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The Biblical Basis of Christian Counseling for People Helpers: Relating the Basic Teachings of
Scripture to People's Problems (Pilgrimage Growth Guide)

9. Human Nature and Counseling

Collins argues that how a counselor views human nature shapes how they counsel. Using the contrast between Mark Kilroy's brutal murderers and Mother Teresa's caregiving sisters, the chapter builds a biblical picture of what people are: creatures like animals in body, yet made in God's image, marred by sin but valuable to God and made to glorify Him.

Key takeaways

- A counselor's worldview about human nature drives their whole approach; the Christian view starts with people as creations of a holy, loving God.
- Humans are creatures: physically like animals (born, die, dust to dust), and the body and its appetites are not evil in themselves—God called creation 'very good.'
- Yet humans are unique, made 'in the image of God.' This shows up in four marks: relatedness (built for relationship, not isolation), gender (male and female), dominion (real moral choice, not just reaction), and responsibility (stewardship over the earth).

- Against existentialism's fear of being an empty 'nobody,' the Bible says each person exists for a noble purpose: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
- The image of God was marred but not destroyed by the Fall; Christ came to restore it, and believers are being changed into His likeness by degrees.
- Debates over tripartite (body/soul/spirit) vs. bipartite (material/immaterial) views matter less than the conclusion: a person is a unified whole, not carved into parts. Counseling can't treat one part and ignore the rest.
- Counselees, however warped or wounded, are loved by God and worth respecting—like the outcasts Jesus befriended.

Passages worth keeping

“Human beings do not know who they are because they have lost contact with their Creator, the One who gives them identity and meaning.”

States the chapter's core diagnosis of the human problem.

“Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever.”

The Westminster answer Collins sets against existential despair about purpose.

How it connects

The chapter frames counseling itself as an act of stewardship: caring for people made in God's image is part of the dominion mandate. It sets up the next chapters on how sin distorts this nature.

Scripture referenced

- **Genesis 1:26-27** -- Humans made in God's image, male and female, with dominion.
- **Genesis 2:7; 3:19** -- Created from dust, returning to dust—humans as creatures.
- **Isaiah 43:7** -- We are created to bring God glory.
- **1 Corinthians 10:31** -- Glorify God in ordinary daily activities.
- **2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29** -- Believers being changed into Christ's image—the goal of salvation.
- **1 Thessalonians 5:23** -- 'Spirit, soul and body'—the text behind the tripartite debate.