

Assessment in Christian Counseling

Craftsmanship and Connection

3/28/2013

InterVarsity Press

Stephen P. Greggo

Contents

Chapter 1	Assessment Basics for Christian Counseling	5
	From Technology to Conversation.....	5
	Assessment: Hearing the Cry of the Heart.....	7
	Central Assumptions: The Search for Wisdom	7
	Assessment is Therapeutic Conversation	8
	Assessment is a Strategic and Systematic Search.....	9
	Assessment is Communication that Opens Hearts.....	11
	Counseling: In Search of a Definition.....	11
	Counseling that is Christian	12
	Preparing the Heart of the Counselor.....	15
	Enter Scripture Devotionally.....	19
	Explore Scripture in Community	20
	Examine Scripture to Develop Fluency in Biblical Theology	21
	Expand Access to Biblical Passages Relevant to Client Concerns	24
	Exhibit Suitable Scriptural Expertise in Special Presentations.....	26
	References	28
Chapter 2	Defining the Assessment Task.....	31
	Envisioning Best Practice	31
	Locating Targets for Change.....	31
	Assessment Dimensions	31
	Details: Observe and Assemble	31
	Dynamics: Patterns and Persons.....	31
	Dependence: Empowerment and Submission	31
	Clarifying Terms.....	31
	Psychological testing.....	31
	Psychological assessment.....	31
	Tools for Clinical Care	31
	Contrasting Applications	31
	References	31
Chapter 3:	Forming a Theological Foundation	32

Demonstrating the Craft of Assessment.....	32
A Theology for Assessment	38
Craftsmanship.....	38
A Discerning Heart	41
Discovering Wisdom Afresh	46
Discerning Wisdom in Layers.....	50
Posture: Submissive to Triune God.....	50
Product: Recognize Special Revelation.....	50
Process: Dialogue with Christian Community and Doctrine.....	53
Person: Reflect Jesus Christ as Wisdom Incarnate	54
Potential: Eschatological Purpose, A Restored Human Soul.....	54
Assessment within Christian Counseling Approaches	56
References.....	61
Chapter 4: Integrity in Assessment Ethics.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses.”	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Scientific Methods: Triumph or Travesty?	Error! Bookmark not defined.
History Lessons	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Be Informed about Assessment Approach Disputes	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Evaluate Novel Methodology and Major Instrument Revisions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Remain Current on Ethical Codes and Standards for Assessment ...	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Personalize Assessment Risk	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Essential Elements of Measurement Scales	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conceptual model.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Standardization	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Reliability	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Validity	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Utility.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Honest Scales	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The Great Invitation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
References.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter 5: The Case for Redemptive Validity	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Measures of Choice.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Biblical Terminology: Testing, Proving and Tempting.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Trends in the Measurement of Depression	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Content Validity & Item Analysis through a Christian Lens.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Construct Validity: Aligning Depression and a Heavy Heart	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Criterion Validity: Exploring Matters of the Heart	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Redemptive Validity and Tool Selection.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
References	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter 6: Craftsmanship in Conducting Interviews	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Deep Waters, Rushing Streams: From Words to Wisdom	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Interviewing and Connecting	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Scientist-practitioners and Participant-observers	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Formalities and Becoming Familiar.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Data Resources	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Counselors as Comforted-Comforters	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Recognizing Spiritual Orientation.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Extrinsic or Intrinsic Faith Orientation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Seeking or Dwelling Faith Orientation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Scripture or Experience Faith Orientation.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Wise in Heart.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
References.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter 7: Connecting in Initial Consultations (START).....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
First Contact.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Hospitality: Strangers, Guests and Friends.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
An Underlying Structure for Clinical Consultation.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
“S” is for capturing the client’s <i>Story</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
“T” is for therapeutic alliance	Error! Bookmark not defined.
“A” is for assessment	Error! Bookmark not defined.
“R” is for recommendations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
“T” is for treatment plan.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Customize your START	Error! Bookmark not defined.

References **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Appendix 1 63

 Clinical Assessment Instrument Christian Evaluation Form (CAICEF)..... 63

Appendix 2 68

 START Initial Consultation Report..... 68

Chapter 1 Assessment Basics for Christian Counseling

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (II Tim 3: 16-17).

Theological Theme: Scripture as 'norming norm.'

From Technology to Conversation

The counselor paused. Phillip, a withdrawn and discouraged college student, adjusted in his seat, wiggled to get comfortable and eventually made eye contact.¹ The counselor met his gaze and smiled to engage him softly. Reaching towards Phil, the counselor passed over an I-pad with the Counseling Progress Check (CPC) open and ready (McMinn, 2012). This was the third week that the duo had been meeting, so Phil accepted the device with a readiness for this opening routine. "It is good to have you back Phil. As we have done in each session thus far, I would appreciate if you would show me how you have been feeling the past few days by using the touch screen to complete this scale. This will direct us on where to focus." Phil slid his finger with intentionality over the face of the I-Pad to select his response for each of the twelve items. Despite the deliberate attention that Phillip gave to each of his selections, the procedure took less than a minute.

The counselor accepted the device back from Phil and immediately glanced at his ratings. "Well, thank you Phillip for sharing with me that you have been in the midst of an uncomfortable, emotionally distressing week. It is good that you are showing that you have been pretty miserable. We will certainly explore those heavy experiences. At the same time, you are aware that you were not as far from God as you had reported last week. Let's start by letting me

¹Clinical examples throughout this text are formed from case composites. All identifying features, particularly the demographic elements, presenting concerns and treatment settings are combined, altered or exchanged. These are not actual clients. The features under consideration are genuine and flow from clinical experience.

hear what happened to give you that sense of actually being closer to the Lord.” In response to this invitation, Phil now returned the counselor’s delicate smile and began to share his story.

Combining high-tech assessment technology with high-touch interpersonal communication is commonplace in helping relationships today. It is indeed critical to monitor progress in vivid and valid ways for all invested parties to see. There are definite benefits to marking off progress in the attainment of desired outcomes. In addition, clients like Phillip value a concrete way to communicate. This active assessment enables folks like Phil to express where he’s been at physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually in tangible ways and with no words. The development of practical tools such as these is enormously exciting. Existing applications point down the road to those soon to come. There are telltale signs that the future of counseling care is *now*.

It is my privilege to invest in training the next generation of Christian helping professionals and pastoral caregivers on how to make the most of the wide range of assessment methods, tools and techniques that are currently available. In any and all helping relationships, opportunity brings responsibility. What criteria need to be in in crystal clear focus for practitioners to be circumspect and judicious when making decisions about the application of such technology? Are there essentials to keep in perspective to achieve the most valuable and productive helping alliance possible? Most importantly, what do counselors and clients need to bear in mind and actually do so that God is the one glorified when assessment technology merges into counseling conversation. Considering each of these critical concerns to the fullest and preparing clinicians to serve well in the wave of the future is the passion that drives this project.

Assessment: Hearing the Cry of the Heart

Assessment done right can define, inform, and guide counseling endeavors from inception to conclusion. Assessment done to pursue righteousness –living and relating to please God -- inspires counselors to be responsible craftsmen who use the best available tools to facilitate God-honoring change and worthy relational connections. Assessment can enhance communication as it furthers the decisive task of planning the helping effort's purpose, goals and exit strategy. Assessment procedures can establish a built-in mechanism to evaluate how the partnership is making proper headway towards the intended change. Viewed in this light, assessment becomes the pursuit of excellence in counseling and a mutual activity to enrich the therapeutic alliance. It is of utmost importance to be prudent and proficient when applying assessment technology. An astute assessment mindset and skillset are necessary to minimize risk, enhance benefit and to prevent worldview distortions. Let's begin by visualizing the entire assessment process in conjunction with a search for wisdom.

Central Assumptions: The Search for Wisdom

- 1) Assessment is the means to *activate* effective therapeutic conversation (Pro. 1:7).
- 2) Assessment is the diligent *search* using systematic techniques to secure insight, understanding and skills for living (Pro. 2 1-5).
- 3) Assessment is the gateway to *communication* that enables the heart to hear (Pro. 3:1-6).

These three statements encapsulate the central contentions bound into these pages. A thorough grasp of assessment is crucial to realize expectations and to ensure quality in contemporary counseling and Christian soul care.

Counseling within the Christian tradition launches a search for wisdom within a unique interpersonal dialogue that nurtures the whole person. Its kingdom purpose is to condition the

heart to love God unconditionally and self in such a fruitful way that a Christ-like love for others is sustained (Mt. 22:37-39; Ps. 4: 1-10; Ps 51: 10-17; Ps. 61:1-4). These underlying assumptions link the assessment enterprise to familiar verses from the early portion of the book of Proverbs where wisdom is personified and esteemed. This initial section of Proverbs establishes the biblical framework for a Word-oriented and God-glorifying quest for deep and fulfilling direction. Its first eight chapters define wisdom as the lead virtue to inform living so that it is completely consistent with a life that honors God. Each assessment premise is best understood when placed with a corresponding message from Proverbs. This will bind the purpose of assessment in helping conversations to Christian heart care as its ultimate intent.

Assessment is Therapeutic Conversation

Assessment *activates* effective therapeutic conversation (Pro. 1:7). When a helping relationship comes together, the conversation moves with intention to distinguish where change is required. Assessment and discernment are parallel activities. Discernment in Proverbs depicts a heart yearning for wisdom and open to instruction (i.e. Pro. 1:5; 15:14; 18:15). Counseling is a collaborative effort where the essence of the exchange is to uncover the hidden matters of heart and use the grace of insight to adjust attitude and actions. The beginning of wisdom is no mystery in Scripture. The pre-requisite for knowledge and comprehensive understanding is repeatedly declared to be an inner conviction regarding the fear of God (Job 28:28; Ecc. 12:13; Ps. 111:10; Pro. 2:5, 8:13, 9:10) (Hughes & Laney, 2001). In Scripture, such ‘fear’ is not a passing emotional state. It is a foundational, solemn declaration of utter dependence on the Lord God who is the sovereign source of absolutely everything. The starting point for wisdom is to become awestruck. That is, being aware of one’s humanity in the presence of a majestic,

heavenly Father. This instills a humble obedience to his standards. Fear of the Lord inspires reverence for his will because his ways are recognized as true and just.

What do sayings from ancient sages have to do with contemporary counseling and sophisticated assessment techniques? A helping relationship makes inquiries into life's details, stories, priorities, expectations and relationships. This triggers earnest contemplation and ignites an interior desire to grasp what is unknown. It stirs sensations of vulnerability and propels an urgency to revise misconceptions. Realignment of relational priorities is sure to follow. The qualities and conditions of the helping relationship itself bring to the surface one's inner reactions to the myth of autonomy and the reality of human dependency. Assessment not only looks at the client's external situation and attitude about these conditions, it untangles the intricacies of therapeutic relationship itself to foster an effective and credible therapeutic alliance. The unrealistic hope for an idealized, affirming relationship is exchanged for one where misunderstandings naturally occur. What gives a therapeutic relationship a razor sharp edge is when assessment generates a ready means to identify and repair disruptions *before* a hurt or misunderstanding begins to harden. Christians who counsel recognize that this human helping relationship is designed to represent a pure connection to the only true source of strength and stability. After all, wisdom secured may flow through the counselor, but is the Lord who provides. All blessings and good gifts are the redemptive benefits of the gospel.

Assessment is a Strategic and Systematic Search

Assessment *searches* diligently to use systematic techniques to secure insight, understanding and skills for living (Pro. 2: 1-5).

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding— indeed, if you call out for insight

and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (Pro. 2:1-5, New International Version).

There are powerful instructions and images packed tightly into these potent verses. Each unique phrase identifies a characteristic that the seeker is summoned to exhibit. The one who searches for wisdom is to: soak-up good teaching; treasure compassionate direction and divine commands; turn one's ear to attend to wisdom; call upon the heart to comprehend; cry aloud for insight; examine matters thoroughly and investigate one's motives diligently. Locating the hidden cache of wisdom is compared to the production procedure that mines the earth for silver. This is nothing superficial about such an expedition. Mining can be strenuous, sweaty and disciplined work. Locating valuable ore from within a mass of surrounding material requires accomplished systems and sturdy tools. The mining metaphor provokes images of intensive work conducted in close quarters, under adverse conditions and without a doubt, coping with elements of risk. The activity takes effort, strategy, dedication and diligence. Whatever motivates or pressures a client to initially obtain assistance, in order for the partnership to be productive, there will be mutual recognition on the level of determined effort that the digging will require. Active and unflinching examination is required to formulate wisdom. This explains the routine invitation that jumpstarts many counseling sessions: *Where would you like to direct our work today?* Assessment is a means through which the helping partnership focuses a united gaze on a collective search to surface valuable ore. The commodity of wisdom is a priceless resource that brings rich benefit to those in need.

Assessment is Communication that Opens Hearts

Assessment is *communication* that enables the heart to hear (Pro. 3:1-6). These instructions from Proverbs accentuate the value of godly teaching, commandments, and guidelines. When internalized, living wisely produces prosperity and peace. The offer within these verses is nothing shallow. This is no stingy, symptom-only, superficial relief. This is genuine *shalom* - peace that surpasses all understanding. It is reflected in health, wholeness and well-being. The heart - one's inner thoughts, emotional ties, will and center of being - must be penetrated until saturated with the Lord's insight and perceptions. In counseling, helping conversation is pursued with an extraordinary effort to provide customized care. Such personalized nourishment makes use of dynamic relational resources to soften the heart, open the mind to hear and move holistically towards *shalom*. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" is a reference that returns the reader to the main theme, *fear of the Lord* (Pro. 3:5). By grace, wisdom compels us to honor the relationship at the center of our heart and soul. This is done by loving the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength.

Counseling: In Search of a Definition

It is important before exploring the purpose and principles of assessment to have a firm understanding of what is meant by broad term 'counseling.' The label applies in numerous settings; can reference an infinite range of discussion topics; and can reflect an assortment of roles and helping arrangements. For starters, ponder this official, twenty-one word definition established from within the profession of counseling. This wording was established by thirty renowned counseling experts who invested a year into this communication exercise. A systematic, Delphi research procedure was utilized to arrive at consensus. "Counseling is a

professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education and career goals (Rollins, 2010).” Three notable features are worth exploring.

