



2025-2026

Week Two: ACBC Theology Exam - Questions #2-4-5

Question #2: Describe the sufficiency of Scripture. Relate the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture to the practice of biblical counseling. Research and respond to the arguments of at least one integrationist or Christian Psychologist regarding the insufficiency of Scripture for counseling.

Sufficiency of Scripture Defined: *The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.*¹

Our stage of redemptive history:

Hebrews 1:1-2

Salvation:

John 6:66-68

Trusting Him perfectly:

Psalms 1:2

Joshua 1:8

Ps 56:4

Hebrews 11:1-4

Obeying Him perfectly:

Deuteronomy 27:10

Jeremiah 7:23

Jeremiah 42:6

Acts 5:32

1 John 2:3

1 John 5:3

2 John 1:6

Sufficiency and Counseling / Discipleship:

2 Timothy 3:11-17

Psalms 19:7-14

Colossians 2:8

¹ Wayne A. Grudem, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 127.

Integrationist/Christian Counselor:

1. Dr. Eric Johnson has a different perspective than Biblical Counselors when it comes to his understanding of sufficiency. Dr. Johnson points out that the reformers took issue with sufficiency in a way different from the way today's Biblical Counselors take issue with sufficiency. The reformers challenged Rome's definition of sufficiency, that the magisterium is needed to understand the Bible. The reformers claimed rightly that the Bible is sufficient to understand what the Bible means. The magisterium is not necessary to understand what the Bible means.

Dr. Johnson is correctly addressing what the reformers were claiming regarding sufficiency and the teaching from Rome. They were addressing an issue with sufficiency that was contemporary to their time. However, it is only speaking to one aspect of sufficiency.

Biblical Counselors are speaking to a different aspect of sufficiency, one that is an issue contemporary to our time. Biblical Counselors are speaking to the material sufficiency of Scripture.

Material sufficiency means that Scripture tells us everything we need to know from God regarding our soul, the immaterial part of man. In some cases God has told us in Scripture about a topic in a "general sense". This means He has told us everything we need to know about that topic "for life and godliness", but He has not given us every piece of information there is to know.

For other topics God has spoken in a "particular sense". He has told us very specific details about the topic.

Whether God has spoken generally or particularly, He has given us everything we need to know to judge all other knowledge. We do not need other knowledge to help ourselves or another person with soul care.

In fact, it is only in the past half-century or so that Christian counselors have looked to secular resources to assist in soul care. Dr. Johnson and other Christian counselors who believe as he does, believe the Bible is important but not sufficient. They look to extensive resources outside the Bible. (Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, pages 37-52)

2. Bob Kelleman: God's all-sufficient Word is His perfect, authoritative, inerrant, and inspired special revelation. Therefore, the Word is our all-sufficient guide for assessing and evaluating any common grace interpreted observations. The Bible provides us with the wisdom to know how to engage with and evaluate extra-biblical information.

Kelleman believes there are two common misconceptions about God's sovereign, Christ-glorifying common grace:

- Misconception #1: Common grace is limited to certain domains of knowledge.
- Misconception #2: Common grace equates to and glorifies "the wisdom of the world."

Theological Conviction #1: God's Sovereign Common Grace—The biblical doctrine of common grace is not limited to certain domains of knowledge but covers every square inch of God's creation (Psalm 19:4-6; Psalm 103:19; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 1:16-17).

Theological Conviction #2: Christ-Glorifying Common Grace—The biblical doctrine of common grace does not glorify the wisdom of the world; it glorifies the wisdom of Christ (Romans 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Colossians 2:2-3).

RESPONSE: David Powlison's Three "I's" of Insight

1. Identification

Powlison emphasized the importance of identifying the core issues in a person's life. This involves understanding the specific struggles and patterns that lead to suffering or sin. By pinpointing these issues, counselors can better address the root causes rather than just the symptoms.

