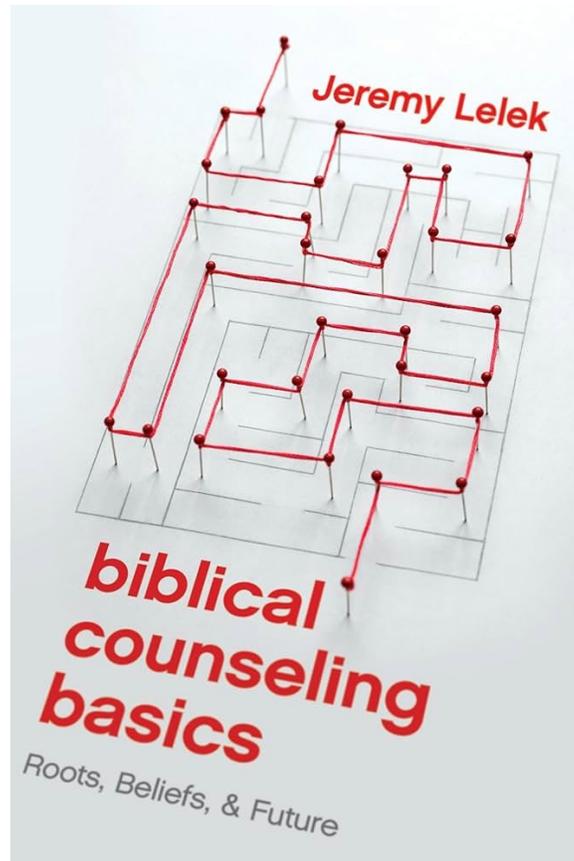


# Discussing and Applying Jeremy Lelek's *Biblical Counseling Basics*

A Three-Part Blog Mini-Series



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# Discussing and Applying Jeremy Lelek's *Biblical Counseling Basics* Part 1

## Links to Free Downloads

You're reading a free PDF of a three-part blog mini-series on: *Discussing and Applying Jeremy Lelek's Biblical Counseling Basics*.

For blog post, Part One, go here: [\*Discussing and Applying Jeremy Lelek's Biblical Counseling Basics, Part 1\*](#).

For blog post, Part Two, go here: [\*Discussing and Applying Jeremy Lelek's Biblical Counseling Basics, Part 2\*](#).

For blog post, Part Three, go here: [\*Discussing and Applying Jeremy Lelek's Biblical Counseling Basics, Part 3\*](#).

## My History with *Biblical Counseling Basics*

Jeremy Lelek, the author of [\*Biblical Counseling Basics: Roots, Beliefs, and Future\*](#), notes that the book was, in part, drawn from his Ph.D. dissertation at Regent University. I, along with others (Don Arms, Howard Eyrich, Stephen Greggo, Eric Johnson, Ian Jones, Phil Monroe, David Powlison, Eric Scalise, Timothy Sizemore, Winston Smith, Joshua Straub, Paul Tripp, Steve Viars, and Ed Welch) had the privilege of being participants-respondents in Dr. Lelek's 2012 dissertation: [\*A Study of the Constructs and a Proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling\*](#).

So, in 2018, when [New Growth Press released \*Biblical Counseling Basics\*](#), I was excited to read it. Now, six years later, I decided to reread Jeremy's work, this time in even more detail—taking notes, highlighting sentences, jotting down thoughts and questions...

## Discussing and Applying the Book: PDQs

I ended up with so many representative quotes, that I decided to discuss and apply the book publicly. "Discussing and applying" is different from "reviewing." If you'd like to read a couple a reviews, check out:

- [\*A Review of Biblical Counseling Basics\*](#) reviewed by Dave Dunham.
- [\*Book Review of Biblical Counseling Basics\*](#) reviewed by Nate Brooks at the Biblical Counseling Coalition.

Here's how I'll discuss and apply *Biblical Counseling Basics*.

- I'll briefly introduce you to the author (Dr. Jeremy Lelek) and to the book ([\*Biblical Counseling Basics\*](#)).