In counseling, the relationship itself has articulated boundaries and assigned roles. It is a deliberate and openly delineated affiliation. The phrase ‘professional relationship’ asserts a key overarching consideration. That is, an agreed upon set of ethical boundaries and procedures will govern the undertaking. Secondly, counseling by design intends to benefit, equip and increase the recipient’s experience of personal power. One or more participants in the counseling arrangement are to be on the receiving end of the pact. Third, counseling determines to accomplish a particular purpose. No matter how these essential components are organized or where the emphasis is placed, an intentional relationship with penetrating talk to equip and accomplish goals ultimately depends upon quality assessment. For simplicity, and to have an all-encompassing definition of counseling that is as conducive to ministry as it is to generic counseling, here is the working characterization that will apply. *Counseling is strategic dialogue within a defined relationship to cultivate growth.*

Counseling that is Christian

The aim throughout these chapters is to consider information collection procedures as they apply to a variety of counseling settings and as practiced by mental health professionals (MHPs). A basic list of MHPs would include credentialed counselors, social workers, psychologists, marriage and family therapists and other health care providers. In addition, Christian counseling functions as an umbrella term to reference talk-based care offered by pastors, biblical counselors, chaplains, and ministry leaders (Powlison, 2010; Collins, 2007; Mahoney & Augsberger, 2007). Churches and other organizations with conservative roots and

evangelical commitments tend to favor the use of this identifier over that of a close cousin, pastoral counseling. Of course, the label pastoral counseling is used informally to reference any supportive service conducted by clergy or lay leaders functioning in a pastoral role (McMinn, Staley, Webb & Seegobin, 2010)). It also can have a more restricted meaning. Those within the helping professions associate this heading with a specific approach that has a lengthy history dating back more than half a century (AAPC, 2011).

Reverend Anton Boisen, founder of the Clinical Pastoral Education movement (CPE), sought to reverse the unwavering secular trend in psychiatry. Boisen envisioned that CPE would equip ministers to furnish clinical assistance that addressed moral, religious and spiritual matters. Faith was to be esteemed as an asset, not as a liability, indication of pathology or reflection of personal weakness. Notice the implication for assessment in this shift of perspective. Does a pastor-clinician categorize faith as an asset or liability? For those who provide pastoral counseling services, there is a proscribed training sequence and necessary supervised field experience. Pastoral counselors seek to provide sound psychological therapy that is thoughtfully combined with a spiritual and religious dimension. Across its history, pastoral counseling has been predominantly allied with mainline denominations, liberal theological positions and with the medical, psychiatric establishment. Thus, the identifying label of pastoral counseling is not exceptionally popular within the evangelical wing of the Protestant spectrum.

Another important categorization to highlight is biblical counseling. This is the contemporary identifier for a long respected, ministry-oriented approach prevalent in church settings known as nouthetic counseling. This significant movement is associated with Jay Adams, a Presbyterian minister and author of many books such as *Competent to Counsel* (1970). The nouthetic movement sought to dispense admonishment derived from Christian theology and a

strong biblical platform via pastoral authority that was sanctioned by the church. Over the years, biblical counseling expanded and clarified its strategies. Despite ongoing advancement, its two central premises remain firm. Its curative centerpiece is to bring the truth of the Scripture to everyday life through the ministry of a local church (MacDonald, Kellemen & Viars, 2013; Powlison, 2010). Biblical counselors strive to sharpen expertise in taking the truths of the Bible to problems in living and thereby assist clients to mature in their relationship with Jesus Christ (CCEF, 2011).

It is granted that MHPs and counselors with a Christian worldview do have a variety of preferred identifying labels along with explicit models to describe their helping approach (Greggo & Sisemore, 2012; Johnson, 2010). Christian tradition is richly complex, reflects hearty cultural rootedness and does indeed represent a range of theological priorities. Therefore, it is acknowledged at the outset that Christians may counsel under a range of credentials, practice in diverse settings and offer services that purposely vary on how explicitly the goals are framed in traditional faith terms or discipleship categories. For convenience and for the broadest possible application of this assessment discussion, the generic label of Christian counseling will be utilized. The intent is to explore theological perspectives and practical techniques useful to those in the Christian faith tradition who engage in mental health and ministry-based counseling. If a narrower term is a better descriptor for your particular practice role, be encouraged to press past this all-embracing terminology to locate material that will indeed be applicable to the actual exchange between helper and client.

This said, when *counseling* is paired with this momentous qualifier, *Christian*, assessment is an especially weighty activity. Consider the rationale behind this claim. When assessment is applied in Christian counseling a dimension is added beyond the surface of basic

problem-solving. Counseling that is Christian strives to stimulate relational experiences that foster spiritual growth, further sanctification and promote faith development. The intention in these chapters is to demonstrate that these assumptions flow from a firm theological framework into counseling activity that promotes heart health psychologically, relationally and spiritually.

Preparing the Heart of the Counselor

It would not be appropriate to equate modern assessment technology with the ancient prescription to discern and secure wisdom without referencing the indispensable framework to establish meaning and provide interpretation. “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding (Pro. 2:6). There is a contextual assumption in the opening chapters of Proverbs where the mandate to search for wisdom is proclaimed. It is granted that the seeker will devote his utmost attention to the collected teachings on the way of the Lord passed along through the guidance of the community of the faithful and Godly parents (Pro. 6:20-23). The God of the Bible reveals himself and has calls a people to live for him. The Bible, a divinely originated and timeless text, is the authoritative record of the Creator’s activity, mercy, redemption, justice and instruction on the way of salvation. Scripture is the framework that unites past to present. Further, it thrusts our perspective forward with hope into a future that is nothing short of eternal! Scripture brings finite human understanding into connection with God’s limitless perspective. Thus, this is where all practical insights are decisively appraised according to the redemptive movement of the Gospel.

There is little value in proceeding to determine what can be gleaned from cutting edge assessment technology for authentic soul care without being transparent on this premise. Those who conduct investigations into the resources, issues, conflicts and personal patterns of others are in need of an obligatory interpretive guide for making sense of any and all data that will

eventually be obtained. Without a doubt, there are numerous psychological, medical and spiritual scaffolds to formulate understanding. Beyond each potential method to connect the informational dots, the Christian has a way to evaluate the system itself. This is the function of the revealed Word of God. J.I. Packer (1993), in *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* offers this declaration in the opening paragraphs.

Christianity is the true worship and service of the true God, humankind's Creator and Redeemer. It is a religion that rests on revelation: nobody would know the truth about God, or be able to related to him in a personal way, had not God first acted to make himself known. But God has so acted, and the sixty-six books of the Bible, thirty-nine written before Christ came and twenty-seven after, are together the record, interpretation, expression, and embodiment of this self-disclosure. God and godliness are the Bible's uniting themes.

From one standpoint, the Scriptures (*Scriptures* means "writings") are faithful testimony of the godly to the God who they loved and served; from another standpoint, through a unique exercise of divine overruling in their composition, they are God's own testimony and teaching in human form. The church calls these writings the Word of God because their authorship and contents are both divine (Packer, 1993).

These words appear at the beginning to Packer's summation of basic theology because Scripture is the very source of our doctrines. Tradition in the form of theological doctrines passes along a reasoned, attested and shared understanding from Scripture as the sanctified teachings or tenants of Christianity (Vanhoozer, 2005). The Bible is how God declares himself.

There is a core professional requirement for any counselor motivated to serve others through joint participation with the Holy Spirit to make Jesus Christ known. These counselors

will maintain ongoing engagement with the sacred writings that reveal God's activity and spoken words. The rationale for this statement within this treatment of assessment strategies for helping partnerships is utterly straightforward. According to Christian tradition, Scripture itself is the ultimate measurement instrument, the authoritative criteria that measures other criteria because it is the 'norming norm' (Westminster Confession of Faith, 1982/1646). It is the 'standard' that God has given to instruct his people on the both the process and criteria to execute discernment. For those who seek to make sense of all forces and factors that have a bearing on human growth, it is necessary to maintain contact with what God himself has made known.

One theologian recently articulated the challenge for counselors who wish to offer services under the banner of Christianity using a creative phrase. Christians who counsel need to secure and maintain 'canon sense' that is, sound judgment derived from a profound appreciation for the full range of biblical literature (Vanhoozer, 2007). The context of this admonition was an address to those who desire to be wholeheartedly Christian in their professional enterprise.

The canon is far more than a mere list of books in the Bible. It is a measuring or even *divining rod* that enables us to discern what we should say and do today in order to continue and correspond to the way, truth, and life made known in Jesus Christ. As such, it is both source and norm of the disciple's individual identity as well as the church's corporate identity. In short: the canon is the Christian framework for knowing who you are and what you are supposed to do *coram Deo* ("before God") (Vanhoozer, 2007, p. 12).

Stated plainly, canon sense is having the essence of Scripture so central in our convictions, so crisp in our thought and so steadfast within our hearts, that what flows from our lips reflects the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5).

The contention here regarding assessment practice is this. It does not matter what our professional affiliation, denominational background, preferred therapeutic approach, service location or who our clientele will be. One's faithfulness in the pursuit of canon sense is what will determine if one's insights and healing presence is unequivocally Christian. Counselors with aspirations to facilitate support in accordance to Christian tradition would do well to establish personal expectations as well as customary exercises to maintain an articulate and accessible canon sense. Five practical, canon sense activities to calibrate our yardsticks for wisdom are worth exploring in this regard.

A counselor primes and readies one's heart to enter into assessment tasks with others by undertaking these routines of Biblical engagement. These methods are the habits that allow Scripture to configure our automatic, underlying thoughts. When unpacking Scripture, followers of Jesus Christ issue prayerful invitations for the Holy Spirit to speak into our lives so that we are ready to share from his blessing into the lives of others. This is the abiding assertion. One who yearns to be thoroughly equipped to serve others in the name of the Lord must recognize that Scripture is God's very breath. Thus, it is ever relevant and robustly useful for those who seek to spread life in how they teach, correct, rebuke or guide in righteousness (II Tim. 3:16). The recommendation to prepare one's heart in this way is relevant even if Scripture may never be directly cited or spoken aloud in an actual clinical appointment. Stated differently, these five recommendations are not intended to dictate a bible-only approach to helping. Rather, this is how the follower of Christ conditions one's own heart to step into the life of another and conduct assessment with an inner awareness of the awe of the Lord. The urgency in these activities is to renew our minds and cultivate compassion. Toward this end, we enter into a divine discourse

where the Holy Spirit converses with our soul and by so doing, positions us before our Lord to care for others.

Enter Scripture Devotionally

Reading Scripture devotionally means to move into the Bible as an act of worship. This may be the most elementary area for counselors to evaluate in their own lives. Nevertheless, this customary practice remains one of the most potent ways that the Holy Spirit penetrates our inner being. Typically, a period of devotional reading- whether brief or extended, light or intense- begins with a child-like prayer: “Speak Lord for your servant is listening” (I Sam 3:10). For centuries, Christians invested in renewal and being spiritually formed have promoted the practice of *lectio divina*, sacred reading. This is attentive and consecrated reading. The participant proceeds slowly and deliberately through each phrase to acclimate to the voice of the Holy Spirit. At its core, this is the act of approaching Scripture with an open heart and in humble anticipation that the God of heaven is ready to enter dialogue with his children through the Word.

Most churches, discipleship ministries and fellowship groups are ready and eager to provide a worthy assortment of dependable plans or suggested sequences for devotional reading. These may tie to the ongoing liturgy for worship or follow a daily regiment to accomplish reading the bible through in a specified period of time. A popular counselor approach for devotional material is to meditate on the chapter number from the book of Proverbs that corresponds to the date on the calendar (e.g. on the 15th of the month, the counselor reads Proverbs chapter 15). A plethora of devotional guides, from classic to contemporary, are available. These couple a Scripture passage with an uplifting message (i.e.

[http://rbc.org/websites/api/term\[category\]/devotionals/;](http://rbc.org/websites/api/term[category]/devotionals/)

<http://www.biblegateway.com/devotionals/>). It is not the intent here to define how often, long,

traditional or trendy one's approach to devotional reading should be. The point is to consistently worship, read, encounter and *listen*. Followers of Jesus Christ- the Word made flesh to dwell among us- access the written Word and welcome the Holy Spirit, who in turn, rouses awareness of the presence of Jesus.

The first step for counselors is to conduct a comprehensive self-inventory to recall and affirm personal expectations for devotional practice based upon one's faith tradition, cultural heritage, discipleship experience, role models and intimate conversations with the Lord. Second, in light of one's counseling ministry and professional role, consider what devotional habits would be realistic, suitable and sustainable. Once there is a fresh awareness of your personal, private, thoughtful and committed values, take the third most challenging step. Proceed to evaluate your own satisfaction with recent experience in devotional reading. Finally, bring any discoveries and decisions from this self-review before the Lord in compliant prayer and petition to launch a Spirit-directed plan to maintain or to change.

Explore Scripture in Community

There is a pronounced advantage for our faith journey to regularly take in instruction and challenging messages in corporate settings. Pastors, mentors and spiritual leaders speak from Scripture with maturity, learning and accumulated knowledge to those under their nurture. Such preachers and teachers demonstrate competence in biblical exegesis, that is, the ability to locate, raise awareness and instill conviction on the meaning of a passage, theme or text. When Jesus left his disciples on earth, he gave explicit instructions that his representatives were to make disciples, baptize and teach others to obey all his commandments (Matt. 28:18-20). Since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, believing Christians made it their custom to gather, break bread, fellowship, pray and sit under distinguished biblical teaching (Acts 2:42). Whether a

counselor has extensive clinical experience or is an apprentice under supervision, veterans and novices alike do well to willingly submit to a recognized biblical authority who accepts the responsibility of the high calling to teach the Word (Jam. 3:1). Consider this remarkable example.

On the very evening of the day that this paragraph was written, this writer participated in congregational worship. The pastor dedicated a sizable portion of that noteworthy sermon to a selection of phrases from our Lord recorded in the Sermon on the Mount. My pastor pressed firmly on teaching that addressed judging, measuring and taking specks of dust out of our brother's eye (Matt. 7:1-4). There was passion in his delivery that was accompanied by tenderness in his voice. Careful self-examination is what the Lord expects *before* one brings words of confrontation. This highly relevant pastoral warning from the Word on the requisite attitude to conduct a fair assessment with others was readily interpreted as the Lord's confirmation that counselors do well to fellowship where the Word of God is rightfully admired and proclaimed. The Holy Spirit will do the rest.

