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Prayer can be a life-changing experience and a key component in all forms of healing. It is about embracing God and ourselves in all our complexity and mystery. It is at the heart of our relationship with God. If God is the One in whom "we live, move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28), then prayer may be a legitimate activity in counseling a Christian believer.

CEDRIC B. JOHNSON, *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PSYCHOLOGY & COUNSELING*, 895.

Christian counseling stands in the gap between the secular and Christian world. Christian counseling is not adequate as a secular approach to counseling because it has rarely been subjected to empirical scrutiny and the constructs do not meet rigorous criteria to qualify as a theory. Christian counseling does not please everyone in the Christian community precisely because it smacks too much of the secular society, and critics of Christian counseling seem worried that too much of the world is imported into the lives of vulnerable Christians. Despite being in the breach Christian counseling continues to be practiced.

EVERETT L. WORTHINGTON, *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PSYCHOLOGY & COUNSELING*, 191.

## A SELECT ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Philip G. Monroe

These books represent modern, helpful explorations of the parameters of Christian psychology, pastoral care as well as practical texts dealing with common problems people face today. Some authors are not Christian but write in a way that causes the reader to think differently about the topic.

Cushman, Philip. *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1995. Cushman has given us a fascinating look at how American culture has shaped our sense of the ideal self, our "illnesses," and the healers we use to achieve our ideal self. He traces the American self from Puritan New England through the Eighties. Of most interest is his critique of post WW II America and how we moved from a service oriented society to a self-fulfillment society. Therapy, in his mind, promised deliverance from the empty unfulfilled self. However, most likely it only increased the search for the self-centered self. Though not in this book, Cushman has since argued that we are in the era of the "multiple self"—where we no longer look to find our true self but look to temporary and convenient presentations of the self that are most attractive and efficacious. If this is true, then people are likely to come to therapy not to find themselves but to make their chaotic life work. For those interested in a Christian perspective on this, they might want to explore Stan Grenz', *The Social God and the Relational Self*. He also traces the demise of the modern self as well as

argues for a Trinitarian understanding of the self.

Gottman, John. *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. A popular book written by a researcher at the University of Washington. He makes some very interesting observations after studying how husbands and wives communicate to each other over the course of 20 years of marriage. While not a Christian book, Gottman points out a number of common problems in marriages such as overly negative interpretations of one's spouse, contempt, withdrawal, etc., in a fashion that is easy to understand. While extremely thin on what to do about these problems, Gottman illustrates these problems in a way that many couples can identify and target for change. Other books of interest in this genre: *Fighting For Your Marriage* by Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg.

Jones, Stanton L. and Eric L. Johnson, editors. *Psychology & Christianity: 4 Views*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000. This book contains the most recent discussion of models of Christian counseling in one volume. Authors Gary Collins, David Myers, Robert Roberts, and David Powlison discuss and debate four common views of how psychology and Christianity interrelate. While this marks a much-needed work, it has a few drawbacks. Myers muddies the water with his less than orthodox views of homosexuality. Collins' musing about the integration movement is insightful but may not be descriptive enough of those who would go by that moniker. Powlison does a good job detailing the various meanings of psychology but spends only a few sparse lines discussing his particular counseling model. Despite these drawbacks, it does a great job depicting the tremendous differences among Christians in the world of counseling.

Langberg, Diane M. *On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door of Hope and Healing for Survivors of Sexual Abuse*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale Press, 1999. A resource for

both counselors and counselees that guides them through the difficult process of healing and change after sexual abuse. The chapters are short, educational in nature, and point the reader to the cross. This is also a good read for family members or friends who want to understand and walk with an abuse survivor.

Langberg, Diane M. *Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse*. Xulon Press, ([www.XulonPress.com](http://www.XulonPress.com)), 2003. This book is for Christian counselors and gives sage advice in how to sit with and counsel those who have experienced unspeakable traumas. Another helpful book of interest by Diane Langberg is *Counsel for Pastor's Wives*.

Plantinga, Cornelius. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. While not a new book, this must-read volume provides fresh insights into the problem, motive, root, and impact of sin with practical discussions of the problem of addiction. The reader is forced to acknowledge the depth of destruction of sin in the world and in his or herself. Especially pertinent is his discussion of self-deception and "sins of the religious".

Roberts, Robert C. *Taking the Word to Heart: Self & Others in an Age of Therapies*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993. Bob Roberts critiques contemporary personality and therapeutic theory while setting forth some of the most basic characteristics of the soul. This is a help in the process of articulating a distinctly Christian psychology and therapy. Throughout the text, Roberts illustrates how contemporary therapies are useful yet set themselves up as alternative religions to Christianity. Readers interested in this topic should also note that Roberts has co-edited with Mark R. Talbot a text, *Limning the Psyche: Explorations in Christian Psychology*. This text has helpful essays by Cornelius Plantinga, Paul Vitz, Eric Johnson, Stan Jones, A. A. Howsepian and several others.

Tripp, Paul D. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in*

*Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change.* Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2002. This book is geared toward those interested in knowing how to make the concept of every member ministry a reality in their church. Tripp does a fine job in articulating the basics of how to establish relationships with others, efficiently gather data, identify needs, as well as set goals and objectives for lovingly speaking the truth of the gospel to others. Tripp's use of personal and counseling stories effectively communicates his points and make this an enjoyable read. Other books of interest by Tripp: *Age of Opportunity*; *War of Words*.

Vernick, Leslie. *How to Live Right When Your Life Goes Wrong.* Colorado Springs, Colorado: Waterbrook Press, 2003. A warm and thoughtful application of the process of biblical counseling to real life situations. Vernick guides people to explore their *troubles*, gain a deeper awareness of their *responses* to suffering and of the underlying idols of the heart that control their responses, return to the *truth* of God's Word, and develop a *heart* that seeks God more than self-actualization. What makes this book stand out is Vernick's open discussion of her own struggles and how she applies biblical principles to her own life. As a result, this is a great book to give to anyone going through a difficult time. Other books of interest by Vernick: *How to Have Selfless Joy in a Me First World*; *How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong*.

Welch, Edward T. *When People are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man.* Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1997. A great book that details the varieties of the universal problem of fearing the opinions of others more than we revere God and his opinion of us. Welch describes three types of "fear of man" (i.e., that others may see me (humiliation), reject me, or hurt

me) and practical ways to overcome these fears. Each chapter ends with several suggested activities to help develop a greater awe or reverence for God. The content of the book can be purchased in the form of a video and study guide appropriate for small groups or Sunday Schools. Other books of interest by Welch: *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*.