- To provide the context for discussing the book, I'll provide representative quotes that seek to capture the essence of various topics covered in the book.
- I'll seek to apply the book by asking questions for us to ponder. As a professor, I called these "PDQs": **P**rompting **D**iscussion **Q**uestions. Sometimes those PDQs will be directed to all of us. Sometimes I'll specifically ask Dr. Lelek a PDQ.

### **Who Is Jeremy Lelek?**

The following material comes from bios on several sites.

Jeremy is the President of both the [Association of Biblical Counselors](#) and [Metroplex Counseling](#) (a local center for biblical soul care in Dallas/Fort Worth). He is a Licensed Professional Counselor in the State of Texas having earned his Master's Degree in Counseling and a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. He earned his PhD in Counseling Education and Supervision at Regent University. Jeremy has been counseling for a quarter-century—since 1999. He is an adjunct professor at Redeemer Seminary and lectures frequently in area churches training believers with ABC's *Equipped to Counsel* curriculum.

### **What Is *Biblical Counseling Basics* About?**

Here are two videos by Dr. Lelek that introduce the book.

- [Helping Connect the Dots Between Soul Care and Theology: Introducing Biblical Counseling Basics.](#)
- [Why Is the History of Biblical Counseling So Important?](#)

The following is the book's description from the publisher, [New Growth Press](#).

Drawing from a wide range of resources and experts in Christian soul care, *Biblical Counseling Basics* is a well-researched, easy-to-read, and practical guide for students and counselors both inside and outside of biblical counseling to better understand its aspects, methods, and goals. *Biblical Counseling Basics* equips readers with practical skills for one-another ministry and engages them with their divine call to counsel.

In this resource, Dr. Jeremy Lelek offers a comprehensive approach to biblical counseling, beginning by *retracing the movement's history*, then *exploring its basic tenets*, and finally *providing helpful insight for the future of biblical counseling*.

Helping to connect the dots between soul care and theology, and including real-life case studies, readers are encouraged to apply theology to current issues and the here-and-now needs of others.

Also offering a way forward, this guide encourages counselors that the use of the Bible is central to their practices and development. Offering the Bible as the preeminent

resource to address even the most complex mental and emotional struggles, *Biblical Counseling Basics* exposes readers to the finished work of Christ as the greatest hope for all believers.

### **What Others Have Said About *Biblical Counseling Basics***

I never read a book without first reading endorsements. *Biblical Counseling Basics* was endorsed by a wide-range of leaders. Among them:

“Here is a clarion call to grasping the rich history of biblical counseling with its solid commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture; healthy interaction with secular thought, using the Scripture as the measure of all knowledge; advocacy of surgical accuracy in the use of Scripture and acute avoidance of proof texting; the centrality of theology proper as the context for counseling; and thoughtful challenge regarding law and ethics.”—**Howard A. Eyrich**

“This is more than biblical counseling basics. It is a wise telling of the history of biblical counseling, a useable systematic theology for counselors, and a thoughtful welcome to those who don’t quite know what to make of it all. Thank you, Jeremy, for moving us ahead.”—**Ed Welch**

“Lelek’s book does what no other biblical counseling book does. It gives you a helpful history, it defines what it really means to counsel biblically, and it offers guidance for the future of soul care. If you have been called to care for people, this book should be in your library.”—**Paul David Tripp**

“When an accident left me a quadriplegic, I collapsed emotionally. I vaguely knew that the Bible probably contained answers, but I had no idea where to look. Thankfully, I was introduced to a biblical counselor who made all the difference. He wasn’t a trained professional; he simply loved Jesus and wanted to make him a reality in my life. Friend, you have the same counseling potential. It’s why I love *Biblical Counseling Basics*. Want to help wounded people find life-giving hope? This book is for you!” —**Joni Eareckson Tada**

### **Don’t Forget the Subtitle**

If you want to know what a book is about, then read the subtitle: *Roots, Beliefs, and Future*. Lelek divides *Biblical Counseling Basics* into three parts:

1. Part One: **Roots**—The History of the Modern Biblical Counseling Movement.
2. Part Two: **Beliefs**—The Beliefs, Theology, Teachings, and Practices of the Modern Biblical Counseling Movement.
3. Part Three: **Future**—Recommendations for Further Growth and Development of the Modern Biblical Counseling Movement (The Progressive Sanctification of the Biblical Counseling Movement).