Examine Scripture to Develop Fluency in Biblical Theology

One who desires to counsel others 'Christianly' will recognize the necessity to make a concerted effort to examine Scripture both thoughtfully and systematically. This is not a one-time excursion. Pondering the text of Scripture to know its meaning in part and as a whole is critical, not only for ongoing growth as a disciple of Jesus Christ but in terms of one's productivity as a Christian in a position to come along side others as counselor. The purpose of this category of biblical exposure for professional development is to study and acquire an ever quickening perception of one's faith by gaining a clearer apprehension of biblical norms. Assessment techniques compare findings about our clients to established population customs,

practices and standards. Making sense of those comparisons from the vantage point of our Christian faith requires keen alertness to what God describes as normative. The Word sheds light on his expectations for his people, those called to be holy (i.e. Matt. 5-7; Rom. 12; Col. 3:1-10).

Scripture includes an assortment of literary genres – history, law, wisdom, narrative, poetry, prophecy, letters, apocalyptic, etc. - still it communicates an essential unity in its message. Biblical theology is acquiring a broad and holistic understanding of the sayings, stories and message of Scripture while attending with care to its cultural background, stylistic trends, linguistic intricacies and central author (Bromiley, 1960). Counselors may not all be biblical specialists who have advanced linguistic competences or the background of a scholar who can produce a detailed analysis of complex passages. Nevertheless, there is good reward for counselors who keep an energetic awareness of biblical norms through regular judicious, consideration of Scripture.

Examining Scripture in earnest to achieve increased understanding has been described as ‘interrogating’ the text (Sharf, 2005). The intent of such dedicated investigation is to press beyond what naturally comes to our minds when Scripture is read to uncover through openness, intellectual fervor and instruction from the Holy Spirit what God as its divine author had in mind. What is the grammatical, historical, logical and contextual message? Interrogating the text compels us to deeply probe a passage of the Bible formally, methodically and progressively to discern its meaning and application. In practical terms, this implies that a counselor read select passages intently, with an eye to detect its subtleties without neglecting its forthright communication. Proceed to get to know the passage as a therapist gets to know a patient. One listens to words, statements and stories while looking below the surface for themes, implications and patterns. General bible study techniques to examine Scripture are not out of reach of the

ordinary student and professional counselor given the range of accessible print and electronic resources.

In order to appreciate details, make note of a vital word or phrase. Use a bible dictionary or word study guide to get into its usage and associations. For example, pour over all the ways that God's wonderful activity and characteristics are revealed in Ps. 139. Pause over the phrase in v.13 regarding how humans are 'knit together,' woven or issued a covering before physical birth ever occurs. A word study on this term will yield a portrait of God as the master artist who has made every person with ingenuity, resolve and meticulous attention to detail. Having a rich theology of God's creative jurisdiction over every human being paints a beautiful picture to carry with us into the counseling room. This becomes a lens through which to truly see what may only appear as a broken and damaged human life.

Counselors consult biblical commentaries to gain an appreciation for hidden images, the ancient cultural setting, political-historical background and even personality descriptions. Look up related references to compare how parallel passages shed light on the meaning of the one under consideration. Read the passage deeply enough to: 1) be able to rephrase its intent; 2) recognize its contribution within a particular book; and 3) place it within the larger scope of biblical revelation.

The result of this practice of Scriptural examination by interrogating the text will be that the assumptions of the reader are fortified, refined or flatly rejected. "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). This is the result when we expand our biblical theology, that is, our understanding of how God is at work in human history and our lives as informed by Scripture. An end product of this type of Scriptural

interrogation is to be able to describe what the bible actually says. This is one level of understanding. The far better, second level outcome, is when such study becomes prescriptive. Scripture then speaks into how we live and relate. This level of contemplation turns our attention from what we can say about Scripture to what Scripture says about us and our entire perspective of the created universe (Moo, 2012). In summary, counselors about to set out to pursue change in others need a routine that allows the message of Scripture to change us.

[Expand Access to Biblical Passages Relevant to Client Concerns](#)

When a counselee seeks assistance, those who listen with empathy may well establish a central predominant theme that characterizes in ordinary terms the chief complaint and concern. This is more an emotional impression than it is a clinical assessment. Words such as discouragement, fear, anger, self-control, relational security; grief, loneliness, parental conflict, etc. are reasonable options. These simplistic labels are not diagnostic or clinically sophisticated. These are not summaries with precision to produce treatment plans. Rather, these themes are mnemonics that point to the essential barrier that helping must strive to overcome or a characteristic that dialogue will seek to develop. Scripture often speaks to these concerns.

A practice that counselors may find useful is to locate specific passages, biblical stories and verses that address the matters that top the list of concerns. This matching of need to Scripture is as common as the index of where to find help found in any ordinary Gideon bible (<http://www.gideons.org/ReadTheBible/Helps.aspx>). In order to accomplish the assembly of a respectable list of passages that relate to the identified concern, two bible investigative tools that a counselor should have handy are a concordance and a topical bible. These aides are frequently included in a study bible. A concordance is a bible reference that functions as an index to locate all occurrences of a word (Kohlenberger, 2012; Strong, 2007). A topical bible is quite similar,

but instead of locating single words, it pulls together passages or verses that address the desired theme (Nave, 1997). For ease of access and use, similar tools are in internet versions for ready access (<http://www.biblegateway.com>).

This suggestion for implementation is not an attempt to turn a counseling conversation from an overall impression to discussion of a specific bible passage. The merits of using Scripture as an actual session technique have been acclaimed as well as critiqued. Given that this treatment on assessment aims to move counselors from quick impressions to more considered, nuanced and detailed analysis for treatment purposes, it would be counterproductive to suggest that a crude pairing of passages to a particular need is an action step towards an actual client intervention. Here is the critical point. Locating and meditating on a handful of key passages or verses related to a presenting concern is for the benefit of the *counselor*, not the client. The list is to inform and guide our prayer as we prepare ourselves to meet with a returning client or when praying through treatment reviews or a perplexing roadblock.

For an extended season in clinical practice, this counselor would prepare a short list of appropriate passages for consistent clients using an electronic bible. After a quick cut and paste procedure, these passages were printed and placed loosely in the patient's chart. These would be apparent whenever the client's material was reviewed prior to the start of a session. Scripture would guide petitionary prayer on their behalf before the session ever commenced. The practice itself was not endlessly maintained. Yet, the association of biblical texts with critical needs remains a source of hope that keeps client struggles, setbacks and victories in proper biblical perspective. This practice is issued as a challenge to any therapist who desires to sharpen one's clarity on a biblical perspective on the source of a client's hope.

Imagine the counselor who attempts this basic fluency exercise for select clients on her caseload with differing needs. Over time, this counselor would have a substantial repertoire of Scripture passages coming to mind in conjunction with significant needs. The intention of this exercise is to attune our hearts and attend to a client's cry for mercy (Ps. 10:17; 18:6; 84:2). Using tools to locate passages and placing Scripture into a position where it functions as a prayer guide is an effective method to increase biblical fluency. Further, it contributes to the counselor's internal agility to bring Scripture to mind when our heart is drawn to pray for our clients.

[Exhibit Suitable Scriptural Expertise in Special Presentations](#)

Christians who counsel routinely conduct psycho-educational workshops, teach classes or train other helpers through supervision. Opportunities to invest in prevention events or to consolidate clinical experience into lessons that promote growth could initially appear to be void of assessment. On the contrary, the skilled presenter pays close attention to descriptions of the actual audience, recognizes implicit messages beneath inquiries and observes group dynamics so as to maximize all opportunities to build coping skills into the lives of the participants.

Counselors who teach towards outcomes consider where learners are at before directing them where to go. Thus, clinicians engage in assessment even when they step outside the counseling office and into the training room. As the counselor anticipates where learners may benefit from information or guided experiences, they do well to consider how what they have to share as a wise intervention coheres with Scripture.

When preparing psycho-educational presentations, it is an advantageous practice to dig deep into a cross-section of Scripture passages that speak to the theme, premise or concern under consideration. A sensible cross-section of Scripture would be to pull from an historical account, a psalm and the teaching of Jesus in Gospels. Drawing from three or more distinct places

whenever possible will reduce the risk of twisting the meaning of a select verse to fit one's desired teaching point. Working out from a cross-section of genres and passages will establish a secure the biblical theology for what one actually delivers since related passages often attach to one another to form a sturdy web of meaning. Whether speaking to a cohort of weary mothers raising energetic kids through the terrible twos or coaching couples soon to marry on the top ten strategies to resolve unexpected conflicts, counselors will find it useful to press fervently into Scripture. This is the means to secure wisdom before dispensing treasured lessons gleaned the counseling room or clinical literature. Check yourself and your material in at least these three ways: 1. what hope or promise does Scripture offer related to my theme?; 2. does Scripture specifically name a sin pattern to avoid or character trait to cultivate that connects directly to the topic?; 3. is there a biblical character referenced in Scripture who faced similar circumstances or trials who the Lord how offers as a model for faith?

This recommendation applies even if the workshop material to be offered is based upon concepts initially written by a Christian authority with known expertise. Look to Scripture to better comprehend where this authority on the subject has gleaned key concepts. It will be the counselor's own study in the Word joined together with the selected curriculum that will generate confidence in the material that is offered. In order to make headway to reach the multitude of expectations that arise when a counselor speaks to an audience of more than one, thoroughly peruse the Word for how it deals with the key matters at hand. Combine the best from your clinical expertise with the solid foundation found in Scripture.

References

- American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC). Retrieved February 10, 2011 from <http://aapc.org/content/about-pastoral-counseling>.
- Adams, J. E. (1970). *Competent to counsel*. USA: Presbyterian & Reformed.
- Bromiley, G. W. (1960). "Biblical theology" in Everett F. Harrison's (ed.) *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 95-97.
- Collins, G. (2007). *Christian counseling: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF). Retrieved February 10, 2011 from <http://www.ccef.org/counseling-services-frequently-asked-questions#Whatisbiblicalcounseling>
- Erickson, M. J. (1985). *Christian theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Hughes, R. B. & Laney, J. C. (2001) *Tyndale concise Bible commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. (
- Kohlenberger, J. R. (2012). *NIV Bible Concordance, 2011 Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan,
- MacDonald, J.; Kellemen, R. & Viars, S. (2013). *Christ-centered Biblical counseling: Changing lives with God's changeless truth*. Harvest House: Eugene, OR.
- McMinn, M. R. (2012). "Counseling Progress Check" in the *Pastoral counseling tracker*. www.114consulting.com.
- McMinn, M. R. & Campbell, C. D. (2007). *Integrative psychotherapy: Towards a comprehensive Christian approach*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- McMinn, M. R. Staley, R. C., Webb, K.C. & Seegobin, W. (2010). Just what is Christian Counseling anyway? *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. 41(5), 391-397.

- Mahoney, H. N. & Augsberger, D. W. (2007). *Christian counseling: An introduction*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Nave, O. J. (1997). *Nave's Topical Bible*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: A guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.
- Powlison, D. (2010). *The biblical counseling movement: History and context*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press.
- Rollins, J. (June, 2010). Making definitive progress: 20/20 delegates reach consensus on definition of counseling. *Counseling Today Online*. Retrieved March 14, 2011 from: <http://www.counseling.org/Publications/CounselingTodayArticles.aspx?AGuid=dd8a7048-4433-45e8-85ce-7b42d0b777a4>.
- Scharf, G. R. (2005). "God's letter of intent: Six questions that reveal what God meant to say in a text" in Haddon Robinson and Craig B. Larson's (Eds.) *The art and craft of Biblical preaching: A comprehensive resource for today's communicators*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 230-233.
- Strong, J. (2007). *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Updated and Expanded Edition*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- The Westminster Confession of Faith, (1982/1646) in *The Creeds of the Churches*, John H. Leith, (Ed.) 3rd ed. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1.10; 196.
- White, S., Hall, C., & Peckover, S. (2009). The descriptive tyranny of the common assessment framework: Technologies of categorization and professional practice in child welfare. *British Journal of Social Work*, 39, 1197-1217.

Whiston, S. C. (2009). *Principles and applications of assessment in counseling* (3rd ed.).

Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Chapter 2 Defining the Assessment Task

“But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (I Sam 16:7).

Theological Theme: Affections of the Human Heart

Envisioning Best Practice

Locating Targets for Change

Assessment Dimensions

Details: Observe and Assemble

Dynamics: Patterns and Persons

Dependence: Empowerment and Submission

Clarifying Terms

Psychological testing

Psychological assessment

Tools for Clinical Care

Contrasting Applications

References

Chapter 3: Forming a Theological Foundation

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Pro 1:7).

Theological Theme: Wisdom

Demonstrating the Craft of Assessment

The upcoming client encounter would include a marvelous training opportunity. An aspiring social worker was about to be initiated into the intricacies of contemporary mental health care. This afternoon, in my role as clinician and supervisor, it was my clinical skills that would be on display. An eager apprentice would step out of the academic nursery, otherwise known as the graduate classroom and enter in-vivo sessions. In this venue the potential for dynamic dialogue was immediate and real. Initial assessments would be our joint activity. By grace, the Holy Spirit might break into these precious interviews. For clients, concerns would be heard and expectations would be shaped. For the novice clinician, it was my intent that a commitment to choice assessment methods would be caught. Further, throughout the entire experience, my prayer was to communicate a compassion that would convey the love of Jesus Christ. Without compromise, the overarching priority in any intake is to welcome a new client and assess the potential benefit of counseling services. Awakening a passion for creative assessment in a new Christian counselor might not be the main course, but would surely satisfy as a fine dessert!

“Describe briefly the reason you are seeking counseling.” This is an early item on the Personal Information Form. I directed the attention of my apprentice to the client’s written response, “Rid myself of the depression and rage leftover from my childhood that constantly trashes my life.” The request was telling and descriptive. It screamed ‘hurt’ as it pointed to a direction for therapy that was well worth considering. Behind this 38-year-old woman’s explicit

statement, there was the distinct likelihood that a recent event prompted her request for this consultation. Since childhood was decades in the past, why dig up its pain now? The remainder of the advance information available was gleaned to cull as much perspective as possible. Reading between the lines, my thoughts were oriented towards the conversation that was about to commence. In order to stir the imagination of my observer, several curiosity questions were spoken aloud.

- What is it like to be a second child and the oldest female amongst nine siblings?
- Would her parents, now unfortunately deceased, have cherished all those grandchildren, our client's vast tribe of nieces and nephews?
- This client is college-educated and has an impressive employment position. Travel was a requirement for one who conducts management seminars for a global company. Would this allow for local relationships? Thinking pragmatically, would an extensive travel regiment permit routine counseling appointments?
- The address indicates a home in a quaint, small hamlet well outside of the city. The client did not mark that she was ever married and no roommate is mentioned. What would single life be like in a conspicuously rural environment?
- Was her living location making a statement? All of her family roots and ties plainly reflected urban addresses.

