

# UNPACKING “PERSONALITY DISORDERS”: GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Following are the general descriptions of “Personality Disorder” as offered by the American Psychiatric Association’s diagnostic manual (left) as well as a brief biblical discussion of each point (right).

<i>DSM-IV-TR Criteria for “Personality Disorder” (general)</i>	<i>Biblical Description for “Personality Disorder” (general)</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Enduring pattern of inner experience or behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual’s culture including the areas of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cognition</li><li>• Affectivity</li><li>• Interpersonal functioning</li><li>• Impulsive control</li></ul></li><li>2. The pattern is enduring and inflexible as well as pervasive across a broad range of personal and social situations</li><li>3. Enduring pattern leads to clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.</li><li>4. The pattern is stable and of long duration and its onset can be traced back to at least adolescence or early adulthood.</li><li>5. Pattern is not accounted for by another mental disorder.</li><li>6. Pattern is not due to direct physiological effects of a substance.</li></ol> <p>American Psychiatric Association: <i>Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders</i>, Fourth Edition, Text Revision. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 2000.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The so-called “Personality Disorders” (i.e. paranoid, narcissistic, etc.) are simply descriptions of long-term behavioral, emotional, interpersonal, and thought patterns developed by an individual over a period of time.</li><li>2. The Bible clearly articulates the influence of depravity and sin on a person’s behavior, thinking, and feeling. Therefore the influence of the “law of sin” must be a focal point for individuals citing these labels (Ephesians 2:3).</li><li>3. Following the flesh always leads to further corruption, death, and darkness (Ephesians 4:22-24, Romans 8:5).</li><li>4. Adams (1979), citing II Peter 2:14, discusses the idea of “habituation” in which sinful patterns spawn (and reinforce) sinful patterns (p. 243).</li><li>5. Powlison (1996) highlights the fact that people don’t “have” disorders, they “do” what the so-called “diagnoses” (to the left) describe (p. 3). This is especially so, it seems, as it relates to “Personality Disorders”. This is an imperative conceptualization that will shape one’s approach when dealing with such individuals.</li></ol>