Dr. Lelek informs his readers that,

“The book you are reading attempts to unpack the single question, *What is biblical counseling?*” (1).

Lelek unpacks that question historically, biblically, and theologically.

### **My Initial Impression: Scripture-Saturated, Theologically-Rich**

As I began rereading *Biblical Counseling Basics*, I was struck by how *Scripture-saturated* it is.

Those who know me, won't be surprised that I started counting every time Dr. Lelek engages with Scripture, quotes Scripture, discusses Scripture, develops biblical passages, and applies the Bible to biblical counseling. In a 250-page book, I would have expected perhaps 100 biblical passages. Instead, I counted **542** biblical passages!

That's not all. In addition to exegeting and applying specific biblical passages, throughout the book, Dr. Lelek explores and develops a biblical theology/systematic theology of biblical counseling. Additionally, throughout *Biblical Counseling Basics*, Lelek quotes scores (I didn't count them all this time) of conservative, evangelical, Reformed commentaries, theologians, pastors, and biblical counselors.

As Ed Welch said (see above), this is more than biblical counseling basics. This is *biblically-saturated, theologically-grounded biblical counseling*.

### **PDQs About the Roots of *Biblical Counseling Basics* (BCB)**

I thought it was significant and telling that even in the historical section of *BCB*, Lelek emphasizes theology. He asks the question, *When did counseling begin?* Lelek answers that question by asserting that counseling began with the Bible. He traces counseling from Genesis 1-3 with God counseling Adam and Eve, through the Old Testament, to the ministry of Jesus, and to the Apostles throughout the New Testament (5-9). Then he states:

“Since the Bible reveals that counseling finds its birthplace in the person and activity of God, it is not a recent, secular novelty. Rather, rightly understood, counseling is an eternal gift graciously transferred to humanity in order that humanity might gain knowledge of the supreme fullness of life, namely, God” (5).

I found it historically important that Lelek did not begin his historical survey with the 1960s and the modern biblical counseling movement. Instead, he accurately traces Christian soul care from the Church Fathers, to the middle ages, to the Reformers, and to the Puritans (9-15). He then traces “biblical psychology” that predates secular psychology, listing ten sample biblical psychology texts dating from 1538 through 1874 (15).

**Prompting Discussion Questions (PDQs) for All of Us:** How might it strengthen the modern biblical counseling movement if we availed ourselves of the teachings of historic Christian soul care that predated the rise of our modern movement?

### **PDQs About the Modern Nouthetic Counseling Movement**

Lelek, in alignment with Jay Adams, then traces the decline of biblical soul care, dating it to the rise of secular psychology, to the silence of conservative evangelicals, and to the ascension of liberal Christian thinkers (16-17).

“With such a stigma attached to scriptural teaching in the realm of counseling, from the 1920s to the 1970s, the discipline of pastoral counseling was almost exclusively shaped by secular thought influenced by the likes of Freud’s dynamic needs theory and the client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers” (19).

Speaking positively of Adams, Lelek notes, “Adams dedicated his work to formulating a comprehensive model of counseling that was built upon a very specific presupposition: the Bible is sufficient to make a believer competent in the work of counseling” (28). “Nouthetic counseling formulated a comprehensive system, defining truth about people, their problems in living, and the processes of change” (28).

**PDQs for All of Us:** Whether or not you agree 100% with the modern nouthetic counseling model, would there be a “modern biblical counseling movement” today without Jay Adams? What aspects of Adams’s modern nouthetic counseling model most resonate with you? What aspects of Jay Adams’s modern nouthetic counseling model less resonate with you?