There was a bygone era when an initial assessment required a cold start. Counselors had a few checked boxes and scant words scribbled on a pink sheet torn from a phone message pad. Initial interviews now have demographic highlights gathered using electronic forms, checklists and other technology. There are numerous administrative tasks to complete in the early phase of forming a helping relationship and attention to procedural particulars is a must. In this age of

practice accountability and third-party payers, intake activities travel through step-by-step procedures. Decision trees mapped out on flow charts specify an unambiguous sequence to collect and distribute information in a systematic manner. In our initial consultations, clients are prepared to begin therapy so that the investment is worthwhile. Prospective counselees are acquainted not only with the benefits, but also with the potential risks of change in order to establish informed consent (Corey & Corey, 2011). This is not a preference designed merely to convey a professional appearance. Rather, this reflects a core commitment to fulfill a clinician's ethical responsibilities. The pursuit to deliver quality care necessitates both comprehensive appraisal and careful treatment initiation. This is essential in all therapeutic service settings and conveys a striving for excellence. These are also important priorities for a ministry grounded counseling practice (Col. 3:17).

The mainstream medical community is currently navigating the migration into electronic medical records. Mental health services will likely follow suit as confidentiality concerns can be adequately addressed through proper safeguards. Digital records and information systems increase the application of standardized forms and interview questions for streamlined and comprehensive data entry. The important implication for going forward is this. The pathway to utilize methodical assessment to define issues and track treatment as a matter of ordinary practice via technology is wide open.

The supervision arrangement ensured that my uninitiated social worker would experience her inaugural moments of practice in the immediate presence of a client in the throes of chaos. Those who take on the bold initiative to speak with a mental health professional are often grappling with momentous adjustments provoked by an ongoing disturbance. The request is for direction, relief and support. Expressed concerns tend to be accompanied by substantial pain.

The circumstances surrounding most presenting problems are formidable. After all, if the sought after solution was simple or within easy reach, the humbling plea for mental health services and Christian aid would never surface. Counselors are exposed to the embodied cries of human beings in the midst of suffering. The apostle Paul writes that the creation groans for the day of redemption when there will be a new heaven and new earth (Rom. 8:22-23). The message from Scripture is that the physical realm is reeling under the influence of sin. Clients disclose strife and hardships that stem from dwelling in an environment where the impact of sin against the Creator stimulates restlessness, sorrow and struggle. Not only do the effects of sin surround, its most demanding disruptions reside within (James 4:1-10). Sin pervades perspectives and limits one's ability to contend with the encircling challenges. Thus, for the client, the means to execute an effective response and successfully re-adjust is either unclear, implausible or both. The momentum to maintain hope is sputtering and about to stall. Clients seek assistance when the future is as bleak as a blinding fog, resources are depleted and the road ahead is hidden in darkness. Given these realities, there is much at stake for the counselor and client at the outset of the process. The counselor's mission is to greet seekers, share hope, instill confidence, invite disclosure and organize vast material. These purposes are realized while constantly respecting a client's distinctive background, individual development, autonomy and spiritual maturity.

Whenever possible, my preference is to demonstrate via live encounter the efficient steps, spontaneous emotion and intensity of interpersonal challenge that actually comprises quality Christian counseling. Displaying intake procedures and case conceptualization is a far superior method to teach than giving a blow-by-blow analysis in the abstract. Client stories, predicaments and challenges typically unfold from a strange void that lacks form or a central theme. This explains the necessity of making tactical assessment an essential priority.

The social work intern witnessed the initial consultation. This female client, an articulate management specialist exuded public success. Inwardly she was bitter over longstanding loneliness. The precise features of the semi-structured, interview will be described in detail later (START, Chapter 7). The story that surfaced hovered around subjects revealing stark disappointment. A seven-year, intermittent relationship was now unflinchingly recognized as destructive, unfulfilling and terminal. The remote residence was the place of rendezvous for the all too few getaways with a married lover. Escape and secrecy was the explanation for hiding out in the country. The tie to the past was a father's alcoholism and a deeply religious mother's enabling. This essential tale was gathered through the routine maneuvers and the client was ready to pour out her hurt. Two unplanned interventions were blended seamlessly into the session and proved to be pivotal. Later the intern inquired about these productive choices that added dimensions of import to the purposes beneath the service request.

The client was queried about her desire for Christian counseling as indicated by a checked box on our intake forms. The response that her older sister had once been to the agency and had made this recommendation was straightforward enough. However, the lack of any affirmation of faith convictions prompted this interviewer to introduce a question set that tapped more deeply into her spiritual resources and beliefs (Plante, 2009). Such as, *how were religious-spiritual discussions experienced within your family while you were growing up? Did your contact with the Christian faith come across as positive, negative, or a mixed bag?* The intern was surprised to learn that this client had vast network of roots in a religious upbringing. Most family members were reported to express vibrant Christian testimonies. Remarkably, the client's own internal spiritual experience was hollow and hidden by shame. Hope in a Savior, always a soothing promise articulated by her mother, now resembled a futuristic wish. Any anticipation of

becoming a new creature with a heavenly destiny or belonging to a special family was like one of the silent longings brought to mind when blowing out birthday candles.

Furthermore, a throw away comment made by the client during a rapid survey of current symptoms alerted this clinician to introduce a substance abuse screening technique known as CAGE (Ewing, 1984). *Have you ever felt you should Cut down on your drinking? Have people Annoyed you by criticizing your drinking? Have you ever felt bad or Guilty about your drinking? Have you had an Eye opener first thing in the morning to steady nerves or get rid of a hangover?* The answers not only caused the client's eyes to swell with tears, these questions released a forthright admission. Her second DWI might well result in driving restrictions that would seriously interfere with her employment expectations. Counseling was strong recommendation made by her defense attorney. This was not recorded anywhere on her forms. Although the accusation was never expressed, there was palpable sense of wonder that perhaps she had become more like her wayward father than her saintly mother. It was evident that detailed plan to modify alcohol use would be an early treatment priority.

Blending these uncomplicated assessment techniques to acquire a spiritual history and complete a substance abuse screening within an initial session was nothing remarkable. In this instance, these options did yield highly relevant pockets of information that contributed substantially to the overall understanding of the clinical profile. These assessment sequences offer a prime example of subjectively sensing an emotional vulnerability and then responding with an objective strategic investigation. Additional standardized mental health screening measures were selected for use following the interview. This initial consultation accomplished its therapeutic mission. Closer to our purposes, curiosity about assessment was awakened in the apprentice helper.

One serious matter was left unaddressed, that is, with the intern in training. In the rapid pace of clinical practice and supervision on-the-fly, there was minimal opportunity to explore the theological underpinnings beneath the assessment processes and wisdom search. This chapter offers an excursion into biblical material that clinicians, novices and veterans alike, would do well to contemplate when engaging with clients in the early phases of treatment. Christian theology does offer guidance on how information can be gathered and assembled under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is an art of craftsmanship evident in a search for wisdom. In Scripture, skilled tradesmen are described as those who use tools responsibly, masterfully and for service of the Lord. Regrettably, those identical artistic skills can be turned to construct idols. Christian counselors operate as craftsman, seeking to make expert use of available tools for kingdom purposes and to establish a purposeful, task-oriented, relational connection.

A Theology for Assessment

Craftsmanship

According to contemporary usage, a craftsman refers to one who practices an art or handicraft to express creative talent with skill, dexterity and ingenuity (Merriam-Webster, 2003). When the intension is to place emphasis on quality and value, the label of craftsmanship is inevitably woven into the conversation. The term introduces a striking contrast. On the one side are mass produced articles pumped out through robotic, mechanical or assembly line procedures. On the other end are specialty pieces, uniquely and painstakingly handcrafted. A related designation is artisan. This describes one who hones a talent in producing limited quantities of particular items in top-quality versions (i.e. bread, cheese, wine, jewelry, furniture or pottery). Craftsman and artisan are evocative terms, stirring images of persons who combine artistic vision, proficiency and expertise to engineer commodities of merit with the utmost of personal attention.

In the Genesis creation account, human beings were commissioned by God to represent Him by assuming the function of dedicated resource stewards as they populate the entire earth (Gen. 1:27-30). The term for a skillful artisan appears early in Scripture where it depicts Tubal-cain, only a few generations down the line from Adam, as one who worked metal with forge and hammer to manufacture fine tools (Gen. 4:22). From making swords to bricks, from perfume to bread, from musical instruments to idols, those who combine expertise of mind and hand to generate art or crafts are mentioned with considerable respect throughout the Bible. There is much to know before an inspired skill can be executed. First, the performance and pliability characteristics of earthly materials must be understood. Next, tools, methods and procedures must be perfected to utilize materials effectively. Finally, the signature of a fine craftsman is the transformation of practical item into a symbolic representation of beauty and imagination. These traits are aspects of human workmanship that bring glory to a creative, personal God by illustrating the wonder of the human capacity to master elements in the environment.

Consider the prominent description of artists and tradesman as God speaks at length to Moses regarding the tabernacle, alter of sacrifice and garments for priests. The Lord chose Bezalel, son of Uri, and filled him with the Spirit so that his inventive designs in gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood would contribute to an impressive setting that would distinguish the religious celebrations of God's people (Ex. 35: 30-15). The children of God were no longer in Egypt. The offering poured out by the work of their hands would now be lifted before a new master. The Lord commissioned a line of competent craftsmen to construct the sanctuary according to his commands. This arrangement was far more demanding than recording dimensions and specifications to assemble a building according to a generic blueprint. Craftsmen turn out items of loveliness that exceeded utilitarian purposes. Handiwork displays the quality of

intelligent design and this honors the Creator of the universe. The Lord, who brought the physical universe into being from void and emptiness, left his artistic handprint in incredible ways for human beings to behold. Human beings, the pinnacle of God's craftsmanship, were made *imago Dei*, in his image (Erickson, 1998). The central theological principle beneath the term *imago Dei* is that human beings represent or mirror characteristics of the Creator. Men and women reflect the Lord of creation well when the whole of what emerges from our hands bears the mark of a devoted craftsman. Such an image bearer offers the product of one's hands back to the very same Lord who provides the materials and the means to create.

Scripture extends the application of expertise, skill and creativity in using physical materials to those who exercise leadership or who advise through mental capacity regarding moral matters (Gen. 41:33-34; Deut. 1:13). The passage implies the existence of a dedicated capacity to direct and unify those who will offer the fruit of their hands in service. Thus, there is an art and science to providing headship over fellow artists. Notice the biblical unity between the display of a mechanical proficiency and mental competency. In contemporary use, it is customary to distinguish physical handiwork from mental exercise associated with leadership, judgment and management. For example, standardized intelligence tests customarily separate internal problem solving from performance or external manipulation. Verbal reasoning is thus distilled from spatial and manipulative skills. In a biblical sense, work produced by hand or as the outcome of mental competence coheres through the process of practical implementation. Both craftsmanship in productivity and wise demonstration of a judgment capacity exemplify wisdom when utilized in honor of the Creator.

Although there is no single, compact definition of wisdom, the term is abundant in Scripture. The trend is to represent it as the combination of resourceful application of moral

insight regarding right and wrong into word and action. This incorporates the intellectual understanding of how the world operates, along with social ingenuity, into activities and decisions that produce successful living. Scripture is consistent on the message that wisdom is attainable as long as it is acknowledged as a gift from God (Ps. 51:6-8; Pro. 2:6). Wisdom mediates the association between the physical creation, human social order and the Creator (Dell, 2009). Therefore, craftsmanship in discerning wisdom to guide the heart is displayed in ethical, virtuous living that honors God and reflects his divine, holy character suitably in the world. The foundation for wisdom is earnest respect for one's dependent status on the Creator (Job. 28:28) (Wilson, 1997).

Thus far, wisdom has been described as alive, practical, righteous and relationally significant, not as peculiarly personal. Scripture will not allow such a division to stand, for wisdom calls aloud in the street and raises her voice in the public squares (Pro. 1:20). In the New Testament wisdom is associated with the Word made flesh who dealt among us (Jn. 1:1-5; 1 Jn. 1:1-4). The craft of locating wisdom is not merely about knowing and doing, but includes being in relationship. More specifically and significantly, wisdom is synonymous with knowing Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ is the word and wisdom of God, the revealer and the redeemer: the way, the truth and the life (Vanhoozer, 2005, p. 13)."

In sum, craftsmanship encompasses handiwork or creative ethical activity. It is the finely attuned application of wisdom by those made *imago Dei* in a manner that glories and reflects the Triune God. It is the exhibition of the Creator's characteristics in the stewardship of life by those creature lovingly cast in his image.

A Discerning Heart

No human person in Scripture is more notoriously associated with wisdom than the son of David and Bathsheba, King Solomon. His reign was the most prestigious and grandest days

for the nation of Israel, spanning four decades approximately 1000 years before the birth of Christ. His expansive understanding was compared in a biblical word picture to the grains of sands on the seashore (1 Kgs. 4:29-34). Solomon was esteemed not only for compiling wise sayings to guide action, but also for his scientific knowledge of botany, zoology, political science, anthropology and psychology. When Solomon ascended to David's throne, the Lord granted him the opportunity in a dream to ask for anything his imagination could possibly desire. Scripture duly records that the young king's response delighted the Lord (1 Kgs. 3:10). Solomon openly acknowledged his limited grasp of leadership and incompetency to rule honorably over such a vast nation. His admission was paramount to confessing a lack of the craftsmanship necessary to carry out his commission. Declaring his humility and insight, Solomon implores the Lord for both a discerning heart to separate right from wrong and for the ability to govern an entire nation as the Lord's chosen people (1 Kgs. 3:4-15). The request for a heart that can truly hear, along with presence of mind to recognize righteousness is a prayer that can be imitated by people helpers without hesitation.

The remarkable and renowned passage that follows offers the link between assessment and Solomon's gift of wisdom from on high (1 Kgs. 3:16-28). Two prostitutes petitioned the king to make a determination as to who held legitimate parental rights over an infant. Perhaps the case had been reviewed in lower courts, but the inability to ascertain which woman was the rightful mother was a not a matter to be readily resolved in any typical judicial proceeding of the day. A series of tragic events complicated the plight of these competing women (Konkel, 2006). It is apparent that for these women and others in their occupation, there was considerable scorn and negligible social status. No mention is made of husbands or known fathers. Further, these streetwise housemates give birth to fragile infants within three days of each other. One newborn

was accidentally killed during the night, presumably by the inadvertent action of its mother who rolled on top of the little one, suffocating the infant. The accusation is that the grieving mother switched her deceased baby with the one still breathing. The second mother remained in slumber and did not detect the switch until she went to put the child to her breast. The essence of the legal plea is one disreputable woman's word against the other (Farrar, 1982). The case turns on the claim that "she took my living child while I was sleeping," (vv. 20-21). How could any respectable judge have powers of detection to discern the sincerity of these women and determine proper custody? This case was heard literally thousands of years before any authoritative medical test would be available to solve such an atrocious human puzzle. But Solomon does prevail for he hears their hearts.

