

## **A Statement from Biblical Counseling Leaders on Common Grace, the Sufficiency of Scripture, and Conduct in Contemporary Conflict**

**I. Preamble.** We are counseling leaders, scholars, authors, practitioners, and pastors who are profoundly concerned about current debates within the biblical counseling movement. Our primary goal is to honor Jesus Christ, who has revealed himself and his will for our lives in the pages of his authoritative and sufficient Word. We are committed to helping God's people who struggle with sin and suffering by equipping them with the pure milk of God's Word. In that spirit we address the current conflict and seek to clarify the confusion surrounding the doctrines of the sufficiency of Scripture and common grace. The recent mischaracterizations of these doctrines, whether intentional or not, threaten to lead many astray.

**II. On the Sufficiency of Scripture.** As one of the four perfections of Scripture, the doctrine of biblical sufficiency teaches that Christians require no additional revelation to understand how to please God in any area of life. It is a bedrock theological foundation of the biblical counseling movement.

- A. As this doctrine is applied to counseling, it means that Christians require no special knowledge or methodology drawn from outside Scripture to construct a system of counseling care. Scripture explicitly claims to address our entire spiritual life, including the challenges faced in a fallen world which are the same challenges we face in counseling conversations.
- B. Counseling ministry does not stand in need of any insights from secular psychology, which views people, their problems, and the corresponding counseling methods primarily according to philosophies and practices that are opposed to the Bible.
- C. The sufficiency of Scripture does not mean the Bible is a detailed and exhaustive catalog of all knowledge. It does mean that what is given to us in God's Word provides all the truth we need to address our spiritual needs. The Bible's rich treasure of wisdom and knowledge provides comprehensive information that applies explicitly or implicitly to every counseling issue in ways that are pleasing to God and good for people.
- D. Any approach to counseling that attempts to supplement Scripture with secular resources is in error and will harm those it means to help. Such attempts constitute an implicit denial of Scripture's authority and sufficiency. Accordingly, such practices exist outside the stream of faithful biblical counseling and discipleship.

*Psalm 19:7-11; 119:105; Proverbs 1:20-33; 1 Corinthians 1-3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17;  
2 Peter 1:3-21*

**III. On the Doctrine of Common Grace.** Common grace is the biblical truth that God shows kindness and gives good gifts to all people, regardless of their faith or moral standing. It is an undeserved favor that temporarily postpones the full judgment of sin so that sinners may enjoy life, receive the blessing of God's patience, and have opportunity to repent. Common grace limits the destructive power of sin. It enables fallen sinners to perceive many truths about God and his creation that are embodied in nature. In their fallen state, however, sinners always twist or suppress God's truth. This doctrine of common grace has a rich tradition in church history, occupies a vital place in Christian theology, and is embraced by every faithful biblical counselor.

- A. The minds of unbelievers are blinded by sin, darkened to the truth, and unable to see anything properly from God's perspective. Despite this, God's common grace makes it possible for unbelievers to observe and apprehend many useful facts, principles, and features of creation. These insights can be used to improve the quality of life in various ways. But common grace alone cannot redeem a sinner or offer any help for the underlying sin problem at the foundation of all human trouble.
- B. Common grace may enable secular therapists at times to utilize counseling techniques that offer a measure of symptom relief to troubled people. The existence of such help is not an argument to copy the secular therapist, but rather to rely on God, who has fully revealed superior methods of care in the text of Scripture.
- C. In a world corrupted by sin, God has assigned limits to the doctrine of common grace because only his redeeming grace can renew the minds of fallen people. Common grace cannot guarantee the accuracy of any information a person claims to know. It offers no reliable means for verifying truth claims. It does not enable an unbeliever to see truth from God's perspective. The inability of unbelievers to see information from God's point of view is why the Bible never uses the existence of common grace as an argument to supplement the counseling resources in Scripture with human philosophies like secular psychology.
- D. The use of the doctrine of common grace to justify implementing secular psychology into counseling care is incorrect, unhelpful, and outside the tradition of faithful biblical counseling and discipleship.

*Psalm 145:9; Isaiah 6:9; John 1:9; Romans 1:8; 2:4; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, 14; Ephesians 4:17-19; 1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 1:15; 2 Peter 1:19*

**IV. On Conduct in Contemporary Conflict.** Conflict is an unfortunate reality in a world marred by sin. Even among Christians, seasons of conflict have arisen throughout history, and factions and divisions will continue until Christ returns. It is not in our power to end the current conflict, but we can encourage one another to wise and compassionate conduct.

- A. Scripture acknowledges that some matters are worthy of conflict even when that conflict is unpleasant. The current dispute in biblical counseling concerns the character of God, the content of his revealed Word, and the care we offer to people in

need of help. It is a mark of faithfulness, not divisiveness, to advance strong and careful arguments regarding these crucial matters.

- B. Believers who engage these issues must advance the cause of truth by carefully understanding the issues and faithfully representing the arguments of those with whom they disagree.
- C. All who bear the name of Christ, especially those serving in ministry, must be humble and open to correction. We should not assume that principled disagreement signals a lack of love between believers, nor should we accuse fellow Christians of an attack because they hold a different position than our own.
- D. Biblical counselors must demonstrate love for fellow Christians, even when they have significant disagreements. Such love should shape the way we express our disagreements and our attitudes toward those with whom we differ. Strong disagreement should never diminish our personal care for one another.

*John 13:35; 1 Corinthians 11:18-19; Galatians 2:11-14; Ephesians 4:15; 1 Timothy 3:15*