

Integration of Faith and Theory

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GCN605: Marriage and Family Therapy

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March 22, 2023

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For this paper on Integration of Faith and Theory, I would like to use the text “You and Me Forever” by spouse authors Francis and Lisa Chan. Francis Chan is the former and founding pastor of Cornerstone Community Church in Simi Valley, California. He is also the founder and former chancellor of Eternity Bible College. While there isn’t much known about Lisa Chan, she currently serves as the wife and caretaker for their children. The intention behind this book is to show couples how to have a Christ centered marriage. Francis and Lisa suggest that couples and individuals live their life in the light of eternity in create a Christ centered. In this book, they share on spirituality, but also offer time to meditate on God’s word and act on it. While the purpose and intention of this book is clear, it should only be referenced by a licensed clinician at very specific times, and paralleled with evidence based techniques for couples therapy.

In this book Francis and Lisa Chan’s primary belief is the best remedy for a couple seeking to improve or heal a broken marriage is fixing their eyes on Jesus and His purpose for them as individuals and as a couple. During the introduction to the book, the author teaches us three foundational things about marriage. First, marriage is a display of God’s love for us. Second, without salvation, a marriage is doomed to fail. If one or more of the persons in a marriage do not know God, it undermines the union. Third, the authors proprot that a marriage will continue to struggle if both partners do not have an ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit. Before moving into the focus of the book, the author encourages us to sit in the presence of the Lord and gaze on his beauty. He invites us to do what he refers to as practicing the presence of God This would become a common thread throughout the book. The authors

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offer moments throughout the chapters and at the end of a chapters to pause, meditate, and act (Chan & Chan, 2014).

As we progress into the meet of the book, the authors use testimonies (both personal and that of others) to address issues in an unhealthy marriage. Overall, the authors suggest that to have a healthy marriage, couples should keep their eyes fixed on Jesus. Subsequently, every chapter points back to Jesus' purpose for the individual and the individual who is part of the couple. Each chapter points back to Christ through a particular lens, whether in the light of the Gospel, our mission, God's promise, Christ example, or God's glory (Chan & Chan, 2014).

When I consider my studies in the Mental Health Counseling programs so far, I reckon that I can only suggest this book ethically if both parties I am counseling have identified themselves as Christians and desire this kind of in depth Christian focused-counseling. It is best practices as a counselor that after a thorough interview with a couple, I should then suggest evidence-based interventions to address their presenting problem. The portions of this book that include evidence based addresses the couple's presenting problem, I will suggest it as a means of intervention. The couple will then be notified that they have a right to accept or reject this form or therapy. And if they choose to accept it, they can stop the use of this therapeutic modality at any point in time.

I understand that a major component of this book is heavily focused on God. And while I believe that spirituality and our relationship with God should be the basis for our lives as individuals, as couples, and as a family unit, it should not be the only way we increase satisfaction in our marriage. When a couple comes for therapy, their issue could fall in either of two categories (1) spiritual, or (2) practical. It is the view of both authors that marriages are

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under spiritual attack because of the threat that it poses to the enemy. This is also a general view and understanding adopted by most Christians. But while this is true, it is also true that a relationship might be struggling because of natural complexities that exists when two different people with varying backgrounds unite. As a mental health counselor, I have a responsibility to understand the unique dynamics that exist within the relationship of my couple and equip them to address both. In other words, I must examine my clients' relational experience through a biopsychosocial lens which would incorporate their faith and spirituality.

This book deals primarily with the spiritual aspect of a relationship. There is a section for action, however that call to action is spiritual. There is no practical intervention suggested to maintain the health of a relationship. For all intents and purposes, this book is successful at addressing the spiritual well-being off a couple but does not address the natural. However, this book does broaden the perspective on counselors who are not of the Christian faith. As best practice, counselors should reflect the biopsychosocial model (Cherry & Erford, 2017) and use this as a tool to understand Christian view on marriage, particularly spiritual attacks and defensive spiritual warfare strategies of Bible reading, prayer, and scriptural mediation provided.

One challenge with this book was finding evidence-based research to support the use of the book in its entirety in clinical practice. However, I was able to identify two activities mentioned in the text that have been proven to be effective in individual counseling: journaling and meditating. In chapter 1, Francis challenges the couple to journal describing their relationship in various stages, all the way into the future. In multiple other sections of the book, either Francis or Lisa gives the reader a chance to mediate on scripture.

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More practical ways such as this would greatly increase the use of this text in clinical practice. In the same way, The Chans address attacks in our marriage by focusing on God and prayers, they should also have practical strategies to address specific issues that arise between couples. They should also add specific issues couples face and the evidence-based technique activity to address them directly. This book can also be suggested to the couple to read while they are seeing a counselor who is using clinical techniques such as the Genogram intervention, Mandala, Gratitude intervention and so many others (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2015).

In conclusion, the Chans expressed a clear goal during their introduction to the text; they wanted help couples develop a Christ centered marriage. Throughout this book, they focused on this and achieved this by teaching the readers how to keep their mind on eternity. Every chapter focused on the purposes of Christ for the individual and/or the couple. They were successful at providing strategies for dealing with the spiritual war on marriage, but not successful at creating practical ways to do so. For this reason, this book should be paralleled with best practices in clinical counseling and should not be used as the sole source in clinical mental health counseling.

References

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