The brutality of the ruling is striking. The pronouncement is vicious. Solomon, the newly elevated king, issues the order that the living child is to be literally severed into two. In the interest of fairness, each claimant would be given a bloodied half. This decision, though utterly absurd, was certainly within the prerogative of a king within the period and culture. Such a ruling was justified by the pitiful stubbornness of these women who refused to resolve their own dispute. How dare such lowly harlots burden a king destined for greatness with these intractable positions and contradictory allegations? Solomon dramatically summons that a sword to be brought speedily into the courtroom. Justice would be immediate and visible. The sentence would be carried out in plain sight of these bickering women. There was little doubt amongst those assembled in the court that the king had every intention for his order to be implemented. It was under these unique circumstances that each prostitute turned mother, issued a further statement. One yields her claim of ownership in order to spare the life of the infant. The other spitefully applauds the impartiality of the death sentence (v. 26). From these declarations, the

loving heart of the true mother became utterly transparent. It was separated from the grief saturated bitterness of the one suffering from loss, thus darkly bound in shock, denial and mourning. News of Solomon's judicial wisdom traveled not only across the known world, but has been preserved throughout the ages. This courtroom drama stands as an enduring testimony to his prowess in detecting the interior motives hidden in the recesses of the human heart. How did he arrive at his judgment?

Solomon may not have invented this assessment technique as a ploy. He certainly held the authority to carry out his decree. His motives are not unpacked in this ancient court transcript. No post-sentence commentary or interview is available. What is revealed is his recognition of the natural mother by her readiness to sacrifice her rightful claim for parental rights in order to protect the child's precious life. Consistent with the definition of a modern psychological test, Solomon's order elicits a sample of behavior that has relevance for the classification of interior motivations, relational attachments and emotional state. The words spoken in that instant offer a graphic portrayal of the state of these desperate hearts. Overt behavior opens a window into the covert. The brilliance of his decision is not tied solely to subjective powers of discernment. Solomon's cleverness acquires what amounts to a confession through his radical pronouncement and the expectations associated with the courtroom practice of a formidable king. Authority, action and speech proclaimed the violent sequence about to unfold; two women responded by exposing their hearts.

The collected sayings of Solomon throughout the wisdom literature display further the intricate web connecting external behavior and inner affections. For example, a villain, who harbors evil intent, may make bold promises with his mouth while proclaiming contrary signals in his body language (i.e. eye, hand and foot movement). Behavior, not actual speech, reveals the

malicious plot in his inner being (Pro. 6:12-15; 10:10). Further cases suggest that a heart full of rage and hate stirs dissension while love seeks to reduce or diminish the impact of careless, accidental or improper actions (Pro. 10:7; 15:18). A righteous person displays kindness even to a defenseless animal, whereas a wicked man delights in satisfaction when perpetrating cruelty (Pro. 12:5). A fool finds unceasing satisfaction in expressing his own opinion, while a wise person opens his mind to receive understanding (Pro. 18:2; 19:8). In collecting numerous pithy sayings of the wise, Solomon catalogued perceptive ties between patterns that can be empirically experienced and concurrently expose inner motives. Once exposed, the matters of the heart are left open for interpretation. This exhibits Solomon's craftsmanship to unmask the disposition and inclinations of human beings in crisis. The attribute of having an internal discerning emotional, relational and ethical center is granted by God to Solomon. This is the prototype to link what is seen or heard with that which is hidden. This skill is the essence of assessment.

A counselor is a craftsman of the heart. This specialization requires the examination of, through words and behavior, the intricate ties between what is displayed on the surface and what lies within. Details regarding events, behaviors and relationships are collected to assemble a plausible explanation for what may be occurring on a deeper, more intimate level. Likewise, a current behavior sample may be utilized to make a prediction regarding subsequent actions. An artisan of the heart ponders and evaluates behavior in the light of a broader narrative and interpersonal patterns. An assortment of techniques and specialized assessment tools might be created or appropriated and applied. This allows respectful associations to be formed between that which is readily observable and motives that are more mysterious. Remember, for one in distress, the desire, depth and deceptiveness of the heart may be concealed even from the self.

Discovering Wisdom Afresh

The downside to illustrating this model using the great Solomon is the risk that inexperienced or overzealous helpers may mistakenly attempt to repetitively implement in formulaic fashion the golden principles located in biblical material. Statements pulled from their ancient context may serve as prescriptions to guide current decisions. In many instances this can produce a favorable outcome. Nevertheless, wisdom, the application of the principle with success, mandates submissiveness to the Lord and right relation with others.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger,” (Pro. 15:1). This tactical interpersonal maneuver of issuing soft-spoken and cooperative speech in response to anger stirred has near universal application. Still, the glitch occurs not in the stable truth content of the proverb itself, but in the person-to-person recognition of emotional cues. Decoding the communication in conjunction with the nature of the relationship is necessary to ascertain if the biblical recommendation applies in a particular instance. Is that an expression of reasonable anger or a manipulative and detrimental sequence that may need interruption? Is the best answer gentle submission or firm challenge spoken softly, yet in strength with resolve? Wooden adherence to a biblical proposal from the wisdom literature is not a sign of faith, but a presumption of magical thinking. Does this meet the criteria for wisdom? The strategy of this ancient proverb does serve the faithful well even today as a default response to the emotional outbursts of others. The unfortunate error that may be encouraged by Christian helpers is to enforce the application without imitation. Solomon’s process displays crafting wisdom afresh for the moment.

Biblical premises have no expiration date to limit their usefulness. Nevertheless, within the canon of Scripture containing God’s communication, virtue and prudence is never packaged in neat categories or stacked on shelves, ready to select, unwrap and consume. If the metaphor

for wisdom was a massive library, extensive database or a mammoth warehouse, the necessity of spiritual dependency and constant abiding that Scripture so forcefully advocates would be redundant and irrelevant. Wisdom would be available for the taking instead of being realized as a relational solution for contemporary application. As exemplified in the courtroom of Solomon, the metaphor for wisdom is the stage where the drama of divine-human relationship, moral choices and spontaneous decisions are on display scene by scene. The text itself asserts the necessity of searching, listening and discerning in community and with divine consultation.

Cultures, ethical scenarios and person-to-person contact will consistently be in transition until the Lord's return. Thus, Word-based principles for living are best applied in innovative and original ways. Consider the theatrical ingredients that make Solomon's courtroom scene so compelling. The intensity of the conflict is brilliantly dispelled by a marvelous unveiling. How is the truth brought to light? Craftsmanship to hear hearts is illustrated by a blend of faith, the exemplary use of authority, recognition of patterns of human nature, signs of compassion, flashes of intuition and spontaneity. Solomon did not resort to a rote formula. Wisdom emerged from an astute discernment capacity. He could hear how the actions of others observed in the present were tied to the extraordinary power relations of the courtroom. He recognized the volatile, fever pitch of emotion operating in the immediate context. The biblical account stands as a living testimony to this remarkable blend of objective observation, subjective awareness and cognitive acuity. The discovery of wisdom comes to surface by faith to meet the necessity of the moment. Like manna in the wilderness, God supplies wisdom to meet the demands of the day. As much as a counselor may covet a storehouse of wisdom, it cannot be preserved or set aside to inform the actions of a lifetime.

Christian theology and doctrine as revealed in the Word of God is essential for living in a manner that brings glory to God. This position is entirely consistent with Christian tradition and the reformation priority of *sola Scriptura*. This Latin phrase literally references Scripture as sacred writings that stand alone. The meaning of this theological principle is that Scripture is the solid base of God's authoritative pronouncements regarding Christian faith and practice. In an effort to keep this review and application succinct, the essential argument will be appropriated from extensive efforts of contemporary theologian, Kevin Vanhoozer (2010; 2005; 2002). What is particularly useful for this synopsis of a theological foundation for assessment is the well-articulated central theme found in Vanhoozer's extensive material regarding how God speaks and acts so that human beings are empowered to recognize, comprehend and respond.

Theological doctrine is useful to embrace the drama of the Gospel's redemptive narrative into a human life. The term that Vanhoozer conveys to capture the contemporary edge or freshness of doctrine is *theodrama*. Human beings are accepted as embodied personal relations who operate within the reality of a divine covenant. The narrative of theology is God and humanity as covenant partners, acting as agents in a dynamic and dramatic relationship. For an adequate grasp of what that reality entails, it is imperative to recognize that the essential ground of human existence is in the Triune God, who speaks and acts in the ongoing movement of creation, redemption and restoration. Vanhoozer (2005; 2002) contends that Scripture is not most accurately viewed as a deposit or storehouse of revelation, but as one of God's "mighty speech acts." The Bible communicates the content of the gospel and it is God in action drawing human beings into His ongoing enactments in creation and with his creatures. Christian tradition and faith rests on what God has done, is doing and will do with words, the Word and the Holy Spirit (Vanhoozer, 2010).

“Theological competence is ultimately a matter of being able to make judgments that display the mind of Christ (Vanhoozer, 2005; p. 2).” Believers seek to obey or act out Scripture as a script as they live in Christian community. Yet, catch the crispness of this essential requirement. The Holy Spirit enables Christ followers to hear that speech afresh and to express immediate obedience in a manner that ideally reflects the mind of Christ to the contemporary scene. Doctrinal proficiency and wise living requires more than knowledge of a critical mass of abstract material, regardless of how spiritual or Word saturated that material may be. Information about God and his creation may be necessary, but it is not sufficient to produce action that reveals mature faith or spiritual depth.

Wisdom that reflects true Christian theology and biblical allegiance flows from respecting, listening and relating anew to the voice of God. Wisdom is made alive in human agents when there is dialogue with others and with the Creator God who continues to communicate in speech and action. Believers are granted the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to produce bidirectional outcomes. Inwardly, the mind of Christ is formed; outwardly his glorious grace is displayed to the surrounding world.

Vanhoozer (2010) recently directed his theological insights to Christian helpers. The notion of theodrama was explored in conjunction with the ministry of Christian counseling. The Word is the script; the Holy Spirit is the director; pastors are the assistant directors. How do counselors contribute? The role of stage managers or make-up artists might be a fitting role but its seems to fall short of exemplifying the impact of a Christian counselor. After consideration, the suggestion is that ‘acting coach’ is likely the closet analogy. The coach is the person who comes alongside the aspiring actor to assist the performer to assume, conform and ultimately become the role intended by the playwright.

Yet many of us need help in learning how to live truthfully in a theodramatic situation that is largely invisible to the naked eye. The imagination is a cognitive faculty, however, and can be a servant of the truth. Indeed, only with an eschatological imagination can we see the reality of the “already” and the “not yet” of the kingdom of God in our midst (Vanhoozer, 2010, p 9).

Wisdom is the means to live virtuously and rightly as a personal narrative is woven ever more tightly and beautifully into the grand theodrama of the gospel. The search for wisdom may bring a counselor as acting coach to encourage contemplation, reasoning in dialogue, surfacing or redirecting affections, or taking action (Treier, 2006). The following proposal provides a portrait of wisdom in layers. This is offered as a diagram to more readily notice the benefits of the assessment process in the pursuit of wisdom. Assessment opens understanding to enable client/actors to move more firmly into character, relate to others and God as naturally and realistically as the Holy Spirit directs.

Discerning Wisdom in Layers

Posture: Submissive to Triune God

These five layers of wisdom surface in dialogue (Greggo & Tillett, 2010). See Figure 1. After all, wisdom is the collective property of the community devoted to loving God. The first layer is the absolute precondition to any Christian wisdom quest. Participants in dialogue must assume a submissive *posture* to the Triune God. This means that one’s personal wishes and volition are placed before the Lord. The opening prayer of wisdom quest will express one central plea: “*thy will be done.*” This is the open confession and recognition that the fear of the Lord is the foundation for wisdom.

Product: Recognize Special Revelation

Second, a wisdom search in certain instances may land firmly on a tangible result. The wise craftsman may offer a *product*, so to speak, an explicit verse or passage that ideally matches the need. This is found in the special revelation of Scripture in the form of a Biblical proposition,

command or discrete principle. Don't bear false witness against a neighbor (Deut. 5:20). Give to those who are in need (Matt. 5:42). Provide for widows and orphans (James 1:27). Such verses often form the base for wise and direct recommendations for how to live. Seek the Scriptures to discover what it states directly and plainly. If an answer is located, the product of this wisdom search is made available.



Figure 1: Layers of a wisdom search

For a clinical example, picture counseling a husband of 18 years who forthrightly professes a Christian faith identity and has done so for his entire engagement and marriage. Empathy and concern are offered as he discloses his recent loss of appetite, sleeplessness,

inability to focus and an emergency room visit for chest pain, eventually diagnosed as a panic attack. The background story reveals turmoil, inner conflict and intense agony over a growing infatuation –love -- for a female coworker, who reportedly has offered to reciprocate as soon as he is ready to step forward to declare his interest. The symptoms in his presenting profile may fit with precision the parameters of depression and anxiety. The division in his mind and speech is now following the theme of a battle of emotion and passion. On one side are his feelings of loyalty for his wife of nearly two decades and on the opposing front is awakening passion for a novel romantic interest. What biblically informed wisdom will make apparent, if there is the opportunity to place it candidly into the conversational exchange, is that the actual inner war is over obedience to astonishingly direct Scriptural teaching.

Biblical references to adultery are pretty difficult to miss. The plain meaning is not subject to contentious hermeneutical dispute (Mt. 5:27-30). Of course, issues related to personal happiness, marital satisfaction or personality conflicts are likely to surface in the consideration of application. Social standards and the reality of the contemporary options may be explored. Eventually, seeking Word-based wisdom will surface intentional dialogue between the client and the Holy Spirit over his identity as a Christian. The product that must be faced is the plain teaching of Scripture that contains a strong message about marriage as sacred covenant. The drama of relationship under consideration is primarily about this client's relationship with himself, others, the Word and God. Wisdom in this scenario will direct discourse towards explicit interaction and application of Biblical chapters, verses and themes. Assessment will track presenting symptoms, spiritual priorities, long-term interpersonal patterns and broader themes of personal identity.

