

Position Paper #3

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In Philippians 2:13 it says, “For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.” This is a good reminder, that it is not us who does good work, but it is God who works within us. Specifically through the Holy Spirit. The Bible also says in John 14:26 “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (*Bible gateway - New International Version*). The Bible is clear that the Holy Spirit is in us and is what propels us forward to change. Oftentimes as counselors our job is to help our clients change. So how do we apply this knowledge of the Holy Spirit to help us as counselors to help our clients change? Especially if those clients do not believe in God or the Holy Spirit.

In Bird’s text he discusses the Holy Spirit explaining “that the Holy Spirit is not just any person but is a fully divine person.” He then goes on to explain the Holy Spirit's work. He says that “The Holy Spirit can be likened to the sound waves of the divine voice that echo forth into the world. The Holy Spirit reveals God’s purposes to human creatures by inspiring prophets and apostles to speak forth the words of God in human speech, what we traditionally call divine inspiration.” (Bird, 2016) . This is not only a beautiful way of explaining the Holy Spirit but also a good testament of how the Holy Spirit can be our divine inspiration as counselors. He can even lead us in the correct way to speak to and guide our clients.

Once we understand how the Holy Spirit works in us then we can focus on *why* God wants us to help our clients toward change, even the non-believers. One example of this is shared in Holeman’s text. She states that “God’s restorative justice involves delivering the widow, orphan, sojourner and poor from exploitation, liberating the dominated and oppressed from the power of their tormentors, eliminating violence and establishing peace, and ‘restoring the outcasts, the excluded, the Gentiles, the exiles, and refugees to community.’” This is an example

of what it would look like in Biblical times. In the common day, and more specifically as mental health counselors we can deliver God's restorative justice by using our skills. As Holeman continues to state "Christian mental health practitioners can view their daily work as a way to participate in God's redemptive plan for individuals and families. Counselors can use their skills to advocate on behalf of their clients by attending to social policies that negatively affect clients' welfare." (Holeman, 2012).

The Bible is clear that God put us on earth to help others, all of His children. As studying mental health counselors, we are choosing to do this work through psychology. In Galatians 6:2 it states "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (*Bible gateway - New International Version*). Through a counseling relationship we are doing exactly that. Which brings us to our final question, *how* can we help our clients move toward change?

In the Church we often refer to it as our hearts or souls being transformed through God and the Holy Spirit. But a change in heart is not a very tangible measure of change. Instead, clinically, we tend to measure change through behavior. In an article titled *Understanding Behavior to Understand Behavior Change: a Literature Review* by Joe E. Heimlich and Nicole M. Ardoin, they state "Understanding how and why behaviors occur is perhaps the greatest barrier to affecting behavioral outcomes in educational programs. Human behavior and motivation are enormously complex, which can make their study overwhelming" (Heimlich & Ardoin, 2008). Anyone who has worked with humans knows this is true.

In this article Heimlich and Nicole go on to say "people act in ways that are usually consistent with how they express their values, beliefs, understandings, culture, socialization, enculturation, upbringing and training." and when it comes to behavior change "Research reveals that education and marketing campaigns are relatively effective in changing or adopting simple

behaviors that require little confidence or skill. However, behaviors that demand lifestyle and habit changes require a greater sense of self-efficacy and are more complex” (Heimlich & Ardoin, 2008). As Christians we could argue that if we work on people's values and beliefs by directing them to follow the Bible then we could help them toward change. As counselors, though, we know that it is unethical to push our religious beliefs onto our clients.

In Holeman's text she gives a great example of therapeutic techniques in Christian application by saying “For example, counselors may ask clients to engage in specific Christian practices (forgiving or repenting) to affect their behavior, to use Scripture as a way to evaluate their thought life (cognitive reframing), or to practice prayerful contemplation during times of anxiety (emotional regulation)” (Holeman, 2012). This shows that if we were speaking to a Christian we might give a Bible verse that helps the client have a different perspective but for a secular client we would utilize the CBT technique of cognitive reframing, etc.

In conclusion, as Christians we are called to help Christians and non Christians alike. By being filled with the Holy Spirit we will be propelled and lead in the right direction to help others. And as counselors we are given the tools to help our clients change. Whether our clients know our spiritual beliefs or not, we know that we are doing the Lord's work with the help of the Holy Spirit.

References

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