in the marriage is not optional. The phrase “unto the Lord” qualifies the height, depth, length and breadth of the submission and implies the eternal source for doing so: because of her relationship to the Lord, who loves her and gave Himself for her. Her submission is therefore not dependent on whether or not the husband is following verse 25. Her submission to her husband is dependent on her relationship to the Lord and therefore reflects the quality of her submission

to the Lord and her love for Him. Submission does not imply inferiority, but reflects Christ in His submission to God the Father. It is a place wherein the woman can bring love, joy, and peace into the relationship and a place where she can grow in long-suffering, faith, meekness, and self-control. In an attitude of humility, she can exercise her creativity and bring forth wisdom for her husband and children (Proverbs 31). As a woman follows this one command in the normal course of marital relations, she will honor the Lord and her husband by not saying unloving and rude things to her husband or complain about him to others.

Our whole culture has been psychologized into thinking it’s not only okay, but beneficial to be transparent and to be free to say mean things about others, to complain about their faults....

Ephesians 5:25 instructs the husband to love his wife, “even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Such love as this sounds impossible and must be found in a man’s relationship to the Lord Himself. All governance is to be in love and for the wife’s well-being in the Lord. As Jesus sacrificed Himself for the church, the husband is to love and govern sacrificially, not to please Himself, but to please the Lord. The husband carries the grave responsibility to care for his wife sacrificially. That includes paying attention to her and regarding what she has to say. When a husband loves his wife as Christ loves the church, he does not harm her with words or actions, he does not demean her directly or in front of others, and he does not complain about her to others. Instead, he lifts her up and encourages her in her relationship with the Lord and with himself.

Sinful Questions and Answers

Although these verses would be the goals of biblical counseling, the counseling process itself invokes just the opposite. BCM counselors invite the couple to express why they have come for counseling and proceed to ask for details and examples of what needs to be changed. In every live literal marriage counseling session we have seen or read, Ephesians 5:22 and 25 have been violated at or near the beginning of the counseling conversation. In violation of Ephesians 5:22 and 25, the live counseling sessions for which we have copies contain conversations in which couples complain about each other, demean each other, and say cruel things about each other and often about parents and others who are not present to defend themselves. When they do so, the counselor regularly asks for more details. After all, counselors think they must get all the problematic issues out on the table in order to solve the multitude of problems. Thus counselors are active participants as well as precipitants in these sinful conversations.

In Adams’ *The Case of the “Hopeless” Marriage* many words coming out of the mouths of Bert and Sue, the counselees, and Greg, their pastor/counselor, are in violation of Ephesians 5. Couples in contention with each other and airing their grievances to a biblical counselor are in violation of Ephesians 5. And, every biblical counselor who enables them to do so is encouraging them to amplify their sin by asking the kinds of questions that bring out more complaints along with their details. Every marital counseling case we have seen by the leaders of the biblical counseling movement has included such sinful interchanges.

Our whole culture has been psychologized into thinking it’s not only okay, but beneficial to be transparent

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and to be free to say mean things about others, to complain about their faults, to gossip, to speak rudely, and, frankly, to reveal the sinful heart (Jeremiah 17:9). In fact, we have heard people joke about the love chapter in the Bible (1 Corinthians 13), about how it is read at weddings, but no one follows it. We are a very self-centered me-culture, even in the church. Therefore when entering into a counseling relationship, counselees expect to talk about problems they are having with others and counselors seek to find out as much as possible, as if they are attempting to diagnose a disease. The entire process ends up dishonoring the Lord and spiritually harming all participants. Counselees are invited to sin so that grace may abound (Romans 6:1). That is because all the problems must be expressed and explored prior to any teaching about what the Bible says, such as what Ephesians 5:22, 25 has to say about marriage.

The following are the types of questions that are prolifically used by those in the BCM that always end up with sinful speaking:

What things in your marriage make you sad?

How would you characterize your communication with your husband/wife?

Describe how you as a couple resolve conflicts.

What do you see as the weaknesses of your marriage?

What could your spouse do to greatly change your marriage?

Pick one area of your marriage where you think you have problems. Describe what is wrong and what each of you has done to solve it.

Can you tell me a little more about that?

So what else would you like to add to that?

Is there anything you want to add to that to help me understand it?

How are you dealing with that?

Are there any other areas?

Although counselors may believe that they are simply exposing what needs to be addressed, they are actually exacerbating problems through inviting and listening to such sinful communication.

The mentality of so-called mental health being achieved through endlessly focusing on self, problems, complaints, and negative feelings became the norm in the world and in the church.

A Psychologized Society

We have given many examples of sinful conversations that go on in the biblical counseling movement. Good sources for readers to see how sinful biblical counseling is would be the following books, which are free to read or download from our website pamweb.org:

Stop Counseling! Start Ministering!

Person to Person Ministry: Soul Care in the Body of Christ

Christ-Centered Counseling versus Problem-centered Counseling

Counseling the Hard Cases: a Critical Review

In addition we have many articles on our website that expose the sinful conversations of biblical counselors.

Almost everyone in America, including Christians, expects this type of conversation in counseling. Counselees come prepared to reveal as much as possible about their lives, people in their lives, and their problems. Counselors are ready to ask questions that will bring out all the details in order to solve the

many problems. These problem-solving methods all came in with the growing influence of psychological ideas about the nature of the psyche, why people do what they do, and how they change. These ideas were created and advanced by all psychological counselors and quickly engulfed both society and the church. Many books have been written about our psychologized country, such as *The Psychological Society*³ and *The Shrinking of America*.⁴

Sins of Selfism

Rarely do counselees come to a counselor to confess their own sins, particularly when there are interpersonal problems involved. More often they expect others to change or at least recognize what they are doing wrong. After all, it is easier to see the sins of others than one's own sinfulness and failings. Thus, Jeremiah 17:9, the deceitful heart, is allowed to play a huge role in counseling.

