

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Improving the Biblical and Spiritual Skills
and Knowledge of Christian Mental Health Counselors
at Grace House Counseling Center
in Fleming Island, FL**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT REPORT ABSTRACT

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Christian licensed mental health counseling at Grace House Counseling Center is a multi-faceted spiritual undertaking that is largely in the purview of lay persons who often work and minister to Christians and non-Christians who live and work in a pluralistic environment. Grace House's mental health counselors are formally trained through their master's degree program to provide mental health care, not spiritual or soul care, to clients. While some Grace House counselors have some spiritual training, either from an undergraduate Bible college or through years of self-study, most do not have formal training that links Scripture and spiritual disciplines to various mental disorders. Even when surrounded by fellow Christian workers, these Christian licensed mental health counselors must rely on their individual biblical and spiritual skills and training as they function as lay chaplains or lay ministers as they consult with their clients. The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry action research project is to research, develop, produce, and distribute a spiritual resource manual that will assist and equip all licensed or state-registered mental health counselors practicing at Grace House to better offer Bible-based spiritual and soul care to clients, regardless of the client's spiritual or faith beliefs.

Keywords: Mental health counseling, integration of Christian values in counseling, spiritual and biblical resources in counseling, soul care, effect of pandemic, mental health counselor training

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Abbreviations

AACC	<i>American Association of Christian Counselors</i>
ACNA	<i>Anglican Church in North America</i>
CACREP	<i>Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
DSM-5-TR	<i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, Text Revision (APA 2022)</i>
EMDR	<i>Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing</i>
ESV	<i>English Standard Version</i>
IRB	<i>Institutional Review Board</i>
LCSW	<i>Licensed Clinical Social Worker</i>
LMFT	<i>Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist</i>
LMHC	<i>Licensed Mental Health Counselor</i>
NHS	<i>National Healthcare Service</i>
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
NORC	<i>National Opinion Research Center</i>
PTSD	<i>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</i>
RCSWI	<i>Registered Clinical Social Worker Interns</i>
RMFTI	<i>Registered Marriage and Family Therapist Interns</i>
RMHCI	<i>Registered Mental Health Counselor Intern</i>
ST	<i>Stinking Thinking</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Christian licensed mental health counseling is a multi-faceted spiritual undertaking that is largely in the purview of lay persons who, most often, work and minister to others, Christian and non-Christian, in a pluralistic environment. Even when surrounded by fellow Christian workers, independent Christian licensed mental health counselors often must rely on their individual biblical and spiritual skills and training as they function in the counseling room with their clients as lay chaplains or lay ministers. As they engage with their clients, both Christian and non-Christian, the skills and techniques used by these licensed mental health counselors would be familiar to those known as pastoral counselors. Thus, the questions, What is pastoral care? and, How does it differ from clinical care? is critical to understanding the dual role of the Christian licensed mental health counselor and their need to be able to use Scripture quickly and effectively as they labor to work with clients who are seeking them and their wisdom for help with the daily issues of life.

To be sure, there are different views of the difference between clinical and pastoral counseling. Tim Clinton and George Ohlschlager's vision for Christian counseling as not just a spiritual-pastoral ministry of the church with its roots in pastoral care, "but also as a modern, emerging clinical profession that will assume a significant role in the twenty-first-century field of mental health."¹ Chris J.K. Leins contends that the definition of pastoral care is more easily answered in terms of a historical overview than of modern theory and practice. Leins says that the kind of care or counseling "that strives to be pastoral, in other words, is more objectively evaluated as such by the long centuries of Church history than by current conceptualizations,

¹ Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling* (Colorado Springs, Co: WaterBrook Press, 2002), 15.

with their decidedly medical overtones and symptom-focused strategies.”² However, Elizabeth A. Maynard and Rodney Parker say that a definition is more complex and includes professionals in multiple professional care settings, including ordained and non-ordained. They say that for these professions, religious endorsement may be unavailable or undesirable.³ Jeffrey A. Kotter observes that even practitioners often struggle with articulating what clinical counseling is and even how it works.⁴ Kotter contends that this definition, like counseling itself, should be a process. “Textbook definitions, although elegant, incisive, and comprehensive, almost always lack one essential ingredient: personalized meaning.”⁵

Regardless of the definition outlining their profession, Maynard and Parker contend that many mental health counseling professions preform this multi-tasking job as a chaplain/minister/pastoral counselor and mental health professional, despite only receiving formal training in how to offer mental health aspects of therapeutic interventions and skills in order to assuage the maladaptive behavior of their clients. Maynard and Parker note that this is so because “few mental health training programs emphasize the spiritual growth and formation of the practitioner.”⁶

As a result, Christian licensed mental health counselors often do not have formal training in biblical counseling, and, except largely for self-training, they are not uniformly skilled in linking biblical truths with mental health disorders and dilemmas. Due to the individual nature of

² Chris J.K. Leins, “What Makes Pastoral Counseling So Pastoral? Distinguishing Between Pastoral Care and Clinical Practice in Modern Life,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2021): 348.

³ Elizabeth A. Maynard and Rodney Parker, *Pastoral Counseling: Mental Health Professionals, Understanding Pastoral Counseling* (New York: Springer Publishing Co., 2015), 39.

⁴ Jeffrey A. Kotter, *Introduction to Therapeutic Counseling: Voices from the Field*. 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2004), 12.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 43.

the profession and the one-on-one character of counseling, Christian licensed mental health counselors are also often bereft of daily, direct, and immediate spiritual support and guidance from superiors and/or colleagues. It is the contention of this paper that Christian licensed therapists would benefit from knowledge derived from informal scriptural or spiritual training that offers the counselor an organized and articulated worldview and framework in which to do their job effectively and efficiently. According to Loren Toussaint, Jon R. Webb, and Whitney Keltner, mental health counselors can help their religious or spiritual clients find healing through focused, explicit, and purposeful utilization of their belief system. In particular, counselors “can help their clients recognize and apply the aspects of their belief systems that promote healthy motivation, socialization, interpretation, and coping.”⁷

To ensure that knowledge of Scripture and/or spiritual training is more widespread among the Christian licensed mental health counselors at Grace House Counseling Center, these counselors need to be equipped, encouraged, and offered resources to help them be familiar with Scripture and other faith resources to use in their practice as needed. Such a resource, and the familiarization in using it, is believed to allow Christian licensed mental health counselors to act independently on matters relating to their ministry context and to better assist the individuals they serve. Christian licensed mental health counselors should possess and adhere to a carefully crafted biblical worldview, shaped by faith, education, and training. The development of this worldview is especially important when a Christian licensed mental health counselor is confronted with a problem presented by a client that may conflict with their individual faith beliefs and mission to serve others. John M. Frame points out that the relation of Christ and

⁷ Loren Toussaint, Jon R. Webb, and Whitney Keltner, “Religion, Spirituality, and Mental Health,” in *The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality for Clinicians*, ed. by Jamie D. Aten, Kari A. O’Grady, and Everett L. Worthington Jr. (New York: Rutledge, 2012), 356.

culture is more complicated than one might have imagined. Yet, the war is between Christ and Satan, and Christ and unbelief, “not Christ and culture.”⁸

Ministry Context

Grace House Counseling Center is a mid-to-large-sized private mental health counseling center located in Fleming Island, Florida. Fleming Island is an unincorporated area of Clay County in Northeast Florida and is located just south of Jacksonville, the largest city in Northeast Florida, with more than one million residents. The larger Jacksonville Metro Area includes the counties of Duval, Nassau, St. Johns, Baker, and Clay. Altogether, the five-county Metro Area is home to an estimated 1.6 million people as of the 2020 census. The Clay County-Jacksonville area is the home of many different industries and white-collar businesses, the largest of which are two U.S. Navy bases: Naval Air Station Jacksonville near Clay County, and Mayport Naval Station on the coast and at the mouth of the St. Johns River. St. Augustine, the county seat of St. Johns County, is a major tourist destination that boasts its heritage as the oldest city in the United States.

Grace House began in 1999 as a ministry of Grace Episcopal Church in Orange Park, Florida, an incorporated community just north of Fleming Island, a sprawling bedroom community of homes and small businesses. In 2006, support of the center by Grace Episcopal ended when the congregation of Grace left the Episcopal church because of differing views from the national Episcopal organization. The source of this breach was multi-faceted, but the lynchpin was the argument over the ordination of homosexuals and the blessings of same-sex marriage. Grace House initially continued to operate for several weeks in their buildings on the Grace Episcopal property without the benefit of spiritual oversight from the church. However,

⁸ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christiane Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 862.

the Episcopal Diocese of Florida soon asked the leaders of the center to move off the property, citing the financial liability associated with counseling centers affiliated with churches and located on church property.

The center's leadership moved the ministry to a private location and continued offering Christian mental health services without any religious organization's direct spiritual, financial, or denomination affiliation support. Counselors were paid by insurance fees and direct cash payments from clients. The center applied a portion of the counselor's earnings to pay staff members and center expenses. After three years, the leadership sold Grace House to Grace Clinic, a Christian-based group located in Central Florida, which promised to offer the financial support and resources it felt Grace House needed to succeed. However, this was not a productive relationship, and, after nine months, in January 2010, Grace Clinic announced they would close Grace House because of financial considerations.

That is when God prompted the author and his wife, Frances, to buy Grace House. At a meeting of the remaining four mental health counselors, two state-registered interns, and one staff member, the owners said they would sell the business to anyone who wanted to buy it. Moved by the Spirit, the author related that he raised his hand and said more boldly than he felt, "I'll buy it." However, his wife, who was not at the meeting, initially said "no" when informed of his decision to buy and run Grace House. However, the author asked her to wait, think, and pray overnight. The following day, his wife said firmly as she made her coffee, "Here's how we will run the finances." Thus, the truth and promise of Isaiah 40:31 became clear to both.

They were now the leaders, owners, and directors of a mental health counseling center with too few clients and too few counselors to make financial ends meet. The author's wife would handle the bookkeeping, and the author would direct the day-to-day operations and recruit

new counselors. The author confesses that while his wife knew what she was doing with finances, he did not with running a Christian mental health counseling center. With a work history as a retired Army and National Guard officer and, at the time, a soon-to-be-retired daily newspaper journalist, the author said he depended on God because he had no other option.

With Frances in charge of the finances, the author's primary task was to establish a vision for Grace House and its counselors and staff as instruments of God's grace and mercy. Keeping God and Christ at the center of all that Grace House would be involved in was critical. Christ was envisioned as the keystone of Grace House's identity as a Christian counseling center. Communicating this vision was a crucial element in developing the vision for the center. That vision saw Grace House as God-directed. Counselors and staff would equally share in its success and ministry, which would extend not only to clients but also to staff, counselors, and the community. The camaraderie among counselors and staff would be nurtured through a monthly newsletter, monthly peer meetings, and Morning Prayer on Friday mornings to which all counselors and staff, regardless of denomination, would be invited. Any profits generated by the center would be reinvested in staff, equipment and, eventually, a new site more suited to the growing mental health counseling center. While the author did some recruiting in the early days, most of the current counselors sought out Grace House to affiliate and practice.

The worldviews of the center's current sixteen independent state-licensed and state-registered mental health counselors, college counseling interns, and four staff members are distinctly Christian. However, there are distinct differences in the expression of that Christian worldview mainly because of different denominational affiliations. For example, denominations represented among Grace House's current counselors and staff include a mixture of liturgical and

non-liturgical denominations, including Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic, Baptist, and non-denominational.

To ensure at least some uniformity of belief, all counselors, staff, and college interns who practice or work at Grace House sign the American Association of Christian Counselors' Statement of Faith⁹ and regularly attend a church. These requirements support the center's belief that all Christian workers are at or near the point of the spiritual spear. They must therefore depend on their spiritual knowledge and biblical training as they prepare to encounter the forces of evil and destruction described in 1 Peter 5:8. It is assumed that spirituality for the Christian counselor must be more than an idea; it must be a way of life (Acts 17:28). If counselors and staff are to face Satan and his minions regularly, it seems only prudent to gird oneself with the full armor of God (Eph 6:13-17) and to be prepared in-season and out for spiritual warfare. Loren Toussaint, Jon R. Webb, and Whitney Keltner agree that research from a variety of studies indicates there is evidence that the Christian licensed counselor can approach religious and spiritual assessment with an open mind, looking for possible positive involvement of religion and spirituality in the person's mental health.¹⁰

⁹ American Association of Christian Counselors, "Statement of Faith," About, accessed August 22, 2022, <https://www.aacc.net/about>.

¹⁰ Toussaint, Webb, and Keltner, "Religion, Spirituality, and Mental Health," 355.

Grace House Counseling Center Organization Chart

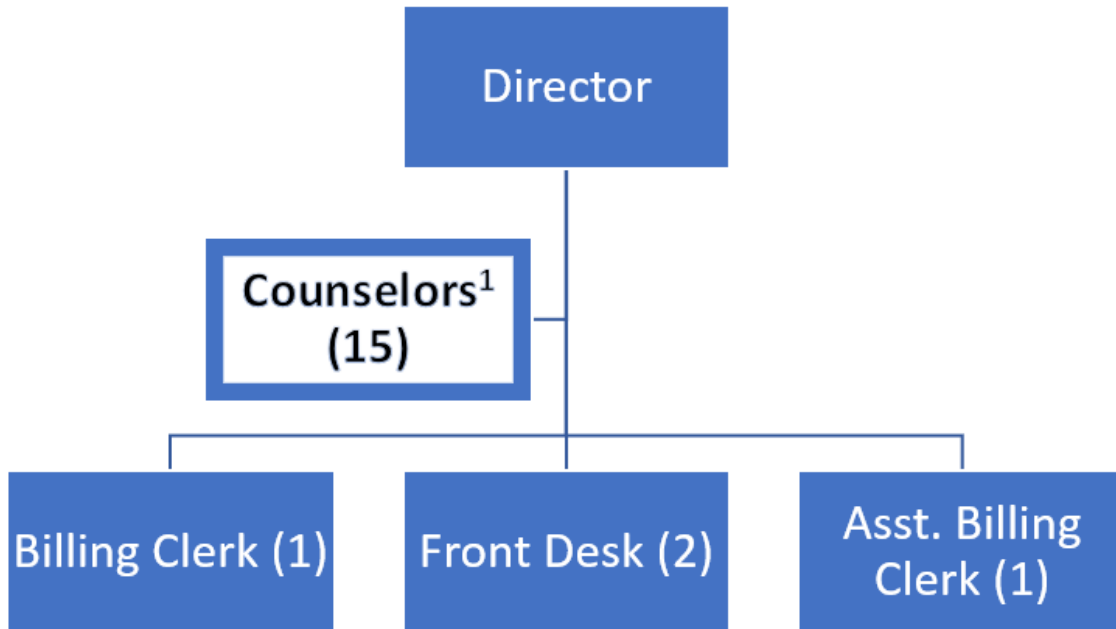


Figure 1.1: Grace House Counseling Center Organization Chart

¹Counselors are independent practitioners and are not in the leadership chain of command for staff.

Staff and counselors at Grace House today (Figure 1.1) assume a servant’s attitude and strive to meet the client’s needs first, not their own. At Grace House, staff and counselors are constantly reminded that they are united in doing God’s work on behalf of clients. The fields in which both counselors and staff work are truly white for harvest, and there is a unity of purpose among all associated with Grace House, regardless of job title. This collaborative partnership between God and workers in and for the church was evident in the early church and in subsequent generations. Each individual brings his or her gift as a part of the whole. Romans 12:4-5 (English Standard Version) reminds staff and counselors that, “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we,

though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” Joshua J. Knabb, Eric L. Johnson, M. Todd Bates, and Timothy A. Sisemore point out that for a Christian, the overall purpose of life is not attainments to be amassed, “but a relationship with God . . . who is active and present in his world and with his people, even in the midst of psychological pain.”¹¹

The heart of the spiritual mission at Grace House is to join with Christ and minister to all, Christian or non-Christian. The mission of the center is to heal the hurt, offer solace to the sick, and bind up the wounded. The goal is to send all who come to Grace House back into the world healed in mind and spirit. The goal is that each client leaves Grace House with the knowledge that, during their time at the center, they have encountered the love of Jesus in the flesh through their encounters with each counselor and each staff member.

Problem Presented

The problem is that Grace House’s therapists are formally trained through their master’s degree program to provide mental health care, not spiritual or soul care, to clients. While some counselors have some scriptural training, either in study at a Bible college or through years of self-study, only two of the counselors at Grace House have the formal college training that links Scripture and spiritual disciplines to various mental disorders. The two counselors with training in both disciplines include one who is an ordained Navy chaplain who works part-time as a counselor. The other is the director, who hold a master’s in religious education and is a lay commissioned chaplain and member of a lay religious order under the headship of the bishop of the Jurisdiction of the Armed Forces and Chaplaincy of the Anglican Church in North America. This problem statement is based on conversations with counselors and staff members who

¹¹ Joshua J Knabb et al., *Christian Psychotherapy in Context: Theoretical and Empirical Explorations in Faith-Based Mental Health* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 22.

indicate they are encountering more and more clients with spiritual issues who don't identify with a church home. This observation coincides with broader church reports and research, which indicate that almost two years after the pandemic subsided in this area of North Florida, Sunday worship service attendance has not returned to pre-pandemic numbers.

Justin Nortey, a research analyst focusing on religion research at Pew Research Center, observed that assessing the impact of the pandemic on religious service attendance remains difficult for two main reasons. One is that the final outcome of the pandemic is still unclear. What appears, at the time this thesis was written, to be a plateau in religious service attendance could be followed by a rise if the pandemic gradually recedes, or by a drop if a new, highly infectious coronavirus variant emerges. Secondly, he said, is that, prior to the pandemic, Pew Research Center surveys did not clearly distinguish between physical attendance at religious services and virtual attendance. "While religious congregations as a whole may have experienced a large drop in physical attendance during the pandemic, there's good reason to believe that virtual attendance is much higher today than it was before the coronavirus outbreak began in early 2020."¹²

While the extent of the increase in unchurched clients at Grace House is not precisely known, Grace House staff and counselors believe through individual observations that there has been a marked increase in non-churched and lapsed-church clients since the beginning of 2022. Additionally, this increase in client numbers has been observed by Grace House staff members who report having to turn away several clients daily for various reasons, including that most of

¹² Justin Nortey, "More houses of worship are returning to normal operations, but in-person attendance is unchanged since fall," *Pew Research Center*, March 22, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services/> (accessed November 1, 2022).

the center's sixteen state-licensed and state-registered counselors have full schedules and are not accepting new clients.

Counselors also report that their clients are increasingly more concerned with matters that have spiritual issues at their source. Because of an increasing number of clients seeking mental health counselors, many licensed and state-registered counselors affiliated with Grace House are temporarily closing their practices to new clients. This has resulted in many of these new clients being directed to and willingly accepting counseling from Grace House's college interns.

Because of this surge of individuals seeking counseling, Grace House added a second student counseling intern in August 2022 and added a fourth state-registered mental health counselor to its cadre of therapists. Grace House receives a dozen or more inquiries a year from college students from various colleges who are seeking internships. The current two college interns are finishing their work this May in mental health counseling at Liberty University. Several secular counseling services in the Clay County area also have college interns, these services charge a minimal fee for their services. The fee stays with the counseling service and does not go to the college intern. Grace House provides the intern's service at no charge. Therefore, while Grace House's college interns do not directly impact the finances of the center in a positive manner, the interns provide a much-needed service to the community, enhance the Grace House community image, and their training gives glory to God for serve now and in the future.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry action research project is to develop a spiritual resource manual that will better equip new and existing therapists practicing at Grace House to offer Bible-based spiritual and soul care to clients. This action is a response to the concern

expressed by counselors to Grace House's director that they do not feel they are completely able to serve the number of unchurched or never churched clients seeking spiritual and biblical care.

To assess the spiritual counseling skills of Grace House's mental health counselors, a questionnaire to appraise the need for spiritual and biblical training will be produced and circulated among counselors. Information from this survey will provide information about the needs and the current levels of spiritual acuity among Grace House counselors. Using the information from this questionnaire, a spiritual resource manual will be developed for use by counselors to provide appropriate spiritual care and increase their biblical education and application skills.

This spiritual resource manual will be designed and written to cover a variety of subjects, including appropriate Bible verses, praying with clients, and spiritual care among its inclusions. A community resource guide to help counselors direct clients to appropriate extra-counseling care such as free or reduced medical services, food pantries, and other helping agencies will be included. Such a document is available and updated each year by new college interns as a way of familiarizing them with the area resources and can be included as a part of this manual. This spiritual resource manual will be designed as user-friendly for a counselor in session. It will be distributed electronically to assist with updates and future additions.

Basic Assumptions

This action research thesis's plenary assumption is that Grace House Counseling Center has received an influx of clients seeking mental health care for a variety of complaints that have their roots in a lack of spiritual direction. This influx of spiritually dysfunctional clients has been noticed and commented on by the Grace House staff since the COVID-19 pandemic began to wane in late 2021, or early 2022. This is approximately the same time Grace House operations

returned to near pre-COVID levels and the number of clients, especially those clients seeking in-person counseling, increased. Coincidentally with this influx, some Grace House counselors began to report seeing more clients seeking help for spiritual matters involving seemingly unconnected issues such as divorce, dissatisfaction with various aspects of their life, anger, lack of direction, and general malaise.

A second assumption is that many of these clients coming to Grace House at this time might, in the past, have sought spiritual direction or solace from a minister or others affiliated with a religious institution. Churches in the Orange Park-Fleming Island area of Clay County anecdotally report severely dropped attendance at all services, which mirrors statistics from other areas of the United States. Area pastors in general also report a reluctance by previous attendees to return to their home church with many citing fears of contracting COVID-19 or some variant. Bereft of a church home or church-affiliated friends, this group of churchless individuals may be lost when they try to find the source of their mental or emotional health malaise, which may be, at the bottom line, the lack of an active association with Jesus Christ.

A third assumption is that many long-term unchurched or never churched individuals, as well as many recently, unchurched individuals, are facing spiritual problems masked as mental or emotional health issues. Lacking affiliation with a religious institution for a variety of reasons, these individuals now face uncertainty in their homes, work, and recreation activities. Adrift and without spiritual winds or currents to guide their paths, these individuals are seeking care from Christ-based mental health counselors at Grace House. The question is why, and it is not unreasonable to assume, regardless of their outward spiritual state, these clients are being guided by the Holy Spirit to seek such help.

Definitions

This project concerns itself with the spiritual education of Christian mental health counselors at Grace House Counseling Center. The project seeks to help these practitioners better provide healing services to their clients using biblical truths in conjunction with psychology and counseling skills. In the process of developing and putting this project into action, some terms are used that, while they may be familiar to the Christian counselor or a learned Christian, may be misunderstood, in whole or in part, by those not familiar with either Christianity or mental health counseling. Key terms used in this project include Christian education, discipleship, sanctification, spiritual formation, and other words significant to the conduct of this research project. It will become evident that many of these terms overlap and point to one another in some form or another.

Chaplain. A particular pastoral ministry that operates beyond the boundaries of, and often without the support of, a local parish or church. While ordained ministers have long been seen as the formal representatives of the Church, it is only recently that both ordained and lay Chaplains have been recognized as a distinct ministry. Robert Crick describes chaplains as “those called to the office of pastor and teacher, but they are called, set apart, and sent out to a specific context outside the borders of the local church.”¹³ Using this loose definition of chaplains, the author believes an argument can be made that Christian mental health counselors could be identified as *de facto* chaplains, albeit without formal training.

Client/Patient. These terms are used almost interchangeably in psychology. However, Richard S. Sharf distinguishes that *patient* is used most often in a medical setting, with the *client*

¹³ Robert Crick, *Outside the Gates* (Oviedo, FL: HigherLife Development Services, Inc., 2011), xiii.

applied more frequently to education and social services. In this thesis, the two terms may be used interchangeably, referring to the person receiving psychotherapy or counseling.¹⁴

Counseling (Christian/Bible). A loosely defined mental health counseling segment with no formal certification process by state licensing boards. This branch of counseling seeks to incorporate biblical knowledge with psychological, scientific, and social skills. According to Clinton and Ohlschlager, Christian Counseling “believes that the care and cure of souls is the work of God—a process of spiritual formation and discipline—more than psychotherapy.”¹⁵ As such, Christian counseling is not an end but a way of finding our authentic selves in the mirror of a new life in Christ.

Counseling (Pastoral). Pastoral counselors combine theology with psychotherapy to address relational, emotional, and spiritual needs. By integrating modern psychology with ministry training, they can help people overcome many challenges, including addiction, marital issues, family conflict, and trauma. As ministry and mental health leaders, they provide valuable guidance and comfort to people of all ages and stages.¹⁶ Liberty University and others offer master’s degrees in Pastoral Counseling.

Counselor (see also Therapist). A general term for a mental health professional who engages in talk therapy as well as other therapeutic interventions. At Grace House, the term therapist is interchangeable with a counselor or, more formally, the title of one’s state license.

¹⁴ Richard S. Sharf, *Theories of Psychotherapy & Counseling: Concepts and Cases* (United States: Cengage Learning, 2015), 4.

¹⁵ Clinton and Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling*, 31.

¹⁶ Liberty University Online, “Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling,” accessed August 29, 2022, <https://www.liberty.edu/online/behavioral-sciences/masters/pastoral-counseling/>, under “Provide Biblical Guidance and Counsel.”

According to the State of Florida Mental Health Web site,¹⁷ the types of mental health professional licenses include Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), or Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC). Unlicensed therapists who are registered with the State of Florida as interns and permitted to offer counseling services are: Registered Clinical Social Worker Interns (RCSWI), Registered Marriage and Family Therapist Interns (RMFTI), and Registered Mental Health Counselor Interns (RMHCI). State-registered interns must be under the supervision of licensed and trained therapists in the intern's discipline.

Discipleship. Discipleship is a commonly misunderstood word used by many to describe someone following someone else's example. However, Donald S. Whitney contends that an examination of the New Testament word disciple reveals that it means to be not only a follower of Christ, but also be disciplined as a learner.¹⁸ Therefore, Whitney explains, to follow Christ and become more like him, there must be engagement in the spiritual discipline of learning. Those who would practice discipleship, therefore, must be lifelong learners who want to know more about Christ. Counselors at Grace House are required to earn thirty to thirty-five continuing education hours before earning or renewing their respective licenses. However, there is no requirement that they do additional learning about Christianity for counseling.

Mental Health Professional. A general term that refers to a plethora of professions associated with mental health care (see Counselor or Therapist definitions). This term covers a wider range of specialists and training from psychiatrists to life coaches. Mental health care

¹⁷ Florida Department of Health, "Licensing and Registration," accessed August 29, 2022, <https://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/licensing>.

¹⁸ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014), 273.

professional job titles and specialties vary by state. The National Alliance on Mental Health issues provides a general list.¹⁹

Spirituality. A distinctive resource for daily living that incorporates a plethora of experiences and relationships with God with one's daily life. Spirituality includes, but is not limited to, prayer, meditation, solitude, fasting, study, etc., with the purpose of drawing the individual closer to God. Pargament calls spirituality well suited to the struggle with human limitations and finitude found in the counseling room. "By bringing the spiritual dimension into the helping process, psychotherapists could tap more fully into this reservoir of hope and source of solutions to life's most profound problems."²⁰ Spiritual resources are not simply another problem-solving tool. They are, instead, embedded in a larger individual worldview.

Spiritual Discipline. Millard J. Erickson points out that discipline is one of the features of our adoption as Children of God and discipline should be thought of as evidence of love rather than evidence of lack of love.²¹ Spiritual discipline is therefore tied to acts such as meditation, prayer, fasting, etc., intended to bring the disciple nearer to God, hearing his word, and growing more into the image of Christ. It would not, therefore, be incorrect to describe one who engages in spiritual discipline as "Spiritual."

Talk Therapy. This style of mental health counseling refers to a wide range of treatments that involve discussing mental or emotional issues with a mental health practitioner. Sometimes referred to as "The Talking Cure," talk therapy differs from other styles of counseling that

¹⁹ National Alliance on Mental Illness, "Types of Mental Health Professionals," accessed August 29, 2022, <https://nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Treatments/Types-of-Mental-Health-Professionals>.

²⁰ Kenneth I. Pargamert, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy: Understanding and Addressing the Sacred* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2007), 29.

²¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 322.

depend almost exclusively on drills, repetition, and/or retraining.²² In talk therapy, a client is encouraged and prompted to talk through and process their emotions, moods, thoughts, and behaviors in the presence of a counselor. In doing so, the counselor will make suggestions or corrections as the client learns about their thinking and emotions and are guided in exercises or readings to better cope with those conditions.

Therapist (see also Counselor). A general term for a mental health professional who engages in talk therapy and various other therapeutic interventions. At Grace House, the term therapist is interchangeable with Counselor or, more formally, the title of one's state license. According to the State of Florida,²³ the types of mental health professional licenses include: Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), or Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC). Unlicensed therapists who are registered with the State of Florida as interns and permitted to offer counseling services are Registered Clinical Social Worker Interns (RCSWI), Registered Marriage and Family Therapist Interns (RMFTI), and Registered Mental Health Counselor Interns (RMHCI).

Therapeutic Relationship. A therapeutic relationship is a collaborative union between client and therapist that commits to action that will improve the client's emotional and mental status. Such a relationship is necessary if the therapist is to conduct psychotherapy for the benefit of the clients and not for the benefit of the therapist or other third parties. Driscoll maintains elements of the therapeutic relationship include being on the clients' side, maintaining an

²² National Institute of Mental Health, "Psychotherapies," accessed August 29, 2022, www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies, under "Overview."

²³ Florida Department of Health, "Licensing and Registration."

alliance, maintaining credibility, communicating an understanding of the client's position, and sharing responsibility for improvement.²⁴

Limitations

Among this action project's limitations is the lack of firm data from new clients as to why they are seeking counseling and why they are seeking that care specifically at Grace House. This limitation will not affect the reasons for conducting the project. There is no expectation that this limitation will halt or impede the production of a spiritual resources training document to assist counselors in how to best relate to non-churched or non-spiritual clients. There is evidence from Grace House counselors that they have a need for the manual, regardless of client input into the reasons. The issue being addressed by this study is not church attendance, but the spiritual and biblical skill needs of mental health providers at Grace House.