Process: Dialogue with Christian Community and Doctrine

Wisdom searches are not limited to occasions when applied exegesis neatly addresses the major concern. The third layer of wisdom is penetrated when the difficulties that arise in counseling have no express counterpart in an identifiable Biblical text. There are human symptoms, choices, dilemmas and interpersonal challenges where instruction cannot be obtained with tight exegetical integrity. This does not make the Word irrelevant or unnecessary. The canon is not pushed aside in such cases where a single command, principle, or biblical story is not located to match the identified concern. The search continues to scan and study Scripture to hear the voice of God and inspire theological reflection on what it means to have the mind of Christ. Scripture retains its authority. The pursuit of wisdom continues through an interactive *process* where communication with others involves diligent, strategic, reflective and prayerful contemplation.

Counselors may not take on this type of search exclusively or in its entirety with clients. Encouragement to those in such a predicament may take the form of a recommendation to converse with faith mentors, believing peers, pastors and spiritual leaders. Seeking direction from credible bibliographic resources to grasp the perspective of the wider Christian community throughout the world and ages may be useful. Direction and decisions are eventually made with unpretentious hope that God will speak through his Spirit and that Jesus Christ will be honored in the implementation. Wisdom is not discovered as new revelation in community. Instead, God speaks through Scripture, his speech echoes in community and becomes a conversational process between Christ followers who aid the seeker to comprehend the Spirit's way forward.

Assessment practices for this process layer of wisdom may involve the consideration of dispositional traits such as tendencies towards introversion or extraversion, solitary or group oriented relational patterns, and passive or aggressive styles of resistance. Family relationships

past and present, peer networks, support systems and the range of community resources will all impact how the wisdom search may proceed when arriving at a direction that is tied to listening to how God speaks through others. What characteristics of the client may limit the impact of informational and instrumental relational support? In this wisdom layer, Christian community or fellowship is the means to decode with interactive process the path that honors the Lord.

Person: Reflect Jesus Christ as Wisdom Incarnate

Fourth, wisdom may center on how the *person* is significantly impacted in terms of prevailing character presentation. What spiritual fruit, such as love, joy, peace patience or self-control, must be put into behavior to display a virtue not previously exemplified (Mt. 5:3-11; Gal. 5:22-25). Self-sacrifice, sanctification and reflecting the image of Christ is the essential effort in this wisdom search layer (Phil. 2:5-11). As will be shown in a later chapter on personality screening, it is often extremely useful in clinical assessment to make apparent in plain language default patterns of behaving, thinking, speaking and relating. The matter at hand is not likely to be resolved or drastically altered in the application of a defined plan of action. The client, by grace, is assisted to increase awareness of long established, distinctive patterns that now must be curbed, managed and submitted to the renewing ministry of the Holy Spirit. What becomes evident in this wisdom layer is that direction forward is not about what to say or do. Rather, the area for change is who to become.

Potential: Eschatological Purpose, A Restored Human Soul

Finally, Christians complete a wisdom search by coming to the point where the *potential* of eternity in the Lord's presence is patiently brought into view (Hires, 1985). Scripture makes routine references to themes surrounding the promised land, the kingdom of God, heavenly mansions, and the new Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-4; Mt. 16:27-28; Jn. 14:1-3; 21:2-22:5). There are indeed counseling concerns that have no apparent resolution this side of death or relief prior to

the Lord's return (Mt. 24:42-44). A wisdom search may surface a realistic and profound awareness that the Lord will not restore well-being this side of heaven. Chronic disease, infertility, the death of a loved one, disability in a child, trauma associated with a natural disaster, random violence or systematic injustice are only a few causes of intense suffering. These may be deeply grieved within a counseling relationship. While the refreshment of support and comfort may be realized, the core matter remains untouched since no remedy is within reach this side of eternity. The hope for bodily wholeness, relational security, restitution, justice or freedom may not rest on an immediate redemptive act of God. Ultimate hope will be realized in that amazing place where the presence of the Lord makes all things new and where Jesus Christ personally wipes every tear from our eyes.

Understanding these layers of wisdom is intended to expand perspective. The courtroom scene of Solomon may not be replayed in the drama of a counseling session. No breakthrough of insight or a way forward may appear in a sudden flash of inspiration or unleashing of the unconscious. A Christian counselor keeps these layers in perspective while exploring matters of the heart. Awareness of various opportunities to locate wisdom provides increased opportunities to recognize how the mind of Christ may establish a new perspective on an ongoing concern.

In summary, the theological foundation for assessment is tied to the biblical theme of a search for wisdom. Counselors operate as craftsmen, using select tools and techniques to discern the movement and leaning of the human heart in conjunction with the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is essential to open the Word in an effort to recognize how the mind of Christ will guide the believer to live in the moment assume a critical role in grand drama of redemption.

Assessment within Christian Counseling Approaches

This discussion of clinical assessment and psychological tools alongside the biblical theme of wisdom places front and center the lingering controversy regarding the use of psychological and theological sources in Christian counseling. Positions vary on what constitutes an optimal model to manage the discourse between disciplines of psychology and theology (Johnson, 2010). Christians who work within mental health systems associated with the social sciences will likely make circumspect use of corresponding theoretical, empirical and clinical literature (i.e. levels of explanation and integration). Despite general reliance on evidence-based interventions, submission to the ultimate authority of Scripture may be paramount. Other faith-clinical practice interface positions align counseling assistance closely with ministry objectives (i.e. Christian psychology, transformational, biblical counseling). Proponents of these views incline heavily or exclusively on faith sources for setting counseling direction such as Christian tradition, spiritual experience and the applied exegesis of Scripture.

The major contentions of disagreement across the five dominant views stem in part from differing formulations on what constitutes a legitimate definition and scope for psychology. How the disciplines are mapped depends on the degree of confidence placed in two sources of revelation. General revelation is explained as what God has made evident about himself by grace in the forces and laws of nature, though the characteristics of the creature made uniquely in the image of the Creator and in the unfolding of salvation history (Ps. 19:1-2; Rom. 1:19-20, 2:14-15; Erickson, 1998). Those who value the quality of the empirical evidence obtained through investigations into human behavior consider the social sciences as a reflection of general revelation. Special revelation is the sole source of the salvation story and is comprised of what God has spoken in Scripture and in the second person of the Trinity becoming flesh and dwelling among human beings (Ps. 119; Jn. 1:1-4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 1: 1-3; Erickson, 1998). The

authority ascribed to each source of revelation material will have a significant influence over the parameters of professional practice (Johnson, 2010; Beck, 1997; Hurley & Berry, 1997; Welch & Powlison, 1997). Regardless of the explicit position on epistemology (i.e. how we know what we know) there are concerns across all five views on the impact of modern psychology on helping services. The reason for this is that all five positions desire to respect Christian theological perspectives on human flourishing.

The phrase Christian counseling might be extensively referenced in everyday speech and in ministry settings. Unfortunately, this popular term lacks a unified or fixed operational definition. The features that set apart counseling as Christian are impacted by core theological commitments related to doctrinal matters of epistemology, anthropology and ecclesiology (Greggo & Sisemore, 2012). Guidelines that shape how counseling is conducted by helpers who hold Christian convictions as their overarching worldview is influenced by vocational calling, occupational role, educational orientation as well as employment status in a health care, academic, social service or ministry setting. The crucial matter for this consideration is how different definitions of Christian counseling will appropriate assessment technology. Will the assessment procedures in use enhance the promotion of a Christian worldview and the implementation of wisdom that flows from the Word? What facets of assessment as implemented might actually inhibit the nourishment of Christian maturation and sanctification?

As a starting point, this statement is intended to establish common ground. Each of the contemporary views on the relationship between counseling and Christianity operates from a distinct framework of anthropology and human psychology. Thus, each champions a corresponding system to conceptualize behavior across a range of options deemed as dysfunctional, unhealthy, selfish and sin-bound or normal, loving and Christ-exalting (Eph.

4:17-24). Each approach has a perspective on how to conceptualize concerns; therefore, each must come to terms with a set of assessment procedures. How will best practice guidelines incorporate or adapt emerging opportunities? Christ-followers with views that are heavily skeptical of the modern psychological establishment will not be comfortable using theory-laden assessment batteries or instruments that rely on humanistic theories. Even evidence-based research may be suspect because these are solely supported by procedures established by social science. Still, the need to conduct a suitable mental health appraisal to form the basis for a sound clinical, social and spiritual perspective regarding presenting problems keeps the practice of assessment priorities front and center. If a form to gather information is issued, a rating scale to study severity is presented or a set of credible inquiry questions is prescribed, then assessment procedures are in use. Christian counselors more comfortable incorporating social science methods may be prepared to ethically and responsibly make use of a wider range of tools.

No matter what ultimate view on the relationship between psychology and theology is preferred there is reasonable cause to consider information gathering strategies that enhance helping services. The intent in this undertaking is less about promoting a single approach for Christian counseling and more about applying an overarching biblical stewardship to the incorporation of tools that contribute to efficient, quality assessment. Whereas all Christian helpers collect, sort and assemble descriptions from life stories into broad portrayals of problems and character challenges, it is worthwhile to weigh appraisal options thoroughly through an informed theological lens.

Defining the divergent criteria that counseling qualified as Christian should ideally display is beyond the scope of this chapter. In admitting that the phrase Christian counseling is a generic ideal, a pragmatic approach will be adopted to further discussion of how to be ethically

and theologically responsible in the use of assessment technology. Christian counseling will reference the helping relationship and arrangements that emerge when client and helper unite in an explicit agreement to address change from that vantage point of what would honor and glorify the Lord.

In an attempt to apply an inclusive framework for Christian counseling that contains sufficient doctrinal transparency to allow for a faith-based critique of assessment procedures, it is best to state a few biblical essentials plainly. The application of the label Christian counseling infers that there is explicit agreement between helper and client to hold to a communal understanding of the parameters of ultimate concerns, nature of reality, ethics, morality and the destination of history (Hathaway, 2009). If the counseling is overtly Christian, Scripture will be granted an evident position of authority. Steps will be taken to secure the intended meaning of the text so that the message of the Word is not bent to confirm to private interpretation. The gospel is acknowledged as the unchanging and still unfolding storyline for all matters that are discussed and pondered.

Gospel is the English term for the Greek word *evangelion*, literally translated as “good news.” In Scripture, the gospel references the announcement made by Jesus Christ himself that the kingdom of God is at hand (Mk. 1:5). Placing helping conversations in a gospel context declares at the very outset that God has accomplished His redemptive purpose for human beings through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:3-5). The united message across the Old and New Testaments contains an announcement of hope. The poor and outcast are under the Lord’s care, prisoners will be set free, the blind will see, the broken-hearted will be restored and those who mourn will be comforted (Isa. 61: 1-2; Lk. 4:18-19). A gospel framework is one where hope prevails even if present suffering is inevitable. The esteemed source of redemption

is the power of God that makes salvation a reality through the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16).

At the outset of this chapter, a passion for assessment in clinical work was demonstrated to a novice clinician. The theological underpinnings for assessment have been explored. Thus far, no specific measures have been endorsed. The matter of choosing the best assessment technology for the task lies ahead. The challenge before counselors is to pray for discernment to become a hearer of hearts. Further, Christian therapists must develop skills, like those of a high caliber craftsman, to use the best available tools to understand as much as possible about the heart of the person seeking wisdom.

References

- Corey, G., Corey, M. S. & Callanan, P. (2011). *Issues and ethics in the helping professions*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole
- Dell, K. J. (2009). Wisdom in the Old Testament. In Katharine D. Sakenfield (Ed.), *The new interpreter's dictionary of the Bible*, (Vol. 5, pp. 869-875). Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Erickson, M. J. (1998). *Christian theology* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Ewing, J. A. (1984). Detecting alcoholism, the CAGE questionnaire. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 252(14): 1905-1907.
- Farrar, F. W. (1982). The first book of Kings. In W. Robertson Nicoll (Ed.). *The expositor's Bible* (pp. 213-335). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Greggo, S.P. & Sisemore T. (2012). *Christianity and counseling: Five approaches*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Hathaway, W. L. (2009). Clinical use of explicit religious approaches: Christian role integration issues. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 28, 105-112.
- Hiers, R. H. (1985). Eschatology. In Paul J. Achtemeier (Ed.). *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (pp.), San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Hurley, J. B. & Berry, J. T. (1997). The relation of Scripture and psychology in counseling from a pro-integration position. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 16(4), 323-345.
- Johnson, E. (2010). *Christianity and psychology: Five Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Konkel, A. H. (2006). *The NIV application commentary: 1 & 2 Kings*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

- Merriam-Webster, Inc. (2003). *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.
- Treier, D. J. (2006). *Virtue and the voice of God: Toward theology as wisdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Vanhoozer, K. J. (2010). Forming the performers: How Christians can use canon sense to bring us to our (Theodramatic) senses. *Edification: The Transdisciplinary Journal of Christian Psychology*, 4, 5-16.
- Vanhoozer, K. J. (2005). *The drama of doctrine: A canonical linguistic approach to Christian theology*. Louisville, KN: Westminster John Knox.
- Vanhoozer, K. J. (2002). *First theology: God, Scripture & hermeneutics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Welch, E. & Powlison, D. (1997). "Every common bush afire with God": The Scripture's constitutive role for counseling. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 16(4), 303-322.
- Wilson, G. H. (1997). Wisdom. In Willem A. VanGemeren (Ed.). *New international dictionary of Old Testament theology & exegesis* (pp. 1276-1285). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Appendix 1

Clinical Assessment Instrument Christian Evaluation Form (CAICEF)

Name of the assessment instrument:

PURPOSE

According to the manual, what is the purpose of the assessment instrument?

Does this purpose align with the clinical needs of my client base?

YES NO

TEST DEVELOPMENT

Is the assessment instrument norm-referenced or criterion-referenced? (Circle One)

Norm-Referenced

Is the size of the norming population adequate?

YES NO

Does the norming population adequately represent the demographics and relevant characteristics of my client base? (i.e. age, gender, race)

YES NO

Rate the overall appropriateness of norming population:

Very Inappropriate	Inappropriate	Average	Appropriate	Very Appropriate	Not Applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Norming population concerns:

Criterion-Referenced

Rate the overall appropriateness of the criterion:

Very Inappropriate	Inappropriate	Average	Appropriate	Very Appropriate	Not Applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Criterion concerns:

ITEM ANALYSIS

Consider the items of the assessment instrument.

Multidimensional Evaluation

Does the assessment instrument contain items that evaluate physiological distress?

YES NO

Does the assessment instrument contain items that evaluate psychological distress?

YES NO

Does the assessment instrument contain items that evaluate social distress?

YES NO

Does the assessment instrument contain items that evaluate spiritual distress?

