

**Palisades Community Bible Church**

**Online Sunday School**

**Are Christianity And Psychology Incompatible?**

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Most of us own a car. What do you do when your car needs a repair? If yours is less than 20 years old, it's probably far more complex than a simple driveway fix will resolve. If you're having a problem with yours, to whom do you take it? Do you ask your friend, or brother-in-law, to take a look at it? Or, do you just take it directly to the dealer?

Sometimes, it depends on how much we have to spend on the solution, but most of us, these days, take our car to a qualified mechanic, or the dealer. They have the most qualified diagnostics, and can usually get things resolved pretty handily.

What about personal problems? Are you one to go with a "driveway fix" or do you go to the dealership? Maybe you have anxiety, or guilt issues. Maybe you cannot get a handle on your money, or you have a compulsion that is affecting relationships. Or, these days.....maybe you're wondering if you were born the wrong gender?

If you're psyche is on the fritz, to whom do you turn? Do you look to modern science? Do you just ask friends (the definition of which, usually constitutes people who agree with you)? Do you turn to your manufacturer?

Too often, with cars and personal issues, we try "handling" things ourselves, first. We may consult an unqualified friend, or someone who 'seems' to have the answers. It's only after these approaches fail – and

often cause more damage – that we finally turn to the more capable source of help.

Though a study in this format is NOT the solution for serious clinical issues, what follows is an extremely sane and wisely presented discussion on the best approach to most of our emotional/psychological issues:

### **Psychology vs. Christianity**

Andrew Womack Ministries

Psychology has its roots in ancient philosophers like Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato. None of these men were worshipers of the true and living God. At best, they believed in a god that was not involved in the affairs of men, and at worse they worshiped multiple pagan gods.

Modern psychology was brought to the forefront by Sigmund Freud in the late nineteenth century. Freud certainly wasn't a godly man. He was obsessed with sex and linked every problem of man to the sexual drive. This man had serious problems, even his most devoted followers admitted that.

Here is the point: If the root is bad, then the tree has to be bad. Jesus said this very plainly in Matthew 7:17-18:

**“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”**

The root of psychology is bad, and therefore, the fruit cannot be good.

I'm amazed at the acceptance of psychology in our society and especially in the church. Many churches and ministries have resident psychiatrists on staff. This isn't the approach Jesus took. He met the

needs, all the needs of the people through the power of the Holy Spirit, and I believe He intends His church to do the same. They don't have to depart and go to the world to get their emotional needs met. They should bring them to Jesus (Matt. 14:15-21).

**15 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." 16 Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."**

**17 "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.**

**18 "Bring them here to me," he said. 19 And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.**

I know many Christians are appalled at these statements. Aren't there Christian psychologists? Certainly, there are. I have some friends who are very successful psychologists. But they will be the first to admit that psychology and Christianity do not offer the same answers to our problems. They use their position to bring the truths of the Gospel to people who would never come to the church for help. If the people will receive the truths of God's Word, they don't need any other help. If they won't receive the Gospel, then in some cases, psychology is better than what they have.

Christianity and psychology have some things in common: They both state that our actions are the product of inner processes. But in describing what those processes are and how to change them, Christianity and psychology take the opposite approach. For one thing, the very word “psychology” reveals an anti-god approach.

The word “psychology” comes from the Greek word “psycho”, which is a derivative of the Greek word “psyche” meaning “soul.” Psychology looks no deeper than the soul of man for answers. It totally ignores the spirit realm: our spirits, God’s Holy Spirit, and demonic spirits. The Word of God is replete with teachings and examples of the influence of God, demons, and our spirits on our actions. Any “answer” that doesn’t take the spirit realm into account isn’t going to the root of the problem. The Greek word “psyche” was also the name of the Greek god of the soul. “eros” and “psyche” were lovers in Greek mythology. Who wants that?

Here are four major tenants of psychology that I believe are incompatible with biblical Christianity:

- 1) We are products of our environment.
- 2) Therefore, we are not responsible or accountable for our actions.
- 3) This leads to placing blame for our actions on anything else but on us, making us victims.
- 4) Self-esteem is paramount.

Let’s look at these areas in the light of Scripture.

First, environment is **not** the determining factor in who we are and what we do. Proverbs 23:7 says,

**“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”**

The Word of God shows us that OUR thoughts are what make us the way we are. Environment has some influence on your thoughts, but it is totally wrong to say you're the way you are because of what has happened to you. If that were true, then everyone who has been through the same negative experiences would have the same problems. That's not so. You can find siblings with the same genetic make-up and environment who respond totally different to the same situation. We always have the choice of becoming bitter or better. God gave us that choice. Deuteronomy 30:19 says,

**“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you; life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.”**

God said the choice is ours, and what a simple one: life or death. A “no-brainer.” But just in case anyone isn't sure which to choose, the Lord gave the answer to this quiz. “Choose life,” He said.

We are not doomed to be victims because of past experiences. We can be born again and become brand-new people through the power of Christ. Psychology doesn't offer that.

Second, since our conditions are a product of how we chose to react to our environment, we can't blame others for our problems. Taking responsibility for our actions is the big difference between true Christianity and psychology. Psychology has influenced our society to such a degree that no one is held accountable for their actions. Even murderers are being acquitted because it's “not their fault”; they were abused as children or whatever. That's stupid. Some of us have had problems that others haven't, but God still holds us accountable for our own actions, regardless of what has happened to us.

The night before Jesus was crucified, He told His disciples not to let their hearts be troubled but to be of good cheer (John 14:1 and 16:33). Those who hold to the belief that our environment is the determining factor in our emotions and actions would criticize Jesus for telling His disciples to do something they were incapable of doing. But they had a choice. The Lord told us to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4). We can choose to go against the pressures of our environment. In John 16:33, Jesus told His disciples,

**“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”**

In this passage, Jesus told His disciples that they would have tribulation. What an understatement! They would see Jesus crucified in just a matter of hours. Their hopes would be dashed. Sadness and confusion would overwhelm them. Fear would cause them to live behind locked doors for the next three days. Yet, Jesus told them to be of good cheer. That wasn't unreasonable; it was doable. And we can do it too if we don't listen to the psychobabble of today.

There is much, much more to Harnessing Your Emotions. I simply ran out of room to share it all in this article. I drew some illustrations of these truths and made an outline of some of the major differences between Christianity and psychology. I firmly believe that psychology undermines true Christianity, and these differences need to be pointed out. Psychology has crept into nearly every aspect of our lives, and most of us don't know it

Here's an illustration: Have you noticed that, when you're lost, you tend to drive faster? It's a result of acting in our own strength. Far too

often, we have a problem, and we don't want to face it, or we think we can handle it....and we drive faster. What we are REALLY reacting to is our lack of experience with a SOLUTION. We've never had a problem like that solved in a Godly way, so we tend to press our own foot harder on the accelerator.

If we really get in trouble, the next approach is often to turn to what the WORLD says will work. As Mr. Womack aptly points out, those approaches are usually anti-God. The better approach is to put your burdens at the feet of Jesus and, if you need additional help, turn to those mature Christians He has put in your life, and who have the capacity, love and Godly perspective to help you.

**Luke 11:11 “And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent?”**

The answer is clear; Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, has promised to be our helper in times of trouble.