For now, it is assumed that the impact of the pandemic on church attendance is still in the discovery process. There are some surveys, published material, and many general discussions of the national counseling scene. However, there has been no such survey in Clay County. While many church leaders among various denominations report a drop in attendance of varying amounts, there may be a plethora of other factors for lower attendance than two years ago. For example, a formally strong Anglican church in a growing area of Clay County lost its pastor to a congregation in another state at the start of the pandemic. In the past eighteen months, the leadership of that church has been slow to find a replacement. This has become more difficult in recent months because church attendance and giving have dropped significantly. The church is now in danger of closing because the current congregation cannot meet the monthly mortgage payment.

²⁴ Richard Driscoll, *Pragmatic Psychotherapy* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1984), 73.

Many other church leaders, with whom the issue of lower church attendance since the pandemic has been discussed, have mentioned varied co-morbid issues affecting attendance. These issues include getting out of the habit of attendance, fear of contracting COVID or another infectious disease, and televised services making stay-at-home attendance too easy. The action project does not propose to offer answers to those questions. The focus of the study will be on how best to meet the spiritual needs of the unchurched by giving mental health counselors at Grace House Scripture-based tools to help them in their daily walk.

Delimitations

This action research project will address Grace House Counseling Center's clients' perceived need for spiritual and soul care and the ability and confidence of the center's therapists to deliver on that promise. This project is limited to collecting information from counselors to develop a training and reference manual for spiritual and soul care. This original manual will be distributed to assist affiliated mental health counselors in dealing with clients and their presenting complaints.

This project does not cover other mental health-related issues among Grace House clients. Nor is it intended to explore or evaluate the counselors' proficiency in dealing appropriately with these issues. The limits of this project are only to increase biblical knowledge, confidence, and spiritual awareness among mental health counselors associated with Grace House Counseling Center.

To address this question, a short questionnaire for Grace House's sixteen mental health counselors will be developed, distributed, and collected, and the results examined. The questions on this questionnaire will be concerned only with the counselors' familiarity and confidence in using spiritual and biblical resources in their work and sessions when they are in contact with

clients. There will also be questions about the counselors' confidence in introducing these subjects in the counseling session and, if low, how that confidence can be increased.

Based on the responses to this questionnaire, a spiritual resource manual will be designed, researched, and written that incorporates the needs and desires of counselors. This spiritual resource manual is expected to include, but not be limited to, an introduction, an explanation of what makes mental health counseling Christian, and a basic description of pastoral and spiritual care. The centerpiece of the manual will be a selection of common mental health diagnoses such as depression, anger, anxiety, grief, etc. These diagnoses will have a brief description from the DSM-5-TR (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, Text Revision*; APA 2022), Bible verses that the counselor can use in session or give to the client, and prayers that address each diagnosis from the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*, 2019.

Counselors will be encouraged to use the spiritual resource manual in their sessions, but they will not be required to do so. This is in line with Grace House's written agreement with counselors, which ensures they are independent practitioners. While not a part of the research associated with this study, college interns and all new counselors who affiliate with Grace House in the future will be introduced to the spiritual resource manual and be encouraged to use it in their daily work and contact with clients. This requirement can be enforced since the interns are supervised by the Grace House director, who is also the author of this study. The vision is to make this manual available to counselors electronically. This will reduce costs for printing and allow quick revisions, corrections, or additions to the manual.

Thesis Statement

If pastoral care information and skills are incorporated into a spiritual resource manual at Grace House Counseling Center, Christian therapists will be better equipped to provide effective pastoral care for clients. Training and experience in spiritual and soul care, and knowledge of Scripture, are mixed among Grace's House's sixteen licensed counselors, state-registered mental health counselors, and college interns. Currently, the only requirement of counselors, staff members, and college interns to practice at Grace House is signing the American Association of Christian Counselors Statement of Faith. Most counselors relate instances of occasionally praying with their clients, and many say they also cite Scripture as part of their counseling sessions. However, this cannot be ascertained with accuracy as all counseling sessions are private and confidential. Church attendance by counselors is strongly encouraged, but not required, especially in the wake of the Pandemic when most area churches were closed to active participation. While most if not all of the churches in Clay County have been reopened for more than a year, informal reports from pastors and others are that they have not returned to pre-pandemic attendance numbers.

There is evidence from counselors that many of their clients are uncomfortable with either prayer or scriptural use in sessions. All therapists are bound by various codes of ethics particular to their profession to be sensitive to a client's wishes in the realm of religion. None of the codes of conduct allow a licensed counselor any way to ethically proselytize in a session without the client's approval. A survey of Grace House counselors will add specifics to the need and content for biblical counseling resources and spirituality training. Therefore, using this input from counselors, a manual combining scriptural knowledge and counseling skills will be developed and distributed. Licensed and state-registered mental health counselors and college interns would be questioned in a survey to determine if the manual has increased their biblical

skills and eased integration in the counseling room. Knowing and using the spiritual resource manual would be mandatory for all future college interns during their practicum and internship at Grace House.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

Christian mental health counseling is a complex pallet of skills and training that often requires an eclectic blend of biblical knowledge and psychology. Unfortunately, that blend of biblical knowledge and science is not always distributed equally among counselors.¹ Variance in such skill sets includes the age of counselors, previous experience in counseling and Scripture, and temperament. Psychology and necessary counseling skills are taught during master's level education and honed through hours and hours of face-to-face practical experience.² Bible knowledge, despite its value as an integral tool in the hands of a skilled Christian therapist, is usually not obtained in an education setting concurrently with a counseling degree. Exceptions abound, but Eric Johnson observes, "The need for greater collaboration within the body of Christ as well as for more dual-qualified counselors (both theologically and psychologically skilled) cannot be overstated!"³ The value of combining counseling skills with scriptural knowledge and application cannot be overstated, especially if the client is unchurched or outright opposed to hearing and applying the word of God to their daily problems.⁴

In the hands of a sensitive and knowledgeable therapist, scriptural and biblical truths can be a source of inspiration, hope, and correction for those clients seeking help for the emotional

¹ Eric L. Johnson, *God and Soul Care* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2017), 582.

² Joseph A. Stewart-Sicking, Jesse Fox, and Paul J. Deal, *Bringing Religion and Spirituality into Therapy* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 157.

³ Johnson, *God and Soul Care*, 582.

⁴ Benjamin R. Doolittle, *Religion and Spirituality for the Healthcare Provider* (Nova Science Publishers, Incorporated, 2016), 70, ProQuest Ebook Central.

bruising and battering presented by everyday life.⁵ The problem is that not all Christian counselors are similarly educated or adept at presenting Scripture as a resource to help their clients grow and heal.⁶ Many clients seek counseling because of various issues such as depression, anxiety, relational issues, and even the “blahs.” The question for the Christian mental health counselor is not if the client is experiencing these feelings but whether those feelings are connected to spiritual issues such as separation from God, sin, or guilt over violating one or more of God’s laws that they may have first learned as little children.

Why Clients Seek Christian Counseling

In Matthew 25:24 (ESV), Jesus tells us that to provide for the care of others less fortunate than ourselves is to care for him: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” This passage summarizes what many therapists consider the appropriate role of a Christian mental health counselor.⁷ Christian mental health counseling attempts to put flesh on Jesus in a safe setting, unlike the pastor’s office or a room in the church administration building, which may be intimidating to some non-churched or lightly churched clients. While these latter locations might seem safe to a churchgoer, they may threaten those individuals who do not have a religious background or have been emotionally damaged by contact with religious and religious-speaking individuals.⁸ At the center of all Christian

⁵ Gregory John Cheney, "The Integration of Pastoral and Clinical Identities: The Professional Identity Development of Pastoral Counselors." PhD diss., North Carolina State University, 2019, 31.

⁶ Harold J. Koenig, *Religion and Mental Health Research and Clinical Applications* (London: Academic Press, 2018), 274.

⁷ Lawrence K. Wieland, “Bible-Based Counseling as an Approach for Evangelical Christians in Addressing Mental Health Issues Using a Qualitative Exploratory Case Study Design.” Ph.D. diss., Grand Canyon University, 2018, 42.

⁸ Charles Sumpter, *Declining Church Attendance: Five Reasons Why Millennials Have Stopped Attending Church* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University, 2019), 2.

counseling must be the living presence of Jesus Christ and the demonstration of his love and sacrifice, as stated in Matthew 25:24. Christ's influence and presence in each Christian counselor weave together the science and theories of human behavior that can lead the way to health for clients.

Clients seeking therapy for specific complaints such as depression, anxiety, or relational issues may be expressing spiritual concerns brought on by the pandemic and the subsequent isolation. In their environment, for some, there has been an almost constant uncertainty for the health and safety of loved ones or themselves. Those fears may be concealed or obvious, and the individual may indicate a personal fear of contracting COVID-19, or their fears may have developed after experiencing the death of a loved one from the disease.⁹ Mental health professionals know that it is a general human tendency to avoid pain and seek pleasure. COVID-19 has prohibited many worldwide from experiencing the freedom and pleasures they enjoyed before the onset of the pandemic. Clients now often present as confused, anxious, and troubled as they attempt to adjust or readjust to the new world of the post-pandemic—a world of masks, vaccines, endless debate over alleged conspiracies, and supply shortages

In addition to the specific reason that some clients, especially Millennials, seek spiritual direction from a licensed mental health counselor rather than a representative of an organized religious institution, is a growing general mistrust of institutions, growing secularization, and a desire for spirituality, not religiosity. Charles Sumpter found that “most ministries, in their current configuration, are inadequate to meet the spiritual needs of Millennials, with 70 percent of them indicating that they cannot find a church that can help them grow spiritually.”¹⁰ This has

⁹ Wieland, “Bible-Based Counseling,” 106.

¹⁰ Sumpter, *Declining Church Attendance*, 91.

led to an ideological divide where Millennials, religious individuals, and those involved in mental health tend to know one another only by the caricature, that is, by the worst examples of each.¹¹ Millennials, and similar younger individuals, are part of one of the fastest-growing groups in the U.S.: those who identify as spiritual but not religious.¹² In short, it is assumed that many clients who otherwise would have sought solace and comfort from their pastor or prayer group before the pandemic no longer attend church and therefore have no trusted source to turn to for sympathy, empathy, and guidance. To get answers and solace from problems such as these, it is presumed that these clients are now turning to mental health counselors, especially Christian mental health counselors, to receive the spiritual and emotional care they need.

Therefore, Christian mental health counselors must be prepared to meet their clients with their faith, or lack of faith, from the first moment of contact. To be effective, Christian counselors should also operate in an environment where they can be free to share their faith with their clients. However, to be effective, Christian mental health counselors should be equipped and prepared for the increased dimension of adding spirituality to their repertoire of skills. Christian mental health counselors maintain the hope that they will be able to introduce their clients to the power of divine regeneration, while always respecting their individual needs and desires.¹³ Being not only ready but proficient in administering the grace and love of God from first contact to the last day of counseling is the hallmark of a Christian mental health counselor. A strong professional identity as a Christian is essential in any profession. Still, it is critical for

¹¹ Carman S. Gill and Robert Freund, eds., *Spirituality and Religion in Counseling: Competency-Based Strategies for Ethical Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2018), xv.

¹² *Ibid.*, xvii.

¹³ Johnson, *God and Soul Care*, 510.

mental health counselors who are not only ethically bound to ensure and protect the well-being of their clients but also to care for their spiritual health.¹⁴

Even clients that don't identify as Christian often seek a Christian counselor for various reasons. Some of those reasons might not be at the forefront of a client's thoughts in selecting a counseling center. Still, many clients have told the author that they have some church background, and they want those teachings in their life, but they do not necessarily want the church in their lives. While many clients report positive contact with religion as a child, many report they have fallen away or become alienated from the Christian faith in general. This is confirmed by Joseph A. Stewart-Sicking et al., who found that while there has been a decrease among Americans belonging to religious organizations, religious traditions often remain present in the developmental ecosystems of seemingly secular clients' lives.¹⁵ It is therefore prudent and responsible for all mental health counselors who identify as "Christian" to develop a strategy for recognizing and determining when it is appropriate to address a client's spiritual needs. This observation and action can lead to more accurate assessments, determining resources, evaluating the impact of beliefs on mental health outcomes and decision-making, and determining the barriers to using spiritual resources.¹⁶

The Christian Mental Health Counselor as de Facto Chaplain

Christian mental health counselors are often called to serve as ministers without portfolio for Christ and biblical truths. To do this effectively, the Christian counselor must meet the client

¹⁴ Cheney, "Pastoral and Clinical Identities," 1.

¹⁵ Stewart-Sicking, Fox, and Deal, *Bringing Religion and Spirituality into Therapy*, 2.

¹⁶ Miles Matise, Jeffery Ratcliff, and Flavia Mosci, "A Working Model for the Integration of Spirituality in Counseling," *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 20, no. 1 (2018): 29. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2017.1326091>.

where they are, sometimes in-person in the counselor's office, in a facility, and sometimes over the Internet by telehealth. The choice of in-person or telehealth counseling is left to the client. This is necessary to give the client the impression that they are being provided a safe place. Therefore, those who feel alienation from traditional religious organizations and facilities have options. In this scenario, a Christian mental health counselor may be considered to serve as an ad hoc chaplain.¹⁷ This dual role as a minister and therapist is not unheard of to military chaplains who, in a reverse scenario, are on the front lines of serving their populations and are therefore often sought out first, before, or instead of seeking out other mental health professionals.¹⁸

However, in a reversal of roles, the military chaplain has training as a pastoral and spiritual counselor and limited training as a mental health advisor. They are usually ordained clergy with a master's degree and additional training in clinical pastoral education that focuses on providing religious counsel and support to those with health problems.¹⁹ The same cross-training experience cannot be said for the therapist assuming this dual role as chaplain and counselor. This becomes problematic if the counselor is not trained or is unfamiliar with biblical principles and how they translate to issues presented in the counseling session.²⁰ If a Christian mental health counselor is not prepared to deal with the spiritual needs of a new client who is seeking both spiritual and mental health care, the first encounter may be awkward, and the client may not return.²¹ This urgency to be both quick and proficient in delivering the truth of the word

¹⁷ Lindsay B. Carey et al., "Moral Injury, Spiritual Care and the Role of Chaplains: An Exploratory Scoping Review of Literature and Resources," *Journal of Religion and Health* 55, no. 4 (2016): 1223.

¹⁸ Cheney, "Pastoral and Clinical Identities," 1.

¹⁹ Koenig, *Religion and Mental Health Research*, 249.

²⁰ Stewart-Sicking, Fox, and Deal, *Bringing Religion and Spirituality into Therapy*, 157.

²¹ Jason A. Nieuwsma, Robyn D. Walser, and Steven C. Hayes, *ACT for Clergy and Pastoral Counselors* (Oakland, CA: Context Press, 2016), 6.

of God “in season and out of season,” as Paul advised in 2 Timothy 4:2 (ESV), is a special trust for Christian therapists. However, a problem for many therapists is that there isn’t a wealth of information or short training in Christian counseling readily available to novice therapists. And as Miles Matise et al. observe, “The client, by not feeling comfortable to disclose spiritual concerns, may become overly censored and not experience the full effectiveness of counseling.”²² While Christian therapists may rely on informal scriptural education learned through private study, or in the pews of their home church, there is a need to display the love of God and present his word in the most accurate manner possible and as applicable as necessary to a mental health client’s individual need.²³

Declining Church Attendance and the Increase in Clients at Grace House

Since the COVID-19 Pandemic began in the spring of 2020, a consensus among Grace House therapists is that the number of church-going clients has decreased, and the number of clients not rooted in faith has increased. This consensus of Grace House counselors coincides with research by Shilpi Kalwani, who found that the pandemic’s most likely long-term implications will be mental health.²⁴ Lawrence K. Wieland, in his study of mental health issues, found that a decline in mental health is one possible consequence of social isolation caused by an unexpected event such as the outbreak of a disease.²⁵

²² Matise, Ratcliff, and Mosci, “Integration of Spirituality in Counseling,” 27.

²³ Kate F. Jones et al., “The Content, Teaching Methods and Effectiveness of Spiritual Care Training for Healthcare Professionals: A Mixed-Methods Systematic Review,” *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 62, no. 3 (2021): 271.

²⁴ Shilpi Kalwani, “The Effect of COVID Fatigue on Mental Health in the Public Sector Organizations: Exploring Compassion as a Mediator,” *Decision* 48, no. 4 (2021): 408. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s40622-021-00294-6>.

²⁵ Wieland, “Bible-Based Counseling,” 106.

Declining church attendance may also be related to the suspicion of institutions in general, and of faith by millennials. Charles Sumpter found this to be true when he explored research that indicates only 31 percent of Millennials attend church, compared to 42 percent of Generation X.²⁶ There are also strong indications that counselors may have to counter much misinformation from those clients who consider themselves spiritual and religious. Sumpter's finding indicated that 8 percent of those who consider themselves spiritual and religious think that the God of the Bible is the same as gods of the other religions.²⁷

The data on the reasons for declining attendance among Protestant church leaders are mixed according to who is surveyed.²⁸ In declining congregations, the perception of competition from secular activities on Sunday leads members and leaders to believe that the changing social environment has made it impossible to reverse the congregation's decline.²⁹ However, evidence shows that theologically conservative Protestant churches in the United States and Canada are more likely to be the site of numerical increase than Protestant churches that are more theologically liberal.³⁰

Additional study would be required to determine if the number of Grace House clients who attend church or denote church membership to determine if Grace House is experiencing a growth in unchurch clients. However, such an increase would not be unanticipated because of the

²⁶ Sumpter, *Declining Church Attendance*, 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁸ Kevin N. Flatt, D. Millard Haskell, and Stephanie Burgoyne, "Secularization and Attribution: How Mainline Protestant Clergy and Congregants Explain Church Growth and Decline," *Sociology of Religion* 79, no. 1 (2018): 99. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx044>.

²⁹ Steve McMullin, "The Secularization of Sunday: Real or Perceived Competition for Churches," *Review of Religious Research* 55, no. 1 (2013): 44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41940815>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

general decline of church membership observed in at least the last twelve years.³¹ However, regardless of declining church attendance, there is no question that Christian mental health counselors at Grace House would be of greater service if they are proficient in combining their counseling training and skills with biblical knowledge and application.³²

Spiritual Training Among Grace House Counselors

Grace House counselors represent a variety of faith backgrounds, including Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, and non-denominational. Grace House clients likewise come from various faith backgrounds, including what is perceived nationally to be a growing category of “none.”³³ Licensed therapists at Grace House are not required to have Bible education training and their knowledge of biblical truths is not the subject of a formal examination in order to be affiliated and see clients at the center. Each counselor at Grace House must sign the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) Statement of Faith, but there has been no educational requirement for spiritual education. The only investigation into the spiritual area of their counseling is during the interview process with the director. During this interview, which varies from prospective counselor to prospective counselor, the director typically explains the Grace House ministry and staff responsibilities available to each counselor. The director also asks the counselor several church and spiritual background questions to loosely determine their general spiritual knowledge. This process is as void of scientific viability as it sounds. However, it has proved adequate in the past, but not always perfectly. For example, several veteran counselors, during the twelve years Grace House has been owned by the Nichols’, report

³¹ Flatt, Haskell, and Burgoyne, “Secularization and Attribution,” 99.

³² Cheney, “Pastoral and Clinical Identities,” 231.

³³ Carey et al., “Moral Injury, Spiritual Care and the Role of Chaplains,” 1,227.

personal spiritual growth, which they credit to their affiliation with Grace House. However, at least one licensed counselor who identified as a Christian in the interview process during this time left the center because of the pressure of being asked to pray by clients.

Any attempt to require additional biblical training would be difficult to demand as a requirement for Grace House's sixteen licensed, state-registered, and college intern mental health counselors, unless there is an incentive or inducement involved. When approached informally about spiritual care training to sharpen or refresh their spiritual skills, many counselors said they believe their membership in and regular attendance in various area churches is enough to maintain their spiritual acumen.³⁴ This reluctance to engage counselors in spiritual training in a multi-faith environment is challenging. Research indicates that while many well-intentioned counselors try to develop spiritual competence in their practice, many others feel they do not need an in-depth understanding of specific religions and belief systems.³⁵

However, this attitude among these latter counselors ignores the findings of Lawrence K. Wieland, who found that the theoretical framework and foundation of Bible-based counseling has had a great deal of development in the last forty years. However, Wieland said that this development has not been systematic and intentional, and many counselors have not kept up to date on the latest methods.³⁶

Licensed and State-Registered Counselors

Some seasoned counselors at Grace House cite commitments such as home, church, or family in expressing reluctance to enter any new training that does not offer continuing education

³⁴ Johnson, *God and Soul Care*, 510.

³⁵ Gill and Freund, *Spirituality and Religion in Counseling*, 1.

³⁶ Wieland, "Bible-Based Counseling," 33.

credits, or which won't benefit the growth of their practice. However, several of the experienced counselors and the newer licensed and state-registered counselors at Grace House have indicated a willingness to explore a locally developed spiritual care manual to aid biblical counseling in the therapy room. These counselors relate that they are often uncomfortable sharing their faith with clients who have expressed opposition to suggestions of trying a faith solution to a problem. Some also report feeling inadequate with the recent depths of anxiety and depression and the need for the spiritual direction they see among many current clients.

This hesitancy to “cross the line” and discuss faith with a client hostile to any discussion of faith is understandable. Joseph A. Stewart-Sicking notes this conundrum among counselors attempting to straddle a sometimes-dotted line between psychology and faith. He further argues that a therapeutic relationship that could be considered primarily or solely a form of spiritual direction raises additional questions about competency, the scope of practice, and professional identity.³⁷

College Counseling Interns

Grace House offers selected master's level college students an opportunity to complete their practicum and internships in a Christian counseling setting under the director, who is a licensed supervisor. During their practicum and internship, these students must complete a total of 400 indirect training hours and 300 face-to-face counseling hours. Many of those indirect hours are now taken up with required work under the direction of the director, who serves as Site Supervisor for the college interns. During their year-long internship, each intern provides at least 300 client hours of pro bono counseling to the greater community during their stay at Grace House. It is believed that a manual addressing spiritual care and biblical counseling would

³⁷ Stewart-Sicking, Fox, and Deal, *Bringing Religion and Spirituality into Therapy*, 167.

enhance their skills and give them additional confidence in the therapy room as licensed counselors.³⁸ Therefore, the college interns will be included in the study, which will attempt to assess their current comfort and confidence with using Scripture and biblical wisdom in session with their clients.

A Plan to Address This Need at Grace House

The confluence of a worldwide pandemic and declining church attendance has increased the need for mental health practitioners who are familiar, confident, and competent in their professional knowledge and skills. This is even more true for Christian mental health counselors, who often are called upon to serve as de facto lay chaplains to individuals in need of spiritual or biblical direction, but who do not have a church home or community as a resource. To effectively practice their profession in this environment, Christian mental health counselors should be expected to be able to do more than exercise the skills, experiences, and knowledge of their health care discipline. To be considered competent as Christian mental health counselors, they must also display the familiarity and spiritual discipline of proper biblical understanding and practice.³⁹

Among the challenges in researching this project was the lack of literature focused specifically on improving the skills of existing Christian mental health counselors working in a private, fee-collecting Christian mental health center. Ample material exists on the “how to” of Christian counseling, either in secular or non-secular environments. Existing literature seems more focused on counselors newer to the profession than Grace House counselors, most of whom have between ten and fifteen years of experience in Christian mental health counseling

³⁸ Gill and Freund, *Spirituality and Religion in Counseling*, 12.

³⁹ Stewart-Sicking, Fox, and Deal, *Bringing Religion and Spirituality into Therapy*, 213.

(see Table 4.1, page 92). In addition, Grace House is a unique setting in that both Christians and non-Christians are seen. Furthermore, these clients are charged by the therapists for their services, either privately or through a third-party, usually an insurance company. According to an article by the Psychology Today staff, given the client's permission, this approach of combining biblical truths with psychology is considered both ethical and helpful.⁴⁰ Such an approach, the staff found, "is often thought to be beneficial for the client, as it allows them to bring their 'whole self' into the therapy room and develop coping strategies that make sense for their personal beliefs."⁴¹ However, the staff cautioned that the efficacy of other kinds of Christian counseling can vary widely. While anecdotal evidence suggests that some people who seek biblical or pastoral counseling find the practice beneficial, they report, "others report it to be less so. In some cases, clients who have bad experiences may become disillusioned with their faith."⁴²

There is literature available that speaks to pastoral counseling, counseling as a part of prayer ministry, as well as counseling within non-Christian environments. However, Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager specifically define Christian counseling as "believing that the care and cure of souls is the work of God—a process of spiritual formation and discipleship—more than the work of psychotherapy."⁴³ This wider scope of counseling, focusing on the soul and spirit as cojoined with the mental part of the client, is a key aspect of Christian mental health. Eric Johnson notes that when working with Christian clients, "the Christian counselor can

⁴⁰ "Christian Counseling," Psychology Today, last modified May 19, 2022, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/christian-counseling>.

⁴¹ Ibid., "What to Expect."

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Clinton and Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling*, 31.

make use of all the therapeutic assets that Christ has procured for those who believe in him—what we might call ‘redemptive grace’ resources.”⁴⁴ When working with non-Christians, Johnson said, there is still much that Christian counselors can do, “but they have to work with what we might call ‘creation grace’ resources, which are available to everyone regardless of their personal relationship with Christ.”⁴⁵

The exact content of a spiritual manual for Grace House counselors remained under development prior to the completion of this study. However, that content was expected to be informed by responses from the counselors on two questionnaires that will be distributed as part of the research phase of this project (see Figure 2.1). The first of these two questionnaires will ask for counselors to describe their knowledge and comfort with using Christian and biblical wisdom in sessions with their clients. The second questionnaire will ask respondents to evaluate the contents of a draft spiritual resource manual and submit suggestions for improvement of the manual beyond that offered in the draft document. This manual will contain researched and sourced material describing Christian mental health counseling, praying with clients, and a way of bringing spirituality into the counseling session. In addition, the central part of the manual will be a section on common mental health issues often presented at Grace House coupled with selected Bible verses and a prayer that may be used with clients who present with that issue. A final section of the manual will be a listing of community resources to which the counselor may refer their clients.

⁴⁴ Johnson, *God and Soul Care*, 17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

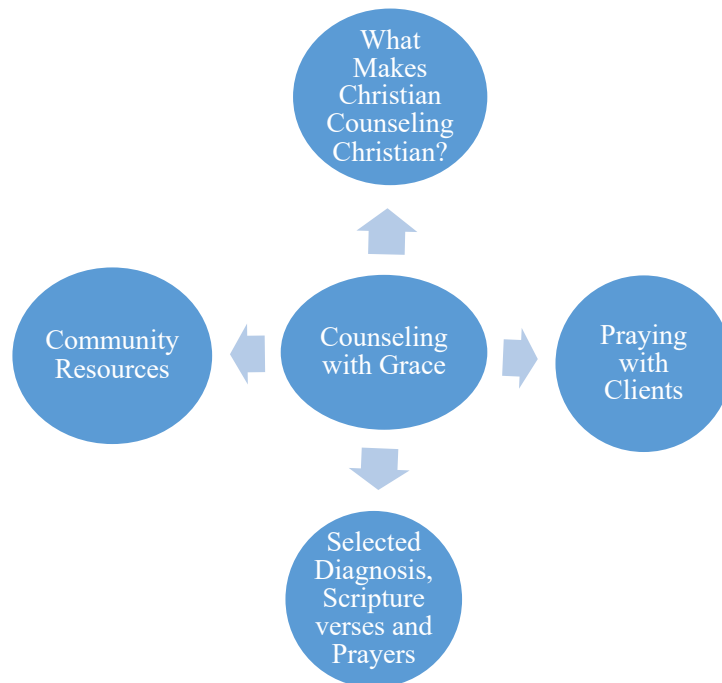


Figure 2.1: Contents of the Spiritual Resource Manual

The manual’s overall core message will be written to convey a proper path for mental health counselors at Grace House to model Jesus’ love, mercy, and grace within the counseling environment. When therapists model this behavior, they become embodied signs of God, helping Christians to turn towards an awareness of God’s work in Christ for healing.⁴⁶ This model of love, mercy, and grace is stated clearly in Psalm 103:8 (ESV) where the writer assures the reader that, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

It is proposed that the development and distribution of the two surveys will ascertain the competence of Christian therapists at Grace House and will be the first step to determine the knowledge of Bible and spiritual wisdom among participating counselors. Such a curriculum and self-study would help counselors deal with the spiritual issues presented by the influx of non-Christian and unchurched clients, which it is believed has been created by the pandemic and the

⁴⁶ Knabb et al., *Christian Psychotherapy*, 237.

ensuing sagging church attendance. A manual concerning spiritual care would be of primary benefit to college students performing their practicum and internship at Grace House. It is believed that these interns would benefit greatly in both confidence and scriptural knowledge, which would help them with their clients. While there are attempts at religious-based universities to include some biblical training in mental health counseling programs, studies indicate that training in scriptural matters is not a core part of the studies included in most secular counseling programs.⁴⁷

Theological Foundations

Through the ages, Christians have sought psychological and spiritual insight as a way of understanding and adjusting their life and human condition to whatever life's circumstances and challenges faced them. Without training in the complex psychological skills and insights available to the modern mental health counselor, our spiritual ancestors looked to the characters and teachings in the Bible and Scriptures, which offered them a coherent, comprehensive Christian metanarrative of life.⁴⁸ At the center of this character and teaching is the person of Jesus Christ, who is described in Hebrews 12:1-3 (ESV) as "the founder and perfecter of our faith."

Christian mental health counselors today, by definition, are expected to focus on bringing the truth of the eternal Christ and his healing and restorative power into the counseling room. There, the client and the counselor are able in various ways to unite in purpose and desire, to join with Christ and feel his presence and power and enable them to pierce the darkness and bring the problems of the day into the light of his love and healing power. Tim Clinton, the founder, and

⁴⁷ Matisse, Ratcliff, and Mosci, "Integration of Spirituality in Counseling," 45.

