

As a new Christian and a Psychology major in college, it was difficult to make what I was learning fit with what I was coming to believe. I was taught a broad range of psychological theories, and I searched each one for what would be a good fit with biblical teaching. Some theories seemed appealing, like humanism and its teaching that people are basically good, but did not stand up to Christian doctrine like original sin. I finally settled on cognitive-behavioral approaches, in part because that was the dominant theory of my school, and also because it seemed to combine the best parts of a few different theories. I started putting it into practice after graduation and found that it worked much of the time

But I was still troubled by my original question: is it biblical? When I started working as a Christian Counselor, that question seemed even more important. How do I combine what I learned in my secular education with my Christian beliefs? People were coming to me as a Christian counselor, and I felt a responsibility to not only help them with the problems that they were experiencing, but to draw them closer to Christ in the process. Would the same methods work in this context? Shouldn't Christian Counseling be decidedly Christian?

I was lead to a scripture that I felt answered my question. It was a writing of Paul found in 2 Corinthians 10:5: *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.* Paul also writes in Romans 12:2 to be *transformed by the renewing of our minds,* and again in Ephesians 4 we are reminded to be *made new in the attitude of our minds.* I could go on—it's all over the place!

This is the very essence of cognitive-behavioral therapy! To help you understand my excitement over this revelation, perhaps I should better explain the theory.

The basic premise of cognitive-behavioral therapy is in the think-feel-do cycle. Imagine a triangle with thoughts, feelings and actions at each corner. The corners are all connected to one another, just as these three aspects of our selves are connected to one another. How you think and feel impact what you do. For example, doing the right thing, even when you do not feel like it, will eventually lead to right thinking and a calming of your fears. Change one, and the other 2 will follow. Through the transforming work of Christ, God can (and often does) heal the feelings associated with past trauma, which changes the way we think about the event and alters our behavior. Extending forgiveness often has this effect. From a counselor's point of view, the easiest aspect of the triangle for me to help my clients to change is the thought. In essence, we as Christian counselors teach people to take their thoughts captive and conform them to Christ and his teachings! No matter what they taught me in school, Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was the original cognitive-behavioral therapist! I am honored to join the Spirit in continuing this work.