

BOOK REVIEW
The Secret
The Purpose Driven Life
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 A B C D E F G H I J K L M
MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Is it wrong to counsel people seeking help for life's problems—people who are caught in drugs, alcohol, pornography, illicit sex, or other obvious sins?

According to Martin and Deidre Bobgan, authors of *Stop Counseling! Start Ministering!*, the answer is yes. The Bobgans have written numerous books exposing the ungodliness of psychotherapy and other humanistic ways in which men try to affect human behavior. After studying the methods used in biblical counseling as well as the results, they have come to the conclusion that biblical counseling is just as ungodly as psychotherapy.

Before you get out the tar and feathers, it would be good to read their latest book to get a clear understanding of what, exactly, biblical counseling really is in practice, and how it contrasts with ministry from the Word of God.

Martin Bobgan holds four university degrees, including a doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Colorado. At one time he championed biblical counseling. This book reports on years of observation and study by the Bobgans.

Stop Counseling! Start Ministering! offers clinical and scientific evidence to demonstrate that biblical counseling is exactly the same as secular psychotherapy, but with a small and often erroneous appeal to Scripture to justify it in the minds of Christians. The basis for both is what the industry terms “problem-centered counseling,” which involves focusing on the counselee’s problems as presented to the counselor. To address those problems many ungodly methods and outcomes occur.

According to the authors, one of the major problems with biblical counseling is that it ignores what they call “the Jeremiah 17:9 syndrome”: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

Biblical counseling, like secular psychotherapy, relies on the counselee’s testimony about her feelings, impressions, understanding of her situation, etc. What the counselee says is taken at face value, and except in rare cases, the counselee’s biases invariably form the basis for the counselor’s judgment and advice. Add to this the factor of speaking evil, and many scriptural principles are regularly violated by both the counselor and the counselee.



Speaking evil involves people saying negative things about others that may or may not be true, but are nonetheless taken at face value by the counselor without requiring any proof. Children speak evil of their parents, blaming them for their problems; wives speak evil of their husbands, blaming them for making them feel unfulfilled; husbands blame their wives for not submitting to them; employees speak evil of their employers. The list is endless, but the methodology is the same—counselees are encouraged to tell the most intimate details of their lives; the more they tell, the more they are encouraged to tell. The result is a merry-go-round of self-pity and self-justification.

The Bobgans trace the history of present-day, easily-attained psychotherapy to the post-World War II era when the U.S. government began funding psychological research and education in the field of psychotherapy. They reveal that psychotherapy (including Christian counseling) is overwhelmingly engaged in by women, men being highly reluctant to be involved unless dragged into counseling by a female figure in their lives.. One therapist condenses the typical male response thusly: “To save my marriage, I have to become a woman!”

Although the majority of biblical counselors are men, the majority of secular psychotherapists are now women, and women make up at least two-thirds of all clients in both the biblical- and secular-counseling fields. Additionally, media personalities such as Oprah Winfrey have made psychotherapy a pop phenomenon, enjoyed by millions of mostly female fans.

There are few churches today where congregants are offered scriptural advice on living a life of sacrifice. Christians experiencing or expressing problems in their lives today are more likely to be shunted off to professional counselors who are expected to fill the need through Christian counseling that generally invokes a modicum of Bible verses, but relies far more heavily on psychotherapeutic methods.

There is not enough room to cover all the important information in this book that could save brethren in Christ a lot of heartache and deception that comes through so-called biblical counseling. Briefly, however, a few of the topics you will read about are these: cross-gender counseling—the dangers of men counseling women and, worse, women counseling men; scientific evidence against counseling; the myth of problem-centered biblical counseling; the names and activities of the most popular and prolific biblical counseling organizations, including their financial stake in this deception; how psychotherapy, including biblical counseling undresses private lives.

But the Bobgans don’t leave us without hope. Their chapters on ministering biblically and the believer’s daily walk sum up God’s method of dealing with the believer’s problems of living.

This is one of the most important books available, and one of the very, very few with courage enough to confront a great evil that is at the center of Satan’s deceptions today—an evil that is consuming most of the churches in America and elsewhere, particularly in the West. ❖

Stop Counseling! Start Ministering! is available through Sword Publishers.