

The New
**Christian
Counselor**

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We wrote this book with a deep sense of gratitude for all
who have taught and mentored us along our journey.
We dedicate this book to them and to all the people
around the globe who have answered God's call to care for
the millions of people in our world with wounded souls.

THE NEW CHRISTIAN COUNSELOR

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1

Introduction to a New Day

By your patience possess your souls.

LK. 21:19 NKJV

It's a new day in the world of Christian counseling, psychotherapy, and mental health care. Like never before, Christian counseling is growing into a diverse, empirically grounded, and biblically based ministry-profession of worldwide prominence. It's encouraging to see the exponential growth of the modern Christian counseling movement as never before. Today, Christian counselors are equipped to respond to the diverse and complex needs of hurting people all over the world. However, we need to keep learning. We are challenged by advances in biblical, medical, and psychological research. Militant secularism and global opposition to Christian truth are on the rise.

Like the prophet Habakkuk, we seek to “write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it” (Hab. 2:2 NKJV). *The New Christian Counselor* offers a vision for the future of Christian counseling that provides definition, focus, and direction to Christian counseling

practice in the 21st century. Author and scholar Leonard Sweet (1999) challenged all believers: “The future is not something we enter. The future is something we create.”

As Christian counselors, we need to maintain pace with advances in research, practice, and treatment. If we properly respond to the challenges of militant secularism, which seeks to remove us from our rightful place in the public square, we will faithfully serve our spiritual calling and avoid becoming obsolete. This book is designed to assist in actively shaping our future so we respond to the Spirit in love and loyalty, honor God, and imitate Christ’s kindness, humility, and strength in all we do.

The calling of the new Christian counselor, our high privilege and our compelling responsibility, is to be *distinctively Christian and thoroughly professional*. To effectively represent Christ and conduct counseling on the highest level, we are responsible to embrace and stay with the tenor of the times by keeping up with advances in research and in the treatment fields of counseling, psychotherapy, and pastoral care. Our foundation is the truth of God’s Word, but we also gain critical insights from a variety of gifted counselors’ and authors’ theories and practices. We view all the resources available to us as God-given, and we rely on the Word of God and the Spirit of God to produce genuine, lasting change in us and in our clients.

We are partners with God in the grand and exciting adventure of seeing lives transformed. People usually come to us at their point of desperation. They are vulnerable and broken, but they have walked into our offices and our lives seeking a glimmer of hope. The potential for life-changing transformation is at its peak when people are in pain. Our desire and our challenge is to provide warmth, encouragement, and insights that help them to make their way toward God, finding him to be trustworthy, loving, kind, and able.

The time has come for us to speak with appropriate boldness, intellectual confidence, and spiritual astuteness in the work and ministry of counseling. Being a Christian counselor is more than having a title on a business card, and it's far more than a job. We are (or we can become) skilled, open, willing channels for God's grace to flow into other people's lives. The purpose of this book is to embolden and equip those who have a spiritual awareness but lack the knowledge and confidence to declare their position on the role of faith in emotional and psychological healing.

To understand our role more fully, we need to begin with a clear grasp of the universal longing—the cry of every person's soul.

The Cry of the Soul

Listening accurately to the client is a central counseling skill, a skill that enables the counselor to hear in stereo, attending to the client's words as well as the surrounding relational environment. The skilled, attentive Christian counselor hears the cry of the soul—the past hurts, present struggles, and future hopes.

When we listen, what do we hear? Depression, stress and anxiety, loss, abuse, relationship problems, divorce, loneliness, violence, and more. The world is full of brokenness that can be traced back to the opening pages of Genesis. The world started off well—really well. In Gen. 1:31 we read, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” Before long, however, a cataclysm shook the created order. The existential earthquake happened when sin entered the picture.

God had given Adam and Eve everything they could dream of wanting. He gave them only one restriction: Don't eat from a particular tree. Satan came along and whispered deception and doubt into Eve's heart—“Did God really say that?” He promised they could “be like God, knowing good and evil.” Adam went along with Eve's choice to sin against

God. The problem wasn't that they ate a piece of forbidden fruit. The real issue—the sin of rebellion—was that they wanted independence from God. They chose something other than God to be in the center of their lives, and the results were disastrous. Since that day, people have lived with sin-darkened hearts, desperately in need of a Savior.