YES NO

Faith-Sensitive Items

Does the assessment instrument contain any faith-sensitive items?

YES NO

If yes, please specify:

Given the belief system of my client base, rate the probability that these faith sensitive items will skew the results of the assessment instrument:

Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High	Not Applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PSYCHOMETRICS

Reliability

Rate the acceptability of each of the following types of reliability:

Test Re-Test Reliability: Is individual performance on the first administration consistent with performance on the second administration?

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable	Not Applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Alternate or Parallel Forms: Is individual performance consistent between the two forms?

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable	Not Applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Internal Consistency: Is the assessment instrument internally consistent?

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable	Not Applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Inter-Rater Reliability: Is there sufficient evidence that the scoring is consistent among raters?

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable	Not Applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rate the overall acceptability of reliability:

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reliability concerns:

Validity

Rate the acceptability of each of the following types of validity:

Face Validity: Based on the appearance and style of the assessment instrument, are items likely to invite reasonable client responses, particularly from clients with Christian faith convictions?

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Content Validity: Does the assessment instrument cover a representative sample of the specified skills and knowledge?

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Redemptive Validity:

Does the instrument reveal aspects of a client's self-narrative that have implications for Christian identity and/or spiritual development? Do items raise awareness on matters that may invite reflection from a gospel lens (i.e. creation, fall, redemption, consummation)?

YES NO

Construct Validity: How well does the assessment instrument measure the intended construct?

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Redemptive Validity: Does the assessment instrument contribute to a more detailed understanding of the central condition of the human heart or reveal ways that core affections (i.e. attachment, ethical motivation, awe, hope, etc.) may need to further rest in the grace of God?

YES NO

If yes, please specify:

Criterion Validity: Is the assessment instrument systematically a good indicator/predictor of a specific criterion?

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable	Not Applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Redemptive Validity: Does the assessment instrument provide insight into life issues or existential matters that reveal personality concerns (patterns of thinking, feeling & acting) that indicate areas for potential growth in spiritual development? Does the measure point to a character matter that the Holy Spirit may also be addressing?

YES NO

If yes, please specify:

Does the assessment instrument measure behaviors, attitudes or beliefs that Scripture directly address or reveal areas where an increased dependency upon the Creator for wisdom is warranted?

YES NO

If yes, please specify:

Rate the overall acceptability of validity:

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Validity concerns:

Rate the overall acceptability of redemptive validity:

Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Average	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Redemptive validity concerns:

ADMINISTRATION, INTERPRETATION AND SCORING

User Qualifications

User qualification level required for administration and interpretation:

A B C

Based upon the criteria of this user qualification level, am I competent to administer and interpret the test results of this assessment instrument?

YES NO

Administration Procedure

Is the administration procedure outlined in the manual compatible with the overall logistics and procedures of my organization?

YES NO

Potential areas conflict:

Scoring

The assessment instrument requires: Hand-scoring Computerized scoring

Overall ease of scoring:

Highly Complex	Complex	Average	Easy	Very Easy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scoring concerns:

Interpretation

Does the manual provide sufficient information to appropriately interpret the results of the assessment instrument?

YES NO

Does the manual provide sufficient information to assist in communicating results to clients in ways that will facility understanding of behavioral, internal, interpersonal or spiritual areas in need of restoration and redemption?

YES NO

Overall ease of interpretation:

Highly Complex	Complex	Average	Easy	Very Easy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Interpretation concerns:

UTILITY

Is there a significant additional investment in time, resources and training for my organization if this assessment instrument is adopted for us?

YES NO

If yes, please specify.

What information, benefit, risk reduction or new efficiency is likely to be gained from the application of this assessment instrument?

If this assessment instrument is adopted by my organization, what supplemental questions should be asked in order to improve my conceptualization of the distress from a spiritual perspective?

Utility Concerns:

TOTAL EVALUATION

Based on the information and concerns above, rate the overall appropriateness of assessment instrument:

Very Inappropriate	Inappropriate	Average	Appropriate	Very Appropriate
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Narrative Summary, conclusion, and recommendation for use:

Appendix 2

START Initial Consultation Report

STORY

Referral Source: _____

Reason for Referral (*What has motivated client to come?*):

Presenting Problem (*Focus on one or more of the following: trigger/why now?, behavioral/functional problems, precipitating factors, developmental stage/social clock, role change, services sought, previous experience, conditions when problem improves/worsens, duration, etc.*). NOTE: Record level of severity next to abnormal findings – 1 (mild), 2 (moderate), or 3 (severe); use “X” if normal finding.

Stressors	<input type="checkbox"/> Birth of a child	<input type="checkbox"/> Change of residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Child leaving	<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic health problems
	<input type="checkbox"/> Death of a family member	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorce	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Major illness/disability
	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent-child problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Separation	<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment	<input type="checkbox"/> Workplace change
	<input type="checkbox"/> Marital problems			
Duration	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary	<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent		
Frequency	<input type="checkbox"/> /day	<input type="checkbox"/> /week	<input type="checkbox"/> /month	<input type="checkbox"/> /year
Locus of Control	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal	<input type="checkbox"/> External		

Client Expectations (*What does the client hope to gain from counseling?*):

Relevant Family Factors (*family dynamics, rules, values, discipline, boundaries, early development and/or anything unusual regarding family relationships, communication and/or family medical history*):

Career/Educational Highlights:

Therapist: _____

Date: _____

Spirituality/Religion:

Does the client express willingness to incorporate faith into counseling ? ___Yes ___No

Present religious affiliation: _____

Spiritual/religious up-bringing or practices: (*denomination, patterns, rules, experiences, etc.*)

Current Spiritual/Religious Commitment:

Spirituality/Religion	Unable to Rate	None	Minimal	Some	Moderate	Significant	Potential Level at Termination
Importance	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Influence on daily activities & life	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Practice of Spiritual Discipline	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Spiritual Maturity	0	1	2	3	4	5	

THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE

Initial Session Rating	___Strong	___Average	___Strained	___Weak	___None
Client Self-Disclosure	___Strong	___Average	___Minimum	___Initial	___None
Client Resistance	___Strong	___Average	___Minimum	___Initial	___None
Therapeutic Alliance	___Appropriate	___Defensive	___Dependent	___Domineering	___Evasive
	___Hostile	___Passive	___Seductive	___Other	

List one to three client strengths evident in this session.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List characteristics or attitudes that may impact the alliance or counseling progress.

ASSESSMENT

Current Functioning

Categories	Impairment Level (circle level)					Impairment Level After Treatment
	None	Mild	Moderate	Marked	Extreme	
Marriage/Relationship/Family/Job/ School/Performance ___ Disability Leave ___ Job Jeopardy	1	2	3	4	5	
Friendships/Peer Relationships	1	2	3	4	5	
Financial Situation	1	2	3	4	5	
Hobbies/Interests/Play Activities	1	2	3	4	5	
Physical Health	1	2	3	4	5	
Activities of Daily Living (personal hygiene, bathing, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	
Eating Habits Weight Loss ___ lbs. Weight Gain ___ lbs. Current Weight ___ lbs.	1	2	3	4	5	
Sleeping Habits ___ Difficulty Falling Asleep ___ Difficulty Staying Asleep ___ Early Morning Awakening	1	2	3	4	5	
Sexual Functioning	1	2	3	4	5	
Spiritual/Religious Activities	1	2	3	4	5	
Ability to Concentrate	1	2	3	4	5	
Ability to Control Temper	1	2	3	4	5	

Elaboration: _____

Symptoms: NOTE: Record level of severity next to abnormal findings –
1 (mild), 2 (moderate), or 3 (severe); use "X" if normal finding.

Physical ___ N/A	___ Aches & Pains	___ Chest pain	___ Dizziness	___ Fatigue
	___ Headaches	___ Heart palpitations	___ High blood pressure	___ Panic attacks
	___ Pregnancy	___ Frequent Illness	___ Sleeping problems	___ Trembling
Cognitive ___ N/A	___ Distractibility	___ Disorientation	___ Recurring thoughts	___ Other (specify)
Emotional ___ N/A	___ Grief	___ Guilt	___ Hopelessness	___ Insecurity
	___ Loneliness	___ Mood shifts	___ Phobias/fears	___ Worrying
	___ Apathy			
Behavioral ___ N/A	___ Antisocial	___ Avoiding	___ Eating disorder	___ Hyperactivity
	___ Impulsivity	___ Learning Disability	___ Speech problems	___ Withdrawing
Cultural ___ N/A	___ Conforming	___ Dissonance	___ Resistance & Immersion	___ Introspection
	___ Integration Awareness			
Coping Ability	___ Normal	___ Resilient	___ Exhausted	___ Overwhelmed
	___ Deficient supports	___ Deficient skills	___ Growing	___ Other (specify)
Skill Deficit	___ Normal	___ Intellect/Education	___ Communication	___ Interpersonal
	___ Decision Making	___ Self-control	___ Self-care	___ Other (specify)
Risk Factors ___ Assessed ___ Legally Reportable	___ Child Neglect	___ Elder Neglect	___ Poverty	___ Domestic Violence
	___ Physical Abuse	___ Sexual Abuse/ Molestation	___ Verbal/Emotional Abuse	
Substance Use Abuse ___ N/A	Tobacco _____	Caffeine _____	Drug _____	Alcohol _____
	___ Early Partial Remission	___ Early Full Remission	___ Sustained Full Remission	___ Sustained Partial Remission

Elaboration: _____

Medical History

Medications (Include Medical, Psychiatric, Over the Counter/ Herbal)

Therapist: _____

Date: _____

START INITIAL CONSULTATION REPORT

Client Name (First, MI, Last): _____

Previous Therapy (*purpose, counselor/psychologist/pastor, when, duration, outcome*):

Recent Physical Exam & Results:

Hospitalization (*when, reason, duration*):

Mental Status Exam: *NOTE: Record level of severity next to abnormal findings – 1 (mild), 2 (moderate), or 3 (severe); use “X” if normal finding.*

General Observations	Appearance:	<input type="checkbox"/> Well Groomed	<input type="checkbox"/> Unkempt	<input type="checkbox"/> Disheveled	
	Build:	<input type="checkbox"/> Average	<input type="checkbox"/> Thin	<input type="checkbox"/> Overweight	
	Demeanor:	<input type="checkbox"/> Average	<input type="checkbox"/> Hostile	<input type="checkbox"/> Mistrustful	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn	<input type="checkbox"/> Preoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> Demanding	
	Eye Contact:	<input type="checkbox"/> Average	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoidant	<input type="checkbox"/> Intense	
	Activity:	<input type="checkbox"/> Average	<input type="checkbox"/> Agitated	<input type="checkbox"/> Slowed	
Speech:	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear	<input type="checkbox"/> Slurred	<input type="checkbox"/> Rapid		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Pressured				
Thought Content	Delusions: <input type="checkbox"/> None Reported	<input type="checkbox"/> Grandiose	<input type="checkbox"/> Persecutory	<input type="checkbox"/> Somatic	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Bizarre	<input type="checkbox"/> Nihilistic	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	
	Other: <input type="checkbox"/> None Reported	<input type="checkbox"/> Autistic	<input type="checkbox"/> Obsessional	<input type="checkbox"/> Phobic	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Guilty	<input type="checkbox"/> Ideas of Reference	<input type="checkbox"/> Preoccupied	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Guarded	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
	Self-Abuse: <input type="checkbox"/> None Reported	<input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal <input type="checkbox"/> Self Mutilation	<input type="checkbox"/> Intent	<input type="checkbox"/> Means	<input type="checkbox"/> Lethal
Aggressive: <input type="checkbox"/> None Reported	<input type="checkbox"/> Homicidal	<input type="checkbox"/> Intent	<input type="checkbox"/> Means	<input type="checkbox"/> Lethal	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan
Perception	Hallucinations: <input type="checkbox"/> None Reported	<input type="checkbox"/> Auditory	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual	<input type="checkbox"/> Olfactory	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Gustatory	<input type="checkbox"/> Tactile		
	Other: <input type="checkbox"/> None Reported	<input type="checkbox"/> Illusions	<input type="checkbox"/> Depersonalization	<input type="checkbox"/> Derealization	
Thought Process	<input type="checkbox"/> Logical	<input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial	<input type="checkbox"/> Tangential	<input type="checkbox"/> Loose	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Racing	<input type="checkbox"/> Incoherent	<input type="checkbox"/> Concrete	<input type="checkbox"/> Blocked	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Flight of Ideas				
Judgment	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal	<input type="checkbox"/> Street-smart	<input type="checkbox"/> Naive	<input type="checkbox"/> Impaired	
Mood	<input type="checkbox"/> Euthymic	<input type="checkbox"/> Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/> Anxious	<input type="checkbox"/> Angry	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Euphoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Irritable			
Affect	<input type="checkbox"/> Full	<input type="checkbox"/> Constricted	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat	<input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Labile				
Behavior	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative	<input type="checkbox"/> Resistant	<input type="checkbox"/> Agitated	<input type="checkbox"/> Impulsive	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Over Sedated	<input type="checkbox"/> Assaultive	<input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/> Hyperactive	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Restless	<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of Interests	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn		
Cognition	Impairment of: <input type="checkbox"/> None Reported	<input type="checkbox"/> Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/> Memory	<input type="checkbox"/> Attention/Concentration	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Judgment	<input type="checkbox"/> Insight	<input type="checkbox"/> Ability to Abstract	
Intelligence Estimate	<input type="checkbox"/> Well Below Average	<input type="checkbox"/> Below Average	<input type="checkbox"/> Average	<input type="checkbox"/> Above Average	

Social History

Support	<input type="checkbox"/> Family	<input type="checkbox"/> Friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner	<input type="checkbox"/> Membership
	<input type="checkbox"/> Relatives	<input type="checkbox"/> Neighbors	<input type="checkbox"/> Professionals	<input type="checkbox"/> Coworkers
	<input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentor		
Interpersonal Maturity	<input type="checkbox"/> Dependent	<input type="checkbox"/> Impulsive	<input type="checkbox"/> Irresponsible	<input type="checkbox"/> Isolates
	<input type="checkbox"/> Responsible	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-centered		

