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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)

10. Sin and Counseling

Collins argues that most modern counseling ignores sin, but the Bible treats sin as central to human problems. He surveys how Scripture describes sin, where it came from, and how it damages people—then warns counselors against two opposite mistakes when applying this. The goal is to take sin seriously without becoming simplistic or harsh.

Key takeaways

- Jay Adams' *Competent to Counsel* forced conservative Christians to face sin in counseling, but Collins finds Adams too confrontational and simplistic—right about sin, wrong about method.
- The Bible sees sin not as an occasional lapse but as an inner force and condition at the core of every person (total depravity)—yet this does not mean everyone is as evil as possible.
- Scripture shows sin four ways: a personal act of rebellion, a hidden attitude, a powerful force that permeates whole societies, and a state we are born into through Adam.

- At its root sin is unbelief (doubting God's word and goodness, as with Eve) and rebellion (seeking independence from God).
- Sin causes four separations (Schaeffer): from God, from other people, from ourselves, and from nature/the environment.
- Extreme one: assuming every problem is the sufferer's own sin, to be confronted and removed. Extreme two: blaming all problems on others' sin and playing the perpetual victim. Both are wrong.
- Counselors who ignore sin will be of limited effectiveness—but the hopeful conclusion is that in Christ people become new creations, find forgiveness, and can be healed.

Passages worth keeping

“The Bible presents sin as an inner force, an inherent condition, a controlling power that lies at the core of our being.”

The chapter's central definition, set against views that treat sin as a minor lapse or a violation of a nonexistent code.

“Sin, for all its harshness, carries an implication of promise and hope.”

Mowrer's point that naming sin, rather than 'sickness,' opens the door to real recovery.

How it connects

The four separations trace back to Genesis 3 and forward to redemption in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17): sin fractures every relationship, but the next chapters promise 'the rest of the story'—forgiveness and healing.

Scripture referenced

- **Psalm 51:2,4** -- David: sin is personal rebellion against God
- **Matthew 5:21-28** -- sin as inner attitude—lust and anger, not just outward acts
- **Romans 7:23-8:2** -- the inner 'law of sin' that wars in us—sin as a force
- **Romans 5:12-19** -- through Adam, sin and death spread to all—sin as a state
- **Genesis 3:4-5** -- the first temptation—unbelief and rebellion at sin's root
- **Luke 13:4** -- Jesus rejects the idea that a victim's tragedy proves greater sin