⁴⁸ Knabb et al., *Christian Psychotherapy*, 1.

president of the American Association of Christian Counselors, holds that Christian mental health counseling should never be an end in itself.⁴⁹ The Apostle Paul sends instructions to the young minister Timothy to teach and “let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:11, ESV). With this instruction in mind, Clinton likewise advises Christian mental health counselors to find a client’s true self by finding new life in Christ.⁵⁰ Likewise, Knabb et al, found through a study of the psychology of religion literature has revealed dozens of meta studies, which indicate that religion can be a source of comfort, encouragement, and improvement for clients.⁵¹ In addition, even without resorting to the sciences of modern studies, they cite evidence that “Christians throughout the ages have consistently written on the protective benefits of a committed, unwavering Christian faith in the midst of stressful life events and other forms of suffering.”⁵²

Paul warns his readers in Ephesians 6:12 (ESV) that our battles are not against the powers of flesh and blood as found in the world. Instead, Paul cautions, our fight is “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Research by Daniela Dumulescu, Constantin Valer Necula, Diana Maria Sarca, and George Willy Cristea confirm that integrating religion and spirituality in mental health counseling is indeed a challenge for many mental health practitioners, especially those who practice in a secular environment among largely secular clients.⁵³ With research by many fellow scholars which has proposed spirituality as a reservoir

⁴⁹ Clinton and Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling*, 35.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Knabb et al., *Christian Psychotherapy*, 4.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Daniela Dumulescu et al., “Spiritual Practices in Psychological Counseling: The Return to the Self,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 21, no. 62 (2022): 20.

for promoting well-being and growth after being confronted with major life stressors, Dumulescu et al. propose that integrating religion and spirituality into therapeutical practices would be of great value for welcoming relief from suffering.⁵⁴ This proposal is in line with John 6:63 (ESV), which reminds believers, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.” Likewise, Romans 8:5 (ESV) warns that those who “set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”

Jesus describes to his followers in Luke 6:38 and Matthew 7:12 that the Kingdom of God operates on an eternal exchange system. We are to extend forgiveness and mercy in the same amount we desire to be forgiven and given understanding. In the same way that we treat others, God will also treat us. This scriptural passage is often referred to as The Golden Rule, and the rule, as a general application, is cited in various ways in the counseling room to have clients think about their dysfunctional actions or thoughts. However, for counselors and others in the helping professions, this passage is what Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlandingham cite as “rules for living as disciples.”⁵⁵ Such contrary-to-expectation living (1) contrasts with how unbelievers act, (2) conforms to the nature of the Father, and (3) is the way to be rewarded.⁵⁶

Given the responsibility of applying biblical principles and lessons to a client’s life and story, Christian mental health counselors often work without the benefit of ordination, commissioning, or even the backing of an organized church structure. Still, Christian counselors are no less than agents of Christ’s love in flesh and blood and present in each counseling session.

⁵⁴ Daniela Dumulescu et al., “Spiritual Practices in Psychological Counseling,” 20.

⁵⁵ Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, ed., *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1,563.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Christians and others have counseled since the First Century using their own various terminology and constructs, but always relying on the promise of Hebrews 13:8 (ESV) that, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” However, science in the last one hundred years has added more help for professional and lay counselors to better understand what can go wrong with the soul in a fallen, fragmented world.⁵⁷ Prophets have long urged individuals to reason with God (Isa 1:18). Even earlier, the writer of Psalms 13:2 complains to his readers about this separation from God and the length he has had only his counsel to comfort himself over the evil of another. And Proverbs 13:10 urges the reader to take counsel for wisdom.

In Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV), Jesus left his disciples with the Great Commission, explicitly directing them in verse 20 to teach all to observe all that he had taught. However, Jesus also gave them this promise: “Behold, I am with you always.” In his commentary on this text, William Barclay observes that it must have been a staggering thing for eleven Galileans to hear Jesus sending them out to conquer the world when most of them had never ventured too far beyond the area surrounding their small fishing village. However, Barclay continues, while the disciples were being sent out on the most significant task in history, they would be the most significant presence in history.⁵⁸ The Christian mental health counselor also feels this burden of responsibility when encountering a recalcitrant client that is seeming bent on having their way despite an impossible situation in which they have been embroiled. It is then that the counselor must depend on Christ and his promise to be with them “always” and everywhere.

The idea of Immanuel—God with us—is an example of mental health treatment in numerous healings and miracles recorded in the Gospels. The most dramatic of these, with

⁵⁷ Knabb et al., *Christian Psychotherapy*, 63.

⁵⁸ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*. Vol. 2, *Daily Study Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), 378.

someone suffering from demonic possession and dysfunctional mental illness symptoms, can be found in the story of the demon-possessed and irrational man living in the tombs in Mark 5:1-20. The man and his condition were no surprise to Jesus, who healed him of his irrational behavior and brought him to his right mind. That man is unreasonable and often without rational thoughts and actions should be as an accepted fact today as it was in the time of Christ. In their study, Jason Nieuwsma, Robyn Walser, and Steven Hayes confirmed that one of the most critical findings of psychological science in the past half century is that humans are not always purely rational.⁵⁹ This story of this demon-possessed man is also striking because the man lived in the tombs among the dead, not in town among the living. It is therefore implied that the man was alone, shunned, and without the comfort and support of other human beings. Indeed, this man's only companions before Jesus arrived was demons and rotting corpses. William Hendriksen calls this contrast between Jesus' concern for others and the heartlessness of demons who possess humans and men themselves "is strikingly contrasted"⁶⁰ in this passage. Grace House clients often likewise suffer neglect from friends and family, and their condition often drives them from the normality of such "normal" relationships, including the church and Christ himself. Hendriksen also points out that Jesus' direction to the man called Legion to "Go home to your people" is an emphasis that true missionary activity begins at home. However, Hendriksen contends, it only begins at home; it doesn't end there. He cites the concerns that a church member has about providing a Christian education to his children as well as to sending missionaries abroad. "The latter task is indeed very important and necessary, but the former

⁵⁹ Nieuwsma, Walser, and Hayes, *ACT for Clergy and Pastoral Counselors*, 13.

⁶⁰ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 189.

should have the priority.”⁶¹ It is to this atmosphere, which is not unlike a Christian home, that Grace House clients are attracted.

Clients often relate to counselors that they selected Grace House as a destination for Christian mental health counseling specifically because of the center’s stated religious stance and reputation in the community. Most clients with some church background who come to Grace House, Christian or otherwise, are roiled in spirit and mind. They often have found themselves in life conditions that seem overwhelming, unsolvable, or which have become unmanageable using their available skills and resources. They seek a spirit of peace, acceptance, and hope at Grace House. These clients are often looking for spiritual rest and comfort, and, regardless of their church or education status, they seem to innately look to Grace House as an oasis in a desert wasteland (Ps 107:4) as they look for a place of more permanent rest. Conversely, the unchurched or lightly churched clients who find their way to Grace House are looking for immediate or near-immediate counseling for similar reasons as the churched clients. However, some non-churched clients show up, not realizing Grace House is a faith-based environment. This often leads these clients to express confusion and fear that they will be subject to unrequested religious judgment and rebuke.

In an attempt to accommodate these clients, Grace House counselors seek to employ the four tenants of Thomas à Kempis that bring great inward peace: (1) do the will of another rather than your own; (2) choose always to have less rather than more; (3) always seek the lowest place and consider others better than yourself; (4) wish and pray that God’s will be fulfilled entirely in you.⁶² This attitude of service and putting others before ourselves is in keeping with Jesus’

⁶¹ Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Mark*, 197.

⁶² Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos, 1999), 156.

parable of taking the lower place at the wedding banquet in Luke 14:8. Here, Jesus uses his dinner with a leader of the Pharisees. Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham point out that Jesus again “taught his disciples to consider the eternal perspective. His disciples must wait to be exalted, and they must be generous and considerate of others in this life, expecting to be repaid at the resurrection.”⁶³ This attitude of acceptance and humility on the part of the Christian mental health counselor, if given time, will more likely than not begin to melt away fears and will allow the client to feel safe and be more open and responsive to the counselor.

Grace House counselors, though they may never have heard of Thomas à Kempis or his list of tenants that bring inner peace, follow similar biblical directions because of their love for their clients, their dedication to Matthew 25:40 (ESV) and its directions to minister to “the least of these.” It is the tradition of St. Martin of Tours, the patron saint of chaplaincy, that he was met one day by a beggar. Having no money to give him, Martin, then a Roman Legionnaire, divided his red officer’s cape in half so the beggar might keep warm. The ruining of his cape subjected Martin to much abuse and derision from other officers. But in a dream that night, Martin was told that the beggar to whom he gave the cloak was Jesus in disguise. Barclay observes that such generosity as Martin’s, with no hope or thought of a return on our investment in time, is to extend the help of Jesus himself.⁶⁴

In keeping with the spirit of Saint Martin, Grace House counselors often are called upon to meet their clients’ needs by functioning as spiritual advisors or de facto lay chaplains. They respond by ministering in the counseling room not only with clinical mental health skills but also with the biblical wisdom they have acquired, formally or informally, in their background.

⁶³ Rydelnik and Vanlaningham, ed. *Moody Bible Commentary*, 1580.

⁶⁴ Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 326.

However, this training is not uniform across the diverse counselors and staff at Grace House. For example, one counselor is an ordained Baptist minister and a Navy chaplain; two others have undergraduate degrees from Bible college. The director holds a master's from Loyola in religious education and is a lay commissioned chaplain by the Special Jurisdiction of Armed Forces and Chaplaincy of the Anglican Church in North America. He is also enrolled in a Doctor of Ministry Course at Liberty University. These individuals would be the exception as most counselors have undergraduate degrees in psychology, sociology, or some form of social work. While they may have spent much of their adult life in church, most are working in a Christian environment for the first time.

Unsurprisingly, Kevin F. Karl, Carlin M. Weinberg, Lakyah M. Bullock, Emily K. Wallace, and Ashley N. Pettway found that these usually self-trained Christian counselors often resort to interventions that directly reference God, prayer, Bible/Scripture, grace, or religion generally garnered scores in faith integration higher than those that were less overtly faith integrative.⁶⁵ This, they contend, suggests a degree of creativity and improvisation on the part of Christian counselors and therapists, “implying that if the therapist or counselor did not receive direct training in how to integrate faith in practice, they still found ways to do so.”⁶⁶

Thus, what Christian counselors at Grace House do bring in abundance to the counseling room is their love of Jesus and his command in John 13:34 to love others as he has loved us. While Christ exhibited his love for a sinful world by dying on the cross, Christian mental health counselors desire to die to themselves so they may extend Christ's love to others who are in pain. Therefore, if a client wants to discuss religious matters with them, they should adopt an open-

⁶⁵ Kevin F. Karl et al., “Integrating Faith and Practice: A Descriptive Study Toward an Operational Definition of Christian Therapy and Counseling Practice,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 40, no. 4 (2021): 310.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

minded attitude toward the client's religious beliefs. At the same time, they should be aware of the ethical issues involved with religion-based interventions.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Shiah et al. suggest in their study that the "meaning of life was found to partially mediate the relation between anxiety and mental health."⁶⁸

Therefore, what Grace House counselors may specifically lack in formal Bible training, they attempt to make up with spirituality and by showing the love of God in thought, word, and deed. David G. Brenner defines spirituality as a reference to "a person's awareness of and response to the Divine."⁶⁹ Christian spirituality, Brenner adds, "involves working out our existence within the context of the Christian faith and community."⁷⁰

It is this concern with working within the context of the Christian faith and community provided by membership in a church, that prompted the requirement for all staff and counselors hired by or affiliated with Grace House to affirm and sign the American Association of Christian Counselor's Statement of Faith and be members of a local church.⁷¹ Before this requirement was adopted by the current director, it was not unusual to have mental health counselors looking for a place to counsel as well as potential staff members to inquire about joining Grace House. Today, the requirements involving the statement of faith and church affiliations are stated on the center's Website (gracehousecounseling.com). As a result, the director is seldom approached about affiliation or employment from non-church attending counselors or potential employees.

⁶⁷ Yung-Jong Shiah et al., "Religion and Health: Anxiety, Religiosity, Meaning of Life and Mental Health," *Journal of Religion Health* 54, no. 1 (2015): 42.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶⁹ David G. Brenner, *Sacred Companions the Gift of Spiritual Friendship and Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 15.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ American Association of Christian Counselors, "Statement of Faith."

However, there is no requirement for such spiritual or Bible training to work or counsel at the center. Despite an admittedly uneven level of training among Grace House counselors and staff, their experience in both church and in the counseling profession at large, exceed the religious training of many mental health counselors and staff in secular counseling centers. This observation is supported by research highlighted by Nieuwsma, Walser, and Hayes, demonstrating that the average health care provider is less religious than the patients they serve. They also found that mental health care providers are among the least traditionally religious in the counseling field.⁷²

The current success that counselors enjoy with their clients at Grace House is significant because of their open and honest communication and trust with those clients. As Michael Grove observes, feelings must be free to be shared openly and honestly while concurrently respecting the rights of the client. Grove suggested that for this to occur, there must be a high level of trust to minimize the typical “storms” of human interactions.⁷³ Counselors at Grace House face those storms daily, and while they are largely successful, they would undoubtedly benefit from more spiritual resources in the counseling room.

When Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch on the road in Acts 8:31 (ESV), the young deacon asked the eunuch if he understood what he was reading from the Book of Isaiah. The eunuch responded with a question: “How can I know unless someone guides me?” Today’s implication of this story is that one with more knowledge is needed to properly lead one with less knowledge. Grace House counselors are well-versed and experienced in counseling skills. Their understanding of spiritual matters is generally well grounded in most areas. However, regardless

⁷² Nieuwsma, Walser, and Hayes, *ACT for Clergy and Pastoral Counselors*, 9.

⁷³ Michael Grove, “The Three Rs of Pastoral Care: Relationships, Respect and Responsibility,” *Pastoral Care in Education* 22, no. 2 (June 2004): 34-37.

of their level of spiritual and biblical knowledge, it is assumed that all would benefit to some degree from a pastoral resource manual directed explicitly at mental health and pastoral care needs.

As H. Norman Wright observes, the purpose of all counseling is to help clients become more self-sufficient and to gradually wean them from the counselors' insights, help, and attendance. "Your task," Wright says, "is to work yourself out of a job and to rejoice with the person when that occurs."⁷⁴ This cannot be done without the help of the Holy Spirit who is as present in the counseling room as the counselor and the client. This is in keeping with the promise of Hebrews 8:26-27 (ESV) that the Spirit helps us in our weakness: "For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." As William Crane observes, the Holy Spirit therefore knows the inner thoughts and feelings of the counselor, who is wise to seek the Holy Spirit's wisdom. Thus, "When the counselor becomes counselee in the presence of the Wonderful Counselor and sincerely seeks the honest reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, which the Holy Spirit promises, then he may find it. Many have."⁷⁵

Theoretical Foundations

Most would agree that in a perfect world, there would be no sin, suffering, or shame. Mental health counselors, pastors, and those working in the helping professions would be out of a job. But we do not live in a perfect world, nor will we on this side of heaven. It is no secret that, as M. Scott Peck wrote in 1978, many find that "life is difficult" and, further, that "life is a

⁷⁴ H. Norman Wright, *Crisis and Trauma Counseling* (Minneapolis, MN: BethanyHouse, 2014), 42.

⁷⁵ William Crane, *When God Comes In: The Divine Plus in Counseling* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1970), 28.

series of problems.”⁷⁶ However, Jesus told his disciples in John 16:33 to take heart against the world even as it is besieging them and to remember that he has overcome the world. Clinton and Ohlschlager point out that there is a “false and twisted belief” that suffering comes from God. Suffering comes from human error and Satan’s intervention. Clinton and Ohlschlager recommend that since distress can’t be escaped in this life, individuals would be better off and perhaps live a better life if they have hope that they can find meaning and redemption through the pain.⁷⁷

It is with this hope of finding meaning and redemption that the client often seeks solace through Christian mental health counseling. In doing so, the client is admitting to himself or herself that life has become unmanageable in one or more ways, and what they have been doing, or not doing, is not working. These individuals are often painfully living out the adage that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different result. In making this admission, the client may then be free to join with the Christian mental health therapist in a common effort to ease or alleviate the pain and/or suffering through change. The goal of the Christian therapist, therefore, is to help their clients make the necessary changes to correctly link their faith and Scripture with the science and skills of psychology and counseling for a better life. However, as Peggy Papp notes, there are repercussions from all changes, big or small, and solving an immediate problem often creates another problem in the larger ecology.⁷⁸ The playwright George Bernard Shaw made a similar observation that there are two tragedies of life. One is to lose your heart’s desire. The other is to gain it.

⁷⁶ M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled, 25th Anniversary Edition: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth* (New York: Touchstone, 1978), 15.

⁷⁷ Clinton and Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling*, 23.

⁷⁸ Peggy Papp, *The Process of Change* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1983), 11.

As in all mental health counseling, the goal for every therapist should be for their clients to improve their mental health through appropriate thinking, actions, and relationships. However, as Thomas Howard warns, the state of other people's faith is our business only if we are responsible for them. Also, he cautions, "Faith is often scarcely recognizable across the lines that divide Christendom."⁷⁹ Christian counselors, therefore, must effectively combine the skills learned from biblical principles, the application of psychological skills, and appropriate and timely insights from life experiences to help their clients better manage their lives, activities, and relationships. Stewart-Sicking, Fox, and Deal point to studies that indicate, despite decreased belonging to religious organizations, religious traditions are often present in the developmental ecosystems of seemingly secular clients' lives.⁸⁰

Counselors relate that they are often hesitant to bring religion into the counseling session unless the client mentions it first. This is in keeping with the contention of Harold J. Koenig, who says that, at a minimum, therapists should keep religion out of the counseling session if for no other reason than consideration and respect for the religious or spiritual beliefs of their clients.⁸¹ Koenig further says, that evidence indicates that the benefits of religious interventions depend on the faith of the client. He notes the benefits are particularly strong in religious clients, but weaker in those who are not religious.⁸² In broaching the subject of religion, all licensed professional counselors, even those who present themselves to their clients as Christian, must remember to follow the laws of their state, the rules and regulations of their state licensing board,

⁷⁹ Thomas Howard, *Evangelical is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1984), 154.

⁸⁰ Stewart-Sicking, Fox, and Deal, *Bringing Religion and Spirituality into Therapy*, 2.

⁸¹ Koenig, *Religion and Mental Health Research*, 280.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 274.

and the ethics of their discipline. Additionally, counselors are mandatory reporters for indications of harm to themselves, their clients, or others. Therefore, being a Christian mental health counselor does not reduce responsibility for a therapist; it adds to it.

To accomplish all these duties and responsibilities, not only to their professional ethics and state laws, but to God and their client, the Christian counselor must meet clients where they are and offer their services as a guide to lead them to where they need to move to live a healthier life. This may not necessarily be where the clients want to go when they enter counseling. But, as Papp explains, the therapist's job "is to identify the particular pattern that is related to the symptom and to find a way of changing that participating pattern."⁸³ This may involve patience and reliance on God, not utilizing the skills or psychology, to change the minds of the client. James 5:16 (ESV) reassures the Christian counselor and all others who would listen, that "the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

The goal of all counseling is to help clients identify their "stinking thinking" habits that have resulted in a dysfunctional emotional and mental state of being. In his article "Stinking Thing and Expectation Bias," Bernard J. Luskin quoted Dr. Bob Wright, CEO of Wright Graduate University, who defined stinking thinking (ST) as "involving tactics that can be intentionally used to establish expectation bias in order to control or manipulate situations and affect decision-making."⁸⁴ He said, "The behaviors displayed in ST range from overt forms of bullying to more subtle efforts to cloud clear and objective thinking."⁸⁵

⁸³ Papp, *Change*, 10.

⁸⁴ Bernard J. Luskin, "Stinking Thinking and Expectation Bias," *Psychology Today*, November 16, 2013, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-media-psychology-effect/201311/stinking-thinking-and-expectation-bias>.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Luskin concludes that “Stinking Thinking is a weapon of influence that can cause us to react automatically with a bias that destroys our normal, rational decision-making processes.”⁸⁶ Psychologists, he says, call these easily triggered behaviors “fixed-action patterns,” and once a trigger is known, it is possible to predict with reasonable likelihood how a person will react.⁸⁷

Likewise, Ellen Kirschman writes in *Psychology Today* that how we think and talk to ourselves determines how we feel and how we act. “We are all prone to making thinking errors that tend toward the negative,” she explains.⁸⁸ This is a process known as a negative bias override and likely is a survival skill dating back to cave person days. According to Kirschman, some common thinking errors include: all or nothing thinking; assuming you know another person’s thoughts or how things will go in the future; jumping to conclusions; magical thinking or unreasonable self-blame; dismissing positive outcomes; and catastrophizing.⁸⁹

Kirschman maintains that Stinking Thinking can be countered by using “the three Cs”

1. Capture the thought: Ask yourself “What was I saying to myself before I started feeling down, frightened, anxious, angry, in need of a drink?” Check your thinking against the above list.
2. Challenge yourself by asking yourself the following: “What’s the evidence that my negative thoughts are true?” Be tough. Do an honest cross examination.
3. Change your thoughts to something more reasonable, yet realistic.⁹⁰

Christian counselors should also identify those behaviors inconsistent with God’s teachings that may be contributing in large or small measures to the presenting problem, which brought the client to counseling. To this end, Clinton and Ohlschlager recommend that Christian

⁸⁶ Luskin, “Stinking Thinking and Expectation Bias.”

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ellen Kirschman, “Stinking Thinking: How Our Thoughts Determine How We Feel,” *Psychology Today*, October 17, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/cop-doc/202010/stinking-thinking-how-our-thoughts-determine-how-we-feel>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Counselors incorporate a wisdom theology of caregiving because that “incorporates both the creation and redemptive visions of God and is most applicable to problems in daily living.”⁹¹ The hope of all counseling is that, under the guidance of a skilled Christian Counselor, the client will become more accepting of God’s will—even when it’s not their will. Dennis P. Hollinger succinctly defines the need for intervention by Christian mental health counseling when he states that unhealthy behaviors arise when moral bars are set too low. He maintains that God’s character and actions are the standards for our lives. However, for this standard to be realized, there must be an infusion of the very nature of God’s patterns in us.⁹²

Scripture, likewise, is replete with wisdom about improving our lives and deodorizing their stinking thinking. Philippians 4:6-8 (ESV) for instance, encourages believers not to be anxious about anything, “but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” The most difficult part of this Scripture is to achieve the peace that passes understanding, one must give up understanding. For many clients, this is easier said than done. To achieve this surrender to God’s will, according to Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV), is “to seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” The reward of seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, is preventing anxiety about such matters as to what will happen tomorrow “for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

⁹¹ Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager, *Caring for People God’s Way: Introduction to Christian Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 17.

⁹² Dennis P. Hollinger, *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 67.

The infusion of God’s love through the wisdom of Scripture may be resisted by many clients for various reasons, not the least of which is their lifetime of walking in the sinful nature of their own flesh. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (ESV), the reader is told that while we are of the flesh, our spiritual warfare is not waged according to the flesh and the counselor must “destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive.” This barrier to God’s love and mercy must be breached with spiritual weapons provided by the competent Christian counselor, but only with the client’s permission. This may require much patience on the part of the counselor as they work in session to gain the trust and confidence of the client. At its most basic level, the pastoral care of Christian mental health counseling is the outworking of the remarkable claim of God’s presence, bidden or not bidden, in our lives. Psalm 23 assures with that the Lord is not just like a shepherd; the Lord is my shepherd—a subtle yet profound distinction and tacit acknowledgment of God’s care for each individual. Christian mental health care, first and foremost, is concerned with the cure or care of souls. This is an ancient reference to the “cure of souls,” which is recognized more in some church traditions than others. The word “cure” derives from the Latin *curaanimarum* and means “care of souls.”

The Christian counselor knows that not all clients will accept the Christian faith as truth when it is presented to them in session. Counselors must remember that all therapy moves at the speed of trust, and clients are more comfortable when they feel they have a modicum of control over their lives. Many clients are seeking counseling because they feel their lives or circumstances are out of control. Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King state that we come to know God as we experience him. God reveals himself to us through our experience of him at

work in our lives.⁹³ To be effective and to help clients change their unhealthy behavior, the Christian counselor must meet the client where they are, both physically and spiritually. They must often do as they are directed in Ephesians 6:10 (ESV) to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” According to William Miller and Stephen Rollnick, this process of change often involves three critical components of motivation: readiness, willingness, and ability.⁹⁴ Therefore, Miller and Rollnick contend, “if people find an avenue for change that they believe will work (general efficacy) and that they believe they can do (self-efficacy), they will often pursue it through behavior change.”⁹⁵

Christian mental health counselors should remember they are not allowed by the ethics of their professional organization to “push” unwanted beliefs about faith or other nontherapeutic ideas on their clients. This is not only because the client is paying for the session, but also because professional counselors, Christian or not, have no ethical stance to force their personal beliefs about anything on the client. They must depend on God and follow the leading of the spirit. Sometimes, the client isn’t ready to accept everything the Christian mental health counselor proposes, but by planting the seeds of faith, the counselor follows Paul’s description of the cooperation of ministry in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 (ESV), “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” As Clinton and Ohlschlager observe, “all things are genuinely possible when God is present in Christian Counseling.”⁹⁶

⁹³ Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1994), 9.

⁹⁴ William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2002), 10.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁶ Clinton and Ohlschlager, *Caring for People God’s Way*, 19.

An effective and ethical counselor, therefore, presents the best practices of mental health training and the truth of Scripture so the client can receive it as a possible remedy for their complaints. Steve Wilkens cautions that when ethics and ethical systems are considered, right means something different than correct. Correct, Wilkens holds, is the label attached to factually true information, while the right is oriented to moral truth.⁹⁷ The ethical Christian mental health counselor must be concerned with both the correct and the proper. An adage in counseling is that one can't, and shouldn't, prescribe until they diagnose. This means there is a paramount need to receive accurate information from the client in order to correctly point them to a healthier and satisfying outcome. There is also an element of wisdom involved in this kind of discernment. Billy Graham wrote that there are three kinds of wisdom available to mankind. The first is a natural wisdom, and the second comes from learning, "but the highest kind of wisdom comes directing from God and is associated with the particular work of the Holy Spirit."⁹⁸ For the Christian mental health counselor, the Holy Spirit, the Wonderful Counselor, is, or should be, a welcome partner and co-counselor in every therapy session.

Mental Health Examples from Scripture

While the Bible doesn't specifically identify anxiety, bipolar disorder, or depression, there is evidence throughout the Old and New Testaments of individuals struggling with mental health. The Psalms are replete with verses that speak of negative emotions and inner turmoil. Brad E. Kelle describes King Saul as a "morally wounded warrior" who likely suffered from depression and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).⁹⁹ David, described as "a man after

⁹⁷ Steve Wilkens, *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 16.

⁹⁸ Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1988), 191.

⁹⁹ Brad E. Kelly, *The Bible and Moral Injury* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2020), 47.

God's own heart," cries out to God in Psalm 38 for relief from his inner mental turmoil and pain that is likely depressive symptoms, and is certainly anxiety. In the New Testament, Jesus repeatedly encountered individuals suffering from "evil spirits," but whose symptoms would be familiar to any mental health counselor today. Consider Jesus' encounter with the man identified as "Legion" in the region of Gadarenes as related in Matthew 8:28-9:1, Mark 5:1-21, and Luke 8:26, or with the father of the young boy with an "unclean spirit" in Mark 9:14-29, Matthew 17:14-20, and Luke 9:37-42, who might today have been diagnosed as an epileptic. Eric Johnson calls Jesus the "supreme soul physician" whose mission was to heal humankind from its worse maladies, spiritual and ethical in nature.¹⁰⁰ It is not for nothing that Psalm 147:3 (ESV) tells the reader that God "heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

The Power of Prayer

Jesus the Son never acted without relying on God the Father, and he never went very long before setting himself apart to seek God's comfort, solace, and wisdom. The Gospel accounts are replete with references to Jesus separating himself from the disciples and the crowds to be alone with God and replenish his spiritual needs (Mark 1:35, Mark 6:45-46, Mark 14:32-34, Luke 4:42, Luke 5:16, and Luke 6:12). Each time Jesus was under tremendous pressure or exhausted from his labors. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the reader is told that Jesus' anguish and anxiety were so intense that his sweat was compared to "drops of blood" in Mark 14, Matthew 26:37-38, and Luke 22:39-46. The Christian mental health counselor would do well to emulate Jesus and seek God's wisdom, both in and out of sessions with their clients.

Prayer with and for clients and for themselves is always appropriate if the client agrees. Not all clients are comfortable with spoken prayer, and the Christian counselor should always

¹⁰⁰ Johnson, *God and Soul Care*, 8.

ask for the client's permission before doing so. However, there is nothing is to keep a counselor from silently praying for God's help and intervention during a session. That "arrow prayer" may be for the client, the counselor, or both, and may, as James 5:16 promises, have great power as it is working. H. Norman Wright maintains that prayer should not be intrusive and that all prayers should be brief but sensitive. More importantly, he says, prayer to help someone in difficulty is a privilege.¹⁰¹ Likewise, Blackaby and King make a point that prayer is a relationship, not just a religious activity. Prayers, they contend, "is designed more to adjust you to God than to adjust God to you."¹⁰²

While admitting the need for at least various levels of help in dealing with clients and spiritual matters, many Grace House counselors have nonetheless expressed resistance to attending traditional or even self-study training in spiritual or pastoral care. All cite the additional time needed and stress entailed in adding such activity to what they already consider a busy schedule. To circumvent this hurdle and assist the counselors at Grace House in their spiritual and pastoral interaction with clients, an electronic spiritual and pastoral care resource manual will be developed and circulated. This spiritual resource manual is expected to include, but not be limited to, an introduction, an explanation of what makes mental health counseling Christian, a basic description of pastoral and spiritual care, and a selection of several diagnoses or mental or emotional conditions such as depression, anger, anxiety, grief, etc., with scriptural responses that the counselor can use in a session. Each disorder will be accompanied by a collect (prayer) taken from the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*, 2019 to accompany the biblical citations for each disorder. In addition, a history of Grace House, a copy of the American

¹⁰¹ Wright, *Crisis and Trauma Counseling*, 420.