The fall of man affected us on every level. It distorted our thinking, warped our desires, wrecked our relationships, and infused our world with sin and death. Worst of all, it caused a separation between God and human beings. What a recipe for disaster and profound sorrow! Two verses in the book of Job describe this plight of man: “Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward” (5:7) and “Mortals, born of woman, are of few days and full of trouble” (14:1). Every day in our world, news accounts confirm these ancient observations.

Sin has disconnected us from God and made us strangers in the land he gave us. Instead of feeling deeply fulfilled and wonderfully connected, we now realize we don't belong. God created us for something else, something more, but sin has corrupted our world. When Dorothy landed in Oz, she told her faithful little dog, “Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.” Look around. We are all homesick for Eden. Ask the man caught in sex addiction, the single mother who's trying to get by, the couple who live in an armed truce, and the teenager who wonders if life is worth living anymore. The pace, pain, and pressures of modern life are robbing us of our joy.

However, all is not lost. Our Redeemer lives, and he offers us forgiveness, purpose, and ultimate hope. The apostle Paul reflected on the world's brokenness and the hope of eventual restoration:

The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as

we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:22-23).

As believers today, we still groan because we instinctively long for full, complete restoration. But someday we'll dance.

At this point in history, things aren't getting better. Frankly, the road ahead looks even more ominous than the past. Paul declared that in the last days things would only get worse:

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power (2 Tim. 3:2-5).

But all is not lost. The story of the Bible is a message of hope, a story of redemption and reconciliation. God is working at every turn to call our names and invite us to turn our hearts back from the destruction of sin. We can offer nothing to win his affection or twist his arm. His offer is pure grace.

One of the great love stories in the Old Testament is found in the book of Hosea. In the words of the prophet, we find God's unfathomable love for Israel:

How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I treat you like Admah?
How can I make you like Zeboyim?
My heart is changed within me;
all my compassion is aroused.

I will not carry out my fierce anger,
nor will I devastate Ephraim again (Hos. 11:8-9).

The Israelites had turned their backs on God over and over again, but God still offered them his love and forgiveness. His great love moved him to action.

Therefore I am now going to allure her;
I will lead her into the wilderness
and speak tenderly to her.
There I will give her back her vineyards,
and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope
(Hos. 2:14-15).

God isn't surprised by our sin. He knows the evil in our hearts far better than we know it ourselves. Jesus saw into people's hearts and understood their unique needs. He listened to the cry of their souls and was filled with compassion. The writer of the book of Hebrews describes him in this way: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin" (4:15). He doesn't stand back in fierce condemnation. He is the judge who pronounces us guilty, but he's also the Savior who pays the price we could never pay for our sins.

He not only sees but also understands and offers hope and healing. When Jesus was on the way to raise Jairus's young daughter from death to life again, a big crowd surrounded him. In this crowd stood a lady who had been bleeding internally for 12 years. As Jesus walked by, she reached through the crowd to touch the edge of his robe. Jesus healed her on the spot, and he stayed to talk to her to assure her of his love. Then Jesus continued on his way to raise Jairus's dear daughter back to life. God's gracious touch is always directed toward the need at hand.

As counselors, we are called to be ambassadors of Christ, to be his hands, feet, and voice. It is our privilege to hear the groans of our clients' hearts and step into their lives at their point of desperate need—to identify and relate to the troubles in their souls, to see the overwhelming burdens they carry and the bondage they are wrestling with, and then to help lead them on the healing path toward freedom. We aren't Christian counselors in name only, and we don't "do Sunday school with clients" by remaining on the surface.

We cannot go deeper with our clients, however, until we've gone deeper with God in our own lives. The most important factor in counseling is the emotional and spiritual vitality of the counselor. If we have hope, we can impart hope. But if we feel hopeless, we will have far less impact on our clients. God has called us to be conduits through which his love can flow to others.

Possessing the Soul

Just before Jesus was betrayed, arrested, tried, tortured, and murdered, he gave some last words of warning to his followers. He told them to expect persecution and hardships. Some, he predicted, would die for their faith—and in fact, all of the apostles but John died as martyrs. In the middle of this warning, Jesus gives his disciples a clear mandate: "By your patience possess your souls" (Lk. 21:19 NKJV).