## Discussing and Applying Jeremy Lelek's *Biblical Counseling Basics* Part 2

### Discussing and Applying the Beliefs of *Biblical Counseling Basics (BCB)*

After analyzing the history of biblical counseling, Dr. Lelek begins to explore the beliefs, teachings, and theology of biblical counseling. He starts by presenting a strong contrast between biblical counseling and secular psychology.

“The epistemological differences are clear. While secular models are rooted in theory, biblical counseling is rooted in theology. I would submit that *one of the most prominent goals to which biblical counselors must aspire is to set their hearts on becoming experts in systematic and practical theology*. If biblical counselors are going to counsel others biblically, then right theology will be viewed as an absolute priority” (39, emphasis added).

“The Bible is about what counseling is about” (43).

“Scripture itself is God’s divine counsel to mankind. His revelatory counsel offers humanity knowledge about himself and is infused with divine power that grants to believers ‘all things’ pertaining to ‘life and godliness’ (2 Peter 1:3)” (43).

**PDQs for Dr. Lelek:** In our modern biblical counseling world, are there specific areas where you perceive a theological deficit? How could biblical counseling leaders equip biblical counselors to become “experts in systematic and practical theology”?

### PDQs About the Sufficiency of Scripture

In chapter 4, Lelek builds a powerful case for the supremacy and sufficiency of the Bible.

“The Bible is the ultimate source of knowing (not science, as is the case in secular psychology)” (49).

“The Bible is the epistemological basis from which biblical counselors develop their presuppositions regarding all that is counseling” (49).

“Scripture provides God’s perspective on all of reality. Therefore, the Bible is essential ‘if we are to interpret natural revelation rightly’ since there are no ‘neutral facts, for facts are God’s facts’” (50).

“As Christians, if our conceptual lens is not thoroughly shaped by the Bible, then no matter how well trained we may become in brain research, psychological theory, or counseling methodology, we will inevitably miss the mark in developing a psychology that properly reflects a biblical understanding of creation” (50-51).

**PDQs for Dr. Lelek:** In your counseling practice at Metroplex Counseling, because you follow the Bible’s teaching that we are embodied-souls, you center on the inner life spiritual components, while also incorporating biological interventions. As you oversee your team, how do you assure that they are looking at and evaluating science and neuroscience through the conceptual lens of the Bible?

### **PDQs About the Superiority of Scripture and Descriptive Research**

Lelek continues to present a persuasive case for the superiority and sufficiency of Scripture.

“Biblical counselors must be discerning. Psychological data does not exist in a vacuum, but it always bears the weight of presuppositions and assumptions that must continually be considered and analyzed from a biblical frame of reference. Such considerations often requires a complete reinterpretation of that which the secular establishment deems as truth” (65).

“So are biblical counselors forced to completely discard the descriptions offered by psychiatry? No. These descriptors will likely prove helpful. However, they only articulate symptoms; they do not offer a cure. This is where the Bible brilliantly displays its superiority—it boldly offers rich understanding on symptoms, cause, and cure” (67).

**PDQs for Dr. Lelek:** As you note throughout your book, the use or non-use of descriptive research continues to be a controversial topic in the modern biblical counseling world. What are some specific ways that we can biblically assess psychological data? Are there examples you would share about how you have taken psychological data and descriptive research and done “a complete reinterpretation” of that data biblically, so that it is useful in being a soul physician to embodied-souls? Are there examples you would share where you’ve perceived the research data to be so anti-biblical that you’ve chosen not to use suggested biological interventions?

### **PDQs About the Use of Scripture**

In chapter 5 on *Counseling and the Use of Scripture*, Dr. Lelek teaches readers how to study the Bible for biblical counseling. He focuses on understanding the grand narrative of the Bible, so that counselors avoid proof-texting and taking Scripture out of context. He teaches biblical counselors how to use hermeneutics and exegesis as they study the Scriptures. Lelek quotes Welch and Powlison explaining that:

“Within our own tradition there have certainly been forays into proof-texting, examples of shoddy exegesis, and times when we have been too dependent on a concordance. But the goal is to understand Scripture in context in order to apply it to people in context” (73).