¹⁰² Blackaby and King, *Experiencing God*, 174.

Association of Christian Counselors' Statement of Faith, the Apostle's Creed, and Fruit of the Spirit will be appended.

In conjunction with the development of this spiritual resource manual, two questionnaires will be developed to help clarify the topics needed in this spiritual and pastoral care resources manual, one to be distributed to counselors at the beginning of the study and the second after a spiritual resource manual is produced, and counselors have an opportunity to incorporate in their practice. The counselors' questionnaire will seek answers to whether spiritual knowledge is strong or weak, and counselors' general familiarity with other spiritual resources such as books, Websites, or religious-based financial or spiritual assistance.

There is an adage that Christianity may be defined as one beggar telling another beggar where to find food. We are all now, or at some time in our past have been, hungry for the bread of life, which is found only in Jesus Christ. It is of eternal importance that Christian mental health counselors be equipped to serve this bread of life as part of their care for their clients. David Brenner says that the supreme gift one can give another "is to help that person live life more aware of the presence of God."¹⁰³ Likewise, Robert Crick reminds us that we are at our best as healers when we approach physical and spiritual care with our eyes and hearts wide open. And that care is best given when we no longer fear making a connection with another's pain through our pain; providing that such a connection doesn't compromise the care given.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

When clients walk into a counseling session, they don't leave their spiritual or religious beliefs or disbeliefs in the waiting room. Kenneth I. Pargament contends each client brings with

¹⁰³ Brenner, *Sacred Companions*, 17.

¹⁰⁴ Crick, *Outside the Gates*, 27.

them their individual history, practices, experiences, values, relationships, and struggles. Implicitly or explicitly, he contends, this complexity of spiritual factors often enters the psychotherapy process.¹⁰⁵ This complexity of spiritual factors plagued even the great evangelist Paul, who suffered from what he described in 2 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV) as his “thorn in the flesh.” Paul described this thorn and its accompanying pain and distress as “a messenger of Satan” with its purpose to “torment” him. Unfortunately, there are no definitive specifics as to what this “thorn” might have been. Because of this lack of specificity, the ambiguity of the difficulty has been general enough for two millennia that Christians have applied Paul’s suffering to various personal mental and physical problems that the Christian may encounter daily. Christian mental health counselors must have faith that the “thorn” plaguing them, or their clients, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual, is known to God. They must also believe that God’s grace is as sufficient for them or for those under their care as it was for Paul.

Along with their faith in God, Christian mental health counselors, to be effective with their clients, regardless of the client’s faith, must be knowledgeable of the Scriptures and their application to the complaints of clients sitting before them in an hour-long session each week. While all Christian counselors know the Scriptures and their application to the lives and complaints of their clients, many are increasingly concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened mental health issues. As a result, Christian counselors at Grace House increasingly report they are seeing clients who are seeking advice and counseling for mental health issues that are actually spiritual concerns masked as mental health issues. As Colossians 1:26-27 reminds us, the core of all Christianity, especially Christian counseling, is hidden in the person of Christ. To find the root problem of clients’ concerns is to seek the presence of Christ.

¹⁰⁵ Pargament, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy*, 4.

Ken Sande likewise maintains that all conflicts provide opportunities to glorify God, serve others, and grow to be like Christ.¹⁰⁶ These opportunities, which are in other places described as being faithful to God, being merciful to others, and acting justly to us, are captured in Micah 6:8 and Matthew 23:23. Therefore, producing a spiritual and pastoral care resource manual for Christian mental health counselors would help them help their clients live out the truth and promise of the gospels and to make the Lord's priorities their priorities. If the counselors are provided with this manual, it is proposed that, as Sande says, every conflict is a potential stepping-stone to a closer relationship with God and a more fulfilling and fruitful Christian life.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 40.

¹⁰⁷ Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 40.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The intervention plan for this action research project was the designing, producing, and distribution of an electronic spiritual/biblical counseling resource manual for Christian Mental Health Counselors at Grace House Counseling Center in Fleming Island, Florida. Once completed, this manual was to be electronically distributed to the fifteen counselors at the center eligible to participate in the study. The manual was to be accompanied by two questionnaires asking for voluntary responses to questions concerning their spiritual and biblical knowledge and the use of such knowledge in their therapy sessions. The questionnaires were designed to serve two goals: (1). Surveying the spiritual and biblical knowledge and experience of mental health counselors at Grace House; and (2). They involve and interest the counselors in participating in the research project by garnering their input into the manual's contents. It was believed that soliciting the counselors' input about the manual would increase their buy-in, not only in the project but with their inclination to use the spiritual resource manual as part of their counseling practice. (After completing this project, this manual is anticipated to be modified into a training tool for future licensed mental health therapists who practice at Grace House. The working title for this resource manual is *Counseling with Grace*.)

Ernest T. Stringer says such a participatory process among stakeholders is necessary to formulate a “community of inquiry.”¹ When working with people, Stringer says, it is important to “create the conditions that will mobilize their energy, engage their enthusiasm, and generate activity that can be productively applied to the resolution of issues and problems that concern

¹ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2014), 23.

them.”² Thus, Stringer postulates that creating this “common unity” among participants “strengthens the democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing qualities of social life.”³

Similarly, Tim Sensing says that Doctor of Ministry students are ambassadors of God and servants of the gospel of Christ.⁴ As such, he continues, the researcher is leading change in the social-religious lives of people, therefore, “Your role as a minister is a sacred trust.”⁵ It was thus decided at the beginning of this project that, if accepted by Grace House counselors as a part of their counseling resources, the manual would be made available without charge to various churches, ministry groups, and other Christian mental health counselors practicing in the Clay County area.

The Need for an Intervention

The need for spiritual resources for mental health counselors at Grace House Counseling Center became apparent because of several informal conversations with counselors, both licensed and state-registered interns, during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2022. All mental health counselors, regardless of license identity (LCSW, LMHC, or LMFT), are urged to adhere to one or more codes of ethics by one or more professional associations to which they may belong or adhere to in their practice. These include the American Mental Health Counselors Association,⁶ the American Counseling Association,⁷ the National Board of Certified

² Stringer, *Action Research*, 23.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 31.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ American Mental Health Counselors Association, *AMHCA Code of Ethics: Ethical Priorities for Clinical Mental Health Counseling* (Alexandria, VA: American Mental Health Counselors Association, 2020), www.amhca.org/publications/ethics.

Counselors,⁸ the Clinical Social Work Association,⁹ and the American Association of Christian Counselors,¹⁰ all of which prevent them from discussing the specifics of their cases, such as names or other facts that would identify their clients. However, it is not outside the code of ethics for counselors to discuss troublesome aspects of cases with other therapists in monthly peer sessions or informal conversations, which are confidential.

All counselors at Grace House are encouraged to attend a regular monthly semi-formal peer session where they may confidently ask colleagues for advice or opinions about cases, treatments, or resources to help clients. The discussions among the counselors at several of these monthly sessions in the past year have been about the number of clients seeking counseling who reported anxiety and anxiety-related symptoms. Counselors also noted that they are ministering to more non-churched clients and clients who no longer attend church because of pandemic restrictions or fears. This anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that this influx of non-churched clients is due to anxiety and other stressors triggered by the pandemic, which presented itself in Northeast Florida in early 2020 and did not abate until late summer of 2022. As a result of the fear generated by the pandemic in the first year, many churches in Clay County suspended in-person worship services for six months to a year, an action that deprived many parishioners of a confidential source for Bible and spiritual counsel. All these churches have resumed regular

⁷ American Counseling Association, *2014 ACA Code of Ethics: As Approved by the ACA Governing Council* (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 2014), www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf.

⁸ National Board for Certified Counselors, “NBCC Code of Ethics,” October 7, 2016, <https://nbcc.org/Assets/Ethics/NBCCCodeofEthics.pdf>.

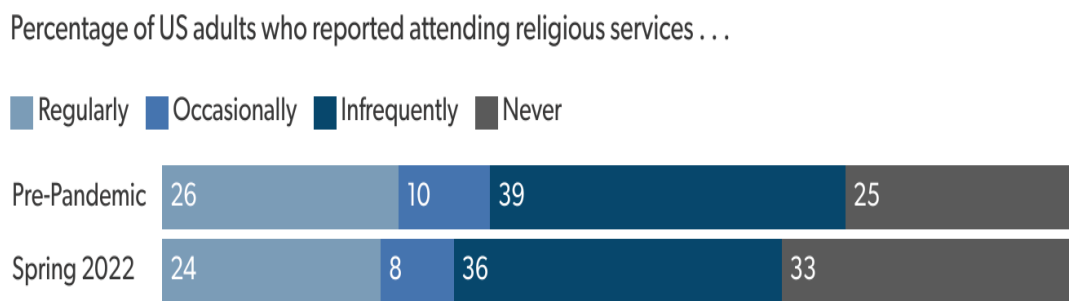
⁹ Clinical Social Work Association, “CSWA Code of Ethics: April 2016,” accessed March 1, 2023, <https://www.clinicalsocialworkassociation.org/CSWA-Ethics>.

¹⁰ American Association of Christian Counselors, “AACC Code of Ethics,” accessed March 1, 2023, www.aacc.net/code-of-ethics-2.

services, although conversations with several church leaders indicate attendance numbers are not at pre-pandemic levels.

On a national level, this hesitancy of churchgoers to return to pre-pandemic attendance levels is evident in the 2022 American Religious Benchmark Survey by the Survey Center on American Life conducted by the American Enterprise Institute and researchers at the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. The findings were reported by Daniel A. Cox, Jennifer Benz, and Lindsay Witt-Swanson, who said that religious attendance was significantly lower in spring 2022 than pre-pandemic.¹¹ The survey reported that in the spring of 2022, 33 percent of Americans reported never attending religious services, compared to one in four (25 percent) who reported this before the pandemic. However, there was less change among the most religiously engaged Americans. Before the pandemic, 26 percent of Americans reported attending religious services at least once a week, similar to the 24 percent who did so in spring 2022.¹² Their findings are found in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Percentage of US adults who attended religious services pre- and post-pandemic.



Note: Survey of US adults (N = 9,425). Figures may total less than 100 percent due to rounding. Data were collected from 2018 to March 2020 and February to April 2022. Source: NORC at the University of Chicago.

Source: Cox, Benz, and Witt-Swanson, “Faith After the Pandemic.”

¹¹ Daniel A. Cox, Jennifer Benz, and Lindsey Witt-Swanson, “Faith After the Pandemic: How COVID-19 changed American Religion,” American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, January 05, 2022, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/faith-after-the-pandemic-how-covid-19-changed-american-religion/>.

¹² Ibid.

The impact of the pandemic on mental health counseling services at Grace House was noticeable in the number of anxiety-related disorders reported by new clients. Like most of America, the pandemic in early 2020 undermined the comfort level of many Clay County and Northeast Florida residents. In addition, masks, vaccines, illness, isolation (forced or self-imposed), and closing trusted institutions, such as churches, raised anxiety levels. Even after the pandemic abated in mid to late 2022, anxiety and other related disorders remained evident among the clients who sought help at Grace House. In the first three months of 2023, there were nearly 2,600 visits by 654 clients to Grace House. Of these visits, 1,347 were made by 375 clients. Half of those seeking help at Grace House reported issues involving anxiety or anxiety-related disorders (see Figure 3.1 below). To treat those clients presenting with anxiety, counselors often employ not only mental health counsel but also biblical and spiritual truths as a part of their session. As Ghaderi et al. report, to attempt to treat someone's complaints without addressing the spiritual aspects of their situation is as if the practitioner is not treating the whole person.¹³

¹³ Ahmad Ghaderi et al., "Explanatory definition of the concept of spiritual health: a qualitative study in Iran," *J Med Ethics Hist Med* (April 2018) 11, no. 3, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6150917/>.

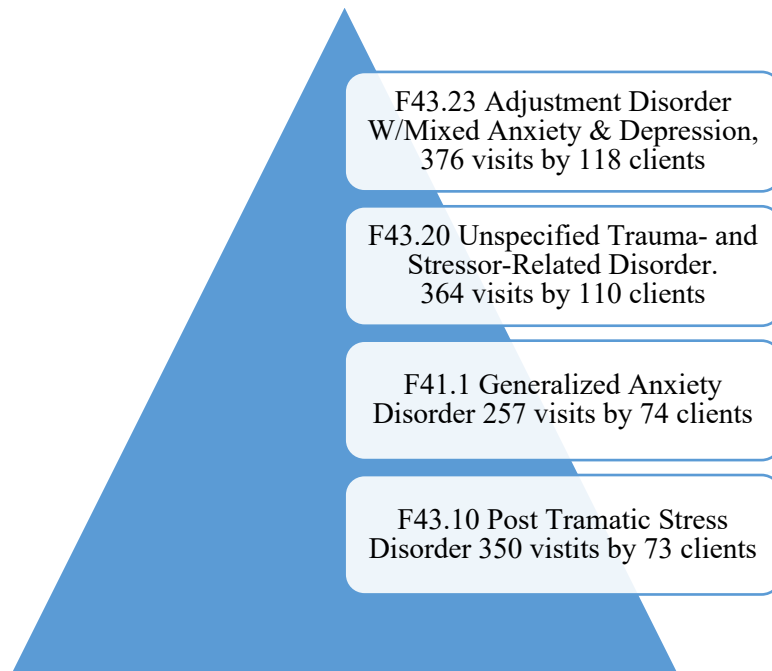


Figure 3.1: Most common diagnosis codes of Grace House clients, January 2023-March 2023

However, the question of providing an effective delivery method for incorporating soul care and mental health counseling needs to be clarified. Kevin F. Karl, Carlin M. Weinberg, Lakyah M. Bullock, Emily K. Wallace, and Ashley N. Pettway found in their research on several studies of incorporating spirituality in counseling that Christian counselors have successfully employed a multitude of interventions (e.g., prayer, use of the Bible/Scripture, discussion of forgiveness). However, they contend there needs to be more specificity in incorporating this into the typical counseling session. They observe, “If one is seeking training in how to conduct Christian therapy or counseling and is told they should incorporate prayer into their work, for example, these studies do not provide the specificity necessary to deduce how one might do so.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Kevin F. Karl, Kevin F., Weinberg, Carlin M., Bullock, Lakyah M., Wallace, Emily K., and Pettway, Ashley N. “Integrating Faith and Practice: A Descriptive Study Toward an Operational Definition of Christian Therapy and Counseling Practice,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 40, no. 4 (2021): 300.

Using almost any definition, in addition to providing mental health care to their clients, Christian mental health counselors also serve as de facto lay chaplains to their clients. Carmen Schuhmann and Annelieke Damen point out the similarity between pastoral care and the care offered by Christian mental health counselors when they observe, “Generally, pastoral caregivers meet with people in situations that may be understood in terms of disorientation in moral space.”¹⁵ Those individuals face loss, illness, death, incarceration, or violence and may feel that their sense of being close to or moving towards ‘the good’—towards a life worth living or a full life—is challenged or even shattered.¹⁶ However, to avoid confusion between lay and ordained ministries, the term “spiritual care” will be used in this thesis instead of “pastoral care.”

Intervention Design

Rick Houser says that the dilemma facing counselors and educators wrestling with finding solutions to issues in the workplace is not if research methods should be used.¹⁷ The dilemma, he contends, is how research methods can “be most effectively and efficiently used to inform the work we do” and provide credible documentation that what is done is effective.¹⁸ With the understanding of the military adage that no plan survives first contact with the enemy, the design for this intervention was planned to progress on three simultaneous paths that eventually merged into one goal. This goal was to design, produce, and distribute an electronic spiritual counseling resource manual (*Counseling with Grace*) for Grace House counselors.

¹⁵ Carmen Schuhmann and Annelieke Damen, “Representing the Good: Pastoral Care in a Secular Age,” *Pastoral Psychology* 67 (2018): 408. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-018-0826-0>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Rick Houser, *Counseling and Educational Research Evaluation and Application* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 1998), 200.

¹⁸ Ibid.

The three paths envisioned to accomplish this initial goal included: (1) The production, distribution, and tabulation of a Likert scale questionnaire for Grace House counselors to determine their familiarity and needs in a spiritual resource manual; (2) The production, distribution, and tabulation of a second Likert scale questionnaire for Grace House counselors to determine their reaction, comments, and any suggested changes to the spiritual research manual; and, (3) The writing of material to be included in the spiritual resource manual, which was evaluated by counselors and reported in their responses to the second questionnaire.

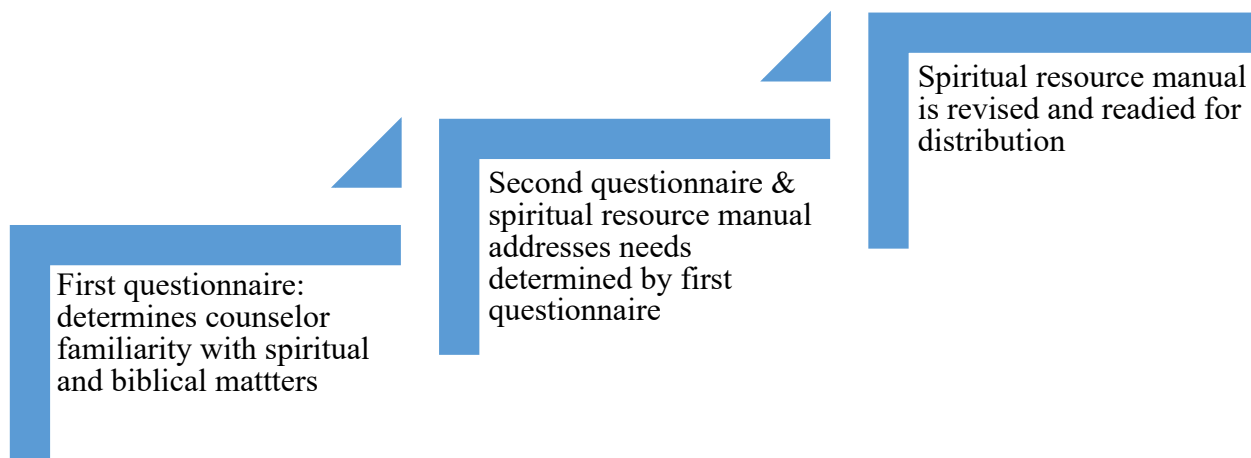


Figure 3.2: Intervention Steps

The two questionnaires highlighted the path to a peer review of the manual. As Lawrence F. Lock et al. observed, “A good question—well thought out and clearly defined—is the engine that drives everything else.”¹⁹ Therefore, Lock et al. conclude there is no best type of research in which the researcher may engage, there are only good questions “matched with procedures for

¹⁹ Lawrence F. Lock, Stephen J. Silverman, and Waneen Wyrick Spirduso, *Reading and Understanding Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 1998), 122.

inquiry that can yield truthful answers.”²⁰ In this project, the three proposed paths could not be pursued simultaneously or independently. All three relied on each other for an orderly progression until the compilation stage, when all the material was merged into the final goal: the publication of a Grace House spiritual resource manual entitled, *Counseling with Grace*. The timeline for the implementation stage of the project was estimated at approximately thirty days, from January 25, 2023, when the first questionnaire was distributed, until February 20, when the second questionnaire was returned. After the input from the counselors’ questionnaires is collected, evaluated, and accepted or rejected, the manual will be shaped into its final form and distributed electronically. In the future, there will be informal but ongoing continual evaluations and updates and or deletions to the resource manual as needed.

Therefore, the spiritual resource manual’s final contents were to be amended to include the suggestions and recommendations from counselors after their review. This inclusion was to give counselors a sense of ownership in the development of the manual. As Sensing points out, practitioners and researchers need to create the conditions that will “mobilize their energy, engage their enthusiasm, and generate activity that can be productively applied to the resolution of issues and problems.”²¹ The manual’s contents include an introduction, a researched and sourced article to answer the unasked questions of what makes mental health counseling Christian and researched and sourced articles describing what pastoral and spiritual care are and what they are not. In addition, there will be forty-plus pages of selected diagnoses or mental or emotional conditions such as depression, anger, anxiety, grief, etc., and scriptural responses to such disorders that are easily accessible to the counselor in the midst of a session. A prayer and a

²⁰ Lock, Silverman, and Spirduso, *Reading and Understanding Research*, 122.

²¹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 23.

biblical citation from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, 2019, will accompany each disorder. In addition, the manual also includes appendixes outlining the history of Grace House, a copy of the American Association of Christian Counselors' Statement of Faith, the Apostle's Creed, and the Fruits of the Spirit. Finally, an appendix will be dedicated to a community resource guide for counselors containing information about various organizations where clients may be referred for assistance.

The first questionnaire (Appendix C) sought to understand the counselors' familiarity and confidence in using spiritual and biblical resources in their sessions and contact with clients. Questions included the counselors' confidence in introducing these subjects in the therapy session and how that confidence may be increased. In addition, counselors were asked to estimate how often clients are consulted about spiritual matters and, in general, how they help the clients, i.e., refer to Scripture, study materials, church, or other religious-based groups such as Celebrate Recovery. While the first questionnaire was being distributed and collected, research continued on the project's third path, gathering information for the spiritual resource manual. This electronic manual was planned to be updated with counselors' suggestions after the second questionnaire was returned and reviewed.

The spiritual resource manual, *Counseling with Grace*, is the capstone of the project. It was designed, researched, and included information gathered from the counselors and distilled and codified to help them better understand and meet the spiritual needs of their clients. Combined with their questionnaires, counselors could identify shortcomings in their individual preparation to deliver solutions to clients to help them meet their needs. Every attempt was made to ensure that the spiritual resource manual reflected general Christian doctrine and not the doctrine of any specific denomination. As noted earlier, Grace House is populated with various

denominations among staff, clients, and counselors. However, as Grace House’s director is the author of this action research project, it is understood that the spiritual resource manual may have an Anglican identity because of the use of specific terminology and sources.

What was sought throughout this action research project will be *Via Media*, a Latin phrase meaning the middle way. This is in keeping with the traditions and practices of the more than 500-year Anglican church history. Thomas McKenzie explains that the origin of this term was that Anglicanism was created by men and women in the sixteenth century who strove to make a middle way between the extremes of Roman Catholicism and European Protestantism. Through the years, Anglicans have wrestled with how to be a “both/and” church rather than an “either/or” church.²² While the spiritual resource manual will have an Anglican bias because of the author’s denomination, the author will make every effort to walk the middle way between all Christian denominations represented at Grace House.

Overview of the Implementation of the Intervention Design

Planning for the intervention design began in the summer of 2022 with the start of developing and researching the spiritual resource manual. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was requested and granted on November 30, 2022, with a letter stating that the study did not meet the definition of human subjects research. Work on the design of the intervention stage continued through the Christmas 2022 break with a presumed start date of January 20, 2023. However, because of late vacations and illness among Grace House counselors, implementation of the Intervention Design began on Wednesday, January 25, with the distribution of the first questionnaire (Appendix C). The second questionnaire, including the

²² Thomas McKenzie, *The Anglican Way: A Guidebook* (Nashville, TN: Colony Catherine, Inc., 2014), 4.

counselor's comments on the spiritual resource manual, was returned on February 20, which marked the end of the counselors' direct involvement in the project.

Both questionnaires were electronically distributed and were accompanied by a cover (recruitment) letter (Appendix A) inviting counselors to participate in the research projects. This electronic packet also included a consent form (Appendix B). The counselors were instructed that to participate in the research project; they should sign the consent form and return it with the first questionnaire. Counselors were given the option of returning the questionnaire and consent form either electronically or dropping a paper copy in an envelope in the author's mailbox in the administrative area of the center. All correspondence, including questionnaires and consent forms, were taken from Grace House to the author's home, where they were locked in a safe.

This first questionnaire was distributed to fifteen of the sixteen counselors affiliated with Grace House, including the four counselors who practice in locations separate from the center's office in Fleming Island, Florida. The sixteenth counselor is the project author and did not participate in the questionnaires or the evaluation of the spiritual resource manual. However, during this research project, the author continued his duties as the director and senior pastoral care adviser for Grace House staff and counselors. This is in line with the reminder by Tim Sensing, who observes that a researcher remains a Doctor of Ministry student, regardless of their job. As such, even though they may not participate in the project, the researcher remains connected to the counselors and the project as a pastoral presence.²³ Not surprisingly, Sensing contends, these roles often need to be clarified. In this case, the author made it clear to the counselors and others that his priority is his ministry as a Lay Commissioned Chaplain, which includes service to all those associated with Grace House, clients, counselors, and staff. This

²³ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 42.

action agrees with Sensing's reminder to his readers that the project's author always has “a moral obligation to the care of people first.”²⁴ There is no way to attempt to isolate the ministry head from the ministry, even during a research project. Sensing says, "Ministry is never an isolated activity unconnected from the larger life of the community.”²⁵

Likewise, Stringer urges those involved in action research to ensure that all participants know what is going on and that the process is transparent to everyone involved.²⁶ However, Stringer emphasizes that providing transparency does not relieve the researcher of the need to obtain informed written consent from all participants.²⁷ To comply with Sensing and Stringer’s admonition, the author used several opportunities in the two months before the first questionnaire was distributed to informally brief Grace House counselors on the progress and status of the upcoming project. Counselors were reminded several times that the questionnaires would be distributed in mid-to-late January. They were all encouraged to participate in the project to provide their input into the services offered to clients at Grace House. However, all counselors were reassured that participation was voluntary and that names would not be attached to questionnaires. However, this safeguard proved ineffective as most counselors returned their questionnaires in person or directly to the author’s email. When they submitted their questionnaire, several participating counselors engaged the author in a discussion about the questionnaire and, in the case of the spiritual resource manual, the contents of the manual.

The first questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter (Appendix A) and a consent form to participate in a Research Project (Appendix B). The purpose of the intervention stage

²⁴ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 42.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁶ Stringer, *Action Research*, 89.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

was to (1) Assess the spiritual and biblical status and perceived spiritual resources needs of mental health professionals at Grace House, (2) Develop and distribute a spiritual resource manual that meets the identified needs and deepens counselors' general understanding of Christian mental health counseling, and (3) Provide mental health counselors at Grace House with a spiritual resource tool to assist them in the spiritual care of their clients.

To accomplish these three goals, it was decided to produce an electronic spiritual resource manual that could be corrected, adjusted as needed, amended quickly, and distributed inexpensively. However, a preliminary search of available documents failed to locate a single source that would fulfill the perceived need of Grace House counselors or that could be adjusted easily to meet new spiritual needs as they arise. Therefore, it was decided that an in-house spiritual resource manual would be researched, written, and electronically published to provide information and tools specific to the needs of Grace House counselors. In assembling the manual, it was decided to begin with a definition of spiritual/biblical counseling in the form of a sourced research article. That article was followed by similarly sourced articles on pastoral and spiritual care skills, how to pray with clients, a section of selected diagnoses of eighteen mental health disorders, and examples of prayers that may be used with clients suffering from that disorder. Each diagnosis also was accompanied by selected Bible verses. A section on community resources available for client assistance was also provided. In addition, the manual would include appendices on Grace House's history, the American Association of Christian Counselors' Statement of Faith, The Apostle's Creed, and Bible verses on the Fruits of the Spirit and the Way of Love (1 Cor 13).

The distribution of the spiritual resource manual and the second questionnaire underwent revision of the initial project implementation timeline over the Liberty University Christmas

break between December 9, 2022, and January 16, 2023. The original timeline envisioned a thirty-day lapse between the distribution of the first questionnaire and the second questionnaire. This extended period was believed necessary to complete the spiritual resource manual in preparation for distribution with the second questionnaire. However, revisions and editing were completed over the Christmas break, and the manual was ready for distribution, review, and evaluation on February 1. This was a week before the projected date of February 8 to distribute the manual and second questionnaire. This second questionnaire asked the counselors to provide input and comments on the manual's additions, deletions, or alternations. Since the manual no longer needed additions or revisions to be finalized, the time allowed between distributing the first and the second questionnaires was shortened to twelve days. This shorter period gave the counselors twelve days to complete the first questionnaire and twelve days to review the manual and complete the second questionnaire. This shorter review time was chosen because it would prevent some counselors from putting the spiritual resource manual aside until the last minute.

The questionnaires and manual were distributed electronically, as were the recruitment letter and the consent to participate in the research project. The questionnaires and consent forms were returned to the author electronically and in printed versions. Copies were made of the electronic version, which was then deleted from the author's computer. All paper copies of the consent forms and questionnaires are stored at the author's home in a safe

Implementation of the First Questionnaire

Grace House counselors were informed of the project's start before and after the Christmas and New Year holidays through the center's newsletter. The project was also discussed in the December and January monthly peer meetings. In addition, the cover letter accompanying the first questionnaire invited the counselors to participate in the study. If they

chose to do so, they were directed to return this first questionnaire and a signed accompanying consent form to the author by Monday, February 6. To preserve anonymity, the consent form was handled separately from the questionnaire.

The first questionnaire (Appendix C) was comprised of ten questions, all aimed at discovering what the counselors desired or felt they needed in spiritual resource tools. This questionnaire was also an attempt to see if those needs could be met in a spiritual resource manual explicitly produced for use at Grace House. Each of the first nine questions asked the counselor to respond on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with one as Strongly Disagree, three as Agree, and five as Strongly Agree. The tenth question asked the counselor to identify any or all the seven topics they would like addressed in the spiritual resource manual. Six topics mentioned in the questionnaire were sections in the proposed spiritual resource manual. The seventh question asked counselors for other articles or skills they would like added to the manual. A final section asked for demographic information on the counselor filling out the questionnaire, i.e., Christian counseling experience in years and type of license held.

