

## A Contrast Between Secular Counseling and Discipleship

By Dr. David DeWitt

In general, secular counseling is people helping people overcome distress and bring comfort by applying information outside the Bible or mixed with biblical truth. This is a reactive process. Biblical discipleship, however, is God helping people to glorify Himself through their life situation. This is a proactive process.

- In *secular counseling*, people, representing the wisdom of people, counsel people. In **discipleship**, God uses people, representing His wisdom, to counsel people (Psalm 23:1-3; 32:8; 62:5; Isaiah 9:6).
- *Secular counseling* sees problems as situations that need to be solved. **Discipleship** sees problems as an introduction to the grace of God, which strengthens faith (1 Peter 1:6-7).
- *Secular counseling* assumes earthly situations are responsible for suffering. **Discipleship** assumes God is responsible for suffering (Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4).
- *Secular counseling* says people need to find themselves. **Discipleship** says people need to lose themselves for Christ's sake (Luke 9:23-24).
- *Secular counseling* sees psychology as the basis of truth and may add Bible verses to reinforce psychological principles. **Discipleship** uses the Bible as the basis of truth (Mark 7:7, 13).
- *Secular counseling* helps people to get gratification in this life. **Discipleship** helps people to get rewards in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).
- *Secular counseling* pursues being at peace with the world. **Discipleship** pursues separation from the world according to the truth of God's Word (John 17:15-17).
- *Secular counseling* says all truth is God's truth. Therefore, we should not throw out human wisdom just because it's not found in the Bible. **Discipleship** is determined to know nothing more than the Bible knows (Psalm 119:97-105; John 8:31-33). So how would we know something else is true or relevant?
- *Secular counseling* includes freeing people from the feeling of guilt. **Discipleship** says we are all guilty and need repentance (Romans 3:23; 6:23).
- *Secular counseling* sees problems as horizontal--between people. **Discipleship** sees problems as vertical--between people and God (Psalm 51:1-4).
- *Secular counseling* thinks problems are too complex to restrict them to biblical answers alone. **Discipleship** believes nothing is new under the sun for which the Bible is not sufficient (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).
- *Secular counseling* emphasizes your knowledge to bring about your will. **Discipleship** prays that you will be filled with the knowledge of God's will (Colossians 1:9-10).
- *Secular counseling* believes tough cases should be sent to experts in psychology or psychotherapy. **Discipleship** believes tough cases should be sent to those who are mature in God's Word, abiding in Christ, and demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit (John 15:4-5; Colossians 5:22-25).
- *Secular counseling* thinks it is the counselor's advice that matters, not his personal moral character. **Discipleship** thinks you should first take the log out of your own eye (Matthew 7:3-5).
- *Secular counseling* says people are dysfunctional, codependent, and victimized. **Discipleship** says people are responsible for and accountable for their actions (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10).
- *Secular counseling* analyzes based on the complexity of the human personality. **Discipleship** analyzes based on the character of God--Who He is and what He does (John 17:3).
- *Secular counseling* looks inward and backward for self-understanding. **Discipleship** looks forward and upward to the call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14).
- *Secular counseling* believes people are controlled by memories buried in their subconscious minds which must be uncovered if they are to find help. **Discipleship** believes people are controlled by sin which needs to be confessed as they focus on Christ not their subconscious (1 Corinthians 2:16).
- *Secular counseling* thinks people don't love themselves enough. **Discipleship** thinks people don't love God as a priority because they love themselves too much (Matthew 22:35-40).
- *Secular counseling* believes we should understand ourselves based on personality evaluation, temperament analysis, or birth order. **Discipleship** believes we should understand ourselves as being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18).
- *Secular counseling* focuses on making a person physically productive. **Discipleship** focuses on making a person spiritually reproductive (2 Timothy 2:1-3).