

The Image of God in Counseling

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In the counseling profession, the American Counseling Association (ACA) has a Code of Ethics to help in the development of counselors and promote the respect of human dignity and diversity; religion is mentioned in this code of ethics for a counselor to not discriminate towards a client based on their religion and to consider the client's religion when administering and interpreting test results (ACA). This inclusion of religion in the ACA Code of Ethics, gives this writer the impression that religion can also be part of the counseling approach. As a Christian believer, there can exist a connection between biological, psychological, social and spiritual contributions when considering methods of interventions in counseling (Entwistle, 2009). This writer interprets the spiritual connection to be the image of God (biblical anthropology); how one views God and incorporates that image of God and faith in the counseling field. This approach can be beneficial in counseling for the client's personal and cultural framework (Bayne and Tylsova, 2019).

This writer believes that the image of God in our lives can impact how we interact with others but also, how we view ourselves. As people, it is important to find relationship and meaning, Maslow believed love and belonging were part of a hierarchy of basic needs; which are belonging, acceptance, love and intimacy. As a believer that need is present as God is love and we were created to have that intimate connection and we are in that pursuit of belonging. Since creation, biblically, God made creation which included humanity. The bible states, that we are made in the image of God, Jesus (the son) and the Holy Spirit; which is the trinity; we were made in their likeness to rule over every living creature on earth. (Genesis 1:26, New King James Version). Following man's creation, the fall occurs which opens the door to sin with the story of Adam and Eve and as a result brings sin into earth; this causes the separation from man and God (Isaiah 59:2, New King James Version). However, despite sin,

the image of God says that Jesus provides salvation for all who believe in the Son (Bird, 2016).

The theological concept of the trinity sets a tone and understanding that all humans were created with purpose and allows one to view the therapeutic alliance as an interpersonal relationship that develops community among the counselor and client (Holeman, 2012). This is important in the counseling perspective because it allows one to be willing and open to embrace one another in a compassionate stand point. As a believer, believing in who God is in this writer's life, should reflect onto how this writer interacts with others. Since the bible says we are made in his image, it means reflecting his attributes of love and passion in helping others. Believing in the image of God does not mean that it'll replace the application of therapeutic modalities but it can add value in the therapeutic process (Bayne & Tylsova, 2019). It can enhance one's understanding that at one point or many points of one's life we may have found ourselves to be broken for a number of reasons but no matter how broken there is the hope to be made new and whole in every aspect of our lives through God.

In counseling, one may not always have the opportunity to express one's own spiritual beliefs, as the client would have to be willing and open to incorporate religion into the sessions in order to maintain the ethical guideline of respect and ensuring to do no harm to the client (American Counseling Association, 2014). The client may not have any spiritual beliefs that they can identify as influential in their lives. However, as a believer of the image of God and His love for everyone without making exceptions of persons, in practice it can influence the efficiency of our work. Not only as a believer am I held accountable to protect the well-being of clients but as a Christian as well, as any incorporation of spiritual dimension should be aligned with psychological techniques and sound theology (Entwistle, 2009).

This writer may not always encounter clients who agree with incorporating spirituality however, this writer can still incorporate her faith. As this writer recognizes that she may not have to agree with clients, in their beliefs or behaviors but understand that the counselor's role is not to condemn; it is to help shed light in the client's own ability and potential to overcome their circumstances.

The image of God places us in a position of grace and restoration, as one believes in God and how Jesus reveals who God is in our lives it gives counselors the comfort that in all circumstances things can work for our good and God is able to do more than we can imagine because of His love (Bird, 2016). With this notion of who God is and the intention of our creation one is able to find healing, wholeness which can give us hope in our practice. One's own belief can work indivisible in the counseling room, as we allow God to enlighten counselors and guide us throughout the therapeutic process. It is recognizing that as we equip ourselves secularly, we have the divine support as believers of God and the works He can do through us.

It is important to note that with anything in life, difficulties and hardships may be encountered but the ultimate sacrifice was done by God in providing Jesus as the sacrificial lamb to rescue and save the world because of love. That practice, can help any counselor find the continued motivation and strive to help those who may feel lost and in search of one of the basic needs of acceptance and belonging. This is what this writer will keep in mind when building a relationship with clients, the love of God as well as their needs when seeking counseling (Holeman, 2012).

## Reference

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