Counselors were given twelve days to formulate and return their responses to the questionnaire and consent forms. If they chose to participate in the study, they were advised that an electronic copy of the spiritual resource manual would be distributed on Wednesday, February 8. This manual would be accompanied by a second questionnaire asking for the counselor's evaluation of the resource manual as a possible resource in their practice. This questionnaire contained six questions, five asking the counselor to estimate how much the manual would be used with their clients and rate it on a scale of 1 to 5. The sixth question asked for an evaluation of the various sections of the manual. The return deadline for the second questionnaire was Monday, February 20.

Implementation of the Second Questionnaire

The second questionnaire (Appendix D) was distributed to only those counselors who participated in the first questionnaire. This questionnaire asked for an evaluation of the spiritual resource manual and was accompanied by an electronic draft of the manual. The second questionnaire and draft of the spiritual resource manual were distributed on February 8, two days after the deadline for receiving the first questionnaire on February 6. Counselors receiving this questionnaire were asked to review *Counseling with Grace* and respond and provide written comments on the manual as a possible resource for their practice. The projected timeline for this project phase asked for a requested return date of February 20. This second questionnaire asks for responses to six questions, all of them related to the manual and its possible use in their practice. Questions one through five ask the counselor to respond on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 as Strongly Disagree, 3 as Agree, and 5 as Strongly Agree. The sixth question asks the counselor for written comments on each of the four sections of the spiritual resource manual: What Makes Christian Mental Health Counseling Christian?, Pastoral and Spiritual Care, Praying with Clients, and Selected Diagnosis, Scriptural Responses, and Prayers. As with the first questionnaire, this second questionnaire asks the respondents to provide demographic information about themselves. That information includes the type of license and years worked as a Christian counselor.

Development of the Spiritual Resource Manual

The spiritual resource manual was developed specifically to meet the needs expressed verbally by Grace House practitioners. This manual was initially envisioned as only a reference tool for therapists to help with questions from clients about biblical or spiritual subjects while in session. However, during its development, but before it was distributed to counselors for review,

it became apparent that the manual also had potential as a training vehicle for new counselors. Following this initial concept, the manual was designed to enable therapists at Grace House to possess a ready resource they could rely on, have confidence in, and be immediately available to provide effective spiritual care for clients. In addition, it was surmised that the regular use of a spiritual resource manual would allow the counselors to be more comfortable using spiritual resources from other sources. Finally, it is believed that comfort with and familiarity with such a document would increase the frequency and effectiveness of the counselor's spiritual approach to client interaction.

This does not imply that training and experience in spiritual care and general knowledge of Scripture are absent among all counselors at Grace House. However, the use of spiritual resource materials and individual depth of understanding in treating spiritual matters are mixed among Grace's House's sixteen licensed, state-registered, and college intern mental health counselors. The differences between the center's college interns and the more veteran counselors exemplify the two extremes of this knowledge. The half-dozen college interns who have trained at Grace House over the last few years, in general, have exhibited a general lack of experience and confidence in many areas of mental health counseling, including sharing their faith in session. More veteran counselors present with higher confidence in their counseling skills, Bible knowledge, and life experiences. Many in this latter group have developed and have available an array of spiritual resources collected from their home church, denomination, or years of experience in their counseling room. Yet, even among this latter group in the last year, there is perceived angst because of the number of clients who seem to be posing spiritual questions that require more immediate thought and depth of understanding of spiritual matters than in the past.

One of the requirements for all counselors, staff members, and college interns who work at Grace House is that they must be Christians. This is determined in interviews with the director before hiring or affiliation. In addition, all employees and counselors, even those associated with Grace House as an administrative service, must sign the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) Statement of Faith, which may be found in Appendix 2 of *Counseling with Grace* (Appendix E). Therefore, spiritual training, resources, and biblical understanding are present in some measures by all who are connected with Grace House professionally. Many counselors also have described to the director and staff instances where they prayed with selected clients. Several other counselors say they occasionally cite Scripture in their counseling sessions. However, only two, one who is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary with a master's in counseling, and the second, an ordained Baptist pastor and an active-duty Navy chaplain, have any formal training in coupling mental health skills with biblical education training.

The general layout and contents of the spiritual resource manual were envisioned early in the planning process. However, the specific content was not finalized until after input was received from the counselor questionnaires (*Counseling with Grace*, Appendix E). The manual version circulated among the counselors with the second questionnaire stayed consistent with the original plan visualized in the summer of 2022. The manual's first article is an introduction letter from the center director, which elucidates the stated aims and goals of Grace House as a Christian counseling organization. This introductory letter in the manual is followed by sourced articles written by the project author. The articles describe the elements that distinguish secular mental health counseling from those practiced by Christians. Other articles describe soul and spiritual care, provide a primer on praying with clients, and eighteen selected mental health diagnoses with appropriate Bible verses and at least one prayer taken from the Anglican Church

in North America’s Book of Common Prayer, 2019.²⁸ The manual includes several appendixes containing other information that might be helpful to the counselor. The manual is into four principal sections, as depicted by the graphic below:

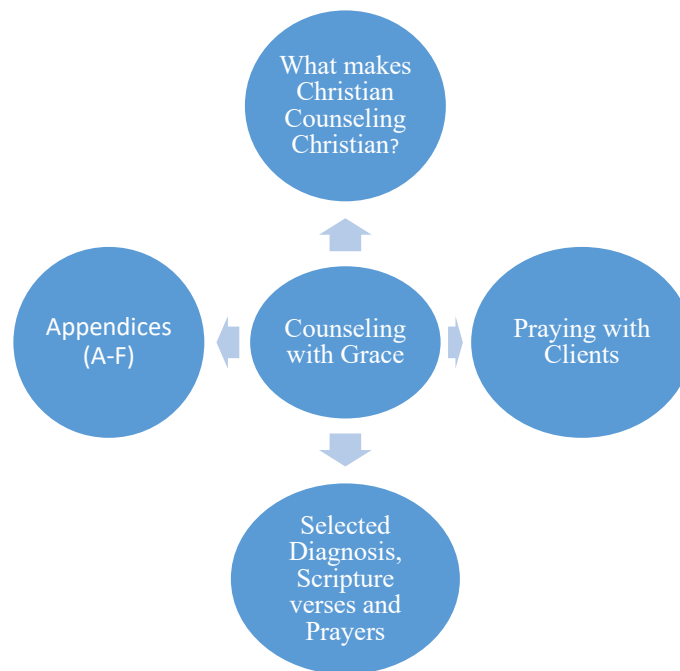


Figure 3.3: Principal sections of *Counseling with Grace*

The manual was designed and written to serve as a resource for current counselors. In the future, it may serve as a foundation document for all college interns and registered and licensed counselors new to Grace House and Christian mental health counseling. The heart of the spiritual resource manual is the section on eighteen mental health disorders and spiritual concerns commonly seen by Grace House counselors. These mental health and spiritual concerns include depression, anger, anxiety, grief, etc. There was no attempt to provide biblical references for

²⁸ The Anglican Church in North America, *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments with other rites and ceremonies of the church According to the use of the Anglican Church in North America Together with the new Coverdale Psalter* (Huntington Beach, CA: Anglican Liturgy Press, 2019).

disorders not commonly seen by Grace House counselors, such as Schizophrenia Spectrum, or other Psychotic Disorders, such as Brief Psychotic Disorder or Delusional Disorder. An explanation of the diagnosis or problem accompanies each disorder in the spiritual resource manual. This explanation is taken from either the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual TR-5²⁹ or Internet sources such as health information from the Mayo Clinic. Below the disorder description are eight or more scriptural responses appropriate to that disorder, followed by a suggested prayer. The spiritual responses were taken from the English Standard Version of the Bible and included headings as a prompt for the reader. These scriptural responses and prayers are available to the counselor in session in the electronic version of the manual. It is emphasized in the introduction to the spiritual resource manual that using any part of the manual is only a recommendation or suggestion. However, nothing in those recommendations or suggestions relieves each counselor from the responsibility for the spiritual atmosphere with their client in their counseling space.

Finally, the spiritual resource manual contains several appendices detailing Grace House's history (Appendix 1), the AACC Statement of Faith (Appendix 2), The Apostle's Creed, and Bible verses on the Fruits of the Spirit and the Way of Love (1 Cor 13) (Appendices 3-5). Grace House interns also produced a listing of community resources (Appendix 6) at the author's direction. This resource list identifies various agencies and services in the Clay County area where counselors may refer clients for additional help beyond mental health counseling. The thirteen categories of resources identified for the counselor in the community resource appendix include abuse shelters, food pantries, veterans' services, women's services, and substance abuse assistance.

²⁹ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR)* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2022).

Next Steps

The next phase of this action research project is to prayerfully consider the results and comments from the questionnaires and putting them into place as a part of the practice of Grace House Counseling Center. This task, Stringer observes, is to interpret and render understandable the problematic experiences being considered from the information gathered in the research.³⁰ Interpretation, he says, requires the researcher to allow participants to understand their own experiences in terms that make sense to them.³¹ In many ways, this may be the most important part of this action research project. Stringer points out that action research enables people “to find effective solutions they confront in everyday life.”³² Sensing, likewise, notes that one of the primary “serendipities of action research in communal empowerment.”³³ The results of action research empower the church congregation or workers in a business to develop skills that enable it to influence its future. Speaking specifically of a church, Sensing said that results obtained and implemented from an action research project empower a congregation “to address future problems and opportunities with hope. Your leadership has equipped the church to function effectively.”³⁴

Sensing’s advice is relatable to all Christian workers, especially those Christian counselors affiliated with Grace House Counseling Center. The counselors voiced a need, and the center's leadership responded positively and empoweringly. Their participation was vital to completing the action research project, and, as such, they are co-laborers in this project. They are

³⁰ Stringer, *Action Research*, 137.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 1.

³³ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 229.

³⁴ Ibid.

eager to hear the comfortable words of Matthew 25:23 (ESV), “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

This action research project sought to determine if pastoral care education information were incorporated in a specially written spiritual resource manual for mental health counselors, would Christian therapists at Grace House Counseling Center in Clay County, Florida, be more confident and better equipped to provide more effective pastoral care for their clients. To answer this question, two questionnaires were developed and distributed among participating counselors to learn their perceived spiritual and biblical experience and assess the value of a spiritual resource manual designed and written explicitly for Christian mental health counselors who practice at Grace House.

The question of how to measure improvement from the current education and comfort situation among counselors at Grace House proved challenging and subjective. Challenging because the study sought to measure each participating counselor's comfort with using a spiritual resource manual, thereby improving the chances that the manual would be used. Subjective from an individual point of view because all responses would reflect each counselor's personal feelings and faith background. To accomplish this goal, two Likert scale questionnaires were developed to measure collective counselor comfort based on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Disagree) to 3 (Agree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The first questionnaire measured each counselor's comfort level with discussing biblical and spiritual matters with their clients, and the second sought information about the participating counselors' comfort with using a specially developed spiritual resource manual with their clients. Finding this comfort level was considered an essential element of the self-reporting as it would measure how willing counselors would be to discuss spiritual issues with their clients.

Results of the First Questionnaire

The first questionnaire was circulated among fifteen Grace House Counselors on January 25, 2023. This questionnaire sought to gather information to provide a clearer overall picture of Christian knowledge and the comfort these counselors have with sharing that knowledge with others. This questionnaire also asked for input from all counselors at Grace House about their desire for additional content to add to the spiritual resource manual developed in this research project. This spiritual resource manual was designed as both a reference guide for counselors and a future training tool for college interns and other counselors new to Christian counseling. Early in the project, it was determined to allow participating counselors to offer their input into the final version of the spiritual resource manual to help promote ownership of the document. Ownership increases the chances that the counselor will use the manual in a session.

Counselors were asked to review the spiritual resource manual and to respond to the second questionnaire, which also used a Likert scale to measure any change or improvement in a counselor's spiritual education and comfort levels. Responses to the first questionnaire were compared to responses to the second to evaluate counselors' estimation of the extent to which they believed the spiritual resource manual would improve their comfort level of discussing biblical and spiritual issues with clients. The second questionnaire was distributed to the twelve counselors who completed and returned the first questionnaire. Accompanying this questionnaire was a draft of the manual, which was entitled *Counseling with Grace* (Appendix E).

Counselors were asked to read and evaluate the manual's usefulness in their practice and to express their comfort level in using such a document. The questionnaire also urged counselors to provide their comments, good or bad, on the various sections, plus any other information they would like to see included in the final document. Eleven of the twelve mental health practitioners who received this second questionnaire and the manual draft returned their responses and

comments twelve days later. Figure 4.1 below illustrates the timeline and time allotted for the research phase of this project.

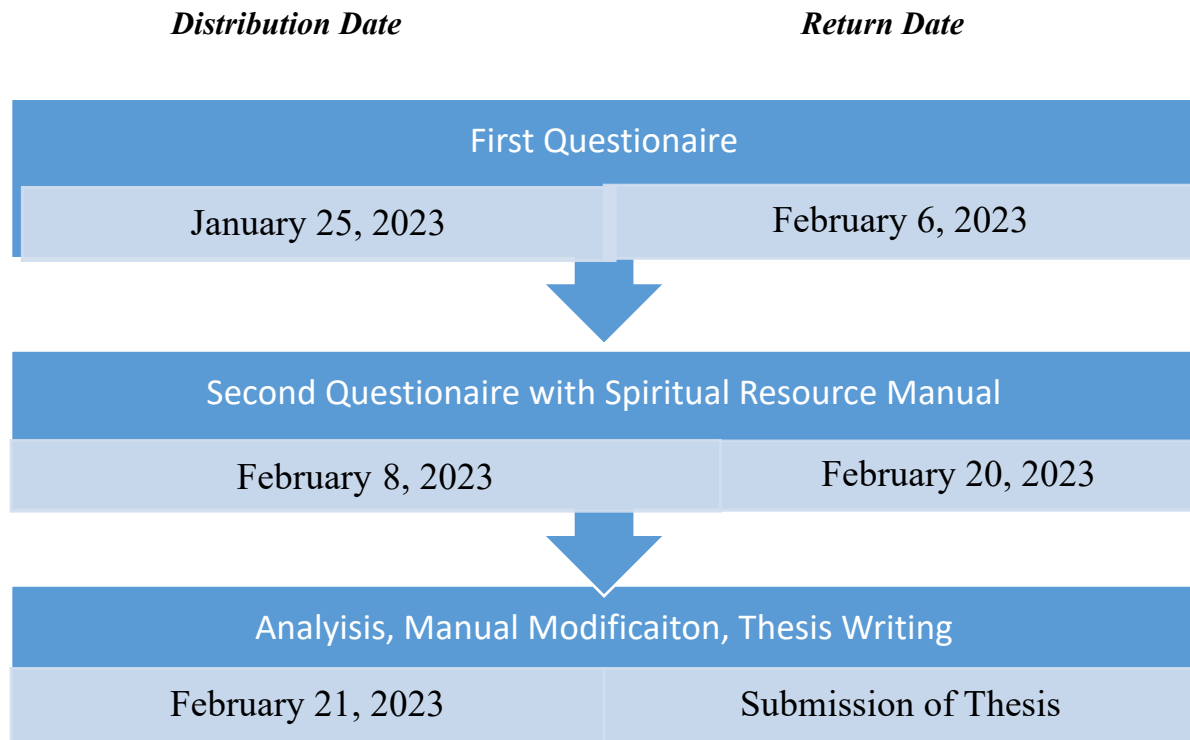


Figure 4.1: Timeline of Research Phase

Figure 4.2 below indicates the breakdown of how the fifteen counselors affiliated with Grace House responded to each questionnaire and the spiritual resource manual based on their licensing status:

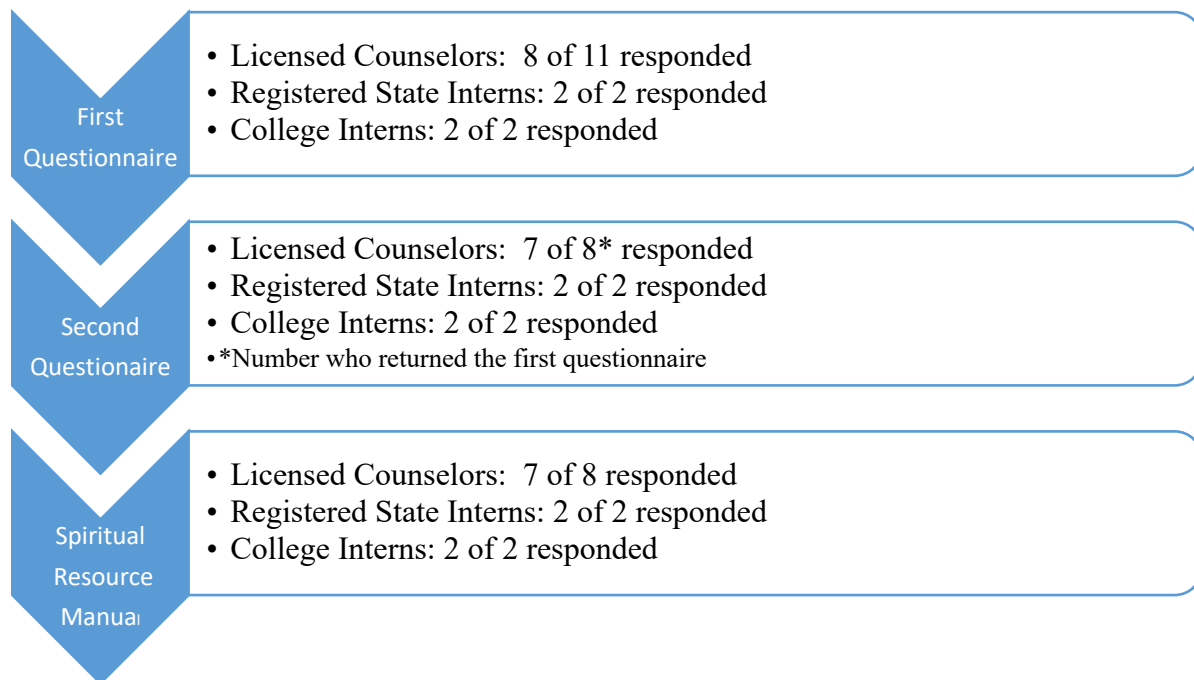


Figure 4.2: Breakdown of responses to questionnaires and manual by licensing status

This initial questionnaire was distributed with a recruitment cover letter (Appendix A) and a consent form to participate in Research Project (Appendix B). The questions in the first questionnaire were designed to: (1) Assess the spiritual and biblical status and perceived spiritual resource needs of mental health professionals at Grace House; (2) Generate input into a spiritual resource manual to meet the identified needs and deepen each counselor’s general understanding of Christian mental health counseling; and (3) Provide counselors with a spiritual resource tool to assist them in the spiritual care of their clients. The study’s progress followed the path outlined in Figure 4.3 below.

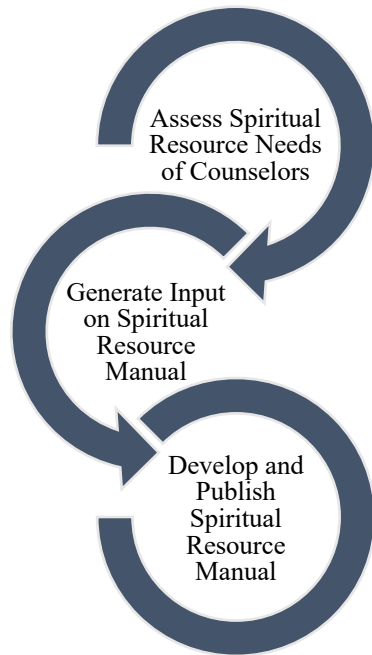


Figure 4.3: Study Path Outline

The first questionnaire contained ten questions, nine of which asked for each counselor's self-assessment of their spiritual and biblical knowledge as well as their comfort with sharing that knowledge with their clients in session. The tenth question asked the counselor to select one or more topics proposed to be included in a spiritual resource manual, *Counseling with Grace*. Among the suggested responses was a definition of spiritual/biblical counseling, pastoral and spiritual care skills, how to pray with clients, examples of prayers that may be used with clients, Bible verses connected with mental health issues, and a list of community resources for client assistance.

One study finding was the difference in responses and comments based on the age and experience of Christian counselors practicing at Grace House. These differences were most evident in the answers to the first questionnaire. Younger counselors, especially college and new state-registered interns, expressed less confidence in discussing spiritual and biblical issues with

clients than licensed counselors who are older and more experienced. Even among more experienced counselors, some therapists indicated temerity in discussing spiritual or biblical matters with their clients. This confidence level based on age disparity was suspected before the project's onset. Based on interviews with counselors over the past twelve years who expressed an interest in joining Grace House, the director has noted a general uneasiness with discussing biblical and spiritual matters with clients. Some of this is a lack of confidence in using Scripture in session also may be attributed to various codes of ethics among counseling professional groups, which admonish against advocating for a particular point of view with clients who are paying for the session. At least three counselor applicants seeking to affiliate with Grace House in the past told the director they decided not to affiliate because of their uncomfortableness with discussing biblical and Christian values and ethics in a counseling setting.

Four years ago, it was observed that the counseling affiliates at Grace House were aging (see Table 4.1, page 88), and no younger replacements were becoming available to take their place when they retired. Therefore, in 2018, the director completed the required continuing education courses to qualify as a state-certified supervisor for state-registered interns. Concurrently, a robust effort to bring promising college interns into the practice began. The goal of his efforts was to train the interns in Christian counseling and affiliate the best qualified of these counseling graduates with Grace House as state-registered interns and, eventually, licensed mental health counselors. The first two interns accepted by Grace House under this initiative were licensed as this study was being conducted.

However, despite this effort to attract younger counselors, there remains an age disparity among counselors at Grace House. Ten of those counselors are more than fifty years old, which accounts for 62.5 percent of the sixteen counselors, by far the largest single group at Grace

House. Four counselors are between twenty to thirty years old, representing 12.5 percent of the counselors (see Table 4.1 below). Overall, six of the eight interns who trained, or are presently training, as Christian counselors with Grace House in that time have graduated and are state-registered or licensed mental health counselors. As mentioned, two former interns are now state-licensed counselors; a third is a state-registered intern. All three are affiliated with Grace House. The center’s two current interns graduated from Liberty University in May 2023, and both have been offered the opportunity to affiliate with Grace House once they become state-registered interns. One accepted and will be affiliated with Grace House once she receives her registered-state intern license. The second intern chose to affiliate with another Christian Counseling group in Clay County that specializes in trauma care.

Table 4.1: All Grace House Counselors by Age

Age	Number	Percentage of total
50+ years	10	62.5
30-50 years	4	25.0
20-30 years	2	12.5
Total	16	100

This research project also assessed the need for Christian counseling experience and confidence among college and newly state-registered counseling interns (see Table 4.2 below). Among those counselors affiliated with Grace House and participating in the survey (twelve of sixteen counselors), 58.72 percent have more than five years of experience as a Christian mental health counselor, and three have more than twenty years of experience in Christian counseling.

This percentage is significantly higher when the experience of the four licensed mental health counselors who did not participate in the first questionnaire is included. All four of those counselors have more than ten years of experience in Christian counseling, and one has been associated with Christian counseling for over thirty years.

While chronological age does not directly correlate to experience, years practicing in the profession does equal experience. While most counselors at Grace House are more than fifty years old, the Christian counseling experience level is also weighted, with 33 percent of the counselors who participated in the research study having less than five years of experience (see Table 4.2 below). Of those participating in the research project, five licensed and state-registered counselors plus the two college interns each have less than five years of Christian counselor experience, all at Grace House. This lack of expertise among the college interns, licensed counselors, and state-registered interns is evident in several of the answers discussed below to selected questions in the first questionnaire. These answers indicate a need for more confidence in addressing biblical and scriptural issues or praying with clients. These counselors would be the primary beneficiaries of a spiritual resource manual and the skills it would address.

Table 4.2: Christian Counseling Experience Among Research Project Participants

Years	<5	<10	<15	<20	20+
Licensed Counselors	2	2	2	0	2
Interns , State-Registered	1	0	0	0	1
Interns. College	2	0	0	0	0
Percentage	33	16.66	16.66	0	25

Overall, the responses to the first questionnaire indicated strong positive reactions to most of the questions. But, as noted, the questions also reveal a divide between more experienced and lesser experienced counselors. For example, Question 9: “A spiritual resource manual to help me with dealing with spiritual/biblical issues would be helpful in my counseling practice,” received the highest composite score (4.17 out of 5) for the eight licensed counselors, two state-registered intern counselors, and two college intern counselors. However, there was a significant difference of almost one entire point from a composite of licensed counselors versus a composite score for registered state interns and college interns (3.88 verses 4.75). No comments among the participants indicated a reason for this difference. This difference is shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Composite scores from Licensed Counselors, State-Registered Interns, and College Interns of the First Questionnaire, Question 9

	Average response score
Licensed Counselors (8)	3.88 out of 5
Registered interns, college interns (4)	4.75 out of 5
Composite average	4.17 out of 5

Conversely, the lowest average score among the nine questions was Question 6, which posed the statement: “I would like to share my faith with clients, but I don’t feel comfortable doing so.” This question sought to determine the confidence level of counselors in talking to clients about their faith experiences. The overall average among all twelve counselors was 2 of 5. Again, the state-registered interns and college interns indicated a higher response on this question than licensed mental health counselors, 2.5 to 1.75, a difference of .75. A response from one licensed counselor with about fourteen years of Christian counseling experience noted in

response to this question that while “I don’t feel like sharing my beliefs is a problem. I judge this on a case-by-case basis if it is the appropriate time to do that.” Responses by state-registered and college interns, all of whom have less experience than most of the licensed counselors at Grace House, indicated a general reluctance to share their faith unless they felt their client was open to hearing about faith. One state-registered intern noted that some clients might not understand that Grace House is a Christian counseling center. Counselor AA said, “It would not be ethical for counselors to share their beliefs without [the] client’s consent or understanding that Grace House is a Christian counseling center.” The graph below indicates the difference in responses to Question 6 among all licensed counselors or state-registered or college interns who responded to the questionnaire.

Table 4.4: Composite scores from Licensed Counselors, State-Registered Interns, and College Interns of the First Questionnaire, Question 6

	Average response score
Licensed Counselors (8)	1.75 out of 5
Registered interns, college interns (4)	2.50 out of 5
Composite average	2.58 out of 5

The most significant difference in scores on a question was the responses to Question 7: “I would like to be more confident in spiritual counseling and biblical counseling.” This is a critical question in that it establishes an audience for the spiritual resource manual, a draft of which was distributed with the second questionnaire. A negative response to this question would have negated the acceptance of the spiritual resource manual. The eight licensed counselors responded with an average score of 3 (Agree), as opposed to the average score of 4.25, near a

Strongly Agree high score of 5, for state-registered and college interns. The composite score for all 12 respondents was 3.42. This indicates that the state-registered and college interns feel an inadequacy in their spiritual/biblical counseling skills compared to the confidence expressed by licensed counselors in their spiritual/biblical counseling skills and knowledge.

One state-licensed intern noted her belief that becoming more confident in spiritual and biblical counseling is a life-long process. She also stated that while mental health counseling is accepted more readily than spirituality, for too many people, the latter is an essential facet of their life. Therefore, she urged more training in biblical and spiritual counseling skills, which she believes has become “even more important in our ‘post truth’ society where there is such a reduction of absolute truth.” On the other hand, the attitude of many licensed counselors who like knowledge for knowledge’s sake was echoed by the response of one 14-year veteran Christian counselor who said, “I can always use some educating on ways to counsel someone biblically.” However, the high ranking of this question overall indicated a general willingness by all the licensed counselors at Grace House to consider using the spiritual resource manual. This eliminated one of the author’s fears that the more experienced counselors would dismiss the proposed spiritual resource manual as unnecessary. It is assumed that the high positive response scores by the state-registered and college interns indicate a greater desire among this subset of counselors to have more spiritual resources in their counseling toolbox. The belief is that more skills and training will increase and deepen their competence and allow them to serve their clients better.

Table 4.5: Composite Scores from Licensed Counselors, State-Registered Interns, and College Interns of the First Questionnaire, Question 7

Average response score	
Licensed Counselors (8)	3 out of 5
Registered interns, college interns (4)	4.25 out of 5
Composite average	3.42 out of 5

A full accounting of all numerical responses from all counselors is found in Table 4.6 below. All counselors' names have been replaced with letters to prevent identification.

Table 4.6: Composite Responses to First Questionnaire

(Numeric rating 1=Disagree, 2=Disagree moderately, 3=Agree, 4=Agree moderately, 5=Disagree)

Questions	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9
Licensed Counselors									
A	5	5	3	3	3	1	3	3	3
B	5	4	4	2	3	1	3	3	3
C	1	2	1	3	3	1	2	4	5
D	5	5	3	4	2	1	5	4	5
E	5	3	4	4	3	2	3	3	3
F	5	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3
G	5	5	4	4	2	2	2	2	5
H	4	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	2
Registered Interns									
AA	5	5	2	4	3	4	4	3	5
BB	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	5
College Interns									
AAA	5	4	3	3	3	2	5	5	4
BBB	5	3	2	4	2	1	5	5	5

Suggestions for Spiritual Resource Manual Content

Question 10 in the first questionnaire invited counselors to select any of the six topics they would like to see included in a spiritual resource manual. In answering this question, counselors indicated a great deal of similarity in choosing topics to be included. The six topics from which they were asked to select include a definition of spiritual/biblical counseling, pastoral and spiritual care skills, how to pray with clients, examples of prayers that may be used with clients, Bible verses connected with mental health issues, and community resources for client assistance. A seventh choice asked the counselors to suggest a topic or skill they would like to see included in a spiritual resource manual other than the six topics previously mentioned.