2. Interpretation

This aspect focuses on interpreting the identified issues through a biblical lens. Powlison believed that Scripture provides the necessary framework to understand human behavior and suffering. He encouraged using biblical truths to help individuals see their situations more clearly and to find hope and guidance.

3. Intervention

The final "I" involves taking action based on the insights gained from identification and interpretation. Powlison advocated for practical steps that align with biblical teachings, helping individuals to change their thoughts, behaviors, and relationships in a way that reflects their faith.

These three "I's" form a comprehensive approach to counseling, integrating biblical principles with practical application to foster genuine change in people's lives.

Question #4: Define general revelation and special revelation and describe the nature of their authority as well as their relationship to one another.

Revelation generally speaking has to do with the self-disclosure of God.

General revelation is God's witness of himself to all men of all times.

1. Creation Reveals his power and divine nature (including his wrath) Rom 1:18-23 – The text explains not only that there is a God, that God's wrath is poured out, but also that I have no excuse for not seeking after him. Include the image of God in man. In other Gen. 1:26-28 helps us understand that man is relational – with God and others; he rules which reflects the sovereignty of his creator; man is being conformed to the image of Christ (Col 3:10).

2. Conscience

Conscience seems to be the built in awareness of guilt as part of the image of God in man. In other words, God has made man with a sense of what is right and what is wrong.

Romans 2:15

Romans 13:5

1 Corinthians 8:7

**Summarizing general revelation, we can say that general revelation is God's self-disclosure through creation and conscience that helps man to understand (1) that there is a God and (2) everyone has violated God's standard and thus has a great need.

Special revelation is God's witness of himself to specific people at specific times. In other words, special revelation is not universal.

Special revelation is found in the written word of God.

There were several types of special revelation found in salvation history as recorded in His Word.

1. Direct contact with God (Genesis 2)
2. Visions and Dreams (Joseph in both Genesis and Matthew, Isaiah, Ezekiel)
3. Means of determining the Will of God (Urim and Thummim [Num 27:21]; casting lots [Jonah 1])
4. Theophanies/Christophanies (Exodus 40 / pillar of cloud and fire)
5. Historical events (parting of the red sea)

6. Incarnation of Jesus (John 1:1-18f)

7. Prophecy / sign gifts (1 Cor 12-14)

The most important category for our purposes is the special revelation of God found particularly in his written word. This word is given to us because it is profitable. It is uniquely available.

A. What about the level of authority they possess?

What has the right to command me?

The only way we know about either general or special revelation is the Bible tells me. It is also the only means that we have to interpret everything else we experience. Therefore the authority is granted to the Scripture.

B. We need to explain the points of contrasts

So while I appreciate general revelation for a great many things (contributions of science for example) the reality remains that insights from general revelation do not help a person come to Christ nor do they help a person grow to be more like Christ---which is the goal of our counseling---helping and walking alongside people. Thus, their authority is a secondary authority subject to validation from the Scriptures.

Special revelation includes all I need for life and godliness including an understanding of who I am, who God is, the cross of Christ, the possibility of reconciliation, knowledge about a meaningful relationship with a holy God, the glorious future awaiting his children, and how to live until he takes me home.

Question #5: Explain the doctrine of common grace as it relates to the limitations of secular psychologists in understanding true information about the human condition.

Common grace is defined as “the grace of God by which He gives people innumerable blessings that are not part of salvation” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pg 657). This grace is common in the sense that it is not bestowed on a particular group, but is extended to all people.

This does not imply that there are two different kinds of grace in God Himself, but that God’s grace manifests itself in the world in two different ways. (Grudem, pg 657-658)

God’s common grace extends to every aspect of existence. The fact that the earth continues on its axis is an example of common grace. Every breath, especially in light of the truth that the wages of sin is death and not the breath of life, is common grace. The economy, natural resources, and beauty are further examples of common grace that are shared by believers and unbelievers alike.

