

Position Paper #3

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The ultimate goal of counselors when working with counselees is one of healing and transformation. We hope that our clients who arrive in our office wounded and broken will eventually leave healed and whole. Research conducted by Michael Lambert in 1992 estimated the proportion each factor contributed to positive clinical outcomes. What can be concluded from this research is that while it is clear that the therapeutic alliance is one of the most important contributors of facilitating change, a large part of it is unclear, it cannot be accounted for through concrete data (Holeman, 2012). This paper will explore how the role of the Holy Spirit is not only intricately involved in the work of building the therapeutic alliance but may also play a role in the ambiguous and mysterious factors that cannot truly be measured.

While the work and role of the Holy Spirit can be considered controversial, for the purpose of this paper the Holy Spirit will generally be understood as defined by McMartin (2015), as the part of the Triune Godhead responsible for finishing the work of the creator by bringing the created world into wholeness and completion originally intended by God. N.T. Wright also views the work of the spirit as one beyond personal salvation, but as the means by which God implements His Kingdom in this world. It works to bring the love, power and healing wisdom of the gospel to bear the ills of our day.

Holeman (2012), believes that the therapeutic relationship serves as a context within which the Holy Spirit brings salvation to its fullest expression. The work of the Spirit begins the moment the client walks into your office. Building rapport and trust is paramount in the first few sessions and the counselor's reliance on the Spirit will help guide this process. Theologically reflective counselors reflect the holy love of the Trinity. The Spirit helps the counselor come

alongside their clients as they empathize, offer kindness and help the counselee to see her situation as well as herself through a new set of lenses. Holeman refers to the work of the Spirit in the life of the counselor as a differentiating holiness that increases one's capacity to live with an awareness of God's peace through the grace of God. This helps the counselor to be well attuned to their counselee and enables one to soothe anxiety and limit emotional reactivity. As the counselor who is working in alliance with the Spirit can provide a sense of deep peace, safety and security (Holeman, 2012).

According to McMartin (2015), the Holy Spirit brings creation to its intended goal, or telos, thus is thoroughly actively involved in the change process of the counselee. Once trust is established the process of change continues to actively involve the work of the Spirit. One way in which the Spirit can bring about change is by directly empowering the therapist to discern the client's root problems through wisdom and discernment. For example, it is integral for the counselor to accurately assess their clients as clients are not always honest and forthcoming(both consciously and unconsciously) about what they believe their problem to be. Continuous wisdom is necessary to know when to support and/or challenge your clients. Encouragement and support is needed to celebrate steps taken in the right direction. Yet at times gentle confrontation may be needed if the client steps back into destructive behaviors.

Ultimately there is desire for healing and transformation which is reflected in growth in virtue and character. Another way of stating this would be to view the counseling journey as a process of sanctification into Christ-likeness. Creation is a process that involves steps and stages. (Gunton, 2002 as cited in McMartin, 2015). The role of the Spirit is to bring creation from the forces of chaos to structure and completeness. Thus, similar to the role of the Spirit in creation, the Spirit works in the counseling process to overcome destructive patterns and experience a

greater fullness in life. The growth process of therapy is one of continuous shaping and growth in virtues such as compassion, courage and patience.

The Spirit works in the heart of the counselor, the heart of the counselee as well as the space of relationality between the two to bring about transformation. While this paper outlined some specific ways in which the Spirit works, ultimately how the Spirit works to bring about healing is shrouded in mystery. However, there is no doubt that a counselor who submits to the work of the Spirit can exhibit hope within the hearts of their clients and demonstrate love and goodness toward their client. This alone may help spark the change needed for healing and wholeness.

References

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