Of the twelve counselors who responded to the first survey, the topic most selected for inclusion in the spiritual resource manual by both licensed, state-registered, and college interns was Bible verses connected with mental health issues. Ten of the twelve responding counselors made this choice. This response does not indicate that the Christian counselors who responded were unfamiliar with the Bible. It does mean these counselors are looking for a ready reference for those moments in session when a Bible verse might be instructional, comforting, or of educational value. The other two highest-ranking inclusions included: examples of prayers that may be used with clients were selected by eight counselors, and community resources for client assistance were chosen by nine counselors. Two counselors suggested other items or skills they would like addressed in the manual. For example, one counselor suggested adding information on how to help someone not living according to biblical principles without causing them to feel judged. Another counselor suggested an article or instruction on teaching others how to “renew their minds.” All responses to the first questionnaire and the counselors’ consent form are stored in a safe in the author’s home office.

Table 4.7 below indicates the distribution of choices from counselors for possible inclusion in the spiritual resource manual.

Table 4.7: Suggested Topics Ranked for Inclusion in a Spiritual Resource Manual

Bible verses connected with mental health issues.	10
Examples of prayers that can be used with clients	9
Community resources for client assistance.	9
How to pray with clients	5
Pastoral & spiritual care skills	4
A definition of spiritual/Biblical counseling	4
Other suggestions	2

Results of the Second Questionnaire

The second questionnaire and the spiritual resource manual accompanying it were distributed electronically to the twelve counselors who filled out and submitted the first questionnaire to the author. The second questionnaire went out to those counselors on February 8, two days after the deadline, to return the first questionnaire. Counselors were initially given until February 20 to review the draft spiritual resource manual, complete the questionnaire and return it to the author. However, two counselors requested an extra week because of outside circumstances, and the author approved their request.

The second questionnaire contained five Likert scale questions. A sixth question asked the counselors for their written responses and recommendations on four topics included in the

spiritual resource manual. Those four topic inclusions had short-sourced articles entitled “What Makes Christian Mental Health Counseling Christian?,” “Pastoral and Spiritual Prayer,” “Praying with Clients,” and “Selected Diagnoses, Scriptural Responses, and Collects.” The centerpiece of the manual was approximately 40 pages of selected mental health disorders along with biblical verses and prayers chosen by the author from the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*, 2019, to address those disorders. The counselors were given twelve days to review the manual, complete the questionnaire, and return it to the author. Eleven of the twelve counselors returned the second questionnaire with comments on the spiritual resource manual. The twelfth counselor, a licensed therapist, dropped out of the project citing time constraints and therefore did not participate in the second questionnaire and review of the spiritual resource manual (Appendix E).

Overall, the scores on the second questionnaire continued the trend of the first questionnaire, which demonstrated the difference in confidence and need for a spiritual resource manual between state-registered and college interns and licensed counselors. For example, the lowest score for state-registered and college interns was 4.25 on Question 3, “I found the section on prayer helpful in my practice.” The licensed counselors responded positively to this question, though slightly lower at 4 (see Table 4.8 below).

Table 4.8: Composite Scores from Licensed Counselors, State-Registered Interns, and College Interns of the Second Questionnaire, Question 3

	Average response score
Licensed Counselors (7)	4 out of 5
Registered interns, college interns (4)	4.25 out of 5
Composite average	4.09 out of 5

Counselors, both licensed and interns, responded positively to this question on prayer. However, the response to this question raised a denomination difference among licensed and more experienced counselors concerning their acceptance of the prayers in the spiritual resource manual. Counselor E wrote that the section on prayer was “beautifully and sensitively written!” Counselor B acknowledged that “I could probably use prayer more often than I do, and this section really encouraged me to offer it more than I do.” However, Counselor F said that while he liked the discussion on mental disorders, the “individual prayers were okay, but I wouldn’t use them. I would more likely pray from my heart.” Counselors E and B belong to liturgical churches, while Counselor F attends a non-denominational church.

Responses by two of the interns, both of whom belong to non-denominational churches, felt the section on prayer was helpful, but neither thought they were compelled to use the ones provided in the manual. Counselor AA, a state-registered intern, liked the idea of written prayers to alleviate any anxiety by a counselor uncomfortable with praying with others and relieving the counselor of the need to compose an impromptu prayer. Counselor AAA, a college intern, noted that she isn’t familiar with the Anglican prayers, but “I would use the outline of these prayers and changed a few ways I say things to match my personality and relationship with the Lord as well as my clients.”

However, there was a broader disparity in responses to Question 4: “I think all new Grace House counselors and interns should be trained in the resources in the manual.” While positive, the response to this question was the lowest score of any question among the seven licensed counselors at 3.29. Conversely, the combined score for the four state-registered and college interns on this question was 4.5, more than a point higher than the combined score of the licensed counselors (see Table 4.9 below).

Table 4.9: Composite Scores from Licensed Counselors, State-Registered Interns, and College Interns of the Second Questionnaire, Question 4

	Average response score
Licensed counselors (7)	3.29 out of 5
Registered interns, college interns (4)	4.5 out of 5
Composite average	3.75 out of 5

Question 4 displayed the widest disparity between the licensed counselors and the interns, with a 1.21 difference. While the licensed counselors agreed that all new counselors, licensed and interns, should receive instruction in the manual and its resources, the state-registered and college interns indicated greater enthusiasm than the responses supplied by the licensed counselors. Among the licensed counselors, Counselor E responded with a “4” to the question but suggested that the word “trained” be changed to “introduced.” Counselor C liked the overall manual and its presentation, but she said she favors using the word “suggestion” when referring to the question on training. Counselor H responded with a “2” (Somewhat Disagree) to Question 4, and she suggested that the manual and its resources should be made available “to use as needed.”

Among the interns, however, Counselor AA responded on the Likert scale with a 5 (Strongly Agree) and commented that, as a new counselor to Grace House herself, “awareness of available resources would be of benefit.” Counselor AAA, a college intern, also responded with a 5. She commented that training in the spiritual resource manual by new counselors “is important since Grace House is considered a Christian counseling center. I think this would be the difference between a Christian counseling center versus a secular or non-Christian counseling center.”

Question 5, “Having the manual available improves my confidence to use religion and spirituality as a part of my practice,” also pointed to a disparity in the confidence and experience level of licensed counselors versus state-registered and college interns (see Table 4.10) concerning the possible use of the spiritual resource manual. Licensed counselors responded with an average of 3.43 points out of a possible 5. State-registered and college interns gave this same question a 4.5 out of 5. Counselor B perhaps summed up the licensed counselors’ responses when she commented, “Because of my age and life experiences, I am already familiar with many of the Scriptures and the relevance to issues that I see in my office.” However, when she was younger, she admitted, “Prior to the advent of suffering in my life, I was unfamiliar with many of the Scriptures.” Counselor F, who rated his response as a 2 (Somewhat disagree), said that he had been a Christian counselor for over 20 years and feels “somewhat confident” without the manual. However, “for the new therapist, this and supervision would be helpful.” A 20-plus year counseling veteran, Counselor E agreed with the statement, “If I were new to the profession, it would be a ‘5.’”

The state-registered and college interns embraced the manual more enthusiastically in their responses than the licensed counselors. This may be related to these less experienced counselors being novices in the Christian counseling profession. They recognized the need for resources that many professional counselors have accumulated with years of practice. As noted in Table 4.2 (page 89), three of the four state-registered and college interns each have fewer than five years of experience as a mental health counselor. The two college interns are each under thirty years old, and each has less than a year of experience in a Christian mental health counseling center. This combination of youth and inexperience works positively for both college interns as they present as eager and unafraid to learn various ways of melding their faith with

their professional life. Counselor AAA echoed this eagerness when she commented that the manual is a document she wants to read over “a few times” and “take notes that relate to each of my clients.” She also observed that becoming comfortable using the manual is a process. As a part of that process, the counselor must learn to be at ease joining diagnosis to Scripture. “Many Christians,” she said, “are not familiar with the scriptural texts, which could be of great assistance to them in counseling sessions.”

Table 4.10: Composite Scores from Licensed Counselors, State-Registered Interns, and College Interns of the Second Questionnaire, Question 5

	Average response score
Licensed counselors (7)	3.43 out of 5
Registered interns, college interns (4)	4.5 out of 5
Composite average	3.82 out of 5

Questions 1 and 2 were the closest the licensed counselors and the state-registered and college interns agreed on the draft spiritual resource manual and its possible use in their practice. Question 1 asked the counselors if they had reviewed the manual draft and whether they found it helpful in their practice. Question 2 asked if the counselors found the section on clinical diagnosis, biblical responses, and prayers helpful. The numerical responses to these two questions were the highest among all the participants in the project. It was also the closest agreement the eleven counselors reached among all five questions. Overall, the composite rating for all the counselors gave the first question a 4.55 rating and the second question a 4.45 rating. (Tables 4.11 and 4.12 below). Several counselors noted that the electronic version took much work to navigate. They urged that a more user-friendly method be found for moving around in

the various sessions, especially the forty-plus page section on diagnosis, Scripture verses, and prayers.

Table 4.11: Composite Scores from Licensed Counselors, State-Registered Interns, and College Interns of the Second Questionnaire, Question 1

	Average response score
Licensed counselors (7)	4.64 out of 5
Registered interns, college interns (4)	4.75 out of 5
Composite average	4.57 out of 5

Table 4.12: Composite Scores from Licensed Counselors, State-Registered Interns, and College Interns of the Second Questionnaire, Question 2

	Average response score
Licensed counselors (7)	4.29 out of 5
Registered interns, college interns (4)	4.75 out of 5
Composite average	4.45 out of 5

Addition Suggestions for Inclusion in the Spiritual Resource Manual

The one hundred-plus page spiritual resource manual was envisioned as an easy-to-use document that could be kept on a counselor’s computer screen while in session. It was believed that in its final form, it would benefit all Christian counselors who practice at Grace House Counseling Center regardless of experience level. However, it was strongly suspected that the manual would be the most significant benefit in the practice of the four college and state-registered counseling interns. In addition, the manual was projected to be a document that could be used for a potential in-house training or introductory course. This still-to-be-developed training program would be aimed at newly affiliated counselors who might have never worked at

a Christian counseling center or with college interns who are new to counseling in general and Christian counseling in particular. To meet these dual expectations, the manual was divided into five principal sections: “Welcome to Grace House,” “What Makes Christian Mental Health Counseling Christian?,” “Pastoral and Spiritual Care,” “Praying with Clients,” and “Selected Diagnosis, Scriptural Responses, and Prayers.” These entries were researched and sourced for their appropriateness at Grace House. The manual also contained six appendices containing items of interest and possible use by the counselor, such as the history of Grace House and a community resource referral list. The figure below demonstrates the contents of the manual.



Figure 4.4: Revised contents of the manual

The manual's "Selected Diagnosis, Scriptural Responses, and Prayers" section is the central resource section. It was designed and written to assist counselors in sessions with their clients when questions or topics of Christianity or spirituality arise. This section was researched to include appropriate information from reputable sources, the DSM-5-TM, the ESV Bible, and the *Anglican Church of North America's Book of Common Prayer* (2019). Several other resources could have been used for the prayers, but it was decided to use the prayers in the Book of Common Prayer. The inclusion of the more formal Anglican prayers was intended to be used as a guide and not a mandate. It was hoped that the included prayers would prompt counselors who did not like them to develop their own prayers or add their entreaties from the sources of their denomination. The diagnoses, Bible verses, and prayers were selected and codified as the most common disorders or complaints seen among all Grace House counselors. It was also hoped that this part of the document would help Christian mental health counselors connect diagnosis with biblical encouragement and admonitions to meet their clients' spiritual needs better.

Every attempt was made to develop the contents of the spiritual resource manual to reflect general Christian doctrine, not any specific denomination's doctrine. Grace House's staff and counselors represent several denominations, and they serve clients with a wide diversity of faith beliefs, including no-beliefs. This latter group is challenging to Christian counselors because of the difficulty in erasing every iota of one's faith from thoughts, actions, and words. Grace House's director and the author of this action research project is an Anglican, and the spiritual resource manual may inadvertently reflect an Anglican identity in some terminology and sources. Counselors were urged in the manual introduction to apply prayers or selected

scriptural responses common to their denomination if they do not agree with or would like to expand their spiritual resources beyond those provided in the manual.

Overall, the reaction by counselors to the manual was positive, although there were some negative responses to specific entries. Among compliments for the manual, Counselor BB, a state-registered intern with less than five years of Christian counseling experience, said she looked forward to having the manual as a resource for her clientele. She wrote, “I think the manual is amazing and I look forward to having a physical copy in my hands! I can see myself using its contents in nearly all of my counseling relationships.” Another state-registered intern with more Christian counseling experience was appreciative of the manual. “Thank you for creating this much-needed resource,” she wrote, “I believe that it will be of great benefit to those who read it and use it in counseling sessions.”

However, some counselors found the written prayers cumbersome and “too stylized.” In conversation with the author, one counselor indicated she found the verses on divorce were “preachy” and “stiff.” She also said she didn’t like to use those verses with clients struggling with emotional or physical abuse at the hands of their spouse because they were “male-centric.” Counselor B commented that she was not uncomfortable with written prayers. However, noting that she is also somewhat anxious about spontaneous prayer, “I am probably more likely to pray in my own words because I can fit the prayer specifically to the client and the situation, and that form of prayer is more from my heart.”

In all, counselors made sixteen suggestions for additions to the spiritual resource manual. The most common suggestion among the eleven responding counselors was requesting a paper version of the manual, especially for ease in using the Selected Diagnosis section. This section is anticipated to be the most used in session by counselors, where they will be able to address

clients' concerns as they arise. The counselors' desire for a handy and ready-to-use physical document is understandable. Still, the suggestion is opposed to the author's desire and initial plans to publish the spiritual resource manual electronically. Choosing an electronic distribution method was believed to make the manual not only accessible but also easier to amend, correct, and update. The four counselors voicing this desire for a paper version of the manual are all licensed therapists with more than ten years of experience as Christian counselors, most of which is at Grace House. These counselors separately cited in their comments in the second questionnaire what they saw as awkwardness in attempting to use the electronic manual while engaged in therapy. Counselor E summed up the sentiments of the other three counselors when she said she found the manual "beautifully and sensitively written," but she didn't believe she would use it while in session. She cited the potential awkwardness of opening her computer when talking with a client, thereby breaking the thread of their discussion. "I don't like opening my computer in session. I find it distracting," she explained. Other counselors expressed similar reservations about the electronic version.

Two counselors suggested an easier-to-navigate spiritual resource manual. This suggestion was tied in the number of suggestions with those to add the Serenity Prayer as an appendix and the addition of information to the selected diagnosis section addressing the sexual orientation concerns of young clients. This proposed additional section would include sexual identity issues and how to discuss those issues and other sexual concerns with the parents of clients under the age of eighteen.

Other suggestions mentioned by counselors only once included adding sections on abortion, less "stylized" prayers, prayers from other sources than the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, an alphabetical index of scriptural verses in the manual, and additional information on

Christian counseling ethics. Table 4.13 below shows all suggested additions from counselors and the number of times that suggestion was mentioned in the responses to the second questionnaire.

Table 4.13: Most requested additions or changes to the spiritual resource manual

Suggestions	Number of times mentioned
Paper version instead of electronic	4
Easier navigation of manual	2
Add Serenity Prayer	2
Sexual concerns, identity, and talking with parents	2
Add personal prayers and prayers from other sources	1
Expand Diagnosis Section to include items other than disorders	1
An addition from <i>Care of the Soul</i> by Thomas Moore	1
Add guidance on the sanctity of life	1
Entry on abortion in grief or forgiveness entry	1
How to talk to clients about attending church	1
An alphabetical index of scriptural verses in the manual	1
An article on the ethics of Christian counseling	1

Suggestion No. 1: Use a Paper Version Instead of an Electronic Version of the Manual

In addressing this suggestion, it was decided to forgo electronic delivery as the only method of distributing the spiritual resource manual to Grace House counselors. Instead, it was agreed that the electronic version would be adapted to create a separate printed version. All four counselors who made this suggestion are 62.5 percent of counselors at Grace House who are fifty or older (see Table 4.2, page 89). None of the counselors under fifty years old mentioned issues with an electronic version. This means the revised document would be published without the Community Resource section of the current electronic manual.

The Community Resource section identifies various local ministries and agencies available to help those in need. The elimination of this section from a printed document is

deemed prudent because the information in the section (addresses, telephone numbers, etc.) changes more frequently than the other items addressed in the manual. This rapid change in the contents of this section makes the information more prone to needing to be updated. In addition, the Community Resource section is a yearly project for new Grace House interns that are used to introduce them to the various local resources available for their clients. The number, addresses, and variety of resources available often change yearly as new ministries and agencies are opened, moved, or modified. Therefore, keeping this section as an electronic document makes more sense than relying on a possibly dated printed document. The electronic document can also be distributed easily as a separate file, if needed, without additional costs. This would be the preferred method of sharing the manual with other ministries and individuals who express interest. However, printing the remainder of the manual will require additional editing, which involves resizing and reformatting much, if not all, of the material in the manual. It was decided, therefore, to delay that printing until after the manual is submitted and approved as a part of this research project. The cost of printing the abbreviated spiritual resource manual and the number of manuals to be published are still to be determined at the time of the submission of this thesis. However, the author has obtained the services of a printer, and initial discussions indicated that a paper version of the manual could be completed by mid- to late-summer 2023 at a reasonable cost for one hundred copies.

Suggestion No. 2: Provide an Easier Way to Navigate the Electronic Manual

The suggestion for a more straightforward navigation method for the electronic manual was understandable because of the length of the document (one hundred-plus pages). Many counselors have the desire to move quickly to their reference point in the manual while talking with clients. Therefore, they refrain from trying and making a point while scrolling through an

electronically printed document. Printed documents are often easier to navigate in session because tabs or Post-It Notes can be inserted into a book before the session begins. The suggestion for an easier way to navigate the document was accommodated by adding hyperlinks to entries in the Contents section at the front of the manual. A hyperlink is an electronic link that allows direct access from one specially marked place in a document to another in the same or a different document. This editing device is helpful when a document is lengthy, provided it has formatted sections or chapters. In the case of the spiritual resource manual, a click on an entry on the Contents page will allow the reader to jump from the entry to the desired heading without scrolling through the pages of the manual to get there.

Suggestion No. 3: Adding the Serenity Prayer to the Manual

The Serenity Prayer is a standard fixture for twelve-step and other recovery groups. However, the origin of the prayer has been disputed for years. The Prayer Foundation Website notes this controversy when it reports that the prayer has been attributed to various groups and church notables, including a Sixth Century Christian martyr.¹ Most sources today, however, hold that the prayer was composed by Reinhold Niebuhr, an American Reformed theologian, ethicist, commentator on politics and public affairs, and professor at Union Theological Seminary. Niebuhr, who significantly influenced German Pastor and Nazi resister Dietrich Bonhoeffer, reportedly composed the prayers in 1933. According to the Lighthouse Treatment Center Website, the prayer was adopted and popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous in 1941 and soon after by other 12-step programs.² Niebuhr used the prayer in a 1943 sermon at Heath Evangelical

¹ The Prayer Foundation, “Serenity Prayer,” accessed March 10, 2023, https://www.prayerfoundation.org/dailyoffice/serenity_prayer_full_version.htm.

² Lighthouse Treatment Center, “The Complete History of the Serenity Prayer,” August 3, 2017, <https://lighthouse-treatment.com/the-complete-history-of-the-serenity-prayer/>.

Union Church in Heath, Massachusetts. The prayer also appeared in a sermon of Niebuhr's in the 1944 *Book of Prayers and Services for the Armed Forces*. Niebuhr first published the prayer in 1951 in a magazine column. The prayer, both a short version and a more extended version, and a short history of the prayer seemed appropriate for inclusion in the spiritual resource manual. Therefore, they were added as Appendix 5.

Suggestion No. 4: Adding Research on Sexual Concerns and Identity Among Minors and How to Talk with Parents about This Issue

This was a problematic proposal in that it regards an issue of specific concern to two counselors. Most of the other fourteen counselors affiliated with Grace House may only address this issue occasionally, if at all. This is because all Grace House counselors have certain specialties or areas of concentration developed during their practice. The two counselors who made this suggestion list this issue as a specialty in their counseling practice. They are both educationally trained and skilled in sexual identity issues among minors.

Conversely, most counselors at Grace House don't have the skills or knowledge to address this subject with their clients. In such a case among their clientele, they would refer an inquiring client to the two counselors mentioned. Also, the author doesn't feel skilled enough to prepare a written article with the required depth of training and sensitivity. In addition, properly researching the issue well enough to write a creditable treatment would require more time than is available to complete this action research project. As a compromise to the two counselors, the author suggested they collaborate in writing a thoughtfully researched and well-sourced paper. This paper will cover the subject of a Christian counselor's ethical response to sexual concerns and identity among minors. It was also suggested that they include a section on the best practices for discussing these issues with parents, predominantly Christian parents. If the counselors

produce such a paper, the author has agreed to review it and possibly include it in a revision of the electronic version of the spiritual resource manual.

Other Suggestions for Additions to the Spiritual Resource Manual

Three suggestions from eight counselors were accepted and included in revising the manual. First, the suggestion to provide a paper version of the manual greatly enhanced the probability of use by older, more experienced counselors. These counselors needed to be more enamored with the electronic version of the manual. A second suggestion on improving the navigability of the manual and the various topics likewise enhances the probability that the manual will be a well-used resource by making it more user-friendly. Finally, adding the Serenity Prayer gives counselors a popular tool for connecting with clients.

All the remaining eight suggestions offered by counselors in their questionnaires were not accepted for inclusion in the spiritual resource manual. However, when it is updated, there may be an opportunity to include them in a revised electronic version. All the suggestions had merit. Those suggestions included: The addition of personal prayers and prayers from other sources, expanding the Selected Diagnosis Section to include items other than disorders, adding a passage or section from *Care of the Soul* by Thomas Moore (1992), including a passage on abortion in the Grief or Forgiveness entry, adding a section on how to talk to clients about attending church, guidance on talking with clients about the sanctity of life, an alphabetical index of scriptural verses in the manual, and an article on the ethics of Christian counseling. Several of these suggestions are worthy of further exploration, including the proposal by two counselors about exploring sexual concerns and identity among minors and how to talk with parents about this issue. However, the author decided there needed to be more time to research, respond to this suggestion, and complete this action research project.

Initial Reaction to the Research Project and Manual

Of the eleven counselors who participated in both sections of the research projects, there was widespread agreement that the spiritual resource manual would be helpful in their practice. The counselors made several suggestions, none of which would require major revisions, for inclusion in the manual. Not all the suggestions were included in the revision of the manual, but all were strongly considered and may be included in future revisions. Two significant suggestions were accepted for immediate implementation. The first is the conventional publishing of the manual in book form. This will be undertaken after the completion of the project by a printer hired by the author.

The second suggestion from counselors was to solve the difficulty they found in navigating the one hundred-plus pages of the electronic version of the spiritual resource manual. Three counselors indicated they envisioned that accessing specific topics within an electronic manual would be even more challenging while in session with a client. They, therefore, questioned the value of a non-paper manual in their practice. As one counselor commented, “I don’t keep my computer open during a session. It would be awkward for me to do so.” The consensus among these three counselors was that a paper version would be more helpful because it would be easier to navigate in session and not distract their clients. This second suggestion was addressed by installing hyperlinks that tie the Contents topics to pages and subject matter within the manual. The counselor can quickly access any of the issues or sections within the manual by clicking on the item in the Contents, and the page will open.

Licensed Counselor C envisioned the manual as “especially helpful to a new Christian counselor.” Counselor B also liked the manual and noted that the Scriptures “relate to topics we frequently encounter in our work with clients.” Counselor AA called the manual “a much-needed resource for clinicians who want to know how to integrate the scriptural text into their sessions.”

In an email to the author dated February 15, 2023, one licensed counselor, who was returning the second questionnaire, expressed appreciation for the manual. She offered this assessment of the manual and its contents: “I really commend your efforts here, and I think it will be a gift to all of us who are here at Grace House, now as well as to those who come behind us.”

While the consensus among the Grace House counselors surveyed was that the spiritual resource manual was of value in their practice, less experienced Christian counselors (state-registered and college interns) were more enthusiastic in their comments on applying the resources in the manual with their clients. Counselor AAA was enthusiastic about the manual and described it as “helpful (to her) not only as a counselor but as a Christian.” She said the manual “was extremely helpful as it is directed toward a lot of the major diagnoses and (looks) at them in an integrated point of view.”

It is also anticipated that the manual will find an existence beyond the counselors at Grace House Counseling Center. The manual has been made known to various helping groups in Clay County. In the spirit of Acts 4:32, the manual and other material developed in the process of this thesis will be made available upon request to other Christian counselors and related groups. These groups include Stephen Ministry, GriefShare, prayer ministers at various churches, the lay commissioned chaplains of the Jurisdiction of Armed Forces and Chaplaincy, and other Christian counselors in the Clay County area.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The Need for Biblical Knowledge in Counseling Sessions

The need for spiritual and biblical wisdom in counseling at Grace House has been contemplated since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. During and after this time, it was observed that there appeared to be several changes in the presenting complaint of clients at Grace House. The center presents itself to the surrounding community, religious and secular, as a Christian organization. In the wider Christian community, the center is seen as a site where a client may receive sound psychological therapy and biblical and spiritual guidance. The center and its cadre of mental health counselors and staff never closed during the pandemic. However, in the first six months of the pandemic, there were adjustments in the delivery of mental health counseling services from almost entirely in-person to almost entirely telehealth. The reliance on counseling using an electronic platform has abated, but telehealth remains a vital source of client-counselor involvement.

Since the moderation of the pandemic in the summer of 2022, the consensus among the center's 16 licensed, state-registered, and college interns is that their clients are presenting more challenging questions about biblical and spiritual subjects. This increased demand for spiritual guidance has resulted in some counselors expressing a perceived lack of confidence in biblical and spiritual skills. Before this action research project began, there was no requirement or expectations about biblical or Spiritual counseling training among Grace House counselors. To be affiliated with Grace House, counselors were only required to sign the American Association of Christian Counselors' Statement of Faith and regularly attend a church. Even these minimal requirements do not make Grace House attractive to all counselors interested in private practice. However, affiliation with Grace House by counselors was and remains attractive to experienced

counselors willing to stretch their knowledge base to incorporate biblical and spiritual counseling into their sessions with clients, as well as young counselors with a Christian worldview but little or no experience with Christian counseling and sharing one's faith with those outside the church.

As noted, the pandemic of 2020-2022 brought several changes to the role of all mental health counselors across the United States, regardless of the faith orientation of the counselor. During this period, the role of telehealth expanded and moved counseling sessions from being conducted almost entirely in the mental health counselor's office to the client's home via various electronic platforms accessed on telephone and computers. The counselor was no longer tethered to an office but could conduct sessions with clients from their kitchen tables, living rooms, and bedrooms. More than three years removed from the worse of that uncertain time, those changes in the delivery of counseling services continue to evolve. It would not be too great of a stretch to predict that the flotsam and jetsam left by the pandemic changed the practicing landscape of Grace House mental health counselors forever.

Those changes were prevalent in mental health counseling and across almost all aspects of society, including churches. Many churches in Clay County and much of the United States shuttered their doors for varying lengths at the start of the pandemic. Most reopened within weeks and months of closing. However, documentation and research are still being gathered on the extent of those changes across the broader religious landscape in Clay County and the United States. It is known from existing research that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted religious participation for millions of Americans. An online article by Daniel A. Cox, Jennifer Benz, and Lindsey Witt-Swanson reported that in the summer of 2020, only 13 percent of Americans nationwide said attending in-person worship services. This rebounded to 27 percent by March

2022, but rates of worship attendance were still lower than before the pandemic.¹ Church attendance nationwide has been declining for more than a decade. The pandemic added to that downward trend with its restrictions on large gatherings and the temporary shuttering of many churches. As a result, personal and anecdotal evidence from Grace House counselors indicates that it is mental health counselors, especially Christian counselors, not the pastor of the local church, whom clients, churched and unchurched, are now seeking for ethical, moral, or spiritual consultation about a variety of life issues.

Grace House’s Role in Addressing This Need

This research study sought to discover if pastoral care information and skills were incorporated into a spiritual resource manual at Grace House Counseling Center, Christian therapists will be better equipped to provide effective pastoral care for clients. The purpose of developing and distributing this document was to provide Christian mental health counselors at Grace House with a copy with general information about Christian counseling. This manual, entitled *Counseling with Grace*, was researched and written to assist Grace House’s Christian counselors in their sessions. The one hundred-plus page manual was envisioned as an easy-to-use document that could be kept on a counselor’s computer screen while in session. This information included the manual’s capstone Selected Diagnosis section, which includes eighteen common mental disorders and complaints often presented to counselors in sessions. This section also contains several Bible verses and a prayer associated with the disorder that the counselor might access in session.

Counselors were invited to comment and suggest subjects or other information they would like included in the manual. Some, but not all, of those suggestions, were incorporated

¹ Cox, Benz, and Witt-Swanson, “Faith After the Pandemic.”

into the final version of the manual. Among those suggestions was to convert the electronic manual to a print copy so counselors could more easily access it in session with their clients. It is anticipated that in its final form, whether printed or electronic, the manual would benefit all Christian counselors at Grace House Counseling Center regardless of experience level. However, early in its development, it was strongly suspected that the manual would be most beneficial in the practice and knowledge resources of the four college and state-registered counseling interns who, as a group, have the least experience in mental health counseling biblical education.

This manual addresses the client's spiritual issues in counseling sessions, often presented under the guise of mental, emotional, or relational issues. Some, if not many, of these issues, raised by clients warrant a mental disorder diagnosis from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual or other sources. In some more severe manifestations of disorders, recommendations are often made to seek a physician or psychiatrist to prescribe appropriate medication. However, a milder presentation of the same complaint might be treated successfully with talk therapy or skills training, such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), which may enable clients to heal from the symptoms and emotional distress resulting from disturbing life experiences. Among these latter presentations, many clients seek spiritual or biblical wisdom and advice as part of their mental health therapy.