Dr. Lelek then uses a specific case study relating to anxiety, and contrasts the weakness of a proof-texting approach to anxiety with the strengths of a comprehensive gospel-centered approach to anxiety.

**PDQs for Dr. Lelek:** When you are supervising counselors, how do you help them to recognize the difference between proof-texting and gospel-centered counseling? How do you equip novice biblical counselors to grow in their use of Scripture in counseling?

### **PDQs About God-Centered Biblical Counseling**

Chapter 6 focuses on *Counseling with God in Mind*. Here, Dr. Lelek emphasizes a Theo-centric view of biblical counseling.

“Counseling is about God” (83).

*“Glorifying God is biblical counseling’s primary goal”* (84, italics in original).

“The universal variable that all secular theorists miss is the failure to consider God’s glory in their constructs of wellness or health” (86).

“Biblical counseling, like no other form of soul care, recognizes that if people fail to consider God first, then it becomes impossible to understand themselves psychologically (human nature and motivation), ontologically (the nature of being and becoming), and existentially (the purpose and meaning of existence). Accurate self-knowledge becomes illusory when the purpose of counseling—the glory of the Creator—becomes entangled with the man-centered ideology of self-comfort” (87).

“The existence of God is the great presupposition of biblical counseling. Embracing this view orients the counseling process around a person. That person is not the counselee or the counselor, but the God of the Bible who deserves glory. The practice of biblical counseling, therefore, is primarily inclined toward the glory of God. It conceptualizes individuals, their circumstances, the process and aim of counseling with a mindfulness of God’s character” (96).

**PDQs for All of Us:** As you and I counsel, how can we be sure that we orient our counseling not around ourselves, not even around our counselee, but around God and His glory? Practically, how do you help hurting counselees to begin to draw their attention to the goodness and glory of God?

### **PDQs About God and Our Emotions**

Lelek next begins to explore what is God up to in counseling. He draws a profound conclusion.

“Emotional difficulties like depression are not diminished to the psychiatric fallacy that such things are exclusively disorders in need of cure. Instead, they are conceptualized as *divine taps on the shoulder through which the Holy Spirit calls people*

*to find rest in God alone. Emotional suffering, like everything people experience, can serve as a potent means to draw them closer to the Prince of Peace, the Healer of souls”* (108, emphasis added).

**PDQs for All of Us:** As compassionate biblical counselors, how do we gently help counselees to move from a focus on “fixing my feelings,” to a focus on drawing near to their sympathetic High Priest?

### **PDQs About the Person and Work of Christ**

Having introduced readers to biblical counseling and God the Father, Lelek next discusses biblical counseling and God the Son. He explains how the Person and work of Christ is foundational for biblical counseling.

“In Christ, perfect psychological functioning is exhibited, and it is through his finished work that the Holy Spirit is progressively conforming believers into his perfect image. It is incumbent upon biblical counselors, therefore, to consider how they may present Jesus and his accomplished work to those tormented by the horrors of mental, emotional, and relational anguish” (112).

“The Gospel of Christ reorients counseling away from mere behavior modification or modifying a family system or improving an emotional state. It orients counseling around worship—worship centered in the Christ of the gospel” (119).

“Being transformed into glory is not primarily about methods but about beholding the glory of God. If counselors fail to bring the splendor of God’s activities to the awareness of counselees, then they will differ little from their secular counterparts. The process of change cannot be finally about counselees but about the God who created them. Paul emphasized the significance of God in people’s transformation (see 2 Corinthians 3:17-18)” (124).

**PDQs for Dr. Lelek:** Counselees come to us in pain, wanting their behavior modified, their family system changed, or their emotional state improved. How do we empathetically care about those real life issues, concerns, and pain, while also gently helping counselees to move toward the deeper goals of conformity to Christ, worship of Christ, and the glory of God?