Clients come to us as broken, needy people who have lost possession of their souls. They feel shattered, alone, and helpless. Jesus's encouragement to his disciples wasn't a promise of health and wealth. He promised a different kind of peace—not the escape from problems, but the experience of God's purpose, power, and pardon in the midst of problems. That's the perspective our clients need from us and from God.

But first, we need to possess our own souls. What does that mean?

It means we find our hearts' true home in Christ alone, and in him, we experience a deeper contentment and fulfillment than we ever dreamed possible. Soul transformation, for us and for our clients, involves taking responsibility for the possession of every element of the life of our souls, including the complicated process of cognition and the shaping of thought processes.

When the grace, truth, and power of God permeate our thinking and choices, they overflow into our practices and into every relationship. We use all the resources God has given us—including the eternal truths of God's Word, the power of the Spirit, and our growing understanding of human behavior—to guide us and effect change in our clients' lives. Through it all, we remain tenacious learners. We sharpen our helping skills and dig deeper into biblical principles, but we realize we always have much more to learn. The apostle Paul was the master theologian, discipler, and church leader, but he admitted that he, like all of us, was always in process.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained (Phil. 3:12-16).

In Galatians, Paul explains the impact of grace, and he gives a necessary warning to avoid slipping back into empty moralism: "It is for

freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (5:1). Knowing, loving, and following Jesus are far more than going to a building once a week or adhering to some rigid rules. We have far more to offer our clients. Christ-centered, Spirit-drenched counseling is an arduous journey that starts with compassionate listening and heartfelt empathy.

Ultimately, the work of Christian counseling is holy work because it is soul work. Christian counseling, in its purest form, is a covenant between a caregiver and a care seeker to labor collaboratively for the possession of the soul—through the power of the Holy Spirit, under the authority of the Word of God, and within a context of accountability and encouragement—for the purpose of the imitation of Christ.

Searching for Hope

Brokenness begs for healing. People are searching for answers, reaching for anything to anesthetize the pain and fill the void in their lives. Solomon wrote, “All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied” (Eccl. 6:7 NKJV). Noted psychologist Ernest Becker observed, “Modern man is drinking and drugging himself out of awareness, or he spends his time shopping, which is the same thing” (Becker, 1973, p. 284). Author and professor Dallas Willard (1988, viii) may have said it best:

Social and political revolutions have shown no tendency to transform the heart of darkness that lies deep in the breast of every human being....Amid a flood of techniques for self-fulfillment there is an epidemic of depression, suicide, personal emptiness, and escapism...all combined with an inability to sustain deep and enduring personal relationships. So obviously the problem is a spiritual one. And so must be the cure.

Most people live in some degree of denial because it's so painful and threatening to admit the depth of their hurt. To numb the pain, they use all kinds of anesthetics—not only drugs and alcohol but also sports, shopping, sex, television, and other pursuits. Many of these aren't wrong in themselves, but they are poor substitutes for the only thing that can really satisfy the longing of the human heart.

We were created for more—we were created to know, love, and follow God, and nothing else will satisfy. Only he can meet the deepest longings of a person's soul. Augustine prayed, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

The Modern Search for God

Some people think the term *worship* is limited to religious practices, but it simply means that a person finds something supremely worthy of their time, affections, and resources. For many people, money, careers, children, pleasure, and power are the supreme values of their lives. They devote themselves to these pursuits as much as the desert fathers devoted themselves to God. The locus of their worship is simply in a different place.

God has put it in the hearts of people to seek transcendence. People everywhere are obsessed with God, however they define him. Solomon understood this when he wrote, "He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end" (Eccl. 3:11). An undeniable spiritual longing spans all of humanity. For example, every year three million Muslims visit Mecca to fulfill their call to a once-in-a-lifetime hajj. Every year hundreds of millions of Hindus trek to the Ganges River and surrounding temples to have their sins purified. And every year, Vatican City is the most visited place on the planet per capita. More than two billion people worldwide follow

the teachings of the Bible. Conversely, only 2% of the world's population consider themselves atheists (Robinson, 2011).

This divine search is increasingly motivated by a deep thirst for the sacred. A recent Gallup poll indicated that 90% of Americans believe in God (Newport, 2013). Additional research shows that deeply committed believers seek counselors who explicitly incorporate prayer, the Bible, and other faith-based resources into their therapy (Wade, Worthington, & Vogel, 2007). In every generation before, care seekers have looked first to a pastor, priest, or rabbi even though secular resources have expanded enormously in the last 60 years (Clinton & Ohlschlager, 2002; Richards & Bergin, 2005). Confirming the Gallup poll observations, a recent Newsweek poll found that 91% of American adults claim a belief in God, while another Gallup poll reports that 73% of Americans “are convinced that God exists” (*Newsweek*, 2007; Newport, 2006).