It was anticipated that, with the aid of the spiritual resource manual, mental health counselors, in addition to addressing a client's presenting complaint, could also include a discussion of biblical and spiritual truths. These discussions would be done with the client's permission and pertinent to the presenting complaint while the counselor facilitates them. Before the beginning of this study, it was suggested by anecdotal evidence, however, that many counselors were not comfortable with using the Bible and Scripture in session regularly. Also,

some counselors expressed tribulation about introducing the Bible or scriptural wisdom to their clients. It was thus believed that a written and organized document to help counselors interact with their clients in biblical and scriptural matters of Christian faith would enhance the counselor's confidence in presenting the material in session. To meet this expectation, the manual was divided into five principal sections: "Welcome to Grace House," "What Makes Christian Mental Health Counseling Christian?," "Pastoral and Spiritual Care," "Praying with Clients," and "Selected Diagnosis, Scriptural Responses, and Prayers."

Determining Counselor Confidence in Scriptural Presentation

To determine what content of a spiritual resource manual would be most helpful for Grace House counselors, two questionnaires were developed to help refine the manual's contents. The first questionnaire (Appendix C) was created to gather information about biblical and spiritual training, experience, and confidence among Grace House counselors. This questionnaire was electronically distributed to the center's fifteen licensed, state-registered, and college interns, not including the director, who is the author. Twelve questionnaires were returned, and approximately twelve days later, a draft of the spiritual resource manual and a second questionnaire asking for comments on the manual were distributed electronically. This distribution was limited to the twelve counselors who responded to the first questionnaire. Eleven of those counselors responded twelve days later.

The four members of the Grace House staff were not asked to fill out a questionnaire, but they were invited to comment on the content of the spiritual resource manual and its readability for their possible use. There was generally positive acceptance by the counselors of the manual—none of the most common complaints centered on the manual's content. However, there were requests for additions or substitutions of some materials. The most significant number

of complaints was that, at one hundred-plus pages, the manual needed to be more easily navigated. In addition, some counselors complained that using the electronic version with their clients in the room disrupted the flow of the counseling session. In response to those comments, it was decided that the spiritual resource manual would be published in print and electronic versions. Discussions are ongoing with a printer in Jacksonville about the manual's printing.

Research Implications

Romans 12:3 (ESV) tells Christians not to think too highly of themselves and to think “with sober judgment.” That is also good advice for doctoral candidates conducting research. The results of this research project did not find a significant lack of confidence or proficiency among Grace House counselors in using biblical and spiritual resources in their contact with their clients. Some of the twelve respondents to the first questionnaire (Appendix C) did express some hesitation at introducing unsolicited biblical and spiritual issues into a counseling session paid for by the client. However, most counselors who participated in the research study indicated they have confidence in their biblical knowledge without the use of a spiritual resource manual other than the Bible. However, these counselors also said they often use Scripture and Bible resources in counseling sessions only when they feel the client is receptive. For example, Counselor A said she only uses Scripture when she feels her clients are open to hearing it. “Sometimes, I will allude to a principle from Scripture without necessarily stating that it is from the Bible.”

It should be noted that, based on this research project, the counselors most comfortable with using Scripture or the Bible in the session were older, more experienced Christian therapists. These same counselors also stated a willingness to explore additional resources with which they might offer their clients as much care and assistance as possible. However, the

college and state-registered interns consistently scored lower on questions dealing with confidence than the more experienced therapists.

While the research project did not discover an overall lack of confidence among these veteran counselors it did confirm a general need for more confidence in expressing biblical trusts among younger counselors practicing at Grace House. Furthermore, the questionnaires used in this study found that this lack of comfort and confidence was most evident among college interns and counselors new to Grace House and Christian counseling. Therefore, the specific implications of this study are that future college interns and all counselors newly affiliated with Grace House would benefit from training in using and applying spiritual and biblical resources when interacting with their clients. The broader implications of this research there is a need for more specific training in melding Christian counseling practice with educational theory among college counseling interns at Grace House. If this is so with interns largely coming from a Christian-based university, what is the general state of Christian counseling training among all interns and new counseling graduates who enter Christian counseling workplaces?

This is not a suggestion that the institutions these new interns graduate from are doing an incomplete job. And it is understood that the experience of the director and others associated with Grace House may vary from the experience of other Christian counseling centers regarding college interns' biblical and Spiritual competency. Grace House's experience is overwhelming, with interns from Liberty University and other Christian-based universities that offer degrees in mental health counseling disciplines. These institutions have solid academic reputations, and many are endorsed by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP). This accreditation body was established in 1981 and ensured that college and university counseling programs are aligned with various standards. The institutions from

which Grace House and other Christian counseling centers draw interns usually include some Bible and scriptural integration in their courses related to counseling. However, the view from the field, or at least from the field at Grace House Counseling Center, where this research was conducted, is that more specific training in integrating biblical and Spiritual skills for graduate counseling students is a desirable goal. Most graduate schools require approximately 600 hours of practicum and intern experience in a counseling environment. The author would advocate that this training should also be comprehensive enough to equip these interns with the knowledge and skills to give them the confidence to discuss faith issues and lessons from the Bible and other spiritual sources with their clients.

The results of this research project strongly imply that new Grace House counselors, especially college interns and others new to Christian counseling, would benefit from the development and implementation of an in-house biblical and Spiritual counseling training program. This proposed training program is yet to be developed, but the spiritual resource manual, with its various sections, could be expanded into a base curriculum. The training would generate confidence in the counselors' abilities to provide better, complete, and more appropriate Christian service to their clients. The abiding concept of this training would be guided by the instructions of Matthew 25:40 (ESV), "As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

Research Applications

The immediate application of this action research project was the improvement in the confidence of counselors in discussing spiritual issues in the counseling room. Also, the spiritual resource manual, written as a part of this project to help counselors with biblical and Spiritual resources in their sessions, has the added potential as an effective teaching vehicle. The audience

for this training in spiritual and biblical skills would be college interns, state-registered interns, and licensed counselors who are newly affiliated with Grace House and new to the Christian counseling profession. This lack of training and confidence in state-registered and college interns was most evident in answers to both questionnaires by Grace House's two college and one new state-registered intern. All three individuals scored low in confidence for presenting biblical and Spiritual material in counseling sessions. Almost one entire point differed from a composite of licensed counselors versus a composite score for state-registered interns and college interns (3.88 versus 4.75) in answer to the question about the value of a spiritual resource manual (see Table 4.3, page 90).

Developing a spiritual resource manual was the practical capstone of this action research project. The manual provides a resource and reference for counseling sessions by all the mental health counselors at Grace House. The manual is sourced so interested readers can expand their knowledge about the included subject. It is also believed that the information in the sourced articles in the manual is easily adaptable to a series of introductory training sessions for interns in the use of the Bible, Scripture, and prayer with their clients. It could also be used as a self-study primer in Christian counseling for licensed and state-registered counselors new to Grace House and Christian counseling in general.

An area not explicitly addressed by this study but where the manual will be of daily use is with the staff of Grace House. This four-member group comprises individually mature Christians who, like the counselors, have varying levels of confidence in biblical and Spiritual counseling. However, this is an intelligent and sensitive group of individuals who care deeply about Grace House, its mission, and the clients with whom they interact daily. In many ways, they often serve as an extension of the counseling room. They listen to clients anxious about their upcoming

appointment or excited about a just-completed session. This dialogue between staff and client often goes on for several minutes. It may continue later when the client calls in to make another appointment or to ask for prayers about specific issues.

A printed version of the manual will be provided for Grace House counselors. In addition, the manual will be published electronically and made available to other Christian counseling individuals and organizations. In addition to an initial electronic distribution to Grace House counselors and staff, electronic copies will be made available to other Christian counselors in Clay County. These counselors will be informed of the manual's availability through an informal Christian counselor network whose members meet at least monthly. A copy of the manual will also be offered to all chaplains canonically resident with the Special Jurisdiction of Armed Forces and Chaplaincy and the Order of St. Martin of Tours, a lay order of chaplains sponsored by the Jurisdiction, which is the endorsing authority for all military chaplains who are Anglican.

Licensed and registered mental health counselors will be strongly encouraged to use the spiritual resource manual in their sessions. Still, they cannot be required under their agreement with Grace House, which designates them as independent counselors who rely on Grace House for administrative functions and office space. This written agreement with licensed and registered counselors ensures that their practice cannot be directed or influenced by Grace House beyond the severance of the contract. However, a familiarization session for counselors and staff is planned concurrently with the distribution of the final draft of the manual. In addition, future interns will be introduced to and instructed in using the manual with their clients at supervision sessions conducted each week during the intern's practicum and internship.

There are also encouragement signals from those outside the Grace House counseling community that the spiritual resource manual has ministry implications for use in settings and among users other than in a Christian counseling center. For example, an early manual draft was informally made available to the Right Rev. Norman Beale. The Right Rev. Beale is the abbot of the Order of St. Martin of Tours. The order is an Anglican religious organization for non-commissioned lay chaplains in the Special Jurisdiction of Armed Forces and Chaplaincy of the Anglican Church of North America. As a member of that order, the author sought the Right Rev. Beale's scriptural knowledge for correction and commented on the theological themes in the articles written for the manual. While not involved as a participant in the study, the Right Rev. Beale indicated that he saw in the document the possibility of a broader distribution than just the counselors at Grace House.

The Right Rev. Beale wrote the author on February 19, 2023, with compliments for the manual and expressing future possibilities for its use. He noted, "I found myself thinking that this paper could become a beneficial guide for most chaplains, for the people in ministry other than chaplaincy who find themselves in counseling, and perhaps others in helping professions." Draft copies of the manual were also made available to the Clay County leaders of Stephen Ministry. This group of lay helpers also voiced interest in a final copy of the manual and hinted at a possible training session for familiarization for the county's Stephen Ministers. Prayer ministers at the author's church expressed similar interests in reviewing the manual, especially the section on disorders and Bible verses.

Research Limitations

The research limitations of this project are evident in the small sample size studied and the limitation of the study in the responses of only Christian counselors practicing at Grace

House Counseling Center. Eleven of the fifteen counselors affiliated with Grace House who were eligible participated in the entire research project. Those eleven counselors represent 73.33 percent of the counselors affiliated with Grace House. Participation in the research project was voluntary. Before the project began, a projected involvement of 50 percent of Grace House counselors would have been considered a success. This is a better-than-expected response but still represents a small sample size. In addition, a twelfth counselor participated in the first questionnaire, but she dropped out before completing the second questionnaire and reviewing the spiritual resource manual. If this counselor had finished the second questionnaire and reviewed the spiritual resource manual, the participation percentage among eligible counselors would have been 80 percent.

A second limitation of the study was the need for more input from the four-member Grace House staff. All were aware of the questionnaires, and their information was sought in reviewing the spiritual resource manual. Leaving the staff out of the research project was a decision of the researcher, who desired to limit the research to licensed, state-registered, and college intern counselors. This is not meant to imply that the staff is not considered an equal partner in the overall counseling mission of Grace House. On the contrary, the staff is considered vital to the center's daily operation for their administrative duties; the staff often engage in lay counseling as they interact with clients or potential clients in person or via telephone. They, therefore, provide a listening ear for client concerns and convey those concerns and insights to the counselors before the session begins.

A third limitation of the study was the decision not to survey clients about why they chose Grace House to bring their counseling concerns. Clients come to Grace House for various reasons, including insurance companies or referrals from their pastors or friends. In addition,

some clients arrive and express surprise that Grace House is a Christian counseling center and express concern that religion will be forced on them. Therefore, many assumptions about why clients were seeking care at Grace House were formulated from anecdotal evidence from the counselors. A survey or questionnaire would have allowed the clients to say for certain why they were seeking Grace House instead of some other counseling center. Therefore, this study was intentionally limited to the responses of participating Grace House counselors to the two questionnaires and a review of the spiritual resource manual.

Further Research

Mental disorders are considered the costliest medical condition in the United States. Mental health and substance abuse disorders cost Americans \$187.8 billion in spending in 2013. Mental disorders rank in this study ranked only behind cardiovascular diseases (\$231.1 billion); diabetes, urogenital, blood, and endocrine disorders (\$224.5 billion); and other noncommunicable diseases (\$191.7 billion). Neurological diseases, including Alzheimer's disease, cost another \$101.3 billion.² Therefore, it would seem prudent for Christian and secular therapists to study any reasonable treatment that might lower the number of afflicted individuals and the cost of their mental health treatment. Integrating spiritual wisdom and faith as counseling skills is an intervention that may hold promise to help clients.

However, while Christian counselors and other mental health professionals agree about spirituality and faith as viable parts of mental health treatment, there needs to be more agreement on how this may be best done. For example, John Swinton contends that the object of a healthy spiritual life is not to feel better or happier, as desirable as these experiences may be. Instead, he

² Lea Winerman, "The cost of treatment," *Monitor on Psychology* 48, no.3 (2017): 80. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/03/numbers>.

asserts, “The object is to encounter joy: to be with Jesus.”³ This lack of information concerning the increased number of clients seeking Christian counseling at Grace House Counseling Center prompted this study to make several assumptions. One of those assumptions was that the COVID-19 pandemic afflicted the population of Clay County and elsewhere with an increase in general anxiety, accompanying symptoms of fear, uneasiness, doom, or danger. In addition, sleep problems often accompany stress, rumination (thinking about a problem repeatedly and unable to stop), inability to concentrate, and avoiding feared objects or places.

It is anticipated that further research will be needed on the demographics of clients served by Grace House Counseling Center and the training and qualifications of all mental health counselors who advertise themselves as “Christian.” The first place for that research to begin is in colleges and universities that offer mental health counseling degrees in a Christian format. The responses to the questionnaires from the college interns at Grace House point out that more research would help find which programs best prepare students to step into a Christian counseling environment. Although the sample size in this project is small, it seems questionable that the mere accomplishment of attending and graduating from a mental health counseling program does not automatically train an aspiring mental health therapist to use spiritual and biblical counseling techniques and skills in the counseling room. A more comprehensive study with a larger group of therapists might shed more light on this subject. The aim of that research could be the development of a mental health counseling curriculum that would prepare young counselors with more confidence about the use of biblical and Spiritual knowledge in the counseling room. That is beyond the scope of this action research project, but the fact that there is a need is unquestionable.

³ John Swinton, *Finding Jesus in the Storm* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2020), 112.

The writer of 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV) says Christians “are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Lawrence K. Wieland agrees that Christians have a unique culture, and there have been times when that culture does not fit with traditional counseling.⁴ Furthermore, he contends that if Christian counselors are qualified to tout their qualifications to use spirituality and biblical wisdom and truths in their therapy sessions, more research will be necessary to meld these disciplines into one unified discipline.⁵ It is clear from the research in this project that there is a need for the truth of the living God to be present now in mental health counseling rooms, not only at Grace House in Fleming Island, Florida but wherever hurting people seek relief. In John 4:35 (ESV), Jesus tells his disciples, “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest.”

For Christian mental health counselors to be prepared to join that harvest today, they must have the resources and the training to convey biblical and scriptural truths to those who seek them for help. As Christian Counselors, we have no other choice. When Jesus saw the crowds flow away from him after a difficult teaching, he asked the disciples if they would leave too. Peter, answering for them and for Christians today, answered in John 6:68 (ESV), “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Amen.

⁴ Wieland, “Bible-Based Counseling,” 44.

⁵ Ibid.

**APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER TO GRACE HOUSE
MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS**

(Date of Survey)

Dear [Recipient's name]:

As a student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to help counselors provide better spiritual and Biblical counseling for clients at Grace House Counseling Center. I am writing to invite participants to join my study by providing information about their practice.

Participants must be employees or affiliated mental health counselors at Grace House Counseling Center. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a questionnaire asking about their experience using spiritual and Biblical resources as a part of their practice/job. This questionnaire will be used to develop a spiritual resource manual to assist in providing spiritual and Biblical resources and guidance to clients. After the manual is distributed, participants will be asked to evaluate the manual as a counseling resource. A second questionnaire will be distributed concurrently with the manual. This questionnaire will ask how effective the spiritual resource manual is in your practice. It should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete each of the questionnaires. The completed final questionnaires will be compared with the earlier questionnaire to determine if the spiritual resource manual meet the counselors' stated needs from the first questionnaire. Names and other identifying information are requested as part of this study, but the information you provide will remain confidential and not linked to your name when the study is written.

To participate in the study, please complete the attached questionnaire and return it to me or give it to Kelsey in a folder or brown envelope. Kelsey will then store it securely until I retrieve it. You may also send the questionnaire to me electronically by emailing it to —email address—. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, in person, by email (—email address—), or by telephone at —phone number—.

A consent document is provided as the first page of this invitation to participate. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me. After you have read the consent form, please sign it, and proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

Larry M. Nichols MRE, MA, LMHC

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Title of the Project: Assessing and Improving Confidence in the Use of Spiritual and Biblical Resources Among Counselors and Staff at Grace House Counseling Center in Orange Park, Fl

Principal Investigator: Larry M. Nichols, Doctoral Candidate, School of Divinity, Liberty University

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a Florida licensed or registered mental health counseling professional, a counselor student intern, or a staff member at Grace House Counseling Center in Orange Park, Fl. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

The purpose of the study is to improve the spiritual and biblical education and confidence of mental health counselors and staff in their interactions with clients at Grace House Counseling center.

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Complete a questionnaire assessing your knowledge and comfort levels of using spiritual and Bible resources as part of your interaction with clients, either in the waiting area or in the counseling room. This questionnaire should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.
2. Read and use over a 30-day period the skills and tips included in a spiritual resource manual to be produced to meet the needs assessed in Task 1 above.
3. Complete a second questionnaire assessing improvements in knowledge and comfort level as part of your interaction with clients, either in the waiting area or in the counseling room. This second questionnaire should also take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include increased confidence in using biblical and spiritual resources in interaction with clients, either in the waiting room or in the counseling room.

Benefits to society include a more spiritual approach in interactions with clients that may lower any barriers that non-churched clients have to hearing the daily and long-term benefits of following spiritual and/or biblical guidelines. The results of this study will also be made

available to other researchers and practitioners, who are likely to pursue and improve the efforts of this study for others through their research or practice.

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Participant responses in both the questionnaires before and after the production and electronic distribution of the spiritual resource manual will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.

- Data will be stored in a locked drawer under the researcher's name in the locked file room of Grace House Counseling Center. Three years after the completion of this study, all hardcopy records will be destroyed. Any electronic data will be downloaded onto hardcopy records and stored in the locked file room of Grace House Counseling Center for a period of three years. Any electronic records will be deleted.
- No recordings will be made during this study.

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

The researcher serves as Director of Grace House Counseling Center, which has an affiliation agreement with each counselor. As the director, the researcher is the hiring authority and supervisor of all staff members. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or with Grace House Counseling Center. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

The researcher conducting this study is Larry M. Nichols. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at telephone number —phone number— or email —email address—.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX C: INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COUNSELORS

Grace House Counselors

Grace House Counseling Center is a Christian-based organization that provides mental health care to thousands of clients in Northeast Florida each year. Our goal is to provide Christian-based and professional mental health services. Our motto is to “take in, heal up, and send forth,” not only to faith professing clients, but to all in need of our help. To accomplish this goal, we are not ashamed demonstrate our love of God and our clients by following as disciples the teachings and example of Christ in our daily lives and work.

Question 1: I feel it is important to model the right relationship with Christ with my clients.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments:

Question 2: I find it helpful to use Scripture or biblical principles as part of my interaction with clients.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments:

Question 3: It is important that I sometimes self-disclose to my clients about my faith and beliefs without their specifically asking.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments:

Question 4: My clients often seek my thoughts on spiritual matters.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments:

Question 5: I would like to share my faith with my clients, but I feel constrained by their resistance.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
5	4	3	2	1

Additional Comments:

Question 6: I would like to share my faith with my clients, but I don't feel confident doing so.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
5	4	3	2	1

Additional Comments:

Question 7: I would like to be more confident in spiritual counseling and/or biblical counseling.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
5	4	3	2	1

Additional Comments:

Question 8: If I felt more comfortable in spiritual and/or biblical counseling skills, I would use them as part of my interaction with clients.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
5	4	3	2	1

Additional Comments:

Question 9: A spiritual resource manual to help me with dealing with spiritual/biblical issues would be useful in my counseling practice.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
5	4	3	2	1

Additional Comments:

Question 10: If a spiritual resource manual for counseling is developed, I would like to see the following issues addressed:

Please circle all issues you would like addressed in a spiritual resource manual.

A definition of spiritual/biblical counseling

Pastoral and spiritual care skills

How to pray with clients

Examples of prayers that may be used with clients

Bible verses connected with mental health issues

Community resources for client assistance

Other items/skills I would like to see addressed in the spiritual resource manual:

Summary:

Individual Questions	Number
Highest ranked question is number:	
Lowest ranked question is number:	

Combined Average for Questions	Number
Add the score given to each of the 5 questions together and divide by 5. The average score for this entire section is:	

**APPENDIX D: SURVEY OF SPIRITUAL RESOURCE MANUAL USEFULNESS
BY GRACE HOUSE COUNSELORS**

Evaluation of Spiritual Resource Manual Usefulness

Thank you for the work you do for God in working with your clients. To assist you in this work, a spiritual resource manual, Counseling with Grace, was given to you two weeks ago for use with your clients. Please complete the following survey to indicate whether you found the manual useful in your practice. The results will be confidential, and your answers will help further refine the manual to suit the needs of all our counselors and staff.

Question 1: I have reviewed Counseling with Grace and feel it is useful in my practice.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments:

Question 2: I found the section on diagnosis, biblical responses, and prayers helpful in my practice.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments:

Question 3: I found the section on prayer with clients helpful in my practice.

Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments:

Praying With Clients

Selected Diagnosis, Scriptural Responses, and Collects

Additional Comments:

Survey Summary:

Individual Questions	Number
Highest ranked question is number:	
Lowest ranked question is number:	

Combined Average for Questions	Number
Add the score given to each of the 5 questions together, and divide by 5. The average score for this entire section is:	

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Welcome to Grace House!

Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 25:40 that “as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” This is a solemn command that we, as Christian mental health counselors and staff members at Grace House, must carry in our hearts, souls, and minds as we minister truthfully and provide light to our clients. The individuals who come to Grace House for guidance, whether for obvious spiritual needs or to sort out the vicissitudes of life, deserve and must always be treated as “the least of these.”

Whether your clients identify as Christian, non-Christian, lapsed Christian, “Never,” or “None,” they look to you, as a Grace House counselor, as an “expert” in spiritual and mental health guidance and wisdom. However, clients do not always come to Grace House because they seek Christian Counseling. Some clients or potential clients arrive and are surprised that this is a Christian counseling center. Many may be initially uncertain of what they may face in the counseling room. This unknown may create anxiety on their part and an initial hesitancy to enter a therapeutic relationship. Part of the spiritual challenge of Christian counseling is to find ways to pierce the darkness and let the light of Christ shine brightly.

Scott Peck observed that “Life is difficult.”¹ This is a truth for everyone, Christian or non-Christian. Peck’s observation affirms Matthew 5:45, which cautions that God “makes his sun rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” The righteousness of the individual or their good works alone will not protect anyone from the slings and arrows of the outrageous fortunes of this life.

The pain and frustrations that clients (and sometimes counselors and staff) encounter is sometimes seemingly unbearable because there seems to be no rhyme or reason for the event. Rabbi Harold Kushner observed, “We could bear nearly any pain or disappointment if we thought there was a reason behind it, a purpose, to it. But even a lesser burden becomes too much for us if we feel it makes no sense.”²

Those who identify themselves as Christian mental health counselors would do well to remember that while each may face different challenges, those who come to Grace House are usually not coping well with whatever their challenge proves to be. They come to Grace House for hope, clarity, and a listening ear. They are seeking answers to life and how they are to move

¹ Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1977), 1.

² Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Anchor Books, 1981), 106.

and have their being in an increasingly challenging world where they are having difficulty navigating life for myriad reasons and sometimes beyond their control.

As these emotionally wounded and lame come to Grace House for guidance and wisdom, Christian mental health counselors, in turn, must go to Christ, who is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2) and the source of all wisdom. Therefore, the Christian therapist's daily task as they deal with their clients is to put flesh on Christ's mercy and grace. Both therapists and staff are laborers in God's mission field here at Grace House. Counselors and staff members work together for the good of clients and all others who seek help here.

As Christian mental health workers, Grace House counselors and staff work to bring Christ's words to life. They do this best when they show their love to their clients and each other through grace and the extension of pastoral care that begins when the client first contacts Grace House for an appointment.

Henri Nouwen perhaps capsulated the tasks of Christian counselors best when he wrote, "The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares."³

The goal at Grace House is not only to produce the [Fruits of the Spirit](#) (Appendix 4) as we offer guidance to the client. The Holy Spirit also empowers staff and counselors to help "the least of these" sort out the flotsam and jetsam of their lives and relationships. To do this, staff and counselors demonstrate to Grace House clients the way to the peace of God, a peace that passes all understanding. The first step on that journey is to help them understand that to have the peace that passes understanding; they must give up any need or desire to understand.

Even so, it is recognized that not all who work at Grace House are equally equipped or trained in pastoral or spiritual care. In addition, counselors and staff members are all at different places in their journeys. Therefore, although well intended, the care provided can sometimes be uneven. This handbook is designed to take some of the mystery (and perhaps some of the fear) out of pastoral and spiritual care and even the care provided. Hopefully, this manual will be a much-used resource for staff and counselors. However, you may find another purpose in your ministry if it is not used as a daily resource.

This manual is not an all-inclusive document to accomplish that goal, but it is a start. It will be added to and amended in the months and years ahead, and you will be a part of that process. Grace House staff and counselors are a multi-denominational assembly of skill, training, and faith beliefs. All are on different roads in different conveyances, but all are headed to the same kingdom destination.

With that caution in mind, please note that this manual and its prayers have an Anglican bent. There is no apology for that fact, but please don't put away this volume because you don't think it will meet your faith parameters. Instead, please give it fair consideration as a tool in your

³ Henri Nouwen, *Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2004), 18.

practice. The Scriptures cited are from the English Standard Version of the Bible, and the prayers are taken directly from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.⁴ While the [Apostles' Creed in Appendix 3](#) is distinctively Anglican and is taken from the Book of Common Prayer, it is also commonly used in other liturgical churches.

If you are uncomfortable with any of the Scriptures, prayers, or prayers in this handbook, you are encouraged to research your denominational resources for comparable prayers and entreaties. Although all Christians serve one God, there are many expressions of that service and devotion. Please explore your denominational resources to help you and your client in the counseling room if you feel freer to use those resources instead of those provided in this manual.

As stated at the beginning of this introduction, please consider this handbook only a start. I encourage you; no, I implore you, as a fellow Christian and mental health counselor who labors in the same field as you, to complete this journey of education and spirituality. Do so not only in your personal life but also in your professional endeavors. And please do so with the God-directed tools you are most comfortable using.

Our clients, and the God we all serve, demands no less.

(Date)

Larry M. Nichols

⁴ The Anglican Church in North America, *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments with other rites and ceremonies of the church According to the use of the Anglican Church in North America Together with the new Coverdale Psalter* (Huntington Beach, CA: Anglican Liturgy Press), 2019.



What Makes Christian Mental Health Counseling Christian?

Being a Christian mental health counselor allows the therapist to link their faith and the truth of Scripture with the science and skills of psychology and counseling. This is not, nor has it ever been, an easy marriage. Some, including, but not limited to, Jay Adams, have railed against the encroachment of secular psychology into counseling by pastors and Christian laypersons. Adams, the founder of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, launched his campaign against in 1970 against secular counseling with the publication of *Competent to Counsel* and the introduction of Nouthetic counseling.⁵

While Adams was not wholly incorrect in asserting the folly of coming into the mental health arena without the wisdom of God, Grace House counselors envision blending biblical truths and scientific principles for the client's benefit. If what the counselor is doing is not both spiritually and technically correct for the client's long-term well-being, the question must be asked about the counselor's goals and competency. As Joshua Knabb et al. observe, "Though Christians have counseled since biblical times using our own terminology and constructs, science has helped us better understand what can go wrong with the soul in a fallen, fragmented world."⁶

As in all mental health counseling, the goal for every therapist should be to help their clients improve their mental and emotional health through stable thinking, actions, and relationships. This general observation applies to Christians and non-Christians seeking mental health care. Christian counselors stand in two worlds when they engage clients in the counseling room. In one world, they are representatives of Christ and his redemptive grace. In the other world, they are men and women using secular skills to help non-believers with their life issues.

Benjamin Doolittle, addressing the idea of medical doctors as "the priest for today," notes that spiritual and emotional health matters to our patients and dramatically impacts their health.⁷ If a physician can address these issues with patients explicitly, Doolittle contends, "this presents an opportunity for more comprehensive healing and a better doctor-patient experience."⁸ Likewise, addressing the spiritual needs of the mental health client would logically provide a

⁵ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1970).

⁶ Joshua J. Knabb et al., *Theoretical and Empirical Explorations in Faith-Based Mental Health* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 63.

⁷ Benjamin Doolittle, *Religion and Spirituality for the Healthcare Provider* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2016), 20.

⁸ Ibid.

better counselor-client experience. Whether or not this would result in a better outcome for the client is the question the counselor must answer with each client.

Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager define Christian counseling as “believing that the care and cure of souls is the work of God—a process of spiritual formation and discipleship—more than the work of psychotherapy.”⁹ Likewise, Eric Johnson notes that when working with Christian clients, “the Christian counselor can make use of all the therapeutic assets that Christ has procured for those who believe in him—what we might call “redemptive grace” resources.”¹⁰ When working with non-Christians, Johnson said, there is still much that Christian counselors can do, “but they have to work with what we might call “creation grace” resources, which are available to everyone regardless of their personal relationship with Christ.”¹¹

Christopher Cook and Isabelle Hamley note that such challenges with mental health are woven into every life situation.¹² Given this experience with such challenges, Cook and Hamley note, “One might expect that faith would be a comforting element of life: providing meaning and comfort, and the assurance of a wider frame of reference for our experiences. And often that is true.”¹³ However, along with this comforting element of faith, questions are raised about God’s motives in our pain or perhaps one’s lack of faith or adherence to God’s word caused our issues. As C.S. Lewis observed, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”¹⁴

Non-Christian mental health counselors can help their clients with mental and emotional pain. However, Christian counselors also have spiritual skills and tools that enable them to use psychology and insights gained from their own life experiences and to help their clients better manage their lives, activities, and relationships. However, the Christian counselor has a resource that the non-Christian counselor does not: The word of God as related in Scripture. Gordon McConville contends that any wholeness must be within the context of unwholeness. Scripture, he argues, is thus “a rich resource for exploring the lineament of human possibilities, for both

⁹ Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2002), 31.

