

# Psychology, theology, and spirituality in christian counseling essay sample

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In this book published in 1996 by Tyndale House Publishers, McMinn (1996) talks about integrating psychology, theology, and spirituality. The first two chapters talk about history and using religion in the counseling sessions, as well as psychological and spiritual health. According to McMinn (1996), we go through three stages to psychological and spiritual health. The stages are self-sufficiency, brokenness, and healing relationship. We start by doing things for ourselves, then we see our brokenness and sin, and finally we find a healing relationship with God. He then talks about the disciplines that can be used in the therapy sessions to help a client. The disciplines McMinn (1996) discusses are prayer, scripture, sin, confession, forgiveness, and redemption. We can use prayer in many ways such as silent prayer for our clients, prayer in session with clients, using meditation or contemplative prayer in or out of the session, and praying for the client outside of the session. We need to make sure the client is ready for this intervention if we pray aloud with the client or we could do harm to the client and the relationship.

Scripture can be used in many ways in a therapy session as well. You can directly use Scripture, you can use scripturally based strategies for counseling, you can use strategies that are not directly stated in Scripture but are not against Scripture, and you do not use any strategies that would be against what Scripture states. The use of Scripture must be done carefully and only when the client is ready if using Scripture directly. The other methods can be integrated well from the start. We as counselors need to confront our client's sin to help them become closer to God. Here are the methods for this: silence, pondering, questioning, and direct censure. To use

silence we do not respond to the client and let them think things out themselves (McMinn, 1996). Pondering is wondering out loud.

Questioning is asking open-ended questions to get the client to think. Direct censure is to directly confront sin. Each method can be effective, but we need to have a good therapeutic relationship for them to work. We also need to be sure we are right with God before we confront a client. Confession is allowing our clients to confess their sins and then understand the consequences of those sins. This is what therapy of any kind can do for a client. It is important for a client to know that we do not judge them. We help the client learn to forgive themselves, forgive others, and ask forgiveness from God. Forgiveness is an important part of the healing process. The client needs to be ready for this part of treatment for it to work though. It can be very hard to forgive someone if you have been sexually abused. Redemption is showing the client God's redemption by our therapeutic relationship with them. We can show them that God cares and wants them to be saved by the way we treat them. Concrete Response

I have a friend that works in a group home with troubled boys who generally know that God exists but have been abused enough that they do not really believe in Him. Part of her job is to help them start to get over the abuse and grow into the young men that they should be. In a lot of cases they notice the staff act differently and they start asking questions about God and religion. By the time they leave, they are starting to explore God and life with Him and some have given their lives to God. The staff goes through a lot of the steps in this book with these boys even without realizing that they are

doing them. It comes naturally for some of the staff to show these boys to God in this way. This allows them to show their faith and be role models for their clients. They need this because they have never experienced this in their home lives. As they live and work with them, they learn from them. They also learn from them. The ones who have been the most abused and damaged are the ones that they have more trouble reaching because they cannot trust. They have to work longer and harder with them to show them a normal relationship between humans. They cannot accept that God could love them because they have never been loved by anyone but my friend and her colleagues are making a difference. Reflection

I think this book has a lot of merit. It can help counselors put God and spirituality into their counseling sessions. I do have some questions and issues with this book though. How do we use this to counsel non-Christians if our job requires this? If we are counseling Christians who are not ready for any stages in this book, how do we help our clients get to the point where they are ready for this? When our clients are ready for these stages, how do we get them to process the information they need to do these? If we are not trained in these strategies, how do we get the training we need? If we are not willing to get right with God, can we still help clients? Do we need to be right with God in regards to our own sins before we can help clients? As Christians can we help non-Christians with these strategies? If we have clients that are ready to do only certain strategies, do all the strategies need to be used? When we are ready to use a certain strategy, how do we know that the client is ready? How do we get ourselves ready to use these strategies? Are these strategies the best way to reach a client for God? Are

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there other ways that we can help a client become closer to god? Where do we go after using these strategies? Is there more after these strategies or are they all there is? Action

The first thing I need to do after reading this is to look at myself and make sure that I am right with God regarding my sin. As for what I would say to a client, I would start with stating that I am a Christian and that my beliefs will come into the therapy sessions in some ways. This will allow them to open up about their own beliefs. I believe that the religious beliefs of the client are important and that they need to be addressed in therapy sessions. If we use the strategies in this book such as prayer, Scripture, sin, confession, forgiveness, and redemption, then we can help you become closer to God. I think that these strategies can be used to show each client the way that God wants us to live. We can become closer to God by using these strategies to work through our sin and problems in our lives first. I think that this process allows the person to see that God is good and that He means only the best for us even if that might include some problems along the way. Of course, we use this wisely and appropriately.

#### Reference

McMinn, M. R. (1996). *Psychology, theology, and spirituality in Christian counseling*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.