

**Perspective of Biblical Anthropology and Imago Dei and How It Informs Counseling**

**Approach**

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### **Approach**

The importance of the Bible in human life can be drawn first from its popularity throughout the world. Biblical anthropology seeks to study human beings in relation to God. In Biblical anthropology, human beings are a creature made by God and provided with dominion to exercise control over the universe. Humans, therefore, get the basis of their behavior from God and act within the whims of God's mandate (Daalen, 2012). The very existence of human beings has been a contention for millennia. Many myths exist to explain the said existence. Scientific theories have been formulated to explain the wonder that is the existence of human beings. However, the Bible provides a direct answer to these questions albeit it needs faith as the basis for belief. This faith would be necessary even in other scientific theories attempting to explain the existence of human beings and their purpose. The Biblical perspective of human existence begins with a pronouncement made by God to make humans in their image. The divine declaration made in Genesis 1:26 sets the stage for the origin of human beings and sets the tone for their destiny. While Genesis 1:26 ascribes that humans are made in the image of God, the Bible does not explicitly reveal what exactly the image of God entails (Holeman, 2014).

The Old Testament Bible describes imago Dei as a cultural mandate that God provides human beings to have a mandate over other creatures. In this context, the image of God is exercised by humans in how they exercise dominion and control other creatures. It is a mandate delegated to human beings from the creator of the entire universe. I believe that imago Dei gives credence to the unique features that human beings have to distinguish them from other creatures. The mental capacity of human beings has allowed them to be more capable of unique inventions, and linguistics, among other characteristics (Holeman, 2014). Just as the creator spoke at the

beginning and invented an entire universe with things in it, these abilities are passed from God to human beings. The unique capacity of God is passed to human beings so they can practice it to the best of their ability. This can be seen in how greatly inventive human beings have been in the course of history.

An understanding of biblical anthropology is essential in shaping counseling. The recognition of a higher authority and higher hope is critical in counseling. Mostly counseling only succeeds because the person being counseled recognizes the need to have hope and pick up from their misery. Biblical concepts are filled with hope and recognition of higher authority with unmatched powers. Such is essential in handling counseling. Theological explanations are critical for providing an understanding of human conditions and recovery from them. Deep theological reflection can make a major difference in practicing counseling. Christian clients recognize the power of a higher authority in God. They believe in the ability of God to create, change things, punish sin, and reward good deeds. It is therefore important to incorporate biblical concepts especially when the client under counseling is a Christian (Bird, 2016).

Clients who believe in the ability of God to change their situation will benefit if God is incorporated into their counseling sessions. For instance, the bible promises Christians of resurrection when Christ returns. The Book of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16 speaks of the return of Christ and the resurrection of dead righteous people. It also proclaims the translation of alive righteous people to join Christ in their journey to Heaven. While this might seem alien to individuals who do not believe in the Bible and its teachings, it provides immense hope to believers. Such concepts can be very beneficial in counseling and comforting bereaved individuals. If they can find hope in their misery and focus on their lives, then they can recover from any situation that made them require counseling in the first place.

The Bible is full of texts that point to the healing of the word of God. Psalm 107:20 indicates that God sent out his word and healed them delivering them from destruction. This points to the healing nature of the word of God. Its rich power convinces one away from their psychological problems and keeps them in a calm place full of hope and renewal. According to Garzon (2005), the bible describes the word of God as living and active and with the ability to judge the intentions of the heart. The Bible explicitly displays its ability to provide creativity on the issues that affect human beings. The Bible offers room for psychoeducation where clients are taught about their emotions and actions and how they can use the scripture to find suitable practices that will spark behavior change. Theo-education explains God's position in one's life and the ability of God's love to see them through tough times. Indirect interventions such as praying for an individual also work for some therapists intending to exert God's control in the client's life. Biblical anthropology provides numerous means through which prayer can be used to get one out of psychological distress.

Biblical anthropology provides explanations for positive psychology encompassing positive emotions, engagement, meaning, relationships, and accomplishments. It is essential to establish what human beings require for them to thrive. According to King and Whitney (2015), Christian principles recognize God's purpose for humankind. The theology of thriving seeks to establish the full purpose of humankind according to God. Christianity provides a rich base through which humans can establish their purpose and how they can live an optimum life. The doctrine of imago Dei broadens and deepens human understanding from a teleological perspective (King & Whitney, 2015). For one to thrive, one must have a proper direction of where they should go and be in a constant state of growth. The Bible provides Christians with a basis through which they can generate their telos. God instructs Christians on how they are

supposed to live by providing a moral compass through which all must operate. There is an emphasis on respect for everyone and taking care of all in society. These principles are essential in counseling because they serve to remind a client of what they must do to recover from their psychological problem. Living a righteous lifestyle has always been a key reason why many people strive to do good in society and impact lives positively. For instance, the scriptures have been used to successfully discourage people from drug addiction and sexual promiscuity. These are activities that are prohibited in the Bible and if one subscribes to the principles of the book, they are more likely to be successfully counseled against such exploits. The Bible provides a basis through which humans can develop positive emotions by providing a path to a fulfilling lifestyle (King & Whitney, 2015).

Porter (2010), is right to highlight that the integration of the natural sciences and social sciences with theology serves to improve the essence of both disciplines. Psychology and theology are authoritative partners in the quest for truth. Psychology and theology can inform one another by illuminating areas of common interest and insight. Theological concepts like the creation of human beings provide the basis for the interpretation of functional psychological frameworks. Theology can explain certain concepts that are outside the whims of psychology like eschatology (Porter, 2010). There is however longstanding suspicion and mistrust that has for years developed between the two disciplines with one fear of being eclipsed by the other. Despite the fear of eclipse coming from both sides, biblical anthropology is essential to counseling and should be embraced. Biblical anthropology and imago Dei explain key concepts in human life that make it possible for counselors to streamline their counseling with theology. I believe that counselors should be more open to biblical concepts in counseling because they explain vital questions about human existence, purpose, and fate.

## References

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