

What Is the Difference Between Mental Health and Christian Counseling?

A brief internet search will reveal that there are many different counseling agencies available. What is the difference between them? To give a short answer to this question, we will simply say that Christian Counseling is founded on the Bible and Mental Health counseling is founded on secular psychology. This answer is simple enough, but it needs a bit of clarification.

True Christian Counseling approaches every problem with the understanding that God alone has the answer and has provided that answer in the Bible. With this basis for counseling, the counselee can expect the session to include prayer as well as focused Bible study and explanation. The counselor will endeavor to clearly define the problem using Biblical texts and provide the solution to that problem in the same way. The counselee will see God's Word for the situation in question and will be encouraged to perform the directives written in the Bible in hopes of seeing the promised outcomes. This approach brings the counselee into full accountability for his or her own actions past, present, and future. The fundamental idea for the counselor is to find out how the counselee is living in disagreement with the Bible and bring the needed correction so that the blessings and favor of God can be enjoyed.

Mental Health has a completely different approach. By definition, Mental Health is entirely secular. As such, the counselor will draw upon a collection of teachings and methods from various sources. These sources often include the teachings of men like Freud. This system, in complete opposition to the teachings of the Bible, attempts to remove all accountability from the counselee. Respected Christian Counselor Jay E. Adams says, "Freudian psychoanalysis turns out to be an archeological expedition back into the past in which a search is made for others on whom to pin the blame for the patient's behavior." In addition, Mental Health also draws on methods and practices of Eastern religions like Buddhism and Hinduism. For example, patients are often taught meditation techniques like Yoga. This practice is taken directly from Buddhist practices and in reality opens up the participant to intrusion from evil spirits. Another practice is the mantra. These are repeated phrases supposedly intended to make a positive impression on the psyche of man. In reality, however, the mantra concept is taken directly from Hinduism. Just look the word up in a dictionary and you will see for yourself.

To give a living illustration of how mantras work, I will bring to your remembrance the childhood story of the Little Train That Could. The little train in the story was faced with the daunting challenge of hauling his load up a large mountain. As the story goes, he says, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can..." until he clears the top of the mountain. While this may seem harmless enough and expresses what we have come to appreciate as a positive attitude, it is

amazingly similar to the Hindu mantra and Buddhist teachings because it seeks a power within. The Bible NEVER tells us to seek any power within. In direct contrast, it teaches us to seek and trust God alone for our help.

Needless to say, assimilating Buddhist and Hindu methods and practices violates the clear teachings of the Bible. Deuteronomy 18:9 says, "When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations." Hinduism and Buddhism would both qualify as abominations by the teachings of the Bible. Even the New Testament is clear on this subject. The last verse of 1 John states, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

There is yet a third kind of counseling that needs to be mentioned here. This is Christian Counseling under the banner of Mental Health. This kind of counseling is extremely dangerous to both the counselors and the counselees because it is wrapped in a cleverly disguised deception. What happens when a Christian person trains in a secular system adopting secular and even heathen practices and atheistic assumptions? The answer is compromise. These "Christian" counselors often use Bible verses to validate approaches and methods. On the surface, it looks good, but we must ask this question: "How well must we dress up an idol for it to be welcome in the Church?" If we take a Baal idol and put "I Love Jesus" bumper stickers all over it, can we bring it in? You can't start with sewage in the quest for clean water. These "Christian" counselors are living in grievous error. The Bible clearly teaches that those "who mind earthly things" are "the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Philippians 3:18-19). James 4:4 says, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

"Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).

As Christians, we are told to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). It is only through this renewal that we "may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Mental Health and compromised Christian counselors are not capable of assisting us in this renewal process. So, what is the difference between Mental Health and Christian Counseling? Everything!