

Counseling People With Psychological Diagnoses

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Engaging the Heart

- I. Everyone has “people paradigms”. Cf., *Advanced Course in Biblical Counseling*, pp 8-16.
 - A. People use shorthand to describe things so they do not need long explanations or mime!
 - B. Counseling has its language or “people paradigms”. Cf., Graduate school Temple U course in Counseling Psychology.
 - 1. Who is man?
 - 2. What’s wrong with him?
 - 3. How do you fix him?
- II. Not everyone is conscious of or admits his paradigms.
 - A. The history of psychology/philosophy
 - B. The modern/post- modern movements towards eclecticism: materialism; mysticism
 - C. Popular culture is shaped by these psychological paradigms and diagnoses.
- III. The DSM is the prevailing paradigm,
 - A. What is the DSM?
 - B. What is right/wrong with it?
 - C. How do you interact with its diagnoses?

Exposition of the Word

- I. The DSM approach to mental disorders.
 - A. The history of the DSM. Cf., John Applegate, “A DSM Primer” CCEF, 2011 National Conference.
 - B. Strengths:
 - 1. Real people helping real people
 - 2. Real observable mental/behavior problems
 - 3. Real attempt to be objective
 - 4. Real attempt to be accurate
 - 5. Real attempt to be helpful in research
 - 6. Real attempt to be helpful clinically
 - C. Weaknesses:
 - 1. The DSM is limited to general revelation/common grace data.
 - 2. The DSM is a- theoretical.
 - 3. The DSM is amoral.
 - 4. The DSM is politically/pressure group sensitive which undermines its objectivity.
 - 5. The DSM diagnostic labeling can backfire and create problems: victim mentality; Pygmalion effect, etc.
- II. The Biblical approach to mental disorders.
 - A. The history of Biblical revelation and redemption
 - B. Strengths:

1. Special revelation: God gives the necessary grid to examine creation, history and redemption.
 2. Saving grace and the Holy Spirit help us to see life through mysteries. Cf., Calvin's concept of glasses.
 3. The Biblical worldview is the true basis for science.
 4. ***Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1: 6,9,10***
 5. We are to live bound by the Bible, Deuteronomy 29:29.
 6. The Bible gives ***descriptive, diagnostic and directional*** clarity, James 1:19-25.
 7. The Bible is sufficient and superior: 2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:3-12.
- C. Weaknesses:
1. There really are none!
 2. The Bible is not a ***Merck Manual*** or a ***Physician's Desk Reference***, but it is the foundation for them. Cf., J Halla, ***Being Christian In Your Medical Practice***, (Greenville: Ambassador International: 2012).
 3. The Bible may be misused.
 - a. The interpretation can be off: don't add/subtract, Deuteronomy 4:2; don't go to the right or left, Deuteronomy 5:32-33.
 - b. The application may be wrong as wisdom from above is needed, James 3-4.
- III. The DSM as a starting point in the light of the Bible.
- A. A wise assessment: J Babbler, "Biblical Critique of the DSM IV", NANC National Conference 2007.
 1. The descriptive reality of the DSM is not deniable.
 2. The social sciences are not sciences.
 3. The whole is not greater than the sum of the parts.
 4. The Bible addresses all the parts.
 - B. "Accept" the label and review the DSM criteria: find out who gave the diagnosis, psychiatrist or GP.
 - C. Assess the counselee's worldview and his heart commitment to the label.
 - D. Translate the label into Biblical categories.
 - E. Negotiate the final authority of God and His Word.
 - F. Postpone the issue of drugs until the person is growing enough to consider tapering off with doctor oversight.

Exhortation for Life

- I. You need a wise pastoral approach to those with psychological diagnoses.
 - A. Prayer
 - B. Data gathering
 - C. Involvement with the counselee
 - D. Wisdom in interpreting the data biblically
 - E. Instructing and persuading the counselee to see things from God's perspective
Ask God for wisdom to determine the best approach, direct or indirect.
 - F. Above all, treat the person as an image bearer of God!
 - G. Be humble in your diagnostic process and conclusions as God alone knows his body/spirit.

- II. You need to face psychological diagnoses in the context of discipleship.
 - A. Although he may be different in some significant ways, different, he needs discipleship, cf., *Introduction, Marriage and Family, Advanced* courses.
 - B. For examples of specific diagnoses see the studies on *Worry, Fear* in the *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* .
 - C. Always seek the wisdom from above for each individual with individual or multiple labels.
 - D. Patience and gentleness are needed. But never treat him as a victim. Limited liability but liability none the less.
 - E. People must be responsible for their limitations and liabilities.

Asher, Marshal and Mary, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, (Bemidji: Focus Publishing, 2004)

Halla, Jim, *Being Christian in Your Medical Practice*, (Greenville: Ambassador International, 2012)