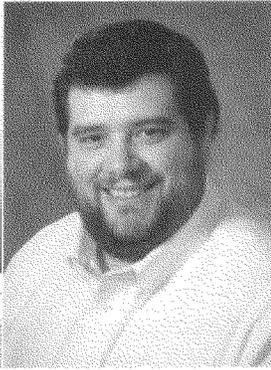


Spiritual Health: A View Through the Lens of Scripture

by
Kurt Grady



There are five characteristics of scripture. Scripture has authority, it is inerrant, it is clear, it is necessary and it is sufficient. "The authority of scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God."¹ God spoke directly to the prophets of the Old Testament or He spoke through them. Likewise, Peter and Paul both acknowledge New Testament writings as Scripture (2 Peter 3:16 and 2 Timothy 5:18). We are convinced then also that Scripture is absolutely truthful because God cannot lie or speak untruth-

fully; it is the ultimate standard of truth and therefore, our final authority; and no new scientific or other discovery will prove the Bible to be false. Scripture is also inerrant, meaning, "Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact."²

"The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it."³ Peter tells us (2 Peter 3:16) Scripture can be hard to understand, but it is not impossible for us to comprehend the teaching. This fact is affirmed throughout both the Old and New Testaments. The Bible affirms its own clarity in passages like Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Psalm 19:7, and Psalm 119:130 where it says it makes wise the simple and imparts understanding to the simple. In the New Testament, the writers often note that it takes more of a *moral and spiritual knowledge* than intellectual ability to understand the teachings of Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:14, for example). James 1:5-6 instructs one who lacks wisdom to simply ask, and God will provide. As with Jesus' disciples, a lack of faith or hardness of the heart can blur Scripture's teaching.

"The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining Spiritual life, and for knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or just

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kurt P. Grady, Pharm.D., MBA, earned his undergraduate and doctorate degrees at the St. Louis College of Pharmacy in Pharmacy and Clinical Pharmacy, respectively. Dr. Grady completed residency training at the University of Florida with an emphasis in adult critical care. He subsequently earned his MBA at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. Dr. Grady has more than a decade of experience in hospital, clinical, community, and consulting pharmacy practice; managed care; pharmacy benefits management; and in the pharmaceutical industry. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Biblical Counseling at Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Indiana. Kurt is married, has three sons, and lives in the St. Louis metropolitan area. He has served the local church as a Deacon and as a Sunday School Department Director, and is currently involved in planning and teaching at Gateway Biblical Counseling and Training Center, a ministry of Edgemont Bible Church in Fairview Heights, Illinois.

knowing something about God's character and moral laws."⁴ Paul succinctly lays out the need for Scripture in knowledge of the gospel in Romans 10:13-17. Jesus says, "*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*" (Matthew 4:4) Just as food is needed to maintain life physically, the word is needed to maintain spiritual life and for growth. Hence, the Bible is necessary to know God's will. While man can have some knowledge of God's will through conscience, reasoning, advice from others, or even the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, these can only give an approximation of God's will. In a fallen world where so much is distorted from its original intent, true discernment requires the Word. However, Scripture is not required for knowing that God exists. In Romans 1:19-21, Paul tells us even without Scripture, man cannot discount God's existence because of the nature of God's created order. Likewise, unbelievers who have no access or interest in the Scriptures undeniably have God's moral code written on their hearts (Romans 1:32).

"The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God He intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly."⁵ 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:3-4 are helpful as we explore the question of sufficiency. We can find answers to our questions in Scripture either directly or through the principles taught. Practically, Scripture should encourage us to think, to do and to add nothing to God's word, considering no other writ-

ings or teachings (i.e. philosophy, science, law, etc.) to be equal. Scripture should remind us to only believe about God that which is contained in its volumes and that no word from God today is contrary to Scripture. It should remind us that nothing is sin that is not called sin and that nothing is required of us that is not explicitly taught in Scripture. Lastly, Scripture leads us to emphasize what it emphasizes and implores us to be contented with what God has told us. In short, the Bible gives us everything we need to live, research, study, preach, teach, rebuke, counsel, reason, and all else while we walk this earth. In all we do, the Bible acts as a beacon to guide us through happiness and heartache. In other words, Scripture is totally sufficient.