Therapist: _____

Date: _____

Elaboration: _____

Initial Diagnostic Impression

Axis I _____

Axis II _____

Axis III _____

Axis IV _____

Axis V _____

Current GAF: _____ Highest in Past Year GAF (If Known): _____

RECOMMENDATIONS

Session Length	<input type="checkbox"/> 30 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> 45 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> 60 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
Frequency	<input type="checkbox"/> twice weekly	<input type="checkbox"/> weekly	<input type="checkbox"/> twice monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> monthly
Format	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> Family	<input type="checkbox"/> Marital/relational	<input type="checkbox"/> Group
Classification	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary	<input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Model Of Therapy	<input type="checkbox"/> Crisis Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Consultation	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Prevention
	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychodynamic	<input type="checkbox"/> Person-Centered	<input type="checkbox"/> Existential	<input type="checkbox"/> Adlerian
	<input type="checkbox"/> Gestalt Theory	<input type="checkbox"/> REBT	<input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral	<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive
	<input type="checkbox"/> Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Family Therapy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)	
Support Groups	<input type="checkbox"/> 12-Step Program	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcoholic Anonymous	<input type="checkbox"/> Narcotic Anonymous	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Gamblers Anonymous	<input type="checkbox"/> Overeaters Anonymous	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)	
Psychoeducational Groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Assertiveness	<input type="checkbox"/> Anger Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Child management	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication skills
	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorce Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Grief Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting skills
	<input type="checkbox"/> Premarital counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Stress management	<input type="checkbox"/> Women's issues	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
Referrals for Continuing Services	<input type="checkbox"/> advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> alcohol-drug treatment program	<input type="checkbox"/> education on medications & compliance	<input type="checkbox"/> educational / vocational services
	<input type="checkbox"/> hospitalization	<input type="checkbox"/> intellectual evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> legal services	<input type="checkbox"/> nursing care
	<input type="checkbox"/> occupational/physical therapy	<input type="checkbox"/> outpatient therapy	<input type="checkbox"/> offender program	<input type="checkbox"/> parochial services
	<input type="checkbox"/> personality evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> physical medical care	<input type="checkbox"/> psychological evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> psychiatric evaluation
	<input type="checkbox"/> psychotropic evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> victim support	<input type="checkbox"/> vocational / career counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Elaboration on recommendation(s):

Therapist: _____

Date: _____

TREATMENT PLAN (Initial)

Complex Treatment Issues:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One or more acute admissions in past year
<input type="checkbox"/> prior treatment attempts w/o success
<input type="checkbox"/> suicidal/homicidal behavior
<input type="checkbox"/> medical co-morbidity | <input type="checkbox"/> multiple family members in treatment
<input type="checkbox"/> disorder keeps child out of school
<input type="checkbox"/> psychiatric disability
<input type="checkbox"/> prescription medication
<input type="checkbox"/> multiple providers | <input type="checkbox"/> agency involvement
<input type="checkbox"/> community support services
<input type="checkbox"/> arrests and/or incarcerations
<input type="checkbox"/> treatment non-compliance
<input type="checkbox"/> out of home placement in past year
<input type="checkbox"/> disorder related to sexual trauma |
|--|--|--|

Elaboration: _____

Behavior(s) to be Changed / Observable Indicators of Improvement:

Interventions:

Questionnaires/Handouts/Assignments Given:

Summary:

Clinician's Signature _____ **Date:** _____

Therapist: _____

Date: _____

Assessment in Christian Counseling: Craftsmanship and Connection

Readership, Themes, & Format

Target Readership: A number of secular texts define concepts, delineate procedures, critique instruments and explore the ethical application of psychological tests. This one moves into a parallel conversation that highlights integrative worldview issues and applications in clinical settings. Assessment in counseling can be understood as merging observations from psychological measurement tools with clinical judgment. Mental health professionals who aspire to offer distinctive and unequivocally Christian services strive for quality interpersonal contact that motivates growth. Counseling is indeed a person to person collaboration. The hope for any communication process associated with the Lord's name is to intentionally bring honor to him (Col 3:23). His presence can be experienced in the therapeutic alliance.

Competency in assessment and a commitment towards excellence in application is important in meeting the contemporary counseling challenges for effectiveness and efficiency. This point pertains to mental health professionals and pastoral counselors alike. This text is designed for those in graduate training programs and practitioners in the field who have the necessary training to apply these tools appropriately and ethically. This implementation guide is intended to encourage the use of reliable tools in spiritually oriented Christian counseling. Therefore, it is intended by design to become a text that complements an established secular 'how to' guide that covers all the ethical and standardized requirements of proper test usage.

Key Theological Themes: The connection between the utilization of psychological measurement and Christian theology is not readily apparent. Testing procedures arose with the ascent of empirical psychology and represents the apex of secular modernist assumptions. Psychological testing has a sordid and controversial history. Essential to the success of this book is to demonstrate that assessment tools in the right hands and submitted to the Lord's purposes can nurture the heart or 'affections' of the counselee. Three underlying theologically informed themes will be evident in the text.

- 1) Vocational stewardship requires that a counselor's skills be submitted to kingdom service and to the nurturance of the client in cooperation with the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Christian maturation and sanctification is consistent with character development. This grace empowered process is described as the disciplined management of the cognitions, emotions and behavioral patterns that flow naturally from our human disposition.
- 3) Counseling, as a defined relationship to pursue wisdom for living, derives its potency to produce change from interpersonal connection (subjective encounter), yet can be enhanced by the independence available via structured assessment (objective criteria).

Format: *Assessment in Christian Counseling* will comprise 12 chapters of approximately 20-25 pages (240-275 pages). Each chapter will highlight a central assessment concept or category, identify worldview issues along with biblical/theological principles, outline application ideas and illustrate those ideas via a case scenario with an assessment profile. In order to facilitate classroom functionality, discussion exercises and questions will accompany each chapter.

Chapter Descriptions

Chapter 1: Assessment Basics for Christian Counseling

Assessment will be defined as the combination of data from counselor judgment with psychological tests to arrive at a comprehensive clinical overview. The necessity of efficient, effective and uncompromisingly Christian service will be described as the contemporary challenge for Christian counselors. Three features of assessment in counseling will be described: assessment as therapeutic conversation; assessment as a strategic and systematic search; and assessment as communication that opens hearts. After defining counseling that is Christian, the importance of assessment is portrayed in terms of getting to know the heart of the client, increasing awareness of the therapist's heart and preparing the heart to hear the Word.

Chapter 2: Defining the Assessment Task

Three dimensions of assessment are described: observing and assembling details; noting relational dynamics and patterns within and between persons; and the grappling with issues of power, dependence and submission. Terms such as psychological testing and assessment are defined. The primary purpose of assessment is counseling is cast as using the best tools possible to foster clinical and spiritual care. This helping application is assessment is contrasted with objective assessment for evaluative or forensic purposes.

Chapter 3: Forming a Theological Foundation

An integrative and applied perspective on assessment represents the critical contribution of the text. “The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delights” (Prv 11:1). This verse targets a manipulative market practice that apparently was culturally acceptable. In the ancient Middle Eastern marketplace it was ‘buyers beware’ of skewed scales. For God’s people, a counter-cultural warning is clear in his Word. Venders have a responsibility to a higher authority. The principle of God’s servants using fair measures because the Lord is watching can be applied to counseling. Beyond this simple principle, this chapter links the clinical and pastoral role of counselors to the image of craftsman. Artisans may use tools responsibly, masterfully and for service of the Lord *or* to build idols. The power of counseling is often realized via a therapeutic alliance. Christian counselors as craftsman expertly- wisely- use available tools for kingdom purposes by establishing a purposeful and task-oriented relational connection.

Chapter 4: Integrity in Assessment Ethics

In order to be ethically eligible to purchase and administer any psychological test, basic training is required in assessment principles, concepts, test development and evaluation. Utilizing a controversial story from assessment history- the use of intelligence tests to screen immigrants –the necessity of ethical practice is made personal. Select historical controversies associated with assessment will be mentioned: the construct of intelligence, bias, vocational discrimination, and the association of religious commitment with psychopathology. While not a heavily technical chapter, a language for describing good tools will be highlighted with a discussion of terms such as reliability, validity, utility, norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, trait versus state, and standardized versus non-standardized. The responsibility for proper test selection and application will be directed to the counselor. A way to evaluate psychological measures from a professional and Christian framework will be offered. This chapter complements the psychometric chapters required in secular psychological testing texts. In Christian counseling, tools are chosen that benefit clients who are seeking to grow in their relationship with the Lord.

Chapter 5: The Case for Redemptive Validity

Building on biblical terminology related to testing, proving and tempting, this chapter considers the importance of worldview when establishing categories and constructs for assessment. The main emphasis in this chapter is to expand standard notions of content, construct and criterion validity to include consideration of “redemptive validity.” After defining this construct, a stepwise procedure is proposed to evaluate tools from the perspective of redemptive validity. Using depression measures as an example, the process of selecting a good tool is demonstrated.

Chapter 6: Craftsmanship in Conducting Interviews

Interviewing is the preferred assessment technique of contemporary counselors. The importance interviewing for the divergent tasks of data gathering and alliance building is examined. A model to increase clinician attention to the spirituality of the client is presented that assesses extrinsic/intrinsic faith orientation; a seeking/dwelling orientation; and a Scripture/experience faith orientation.

Chapter 7: Designing a Helpful S.T.A.R.T

A framework for weaving an initial interview together with selective assessment will be presented. The biblical concept of hospitality is used to ground the welcoming of a counselee into a relationship of refreshment. S.T.A.R.T is a mnemonic to describe the components of such an interview:

- **S**- listening to the client's **S**tory,
- **T**- forming a **T**herapeutic alliance,
- **A**- implementing an **A**ssessment strategy,
- **R**- **R**ecommending reasonable target outcomes, and
- **T**- offering an informed and realistic **T**reatment plan.

The intension is to maintain the crucial importance of interpersonal connection while applying current technology to assist in gathering relevant information, gaining insights into interactive dynamics early and establishing a baseline upon which to evaluate progress.

Chapter 8: The Cutting Edge of Functional Assessment

A wide assortment of symptom checklists and problem identification rating scales are in use for screening and referral management. The use of Rapid Assessment Instruments (RAIs) and assessment technology will be described and encouraged. Selecting and utilizing solid brief measures can result in relevant, point-in-time, descriptive assessment to establish treatment goals. Further, the right measures can contribute to ongoing measurement that facilitates a robust practice-based evidence approach.

Regrettably, the use of RAIs can foster interdisciplinary communication and increase reliance on psychotropic medications as an exclusive intervention. The subtle reductionism of viewing symptoms as the outgrowth of a biological impairment may hide the need to address ingrained, problematic and *sinful* patterns of thinking, feeling, acting and relating. Christians acknowledge sin and pursue putting on the new self. Assessment methods to monitor the therapeutic alliance with an eye towards character development will be explored. A holistic perspective that maintains the benefits of talk therapy will be offered as the usefulness of data collection tools to monitor progress is outlined.

Documentation of progress in counseling care is essential for professionals. Mental health providers in collaboration with clients can devise behaviorally anchored tracking tools—subjective unit of distress scales (SUDS) or goal attainment scales (GAS)—to employ as personalized rating scales to consistently and quickly determine setbacks or gains. Considerable resistance on the part of Christian counselors to accountability procedures mandated by those outside the counseling dyad has been evident. Yet, counsees themselves may desire methods to monitor the gains from clinical or pastoral services while ascertaining the results of their own efforts. Using informal yet well-constructed assessment measures as a normal counseling exercise offers considerable promise. This extends an invitation to engage in an open exchange on evaluating the effectiveness of the counseling process as well as the status of counselor-counselee connection.

Chapter 9: Gauging Religious Affections

Several measures shed light on religious commitment, daily practices, interior spirituality and one's attachment to God. These are more commonly utilized in research than in day-to-day counseling. A proposal for application to counseling will be discussed. In addition, non-standardized assessment can be adopted via interviewing and/or behavioral assessment. These approaches establish a more detailed profile of the counselee's inner life, ingrained schemas or what the Scripture refers to as 'heart.' Counselors are encouraged to help clients assess current Christian life to discern where growth is desirable and possible given the circumstances that have brought the client into this counseling conversation at this junction in life.

Chapter 10: Calibrating the Colors of Personality

The advantages of including a robust personality screening measure in common clinical practice will be explored. This assessment step is critical yet controversial. The potential to foster premature, limiting and even destructive diagnostic labels is indeed a risk. Three advantages of including a standardized portrait of a counselee's personality will be highlighted.

- 1) These tools can reduce distortions that arise from compressed, subjective interviews.
- 2) Awareness of a counselee's preferred mode of thinking, feeling and behaving may assist in structuring further conversations and tailoring one's interpersonal approach.
- 3) Adjusting the delivery of best practice helping strategies to better fit the personality of the client is both possible and desirable.

Regular use of personality assessment measures not only offers a clinical benefit but there are ways that an awareness of traits can impact coaching on discipleship and Christian maturation.

Chapter 11: Connecting on Matters of the Heart

Two assumptions regarding personality growth can undermine counseling with a Christian hope.

- 1) Personality traits are so constant and stable that any desirable change is unlikely.
- 2) New creatures in Christ can put off the old ways by grace as easily as they can change their clothes.

The increased self-understanding gained as one confronts adversity can be viewed as the movement of the Holy Spirit to conform a believer more to the image of Jesus Christ. This may require a steadfast reliance on the Spirit, the practice of spiritual disciplines and the renewal of the mind through encounters with the Word. A division between routine secular counseling and service with a Christian commitment begins here. The Lord and his Word are consulted regarding desired outcomes and the possibilities of change. This opens up in-depth consideration of how the Lord is transforming, redeeming and nurturing our hearts. Assessment results shed light on how the counseling relationship itself can impact interpersonal and spiritual growth.

Case studies will display how objective measures provide explanations for how communication and interpersonal patterns become tangled or entrenched. There good reason for Christians to exercise caution while maintaining hope. Assessment can inadvertently contribute to premature labeling of dysfunctional personality patterns as mental disorders. This can discourage client investment in renewing interpersonal closeness. Mental health professionals and pastoral counselors help strengthen relational bonds by assisting clients to achieve realistic goals and break through barriers.

Chapter 12: Future Perspectives on Assessment in Counseling

Assessment in Christian Counseling is not a reference guide that lists available tools. Instead, Christian counselors are challenged to systematically seek out and develop unique measures to increase our effectiveness as people helpers. It will maintain the important priority of clinical judgment derived from subjective encounter coupled with clinical expertise. The value of training in one's discernment skills is consistent with true craftsmanship. The added value of objective measures and customized rating scales become more evident as technology is applied within this high touch profession. Exercising stewardship in pastoral or clinical care requires applying the best tools in the pursuit of excellence in Christian service. As technology makes the use of measurement tools more accessible, Christian counselors can welcome these trends with a clear commitment to practicing their trade as craftsmen dedicated to the Lord's service.