

Position paper four

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“When the Christian counselor steps into his or her office, God is already there. Even though informed consent may limit the counselor to implicit integration, God remains present. When Christian therapists engage Christian clients, the dialogue between counselor and counselee becomes a triologue, with God as the third member of the conversation. This expanded “therapeutic community” (counselor, counselee, God) serves as a way station where clients may experience God’s love through their interactions with the counselors” (Holeman, 2012 p. 66). After reading and pondering the above quote I was challenged on so many levels, as it pertains to walking in love. It is a cliché we often hear in Christendom “walk in love” it is supported in scriptures such as Ephesians 5:2, which states, “and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

Since the beginning of this journey of obtaining my Masters in mental health counseling degree until now, I must admit that I am not the same version of myself as I was three years ago. It is important for me to take stock yearly of the ways in which I have matured as a Christian, as a woman, mother, wife, friend, sister, and now student. I have found that I have grown much and learned much that I am eternally grateful for, but the area that I feel I have not grown past my level of information, is love. It is important for me to be a doer of the word not merely a hearer. I am guilty of knowing what I should do, yet not doing it at all, or not doing it when I was instructed too. In other words, delayed obedience as I see it is disobedience, nonetheless. Therefore, for that matter, I am challenged daily even as an intern to showcase the love of God by way of “listening” with the intent to understand rather than to respond, by inviting the Holy spirit in the room and humbly requesting his assistance, and by being empathetic and putting myself in the shoes of my client. That last part for me has been easier to do lately, and it has humbled me. In one way, I have recognized God’s keeping grace on my life. I can appreciate the

many ways in which the father has protected me and provided for me. During many of the sessions I find myself thanking the father not only for keeping me from having a similar story that was shared, but I often pray for each client that the same grace that kept me, and is still keeping me would keep him/her.

For a client to experience Gods love in session, I believe requires a level of surrender on my part. Where I yield totally to him, and give him permission to invade me and overshadow me with all of him so that I can speak, see, touch (if necessary), feel, and process as he would, in order to be the most effective with my client. The way a counselor shows up in session, how he/she prepares, and presents themselves, says more about the one (Christ) they profess to follow before they even say a word. My professional counselor identity includes my responsibility to seek to develop courage, justice, prudence, and temperance. These virtues are not going to develop themselves; they require me to decide daily, to build new habits that will be reflective of the character of God in my life. God made us to reflect his image in our own unique way, a particular facet of his glory and his love to the world. As a clinician we need to recognize the strength of character one needs to develop in doing so, we are I believe operating from a place of responsibility, by recognizing that we are not representing ourselves, but again the Christ that we profess. These virtues as they become strengthened in us, they will be evident in our counseling sessions, and speaks to the courage that is necessary to creating new habits, and therefore, one can relate to their client and fortify the therapeutic alliance.

It is imperative for me to keep in mind the promise in John 14:25-26 (Emphasis added), “These things I have spoken to you while remaining with you. But the **helper**, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, He will **teach** you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you. This scripture has become one that I keep close especially in those moments when I feel incapable, or unable to effectively help a person. It is the knowledge and belief that the one who is greater than me, can fill in the gaps, and use me for his glory to make an impact in someone’s life. Having a professional counselor identity can shape who I become as a clinician but also bring me into greater alignment with my purpose, theological commitments, therapeutic practices, and professional ethics.

References

Holeman, V. (2012) *Theology for better counseling*. Downers Grove, IL: intervarsity Press.

The New King James Version (1980). Thomas Nelson, Inc. Publisher.