What accounts for the global, pervasive pursuit of God? Is the earth's population exhausted by the pace, pain, and pressure of modern living? We believe that the past 100 years have created a sea of change in the hearts and minds of seekers everywhere because the grand promises of technology, information, and wealth have proved to be empty lies. People have more physical prosperity than ever, but their hearts remain empty. They instinctively sense something is wrong with the promises. Out of this vacuum, many are turning to God. We believe the future of effective caregiving belongs to those who dare to press in closer to the heart of God and to apply treatment strategies that are firmly anchored in Scripture and divine revelation. Godly change is transformational change—change that lasts and has a deeper impact—and people of faith are now demanding nothing less.

Many people are tired of religion, but they are fascinated with spirituality, the universal “God thirst.” It's not surprising, then, that when

people of faith consider mental health services, they want God in the equation. In fact, two thirds of Americans want their faith addressed in mental health care (Hage, 2006).

Overcoming the Faith Gap

Unfortunately, in the field of mental health care, there's been a serious faith gap between those seeking services and the service providers. Not long ago, if you talked about God or faith in mental health circles, you would have been laughed out of the room. Mental health providers often viewed faith as insignificant or even a hindrance to therapy. Many counseling theories taught in counselor training programs were biased against faith.

For example, Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalytic theory, viewed the idea of God as irrational and irrelevant, writing, "Religion is illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in with our instinctual desires" (Freud, 1932). Even Albert Ellis, one of the early leaders of cognitive theory, concluded, "The sane and effective psychotherapist should not...go along with patients' religious orientation...for this is equivalent to trying to help them live successfully with their emotional illness" (Ellis, 1980).

Seekers must be persistent when they search for professional counselors who value faith as part of the therapeutic process. Sadly, licensed therapists believe in God at much lower rates than do the general population (Aten & Leach, 2009; Pargament, 2007). The training and practice of therapy seems to be significantly secularized, but many people look for Christian counselors who understand and value spiritual life. Furthermore, the ethics codes of every professional counseling discipline have strengthened their commitment to religious diversity as part of the overall dedication to multiculturalism. Faith matters, and the faith of

anyone seeking counseling must be respected and supported by all therapists today.

Good News About Faith and Mental Health

Recent research on the relationship of faith and mental health has shattered the prejudice that religion is pathological and should be avoided (Larson & Larson, 2003). Increasingly, outcome studies document the positive role of faith in mental health (Scalise & Clinton, 2015; Koenig, 2004; Wade, Worthington, & Vogel, 2007). Psychiatrist and researcher Harold Koenig (2011) shows that true faith enhances physical and mental health. Christian counselors are now aligning themselves to the truth revealed in this research—that faith-filled clients become stronger and healthier physically and mentally.

The research has found that most people want their faith to be addressed and integrated in the therapeutic process (Hage, 2006). In fact, recent studies are showing that therapeutic alignment in counseling is critical. Matching counselors of faith with clients of faith is significant to positive therapeutic outcomes. Clients who are deeply committed to their faith appear to prefer clinicians who can incorporate prayer, Scripture, and other faith resources (Wade et al., 2007). Therapist-client congruence is a powerful factor in counseling effectiveness. If spirituality is not considered, we're asking 98% of the world (those who believe in God) to set aside their deeply held personal values and embrace an irreligious therapist's view. That's neither rational nor helpful.

Practitioners have started to incorporate spiritual assessment and faith-based interventions in their counseling practices. Furthermore, empirical studies have supported the assertion that religious faith positively impacts physical and mental health (Koenig, 2004). Christian counseling, in fact, is right in the center of the developing force

of religious faith and spirituality in psychotherapy (Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Koenig, 2004; Sandhu, 2007). The power of this positive relationship between faith and mental health is so great that many have begun calling it the fifth force—after the first four forces in psychotherapy: psychodynamic, behavioral, humanistic, and multicultural influences (Garzon, 2011).

Faith Matters

Many mental health organizations are now making provisions for spirituality in the counseling context. We believe that graduate counseling training programs should conduct sensitivity training to help therapists relate more effectively to religious clients.