### **PDQs About Biblical Counseling and Humanity**

If you trace Lelek’s development theologically, you’ll see that he started with bibliology (the study of Scripture). He then moved to theology proper (the study of God the Father), Christology (the study of God the Son), and pneumatology (the study of God the Spirit).

Next, Lelek begins to study biblical anthropology—the study of humanity as created by God. He first exposes the fallacies of secular anthropology—of the secular psychological understanding of humanity.

“By and large, the theories of personality within classic secular psychology as well as more recent developments within neuropsychology tend to operate from a materialist perspective that is overwhelmingly influenced by the presuppositions of Darwinian evolution and humanistic philosophy” (128).

“Since their researchers and theorists embrace materialistic presuppositions about people, their interpretation of data and conclusions about human nature will be shaped by a philosophy that opposes biblical teaching (128-129).

**PDQs for Dr. Lelek:** You discuss this further in later chapters. Since counseling theory and neuropsychology build upon a materialistic perspective, should biblical counselors even attempt to glean from these fields? If so, how do biblical counselors discern truth from error? How do biblical counselors discern which, if any, insights from these fields are appropriate to use?

### **PDQs About Biblical Anthropology**

Moving from secular anthropology to biblical anthropology, Lelek shares:

“The issues of human nature are critical for developing a model of counseling because it guides a person’s diagnostic framework and prescriptive methods” (129).

“The Scripture’s robust insights on the heart help the Christian orchestrate an understanding of human nature *unlike any model found within secular literature*” (137, emphasis added).

“The Bible offers beautiful insights into human nature and existence not found within the secular literature” (137).

“Scripture is the supreme source for revealing people’s truest nature” (137).

**PDQs for All of Us:** To what extent do you build your diagnostic framework (your understanding of problems) and prescriptive methods (your understanding of change) on what the Bible teaches about human nature?

## Discussing and Applying Jeremy Lelek's *Biblical Counseling Basics* Part 3

### Discussing and Applying the Doctrine of Sin

In the classic systematic theology doctrines, theologians move from anthropology (God's original creation design for us) to hamartiology—how sinned marred that design. Following this theological pattern, Dr. Lelek next applies the doctrine of sin to biblical counseling.

“Unlike secularists, biblical counselors recognize sin as a profoundly relevant counseling concept. *Our biggest enemy is the enemy within.* A proper view of the psychology of man *acknowledges that humanity's greatest ill is sin.* The active sinful desires that emanate from the human heart serve always to move individuals away from God. The hostile, deceptive agenda of such desires promote destruction and corruption within the heart and life of man. Biblical counsel points counselees to the active Redeemer that through him they might effectively confront and crucify the flesh” (135, emphasis added).

“Sin is not exclusively behavioral. Behavior is a product of something deeper. Biblically, sin infects the heart—the motivational core of humanity (Luke 6:45)” (135-136).

**PDQs for All of Us:** How does the doctrine of the fall into sin impact your model of biblical counseling and the way you see people and counsel people?

### PDQs About the Doctrine of Salvation

Continuing to follow classic systematic theology, Lelek now moves to soteriology—salvation and sanctification. How does God change lives? What difference does the gospel make in biblical counseling? First, Lelek rightly builds upon salvation, before addressing sanctification.

“Biblical counseling will encourage believers to maintain a growing awareness of their new citizenship, that Jesus ultimately defeated sin in them and calls them to be made new in the attitude of their minds, faithfully ‘putting on’ the new self so that they may actually become (in their daily lives) who Christ has already made them to be—holy and righteous. Paul stresses this in Ephesians 4:20-24” (147).

“Biblical counseling holds tightly to the hope that if human hearts have been made new by the grace of God and are being transformed by the redeeming power of the gospel, then redemptive change is certain. It is not based on the skill of the counselor or the determination of the client, but on God who has the power to raise the dead” (151).

“When I work with people struggling with ongoing marital strife, severe addictions, compulsive behavior, or chronic depression, I want to make sure that the process of change is conducted within the rich context of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Otherwise, I run the risk of those I serve trusting in methods, a system, or in me as the ultimate hope for change. To avoid these tendencies, I seek to help people operate within the safety of the gospel” (160).