Eva Markowitz, in her book *In Therapy We Trust*, subtitled *America's Obsession with Self-Fulfillment*, shows how early marriage counselors practiced the "therapeutic gospel" of happiness through encouraging people to talk about their problems and dissatisfactions "down to the last detail."⁵ The transparency mantra of letting it all hang out came to full bloom as a hoped-for means of achieving happiness and self-fulfillment, spread its tentacles throughout all of American society, and morphed itself into the church, both through Christian psychological counselors and biblical counselors. Moskowitz says, "It is practiced in every conceivable institution."⁶ Worse yet, it is practiced in nearly every conceivable Christian institution.

Markowitz describes some of the early means of psychologizing our society, "The public, but **especially American housewives**, learned an entirely new way of thinking about their lives, and a new language that went with

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Try, Try Again *(continued from page 7)*

it. Terms such as *ego*, *inferiority complex*, and *self-esteem*, which had been obscure before the war, became, quite literally, household words.” She says, “This domestication of the therapeutic gospel was an important episode in America’s journey to the therapeutic altar.”⁷ Women’s magazines furthered the therapeutic gospel with articles that gave women a psychological perspective by which to view life. Markowitz says, “The content of these magazines also dovetailed perfectly with mental-health professionals’ message.... Psychological professionals could not have created a better vehicle for disseminating the therapeutic gospel.”⁸ She further says:

The women’s magazines also provided women with an entirely new language for expressing their feelings of dissatisfaction, terms such as *unconscious*, *ego*, *inferiority complex*, *psychosomatic*, *defensive reaction*, and *self-esteem*. The use of these terms legitimized women’s psychological inquiries and complaints.⁹

The dissatisfied self was the target and the more the counseling mentality took hold, the more people identified with a keen sense of victimhood at the slightest provocation. **The mentality of so-called mental health being achieved through endlessly focusing on self, problems, complaints, and negative feelings became the norm in the world and in the church.** Hardly a soul thinks that emotional problems, interpersonal issues, unhappiness, grief, or any other negative issue in life can be helped without investigating all the details. Our entire culture has been sucked in and too many in the church have as well. Even though they may add Scripture into the mix, they end up with sinful conversations.

If you now see what is hidden in plain sight regarding the BCM coun-

seling, remember that it applies doubly to psychotherapy. The psychological format of problem-centered counseling is shared by both the BCM and the psychological counseling movement. It is therefore clear that **no Christian should be a psychotherapist or a biblical counselor practicing problem-centered counseling.**

True Gospel Needed

Finally, we all must admit that all of us are involved in sinful conversations when we are walking after the flesh (the old nature) rather than walking according to the Spirit. In fact, our thoughts, words, and actions can reveal the source: the flesh or the Spirit. We all need to practice moving away from sinful conversations by grace through faith. Marriage and other family relationships are a good place to start. May we all disentangle ourselves from the bondage of a psychologized culture and exercise our freedom in Christ to walk according to the Spirit. And may those in the biblical counseling movement see what is hidden in plain sight and help fellow believers to move away from a therapeutically inspired gospel to the true Gospel that gives new life whereby believers are enabled to walk according to the Spirit.

Endnotes

- 1 Institute for Nouthetic Studies, www.nouthetic.org/.
- 2 Martin & Deidre Bobgan. *Counseling the Hard Cases: A Critical Review*. Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers, 2016, Chapter 4, pp. 69-88.
- 3 Martin L. Gross. *The Psychological Society*. New York: Random House, 1978.
- 4 Bernie Zilbergeld. *The Shrinking of America: Myths of Psychological Change*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1983.
- 5 Eva S. Moskowitz. *In Therapy We Trust: America’s Obsession with Self-Fulfillment*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 83.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 169.



The Creaking on the Stairs *(continued from page 1)*

much attention given to the problems as the counselor asks for more details. Then in the behavioristic nouthetic form, the counselor advises external activities that can be done to relieve the situation. In the idols-of-the-heart counseling the counselor attempts to identify what idols may be operating within the inner person to cause the counselee to feel and behave in unproductive ways.

McConnell gives no indication anywhere in his book that he experienced this kind of counseling, with the prying and identifying of idols of the heart. His description seems to align more with the simple biblical ministry of compassion and a believer who really cares about a fellow believer—one who was not in a one-up position of counselor but a fellow human being who does not know all the answers, but who will come alongside and listen without examining or trying to analyze the problem. This would be one who would, by the grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit, gently and patiently lead him to the Savior, who knows McConnell through and through and who loves him beyond comprehension. We cannot imagine McConnell having had to buy the compassion of believers, as required at such places as CCEF and other biblical counseling centers that charge a fee for counseling. **McConnell’s recommendation of biblical counseling does not even fit with the rest of his book!**

Endnotes

- 1 Mez McConnell. *The Creaking on the Stairs: Finding Faith in God through Childhood Abuse*. Geanies House Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2019, pages will be indicated in the text.
- 2 Rosario Butterfield is a former lesbian who promoted the lesbian cause at the university where she taught. She tells her story of conversion to Christianity and how God dramatically changed her life. We quoted her in our book *The Sodomy of Christians: The Biblical View*, p. 65-66.