God created all of mankind in His image and He allows every man to continue to enjoy the blessings of being created in His image, even those who are His enemies. His enemies do not forfeit the blessings of intellect, emotion, the ability to discern truth from error, or the privilege of authority to subdue the earth. This is His common grace.

A further example of common grace is God's restraint of evil. Man is wicked, man is evil, and man is a rebellious enemy of God. God's common grace is what restrains this evil. God's common grace is what keeps man from being as wicked as he could be, from pouring out unrestrained evil. While common grace restrains sin, it does not change a person's disposition toward sin. Common grace is not sufficient to bring salvation.

Scripture on common grace: Matthew 5:45; Psalm 145:9; Acts 14:15-17; 17:28

How does the Doctrine of Common Grace limit secular counselors to understand the true information about the human condition?

Secular Counselors / Psychologists and Common Grace: Since common grace is the grace God gives to all people this includes unbelievers, and it includes those who follow philosophies that strive to explain life from an anti-God worldview. Secular psychologists are made in the image of God and partake in God's common grace of intellect. This enables them to observe, reason, and hypothesize.

God's common grace allows secular counselors / psychologists to observe truths that are rooted in God, and in His Word. They observe truths of the human condition, even though they do not ascribe these truths to God or His Word. They will use secular language to describe what they observe, but they will be describing biblical principles and truths insofar as what they describe is true. When they are accurate in what they observe they are describing what God has revealed in His Word, without fully understanding what they are describing.

The doctrine of common grace grants all mankind intellectual provisions, regardless of their position in Christ. God's common grace does allow secular counselors to make observations, but when it comes to interpretations and interventions based on those observations, they are basing those interpretations on a secular worldview, one that is hostile to God (Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 1:18, 1:25, 2:14).

1. "It is most helpful to understand the information available in psychology as existing on three levels: observations, interpretations, and interventions."¹

1 Heath Lambert, A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry, 76.

- a. "Observations are the information all people come to know through God's common grace."²
 - b. "When unbelievers come to know facts, they interpret those facts as someone who does not love and trust the God of the Bible. When believers come to know facts, they will eventually interpret those facts as worshipers of the living God."³
 - c. "The interpretations of psychologists are when they seek to understand the information produced by their observations . . . No mechanism exists to separate our observations from our interpretations. We seek to make sense out of the information we come to grasp on the commitments we cherish."⁴
 - d. "The interventions of secular psychology are efforts to employ interpreted observations in helping people in counseling. It is at this point that the discipline of secular psychology produces the secular therapies."⁵
2. "By common grace, unbelievers do some good, and we should see God's hand in it and be thankful for common grace as it operates in every friendship, every act of kindness, every way in which it brings blessing to others. All of this—though the unbeliever does not know it—is ultimately from God and he deserves the glory for it."⁶
 3. "Saved and unsaved people are able to know correct information . . . However, Paul mentions that there are blessings from this worldly wisdom. Although worldly wisdom does not lead to salvation, good things come from it, like the production of useful information and wealth (1 Cor. 1:26). These are blessings we receive even when trusting in them leads to our destruction."⁷
 4. "It is important to note that neither Genesis 3 nor Psalm 1 leaves any room for a third, neutral counsel. One of Satan's ruses (as an angel of light) is to convince those who claim theological sophistication to accept error under the slogan, 'All truth is God's truth.' Under that banner nearly every error in the book has been blamed on God!"⁸

2 Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*, 76.

3 Ibid, 77.

4 Ibid, 77.

5 Ibid, 78.

6 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 665.

7. Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*, 69.

8 Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*

5. "Indeed, it is entirely false to speak of what science discovers as divine revelation. It is human discovery made possible by common grace, and that is all. Revelation comes from God; discovery from man. And the discoveries that are unearthed may or may not be correctly interpreted. Most of the supposed 'discoveries' turn out to be nothing more than the views of humans trying to understand nature. Surely this cannot be rightly termed 'revelation.'"⁹

⁹ Jay E. Adams, *Is All Truth God's Truth?*, 27.