**PDQs for All of Us:** Sometimes we can become so focused on sin, that all we do is “sin-spot.” We can become blind as biblical counselors to the glories of salvation. As a biblical counselor, how do the truths that Dr. Lelek outlines about the justification, regeneration, redemption, and reconciliation transform your approach to your Christian counselees?

### **PDQs About Progressive Sanctification**

Having built a foundation of the work of Christ in salvation, Lelek now moves to sanctification. He rightly points out that the goal of progressive sanctification is increasingly looking like Christ—who is our model not only maturity—spiritually, mentally, emotionally.

“A new heart that can treasure God is the beginning of Christian transformation, not the final end. Christian counselors not only need a rich theology of motivation but also *a vibrant theology of change*. Biblical counseling offers a theology of ongoing transformation that is situated in what theologians have termed progressive sanctification. In this process, the Holy Spirit faithfully conforms the whole of believers’ beings *into the image of Jesus Christ* throughout the totality of their lives” (153, emphasis added).

“If counselors desire to help others move toward *greater mental health, they need a construct of a healthy mind*. That construct is realized in the person of Jesus Christ, *the consummate display of psychological wellness*” (154, emphasis added).

“When counselors highlight sanctification with counselees as being ‘conformed into the image of Jesus,’ this includes physical, emotional, and psychological anguish. Christ does not reject counselees because of that anguish. Jesus identifies with them, sympathizes with them, and enables them to walk with God. Jesus allows believers to manifest his character in the midst of tribulation” (159).

**PDQs for All of Us:** Have you ever thought of Jesus as our model of mental health? As our model of a healthy mind? As our model of psychological wellness? How could this biblical way of looking at Christ impact your own sanctification? Impact how you help others move toward progressive sanctification?

### **PDQs About Biblical Counseling and the Church**

The next doctrine covered in systematic theology is ecclesiology—the doctrine of the church. That’s where Dr. Lelek takes us next. Though Dr. Lelek practices as a licensed professional counselor, he emphasizes the absolute essential nature of the church.

“Genuine biblical counseling cannot be effectively practiced in isolation from the church, even among those who hold a state license” (167).

“One cannot read the Bible without coming away absolutely convinced that the church is the preeminent context for rich, personal even psychological transformation” (168-169).

“The Bible does not set apart counseling, soul care, or discipleship as a special discipline exclusive to those who are state licensed. Biblical counseling—the one-to-one intimate ministry of the sacred Scriptures—is a community endeavor. Counseling is helping one another grow in the wisdom of God through his Word” (169).

Dr. Lelek then asks and addresses the obvious follow-up question.

“Biblical counselors are currently debating the question, *Does the Bible leave room for Christians to participate in what culture calls professional counseling and psychology?*” This is a burning issue” (171).

**PDQs for Dr. Lelek:** You take a good portion of a chapter addressing this burning issue. Here’s an impossible task for you. In one paragraph, how would you answer the question, *Does the Bible leave room for Christians to participate in what culture calls professional counseling and psychology?* Another question, in your counseling practice, how do you and your colleagues help counselees to see the vital importance of the local church?

### **PDQs About Biblical Counseling and Extra-Biblical Resources**

After a lengthy and very helpful chapter on counseling methods—that are derived from gospel teachings, Lelek moves to the important topic of the Bible, biblical counseling, and extra-biblical information. He provides the following insights:

“Biblical counseling welcomes empirical data, but with one caveat—the interpretation of such data is not neutral” (192).

People conduct research “with either an awareness of God or a blindness toward him. Science is interpreted through one of two very specific lenses—theism or atheism. As such, biblical counselors will first need a solid understanding of biblical theology in order to interpret the scientific data in such a way that is consistent with the universe God created” (192-193).

Speaking of neuroscience research, Lelek states,

“Did I, therefore, *need* this research to point counselees to God’s magnificence? No, the Bible does that sufficiently. At the same time is it joyful to celebrate God’s greatness as he provides intricate details of his creativity through general revelation? Absolutely, and I will engage the research and literature to capture the wonder of God’s fingerprints upon every facet of existence” (195).