The Bible captures in one volume a common set of definitions useful in diagnosing and categorizing man's struggle in life. Everyone may use the Bible. It is useful in gathering information about sanctification by categorizing our actions into groupings – sins and obedience – and the subsets contained therein. The common nomenclature accepted by those in Christendom allows for professional collaboration, research and educational opportunities around a specific set of topics and also allows for sub-specialization or development of expertise in specific areas of academics or spiritual health.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM or DSM-IV) is the backbone

of secular psychology and psychiatry. Compiled and updated by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the DSM-IV serves as the primary tool to which the mental health industry turns for diagnostic, research, teaching and billing

"We can find answers to our questions in Scripture either directly or through the principles taught."

guidance. The DSM-IV breaks most diagnoses into several criteria of actions, behaviors, emotions, and mental processes – the parts. Some number of those criteria must be met over a specified period of time in order to make the diagnosis, thereby assigning a number and, subsequently, a disease – the whole. The patient then becomes "the number" and at times patients become quite fixated (pleased?) with the fact that they "have" a diagnosed mental disorder, purportedly as a result of a disease process. In short, in the eyes of the patient, the courts and our society-at-large, the disease removes personal responsibility for the actions, behaviors, emotions, and mental processes that the Bible calls sin. People sometimes seek a cure for their disease through medical means as driven by the mental health industry. This begins what is often a long and very expensive journey represented by multiple counselors, medications, little hope, and little improvement.

Babler states, "...my core thesis is that each of the typical behaviors, emotions, and mental

processes (the parts) is addressed by the Bible, without attaching a pseudo-scientific label as a supposed whole. Scripture does not speak about 'obsessive-compulsive disorder' as a whole diagnosis, but the Lord does relevantly and directly counsel someone who exhibits each of the behaviors that qualify one for such a label. The mental and personality disorders codified in the DSM-IV are not matters of objective medical science. Each problem has to do with the relationship of a person to God and to other human beings. What the DSM-IV diagnoses as mental disorders, Scripture diagnoses as spiritual disorders."⁶ One striking contrast between the Bible and the DSM-IV is that the Bible offers hope and victory through Jesus Christ while the DSM-IV offers the promise of another revision in a few years.[▲]

With the Christian, there are three ways God deals with us when we sin. This is part of the hope offered to those lost in the milieu of drugs and therapy. *And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children, 'My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts.'* *Endure trials for the sake of discipline.* (Hebrews 12:5-7a). God could condemn us, though he does not. *"There is*

therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1). He could condone our actions, though God abhors sin and would be incapable of tolerating sin in his people. Lastly, God could correct us, and that is

"If we willingly and knowingly ignore the internal voice of the Holy Spirit acting within us, God can use other methods to arouse our attention. "

exactly what He does. *"I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent."* (Revelation 3:19). God corrects us for two reasons. First, His correction confirms our identity and secondly, it corrects our iniquity. *"If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children."* (Hebrews 12:8). Without God's discipline, we would wonder aimlessly, like those of the world, always searching for that which eludes us.

There are three progressive routes to God's discipline. First, there is internal conviction. That still small voice inside tells us something is wrong. We spoke harshly or acted hastily. Sometimes that little voice is not so little. Sometimes it screams out: "Sin, sin, and sin!" We are immediately faced with a decision to ignore that voice or act upon in repenting before God and

possibly before man. If we willingly and knowingly ignore the internal voice of the Holy Spirit acting within us, God can use other methods to arouse our attention. Internal conviction, if not heeded within God's timeframe, can lead to external affliction.

If we fail to acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit, God may refuse to listen to our prayers. *"If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."* (Psalm 66:18). Sometimes, God will take away His presence, His power or both.

"Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me." (Psalm 51:11). Samson is an excellent illustration of one who lost his power. Lastly, He can remove our privileges. *"Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit."* (Psalm 51:12). If internal conviction and external affliction do not move us to repent according to God's timetable, He may employ eternal infliction, or death. *"If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that."* (I John 5:16 NKJV)⁷

This author contends that in Christians, guilt, worry, fear, anxiety, depression, anger and many other non-organic mental disorders are simply human or fleshly

[▲] This author has written about a number of DSM diagnoses compared to Biblical truth. Rather than repeating that work here, I refer the reader to the article published in *Christianity and Pharmacy*, Volume 5, Number 2, Fall 2002 p16-23 or to the paper *Sin and Sickness: How Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry Usurp the Word of God* written for Fundamentals of Biblical Counseling-I, Trinity College of the Bible and Theological Seminary, Dr. Bill Hines, Fall 2002.

avoidance responses to failures to heed God's conviction for some sin or a pattern of sin. Alternatively, they may be the work of the Holy Spirit directly, as He strives to get our attention. What then can be said about the use of psychoactive medications in the treatment of non-organic mental illnesses? How can we draw a parallel between God's Word and medication use? Clearly the medications available today can lift depression, reduce anxiety, blunt guilt, stabilize mood, control angry outbursts, and make us feel better. Quite simply, dare we only address feelings when heart issues are the central problem? Dare we act to chemically dull the work of the Holy Spirit? Dare we quiet that still small voice of internal conviction and risk external affliction or worse?

"Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21). A close look at this passage will allow for a more definitive answer to the questions above. The passage begins by listing the works of the flesh, translated from the Greek word *sarx* or *sarkos*. *Sarx* means "...the evil and fallen state of the soul, no longer under the guidance of God's Spirit and right reason, but under the animal passions; and they are even rendered more irregular and turbulent by the influence of sin; so that man is in a worse state than the brute: and so all – commanding is this evil nature that it leads men into

all kinds of crimes..."⁸ The sins of the flesh may be categorized into four groups, according to this passage. The first set is specifically the sensual sins of adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness. These are followed by religious sins, namely idolatry and sorcery. The third class includes temperamental sins such as hatred, strife, divisions, heresies, envyings, and murders. A fourth class includes drunkenness and revelings, and can be expanded further (...*things like these*..).

In the Greek language the word for sorcery translates into the English word for pharmacy (*pharmakia*). The word refers to the use of medicine, drugs, spells, or poisons. In sorcery, drugs were often used in combination with incantations to occult powers or in the provision of magical amulets or charms. While the spell was designed to ward off evil spirits, it was also part of the mystique of the sorcerer.⁹ While it would seem a discussion of drugs, illicit or legitimate, would occur here, this author suggests that it belongs with the category of drunkenness, based upon the *heart attitude* of the individual.

The Greek word *methai* (translated drunkenness) is used in the scripture above and means "intoxication." Webster defines intoxication thusly: "to poison, by bacterial toxins, serum injections, drugs, alcohol, etc."¹⁰ Therefore, drunkenness in English applies not only to the common meaning with the drug alcohol, but also to other substances. Note that Webster does not differentiate between illicit and prescription drugs. The use of what we deem illicit drugs (heroin, crystal methamphetamine, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), phencyclidine (PCP), etc.) would seem to

easily fit into the fourth category with drunkenness. There were obviously no prescription drugs in Paul's time, but we do know Paul and James approved of the legitimate use of medication as long as the *heart attitude* was correct.

Thus, the key question for us involves the *heart attitude* of a Christian seeking help. Is the Christian seeking a legitimate therapy to treat a documented biologic anomaly or is the Christian seeking a drug to avoid the pain of God's conviction or trial? The (non-organic problem generated) feelings that psychiatrists and others seek to dispel with therapy and medications offer the Christian an avoidance strategy. If a Christian shakes his fist at God, ignoring the voice of the Holy Spirit to repent, and seeks chemical means to ameliorate guilt, anxiety, worry, or non-organic depression, he sins. He is avoiding resolution of the problem God's way. He has a God problem, not a medical problem and certainly not a disease. He is fully responsible and accountable for his sin. His past has not sinned, he has. Until he repents before God, the Lord will continue to discipline him. Therapy will never make him well. The DSM offers no opportunity for repentance before a Holy and Righteous God and drugs simply cover the problem, addressing our feelings rather than the underlying spiritual pathology. For comparison purposes, consider a patient with a massive bacterial infection where his fever is treated with Tylenol[®], but no antibiotics are given to address the reason for his fever. The symptoms are treated, leaving the underlying problem unaddressed. In mental illness, the symptoms are treated and the underlying cause is left unattend-

continued on page 28

Spiritual Health: A View Through the Lens of Scripture

Continued from page 12

ed. For Christians with these types of problems, listening to God is always a better strategy than listening to Prozac®.

CONCLUSION

Drugs do not have a well-known mechanism of action and though they may improve feelings, they fail to address the underlying spiritual pathology. It is only the Bible, God's Holy Word, applied with a healthy dose of the Holy Spirit that can even begin to address the non-organic mental disorders so few are willing to call sin. Much of what is called mental illness is simply a failure to recognize a sovereign God.

The DSM and the mental health industry offer people an avoidance strategy by calling sin sickness. The pharmaceutical industry is quite contented to alter our feelings accordingly, and the courts seem to be taken in by the whole charade. The Bible offers

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture passages are taken from the New Revised Standard Version. World Publishing. Grand Rapids, Michigan 1989.

1. Grudem W. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Inter-Varsity Press. Leicester, Great Britain. 1994. p.73
2. Grudem p.90
3. Grudem p.108
4. Grudem p.116
5. Grudem p.127
6. Babler J. *A Biblical Critique of the DSM-IV*. *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*. Fall 1999 18(1): 25-26
7. Westbrook CE. *A Trip To God's Woodshed*. Sunday Morning Sermon on November 10, 2002. First Baptist Church. Fairview Heights, Illinois.
8. *Adam Clarke's Commentary*. BibleSoft 1996. Electronic Database. PC Study Bible v3.2F. 1988-2001
9. *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*. Moody Press 1962 Electronic Database. PC Study Bible v3.2F. 1988-2001
10. Marckwardt AH, Cassidy FG, McMillan JB (eds.) *Webster Comprehensive Dictionary*. International Edition. J.G. Ferguson Publishing Company. 1992. Volume 1. p.667

grace and forgiveness, something the DSM is incapable of providing. It is the obligation of all Christians

to help see God's people through the fog of humanism and into the loving arms of the Savior. 