Of the approximately 150 medical schools in the United States, 100 offer some variation of spirituality-in-medicine coursework, and 75 of those schools require their students to take at least one course on the topic (Booth, 2008).

The American Counseling Association and American Psychological Association each have a division to provide resources to professionals who recognize the significance of religion in the lives of their clients and in the discipline of psychology.* These organizations have concluded that faith matters in the therapeutic context. It's impossible to divorce counseling and psychology from its moral and philosophical roots.

To empower this fifth force in the 21st century, we need well-trained practitioners who are willing to wisely and persistently align themselves with Christ and learn to integrate God's truth and grace in their practices. We also need talented researchers who will help establish the efficacy of

*The American Counseling Association division is the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (<http://www.aservic.org>). The American Psychological Association division is the Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality. It "seeks a broad dialogue on religion with all the areas of the social sciences" (<http://www.division36.org/>).

Christian counseling as applied to a variety of mental health disorders. We need gifted educators who will teach the ways, the truth, and the life of Christ to eager students. Christian ethicists are also critical. They can show us the way through deep and difficult issues that will trip up the naive and the unprepared.

Competent counselors and psychotherapists are needed to show others that God matters and that he is willing and able to assist with healing if we simply cry to him for help. We can echo Paul's prayer for the Colossians:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:9-14).

Embracing Our Spiritual and Scientific Foundations

The work of Christ-honoring Christian counseling begins with a solid foundation. If our foundation is not sound, the work will totter and collapse, for “every city or household divided against itself will not stand” (Mt. 12:25). Scripture speaks repeatedly to the importance of building carefully and inviting God into our work.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock (Mt. 7:24-25).

But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

As we seek to build “the house” of Christian counseling and soul-care ministry in the 21st century, we need to continually remind ourselves that without the foundation of Jesus Christ, the Word of God and the Spirit of God, our efforts will be based on human wisdom and strength instead of God’s eternal truth and divine power. Christ is the chief cornerstone. He emphasized this simple truth to his disciples by saying, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

Throughout the development of Christian counseling, leaders sometimes have become enamored with the insights of psychology and neglected our biblical and spiritual foundations. Pioneering Christian counseling leader Arch Hart wisely lamented that Christian counselors often “run ahead of our biblical and theological roots” (Hart, 2001). Let this not be said of us!

Increasingly, those seeking mental health services are looking for counselors who align with them and partner with God on issues of faith, seeking to possess the soul and fully address spiritual issues as part of the counseling process. Mark McMinn (2011) has challenged members of our profession to be astute and accurate in three intersecting areas—the psychological, the theological, and the spiritual domains. A holistic focus demands we attend to biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors when conducting assessment and treatment. Also, a significant

movement in Christian counseling is developing the discipline of spiritual formation while pressing into the fundamental goal of change—cultivating vibrant intimacy with Christ (Col. 1:27-28).

Embracing the Revelation of Scripture

Christian counselors need to be students of the broad scope of biblical theology, and they need to be armed with key biblical passages that speak powerfully and graciously to the specific needs of clients. (See chapter 2 for an expanded outline on the biblical and spiritual foundations of Christian counseling.) Consider Paul's instructions in 1 Thess. 5:14-24 (NKJV):

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

The *ultimate* task of a Christian counselor is to be Christ's partner in the process of redemption and restoration. The first verse in this passage could serve as the *penultimate* goal, defining the core competencies of the Christian counselor—confronting, giving comfort, supporting

and advocating for the weak, and extending patience to everyone. To warn the unruly—to confront the wrongdoer and point out the better way of Christ—reflects the heart of the nouthetic, or biblical counselor. To comfort the fainthearted is to give essential aid to fearful, faithless, and faltering people who are unable to walk on their own in the face of a daunting situation. Upholding the weak is very similar, calling for defense of and advocacy for needy people against controlling and abusive powers. And the call to be patient with everyone challenges any false assumptions (ours or our clients') that change is easy, quick, and simple. These are the four elements of a paracentric model for counseling—to *parakaleo*, or “coming alongside” someone who needs aid and calls out for help.

To his disciples, Jesus explained the intimate and powerful connection between him and our efforts to honor him. The motivation and the power to please God come from a vital connection with Jesus.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love (Jn. 15:5-10 NKJV).