**PDQs for Dr. Lelek:** Your book clearly uses a biblical theology of people—a theological anthropology. Your book clearly cautions that biblical counselors must use God’s Word to discern the relative accuracy of neuroscience research. On your counseling website, you discuss using some of those neuroscience biological/physiological interventions. How do you use the theology identified in your book as the biblical-theological grid to discern when or if to use such biological/physiological interventions as part of your overall biblical counseling with people who are embodied-souls?

### **PDQs About Nature, Nurture, and the Heart**

Lelek then discusses the role of nature (embodied-souls) and nurture (social influences). Speaking of people as embodied-souls, Lelek explains,

“Counseling from this perspective (of God having designed us as embodied-souls) not only fosters a holistic approach to human functioning, it also promotes a genuinely biblical view of people by recognizing the importance of both their inner and outer beings” (196).

He then summarizes his thinking on biological and social influences.

“Biological and social influences are not to be ignored if one’s aim is to treat people biblically. Biblical counselors will be both holistic and contextual in their assessments. Theology informs them in this regard. It tells biblical counselors that they live in a fallen world in which both their biology and sociology have gone awry (Job 1-2). As such, counselors will consider family of origin as well as physiological and neurological dysfunctions. They will assess how these spheres interact and contribute to the presenting issues of their counselees” (200).

**PDQs for All of Us:** As soul physicians of embodied-souls who live in and are influenced by a fallen world system, how do you provide comprehensive soul care that addresses relational-social influences and physiological influences while maintaining a focus on the inner life, matters of the heart, and the counselee’s relationship to Christ?

### **PDQs About the Bible and Extra-Biblical Data**

Lelek ties much of the preceding material together in chapter 15 where he examines in more detail the issues of the sufficiency of Scripture and the use of extra-biblical data.

“Epistemology asks, *Is Scripture or science the foundational source of knowledge?* Biblical counseling would affirm the former, but not to the exclusion of utilizing the latter. Biblical counseling’s epistemological base, the Bible, will shape and interpret all other data” (205).

“I believe it is imperative that Scripture serves as *the comprehensive lens, authority, and source—upholding the sufficiency of Scripture.* I also find value in consulting extra-

biblical literature. While I hold this perspective, I also believe *that outside sources are not essential for me to provide rich, transformative biblical counsel*" (209, emphasis added).

"Is it imperative to rely on secular theory or research to effectively counsel this individual biblically? Please note the word *imperative* as it is a dividing line when it comes to a proper understanding of sufficiency of Scripture. In my view and experience, I do *not* believe it is imperative to consult secular research in order to address this person's underlying symptoms or to counsel him" (211).

This is a vital distinction. Notice that Lelek does not see extra-biblical data as *necessary or imperative*, but as *potentially helpful or possibly useful*. As Lelek notes, this is a dividing line in how biblical counselors think through the Bible and extra-biblical literature.

So, if not imperative or necessary, how does Dr. Lelek see extra-biblical sources?

"Nevertheless, would I consult research literature from the secular community as a means to better understand the physiological and sociological aspects that might be at play here? I certainly would" (211). "My embrace of the sufficiency of Scripture does not forbid me to engage and utilize the secular research, nor does it hold that the Bible is exhaustive on every issue relevant to counseling" (217). "This approach substantiates a very specific view of the sufficiency of Scripture that allows for interaction with outside sources in the pursuit of understanding people while biblical categories drive such interaction. Interaction with psychological research requires the skilled biblical counselor to appreciate, redeem, and reframe the culture of even the most godless men and women. This task is impossible if one does not first possess a robust theology of care formulated from the Bible alone" (218).

**PDQs for All of Us:** The Bible is sufficient to teach us how to evaluate extra-biblical information. How do you use God's sufficient Word as your guide for assessing extra-biblical information like descriptive research and/or neuroscience research?