Advances in Theory, Research, and Practice

A growing cadre of researchers (see Worthington, Jennings, & DiBlasio, 2010; Garzon, Garver, Kleinschuster, Tan, & Hill, 2001; Koenig, 2011) are advancing Christian counseling on empirical frontiers. They have taken major steps to establish credible clinical outcomes of faith-based counseling in the ongoing development of Christian mental health care. Noted Christian counseling leader Siang-Yang Tan is calling for outcome-based research to identify the BEST therapies in Christian counseling (Biblically informed, Empirically Supported Therapies) (Tan, 2011). Recent advances in theory, research, and practice (Collins, 2007; Clinton & Ohlschlager, 2002; Garzon et al., 2001; E. Johnson, 2010; Koenig, 2004; McMinn & Campbell, 2007; Worthington, 2005; Worthington et al., 2010) are producing innovative thoughts, insights, and treatments, anchored and rooted in Judeo-Christian theology and salted with solid psychological science, to treat a wide array of clinical issues (Clinton & Hawkins, 2011; Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007).

In addition, advances in neurobiological research may provide a legitimate theoretical and practical structure for Christian counseling. Neuroscience offers a rich interplay between the mind, the brain, and the network of relationships, which helps us understand mechanisms of a wide array of therapeutic concepts, strategies, and techniques (Clinton & Sibcy, 2012). Additionally, the study of neuroscience fits well within the Christian worldview, especially in terms of the direct influence on cognition, affect, and behavior (Crabb, 2007).

Multicultural Care and Advocacy

The world is getting smaller by the day. People and concepts are more accessible than ever. Christian counselors are partnering with many

different cultures and communities around the world in order to “proclaim good news to the poor...bind up the brokenhearted...[and] proclaim freedom for the captives” (Isa. 61:1). Technological advances are making *glocalization* possible—the process of thinking globally and acting locally. Web-based strategies and partnerships with local believers and churches all around the world enable Christian counselors to be informed, give input, and facilitate action to address issues with global consequences, including genocide, human rights, orphan care, refugees, persecuted and tortured Christians, the sex slave trade, and global environmental concerns.

Throughout the world, trauma is the new mission field. In war-torn and impoverished areas, people suffer tragic emotional wounds and have tremendous spiritual needs. Leaders in the field have observed that trauma is a unique problem and an opportunity for Christian counselors to offer hope and healing to those who have been abandoned, abused, traumatized, enslaved, or otherwise mistreated. Through the future development of a Client Bill of Rights, the American Association of Christian Counselors seeks to propel Christian counseling to the forefront of client advocacy to ensure the availability of compassionate care to everyone, including (and perhaps especially) the poor and disenfranchised, those persecuted for their religious or political beliefs, and victims of poverty, disease, and war.

WISDOM’S REVIEW

Solomon was the wisest of men, but he didn’t have supreme confidence in people’s ability to understand the complexities of the human condition. He knew that God is the ultimate source of wisdom, love, strength, and joy.

I applied my heart to know,
To search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things,
To know the wickedness of folly,
Even of foolishness and madness....
Truly, this only I have found:
That God made man upright,
But they have sought out many schemes.
Who is like the wise man?
And who knows the interpretation of a thing?
(Eccl. 7:25,29; 8:1 NKJV).

As Christian counselors, our responsibility is to pursue God and his wisdom with all our hearts. In this book, we want to bend your learning curve toward God's wisdom so you will become a mature and discerning believer, able to hear the truth from God and able to give it to those who come to you for help. However, like Solomon, we want to remind you that wisdom has its limits—sinful and finite minds can grasp only so much wisdom. We will close each chapter with Wisdom's Review to give some final thoughts about the material of the chapter. In Proverbs, Solomon again pursues wisdom and explains where it can be found. We can apply his encouragement to our role as Christian counselors.

[Christian counselor,] if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding—
indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
and if you look for it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
then you will understand the fear of the LORD

and find the knowledge of God.
 For the LORD gives wisdom;
 from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
 He holds success in store for the upright,
 he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
 for he guards the course of the just
 and protects the way of his faithful ones.
 Then you will understand what is right and just
 and fair—every good path.
 For wisdom will enter your heart,
 and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul (Pr. 2:1-10).

This is our hope and prayer for you as you increasingly love God, study his Word, and apply the God-given insights gleaned from Scripture and study in your practice.

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