¹⁰ Eric L. Johnson, *God and Soul Care* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2017), 17.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Christopher C.H. Cook and Isabelle Hamley, “Introduction,” in *The Bible and Mental Health*, ed. Christopher C.H. Cook and Isabelle Hamley (Norfolk, UK: SCM Press, 2020), xiii.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperCollins, 1940/1996), 91.

good and ill.”¹⁵ McConville further contends that an exploration of a biblical view of the mind “cannot be isolated from other essential aspects of the human constitution.”¹⁶

Counselors who present themselves to their clients as Christian must not only follow the values and beliefs of the Bible but also, professional and the guidelines and ethical rules in the DSM-5-TM, the American Psychological Association, and their disciplines. Additionally, counselors must follow federal and state laws governing their profession, i.e., licensed mental health counselor, licensed marriage and family therapist, and licensed clinical social worker. Each of these disciplines is governed by state law, and all are mandatory reporters to various agencies if their clients exhibit or verbalize indications of harm to themselves or others. Being a Christian counselor, therefore, does not reduce responsibility for a therapist; it adds to it.

To accomplish the aims and goals outlined both in the Bible and by secular authorities, Christian counselors meet their clients where they are and guide them to where the client and the therapist agree they should go. As H. Norman Wright observes of the Christian counselor, “each person who comes to you during a loss, a crisis, or a trauma has a desperate need.”¹⁷ Dealing with another’s trauma is seldom easy. Sometimes, clients may be reluctant to leave their comfort zone and tell the counselors everything. They often only relate their pain, and what they want is for the pain to stop. However, before that can happen, they must trust the counselor and the process. In times like this, the therapist should remember that counseling proceeds at the speed of trust. Christian counseling aims to help clients identify behaviors inconsistent with God’s teaching, grow in the Christian life, and become stronger.

By growing in Christ, the client can become familiar with and more accepting of God’s will—even when it’s not their will. It might be well to remind those clients who are reluctant to accept God’s will of Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane as recorded in Luke 26:39. Jesus and his disciples were in Gethsemane after The Last Supper. While they were there, Jesus went to pray, saying his soul was “very sorrowful, even to death.” Then, Jesus fell on his face and prayed, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” Likewise, Paul relates in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 of the thorn in his flesh that he felt God gave him to prevent him from becoming conceited. Paul concluded that this thorn in his flesh was “a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”

The Christian counselor would do well to remember that even though God’s power is made perfect in individual weaknesses, not all clients, especially those in mental or emotional

¹⁵ Gordon McConville, “Wholeness and Illness: A View from the Old Testament,” in *The Bible and Mental Health*, ed. Christopher C.H. Cook and Isabelle Hamley (Norfolk, UK: SCM Press, 2020), 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁷ H. Norman Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling* (Minneapolis, MN: BethanyHouse, 2011), 20.

pain, will accept that God loves them and wants to heal them. Many others may not understand that not even the secular world is beyond God’s reach. As Christians, we know everything belongs to God, and nothing is beyond his control. Christian counselors must find ways to work within the systems that the client understands and patiently bring them into the light of the love of Christ. Robert Crick reiterates this when he says that the great task before Christian workers “is to find a way to work within the systems of this world in order to redeem and sanctify those systems in the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, who sends them.”¹⁸

Christian Counselors must remember that they are not, under any circumstances, allowed by ethics or biblical tenants to “push” their personal beliefs about faith or any other subject on their clients. Signing the American Association of Christian Counselors’ Statement of Faith (Appendix 2) is required for all Grace House counselors and staff. The last sentence of that Statement of Faith is, “The ultimate goal of Christian counseling is to help others move to personal wholeness, interpersonal competence, mental stability, and spiritual maturity.”¹⁹

Grace House is visited by thousands of clients each year, and all come with some idea of faith, including “none.” Everyone associated with Grace House should understand their ministry, and any religious faith does not rule the ministry of Grace House except Christianity. Grace House did originate in 2000 as a ministry of Grace Episcopal Church (see Grace House History, Appendix 1). Today, the center is privately owned, and counselors and staff attend Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, and non-denominational houses of worship. Denominational traditions and practices differ in these faith groups and are respected at Grace House. Counselors and staff at Grace House are expected to adhere to the rubrics and traditions of their denominations in their personal life. Still, at Grace House, the prevailing talk between counselors, staff, and clients should be about Jesus Christ and his redemptive power in their lives.

The client’s faith (or lack thereof) must be respected, and there should be no effort to proselytize for any faith group. Not only is the client paying for their time with the counselor, but no counselor ethically has the right to force their beliefs about any subject (religion, politics, sports team, etc.) on the client. The American Counseling Association’s Code of Ethics states that counselors are aware of—and avoid imposing on clients “their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.”²⁰ The Christian counselor is expected to present the best practices of their mental health training and the truth of Scripture so the client can receive it as a remedy for their complaints. But they cannot use their position to advocate for any personal position the client doesn’t want to take.

¹⁸ Robert Crick, *Outside the Gates* (Oviedo, FL: HigherLife Development Services, Inc., 2011), 22.

¹⁹ American Association of Christian Counselors, “Statement of Faith.”

²⁰ American Counseling Association, *2014 ACA Code of Ethics: As Approved by the ACA Governing Council* (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 2014), A.4.b. Personal Value. www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf.

Assuming the above, prayer with and for clients (and for the counselor) is always appropriate (see article on [Prayer](#)). Prayers may be simple or complex, depending on the situation and the client's needs. To help counselors, a suggested prayer from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer is included as part of each diagnosis entry in the [Selected Diagnosis](#) section. Grace House counselors are invited to use that prayer or one of their own choosing. Prayer may focus on emotional hurts, needs, lies, and dysfunction. Prayer makes healing a cooperative process between the counselor, client, and God. This is in keeping with Ecclesiastes 4:12, which says that “a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Ahlberg Adele Calhoun says any prayer for healing “assumes that wounded souls will cooperate with Christ in the healing process.”²¹ The New Testament has several examples of Jesus asking others to cooperate with their healing (John 9:11, John 5:6-9). Clients may not accept the invitation, “Would you like me to pray for you?” But the opportunity to come to Christ in prayer should be presented if the counselor feels it appropriate.

Some might question linking the Bible with modern mental health practices. However, Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, notes that mental health and faith have much in common. “Both explore questions of healing, values and personal values, purpose, and relationship.”²² But the relationship between faith in mental health is a complex one, Welby says. He admits that the pastoral and spiritual care provided by the Church cannot replace the expertise offered by mental health professionals, “but the great gifts offered by spiritual and pastoral guidance shouldn’t be underestimated” in treating the whole person.²³

At least part of the divide between mental health professionals and the Church is that the Bible doesn’t specifically identify anxiety, bipolar disorder, or depression. Instead, most mental health issues are ascribed to demons or evil spirits. In 1 Peter 5:8, the writer says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Mark 5:1-43 describes Jesus and the disciples meeting the man who lived among the tombs in the country of the Gerasene. When asked his name by Jesus, this man responds, “My name is Legion, for we are many.”

However, there is evidence throughout the Old and New Testaments of individuals who we would identify today as struggling with mental health. The Psalms are replete with verses that speak of negative emotions and inner turmoil. David, “a man after God’s own heart,” cries out to God for relief from his inner mental turmoil and pain. Consider Psalm 38:

²¹ Ahlberg Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 255.

²² Justin Welby, “Forward,” in *The Bible and Mental Health*, ed. Christopher C.H. Cook and Isabelle Hamley (Norfolk, UK: SCM Press, 2020), xi.

²³ *Ibid.*

“All my longings lie open before you, Lord;
my sighing is not hidden from you.
My heart pounds, my strength fails me;
even the light has gone from my eyes.
My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds;
my neighbors stay far away.”

God invites his people to express their pain and suffering, and he promises to listen. David concludes Psalm 38 in recognition of his need for God:

“Lord, do not forsake me;
Do not be far from me, my God.
Come quickly to help me,
my Lord and my Savior.”

In the New Testament, Jesus repeatedly dealt with individuals suffering from “evil spirits” whose symptoms would be familiar to any mental health counselor today. For example, in addition to the man known as “Legion,” Jesus also encountered a young boy with an “unclean spirit” in Mark 9:14-29, Matthew 17:14-20, and Luke 9:37-42 (ESV).

Jesus is reported to have repeatedly sought the comfort and solace of God in the Gospel accounts when he went away to be alone with God and replenish his spiritual needs. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus’ anguish and anxiety are described as so intense because of the strain of his upcoming crucifixion that his sweat was compared to “drops of blood” in Mark 14, Matthew 26:37-38, and Luke 22:39-46 (ESV).

Likewise, the Apostle Paul suffered from his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7), whom he described as “a messenger of Satan” with the purpose of “torment.” Unfortunately, Paul is otherwise vague about his ailment or condition, and there are no definitive specifics as to what this “thorn” might have been. However, the ambiguity of the difficulty certainly is general enough to allow Christians to apply it to various problems that may be encountered today.

Christian counselors must believe that the “thorn” plaguing clients today, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual, is known to God. The Christian counselor must also believe that God’s grace is as sufficient for them and their clients today as it was for Paul.



Pastoral and Spiritual Care

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers,
against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness,
against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”*

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

Pastoral care within the Christian tradition is inextricably linked to the biblical image of Christ the shepherd and humans as sheep: “The Lord is my shepherd,” the psalmist declares in Psalm 23:1. In 1 Peter 2:25, the writer tells us, “For you were straying like sheep but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” In Hebrews 13:20, the reader is encouraged, “Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant.” Jesus does not doubt who that shepherd is when he declares in John 10:11 that “I am the good shepherd.”

Either alone or in joining the company of saints in singing or reciting Psalm 23, the “Shepherd Psalm,” the participant is not merely giving intellectual assent to a series of propositions about God. Instead, they are engaging in personal and collective devotion to God. In doing so, they give voice to an understanding that wells from the depths of the soul: This is a very personal relationship. The Lord is not just like a shepherd; the Lord is my shepherd—a subtle yet profound distinction and tacit acknowledgment of God’s care for everyone.

In the company of the Good Shepherd, the human soul is nourished, restored, comforted, kept, and guided. This latter adjective is essential to the Christian mental health counselor attempting to provide pastoral or spiritual care to their clients. Despite attempts to “go it alone” or be the master of one’s soul, no Christian or non-Christian can act independently of God’s sovereignty. As J.I. Packard explains, “Though all human acts are free in the sense of being self-determined, none are free from God’s control according to his eternal purpose and foreordination.”²⁴

At its most basic level, the pastoral care of Christian mental health counseling is the outworking of this remarkable claim of God’s presence, bidden or not bidden, in our lives. Christian mental health care, first and foremost, is concerned with the cure or care of souls. An

²⁴ J.I. Packard, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Carol Springs, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1993), 38.

ancient reference to the “cure of souls” is recognized more in some church traditions than others. It comes from the Latin *curaanimarum* and means “care of souls.”

This dimension of guidance and care distinguishes pastoral care from social work, other forms of counseling, and other helping activities and professions. It is not necessarily the case that pastoral care, or the cure of souls, has a spiritual dimension that these different activities and professions need to improve. However, Christian mental health counseling and the cure of souls is an active and intentional sharing, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the pastoral work of the Good Shepherd as he shepherds his flock, which is the church. As such, it has a clear and distinctive focus modeled on how Jesus ministered to others.

H. Norman Wright notes that in Christian counseling, techniques alone are not effective. The way that Jesus ministered to others was foundational to his ministry.²⁵ Wright maintains that Christian mental health counselor demonstrates this care for their client through their warmth, understanding, acceptance, and belief in their ability to change and mature.²⁶

Christian mental health counselors are often called to serve as “ministers without portfolio” to the sick, the poor, and the dispossessed. In doing so, the Christian mental health counselor represents the love of Christ, and they are witnesses providing biblical truths in therapy to their clients. Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager suggested that, at least in part, as a person-focused, case-wise, and intensely formative process of discipleship.²⁷ To accomplish this, they contend, everyone involved in soul-care “must count the cost and be willing to sacrifice some level of personal comfort and preference to be fit for service, able to the needs of others and help them grow into a disciple of Christ’s.”²⁸

To be effective and to help clients change their unhealthy behavior, the Christian counselor must meet the client where they are, both physically and spiritually. They must often do as they are directed in Ephesians 6:10 to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” According to William Miller and Stephen Rollnick, this process of change often involves three critical components of motivation: readiness, willingness, and ability.²⁹ Therefore, Miller and Rollnick contend, “if people find an avenue for change that they believe will work (general

²⁵ H. Norman Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling* (Minneapolis, MN: BethanyHouse, 2011), 17.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2002), 35.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2002), 10.

efficacy) and that they believe they can do (self-efficacy), they will often pursue it through behavior change.”³⁰

However, if Christian mental health counselors are not attuned to the spiritual needs of clients, they may be denying them the very source of strength and hope they need. Miles Matise, Jeffery Ratcliff, and Flavia Mosci found, “To the extent that spirituality-attuned counseling is omitted from counseling programs, it promulgates the separation of counselors from the very people they will be helping.”³¹ For this reason, Christian mental health counselors must often take a more personal stance with their clients than non-Christian counselors. Christian counselors, after all, are attempting to treat the entire person, body, mind, and spirit.

Counselors provide emotional care to clients in such safe places as the counselor’s office, a facility, or even over the Internet by telehealth. The choice of in-person or telehealth counseling is often left to the client. This is necessary to give the client the impression that they are being provided a safe place free from condemnation, bias, or judgment. Miles Matise, Jeffery Ratcliff Miles, and Mosci Flavia found that this feeling of being in a safe place is paramount to providing effective spiritual and mental health care. They contend that if a client does not feel safe in the counseling environment, they are not likely to return, and if they do, they may be guarded and reserved in their response and interactions with the counselor.³²

Matise et al. recommend that counselors develop a strategy for recognizing when it is appropriate to address a client’s spiritual needs. Such a recognition, they say, can lead to more accurate assessments, determination of resources, evaluation of the impact of beliefs on mental health outcomes and decision-making, as well as the barriers present to the use of spiritual resources in the treatment of mental health concerns.³³

Spiritually, clients may be physically present but cognitively traversing through a vast wasteland of mental or emotional discord. Such clients may be helped by learning spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, Scripture reading, and even more formal spiritual journeys such as Ignatian spirituality, the latter of which insists that God is present in the world and active in everyone’s lives. These are pathways that leads to more profound prayer, good decisions guided by keen discernment, and an active life of service to others.³⁴ John Swinton says that such

³⁰ Miller and Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing*, 11.

³¹ Miles Matise, Jeffery Ratcliff, and Flavia Mosci, “A Working Model for the Integration of Spirituality in Counseling,” *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 20, no. 1 (2018): 45.

³² Matise, Ratcliff, and Mosci, “Integration of Spirituality in Counseling,” 29.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ What is Ignatian Spirituality? www.ignatianspirituality.com/what-is-ignatianspirituality

spirituality allows clients to “reattune their minds in a way that enables them to discern that some thoughts are from God and others are their own.”³⁵

Alister E. McGrath says that spirituality is the outworking in real life of a person’s religious faith—what they do with what they believe. It is not just about ideas, although the basic concepts of the Christian faith are essential to developing Christian spirituality. This path to spirituality is concerned about the way the Christian life is conceived and lived out.³⁶ The term “Christian spirituality,” McGrath explains, “refers to the way in which the Christian life is understood and the explicitly devotional practices which have been developed to foster and sustain that relationship with Christ.”³⁷ Likewise, Ahlberg Adele Calhoun cautions that it is not spiritual disciplines that transform us into the likeness of Christ, for “without the work of God’s spirit within, practices guarantee nothing.”³⁸

Those who feel alienated from traditional religious organizations and facilities may visit a Christian mental health counselor. In this scenario, a Christian counselor may be serving as an ad hoc chaplain to their client.³⁹ This dual role as a minister and therapist is not unheard of to military chaplains who, in a reverse scenario, are on the front lines of serving their populations and are often sought out first, before, or instead of seeking out other mental health professionals.⁴⁰

With this unofficial role as a lay chaplain, Grace House mental health counselors may be expected to render “pastoral care” to their clients. Central to the idea of pastoral care is the word “care.” Other terms for Pastoral Care would be Spiritual Care, Spiritual Guidance, or Soul Care. Perhaps in layman’s terms, all the terms for the various care being offered, regardless of the name attached, can be collected in one word: “Friend.” A counselor would benefit from being not only a mentor and guide but a friend. Becoming a better friend, Eric Johnson contends, “also involves face-to-face dialogue: taking turns mutually sharing one’s mind, heart, and story, and empathic listening.”⁴¹

³⁵ John Swinton, *Finding Jesus in the Storm* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2020), 143.

³⁶ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality* (Victoria, Aust.: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 2.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ahlberg Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 20.

³⁹ Harold J. Koenig, *Religion and Mental Health: Research and Clinical Applications*. (London: Academic Press, 2018), 249.

⁴⁰ Gregory John Cheney, "The Integration of Pastoral and Clinical Identities: The Professional Identity Development of Pastoral Counselors." PhD diss., North Carolina State University, 2019, 1.

⁴¹ Eric L. Johnson, *God and Soul Care* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2017), 569.

In its most literal translation, pastoral care is care rendered by a pastor. However, it is well to note that the word “pastor” comes from the Latin word for “shepherd.” A pastor functions as a shepherd or caretaker of God’s sheep. 1 Peter 5:2 tells those that would be pastors to “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

In the counseling room, this role of shepherd fits the Christian mental health counselor well. Though Christians have been counseled using their terminology and constructs since biblical times, science has helped us better understand what can go wrong with the soul in a fallen, fragmented world.⁴² By modeling Jesus’ love, mercy, and grace, Christian counselors are embodied signs of God, helping Christians to turn towards an awareness of God’s work in Christ for healing.⁴³

Here are some general thoughts about the duties of the Christian mental health counselor and providing pastoral care:

A. While Jesus is God’s appointed shepherd/pastor, we, as his disciples, have been given the responsibility to offer people a living and enduring relationship with God through the ministry of counseling.

B. Our goal for pastoral care is to lead others through teaching and to model God’s word of grace in their lives.

C. We are charged to work under God’s authority to lead all people to the truth of God’s word and extend His grace and love into their lives.

However, the Christian mental health counselor should be reassured that many, if not most, clients do not want to follow a shepherd. Many, especially non-Christian clients, never have and do not want to now, even in the pain that brought them to the counseling room, to follow a shepherd, even The Good Shepherd. Others, including professing Christians, have been hurt by churches or those espousing the Christian faith. Robert Crick points out that God’s love for humanity is not limited to our human value systems or national borders. He says that “a person is not loved less because of a scandalous past, and s/he is not loved more because of a social or ethnic background.”⁴⁴

Christian counselors should remember that many clients do not want an all-powerful God of the universe who corrects, admonishes, and punishes them for their errors. What they want is not a God, but a kindly old being who, as C.S. Lewis explains, is more like a doting “grandfather

⁴² Joshua J. Knabb et al., *Theoretical and Empirical Explorations in Faith-Based Mental Health* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 63.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁴⁴ Robert Crick, *Outside the Gates* (Oviedo, FL: HigherLife Development Services, Inc., 2011), 13.

in heaven” rather than the Lord of the Universe: “A senile benevolence who, as they say, ‘liked to see young people enjoying themselves and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of each day, a good time was had by all.’”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Business of Heaven Daily Readings from C.S. Lewis* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1984), 23.



Praying For and With Clients

*“And this is the confidence that we have toward him,
that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.” 1 John 5:15*

Because of man’s nature as a sinner, almost everyone sometimes has an innate bent toward distrust, fear, and doubt about approaching a perfect God and asking for his help. However, the writer of Hebrews 4:16 encourages his readers to “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” For the Christian mental health counselor, this need to draw near to God for his help is essential to the craft. However, for your clients, even the thought of drawing close to the God of the universe in such an intimate manner as a personal prayer may be more difficult than you imagine.

Prayer with clients is encouraged at Grace House but not required. To most Christians, being familiar with talking with God in prayer is almost second nature. Martin Luther thought so highly of prayer that he said, “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”⁴⁶ Prayer, according to Oswald Chambers, is not just asking and getting things from God. Prayer is coming into perfect fellowship with God and asking for his will to be done, not our will.⁴⁷

Christian mental health counselors should remember that not all their clients are Christians. Even those clients who profess the Christian faith may be unfamiliar with or intimidated by the counselor’s denominational practices or beliefs. The Christian counselor would do well to remember Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager's recommendation to remain flexible and allow each session to dictate whether to pray with their clients.⁴⁸

In such situations, the counselor must rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity, and his power and appearance were predicted by Jesus before his crucifixion in John 14:16-17. The Holy Spirit’s coming is told dramatically in Acts 2:1-4 when “tongues of fire” rested on each person in the upper room, and all were able to speak in “other

⁴⁶ Siang-Yang Tan and Douglas Gregg, *Disciplines of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 66.

⁴⁷ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1992), September 16th.

⁴⁸ Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2002), 235.

tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” In the School of Healing Prayer’s Student Manual,⁴⁹ students are taught that discernment is an essential gift in healing. It is also a vital part of mental health counseling, and the same Spirit that guides prayer also guides mental health counselors to discern the needs of their clients.

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun says that discernment occurs when our ears are open to receiving whatever God says.⁵⁰ Therefore, Calhoun contends, biblical discernment involves more than good judgment, the opening of doors, and decision-making skills. “Right discernment arises out of a relationship with God in prayer.”⁵¹

There is no formula for when to offer prayer in session, and the counselor is the best judge of their client’s willingness to accept prayer as part of or an extension of the counseling process. Some do, and some, especially those without an active faith background or who may be angry with God, may be frightened or negative about the prospect of prayer. In addition, the licensed Christian mental health counselor is advised to abide by the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2014) regarding client welfare⁵² and actions that might be construed as harmful to clients.⁵³ Further, counselors must exercise multicultural sensitivity and avoid imposing their values on clients.⁵⁴

To meet these requirements concerning prayer, Chet Weld and Karen Eriksen recommend that counselors thoroughly assess clients’ spirituality and prayer life and their expectations about the inclusion of prayer and other spiritual interventions in counseling.⁵⁵ Counselors, they contend, also need to be aware of the benefits and harm related to spirituality and spiritual interventions, including prayer.⁵⁶

Therefore, the ethical therapist will not impose their desire for prayer on the client. A simple question: “Would you like me to pray for (with) you?” is all needed to ascertain the client’s wishes. A “no” in such an instance means “no,” and the Christian therapist should move on to other interventions. It is important (and safer) that the counselor has a positive and

⁴⁹ Christian Healing Ministries, *School of Healing Prayer, Level 2: Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Jacksonville, FL: Christian Healing Ministries Publishers, 2021), 26.

⁵⁰ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Discernment* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 111.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵² American Counseling Association, *2014 ACA Code of Ethics: As Approved by the ACA Governing Council*, Section A.1.a.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Section A.4.a.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Section A.4.b.

⁵⁵ Chet Weld and Karen Eriksen, “The Ethics of Prayer in Counseling,” *Counseling and Values* 51, no. 2 (2007): 125.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

nurturing relationship with a client before suggesting prayer. Remember, this is the client's hour they or their insurance provider pays for.

Roswitha Saenz and Michael Waldo found that clients who are already open to prayer in addition to counseling might benefit from using several types of prayer, including prayers for guidance, wisdom, and strength.⁵⁷ Grace House counselors are encouraged to consult the Selected Diagnosis section of this manual. Each disorder diagnosis is followed by appropriate Bible verses and a prayer from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.⁵⁸ Grace House counselors are encouraged to use these prayers or to supplement them with intercessions from their denomination.

Before engaging with clients in prayers, Christian mental health counselors would do well to heed the advice of Michael Grove, who said that a relationship should be developed between therapists and clients that is both functional and positive. He maintains that there must be open and honest communication to do this.⁵⁹ Feelings, he argues, need to be shared freely while respecting the rights of the other. For this to occur, Grove explains, it is necessary to have “a high level of trust so that there is the strength within the relationship to weather the ‘storms’ that are part and parcel of human interaction.”⁶⁰

H. Norman Wright likewise cautions Christian counselors to “be careful what you ask God to do.”⁶¹ It is important, Wright says, to ask God to grant comfort, strength, support, and insight. All prayer, he continues, should be guided by the Holy Spirit for instruction and inspiration as to prayer. Remember, you are trying to help your client change their life or attitude. This is not easy.

Larry Crabb, one of the patriarchs of Christian counseling, noted that real change for a client must occur from the inside out.⁶² Often, Crabb suggests, “psychological efforts do not resolve the deepest issues, which are spiritual... Dealing with our insides can be frustrating. Disciplined Christian living fails to resolve all the problems in our soul.”⁶³

⁵⁷ Roswitha Saenz and Michael Waldo, “Clients’ Preferences Regarding Prayer During Counseling,” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 5, no. 4 (2013): 325.

⁵⁸ The Anglican Church in North America, *The Book of Common Prayer* (Huntington Beach, CA: Anglican Liturgy Press), 2019.

⁵⁹ Michael Grove, “The Three R’s of Pastoral Care: Relationships, Respect, and Responsibilities,” *Pastoral Care in Education* 22, no. 2 (2004): 34.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ H. Norman Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling* (Minneapolis, MN: BethanyHouse, 2011), 420.

⁶² Larry Crabb, *Real Change is Possible: If You’re Willing to Start from the INSIDE OUT* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992), 49.

⁶³ Ibid.

Therefore, one of the essential tasks for a Christian mental health counselor is to determine early in the counseling process the faith orientation of their client. Eric Johnson said this determination is necessary when working with Christian clients because then “The Christian counselor can make use of all the therapeutic assets that Christ has procured for those who believe in him—what we might call ‘redemptive grace’ resources.”⁶⁴ This early assessment of the client's faith orientation allows the Christian counselor to confidently introduce the subject of faith in the counseling process. Chet Weld and Karen Eriksen found that caution should be used when including prayer in counseling.⁶⁵

The resources available to the Christian counselor are prayer and intercession on behalf of, or in conjunction with, their client. Christians have a powerful promise from Jesus in Luke 11:9-10, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be open.” Two principles in these verses are intended to give confidence and hope when one asks for God’s intercession in their issues and lives.

The first principle is: that God listens. God hears what his children ask for, and, because He listens, He opens doors that would be closed without prayer. Many have heard or thought they heard someone say, “God has better things to do than answer my prayers or be concerned with my needs when there are so many big problems in the world.” This sounds sensible, but it is not what Jesus said. Instead, Jesus said that God is concerned about his people and wants them to pray to him about what concerns them. This is not only for the “big” things everyone faces but for the little things as well. Therefore, there is nothing quantitative about asking.

The second principle is: asking increases our chances of receiving. People of faith don’t intuitively know what God will do in certain situations. However, the verse in Luke commands them to ask in all situations and circumstances. Prayer increases the chances of receiving what is needed from God. Although God knows everyone’s needs before they pray, prayer is essential in receiving. This is how God has chosen to partner with us when we are in need. God knows what is going on in the lives of his children, and he will respond to their needs according to his will.

Another verse in Luke 11 uncovers a third principle of prayer—God is the Heavenly Father who will give not what is always wanted but what is needed. Somewhat like an insightful and loving earthly parent. Jesus said, “*If you know how to give good gifts (good means good for the child) to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give to those who ask Him.*” Loving parents give their children what they need. Even when it makes no sense economically, they usually find a way. Loving parents figure it out, even with limited resources.

This comparison of parents’ love for their children is intended to heighten man’s expectations. God, who opens the hearts of earthly parents, will not shut His own heart! And one’s expectations should be further elevated because their Heavenly Father owns the world, including all its resources. As Psalm 50:10 proclaims of God: “For every beast of the forest is

⁶⁴ Eric L. Johnson, *God and Soul Care* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2017), 17.

⁶⁵ Chet Weld and Karen Eriksen, “Christian Clients’ Preferences Regarding Prayer as a Counseling Intervention,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 35, no. 4 (2007): 339.

mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.” Acts 17:25 likewise declares that God is not served by human hands, “as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.”

As pointed out, prayer is an essential part of each Christian’s life. This is especially true for the Christian mental health counselor, who is often at the point of the spear in the fight against those human or spiritual forces that seek to degrade the client’s life and well-being. In prayer, we rely on God to supply the tools needed to navigate each day. The Anglican Catechism is often used for Baptismal and other courses in the Anglican faith. The Catechism is based on groups of questions and answers. The section of the Catechism describing *A Rule of Prayer: Scripture, Prayer, and Worship* points out this reliance on Christ and urges each Christian to engage in daily prayer to grow to their full potential in Christ. Question 255 asks, “Why is prayer an essential part of a rule of life?” The response is, “Through prayer, I rely upon God for strength, wisdom, and humility to sustain and guide me in my rule of life. Without the love of God and the power of his Spirit, I will not attain to the fullness of Christ.”⁶⁶

In addition to the prayers in the Selected Diagnosis section of this manual, the following prayers are suggested for counselors’ use. As explained earlier, each therapist is encouraged to have prayers available that they are comfortable with for use in various circumstances. Instead of that resource, the following prayers are recommended. All prayers are taken from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. The prayer number is provided in the title of each prayer. The appropriate page number is appended in the footnote of each prayer.⁶⁷

Suggested Prayers Recommended for Certain Circumstances

117. A Thanksgiving Prayer

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love. We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side. We thank you for setting us at tasks that demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments that satisfy and delight us. We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone. Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of his Word and the example of his life; for his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation; for his dying, through which he conquered death; and for his rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom. Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know Christ and make him known; and through him, at all times and in all places, may give thanks to you in all things. **Amen.**⁶⁸

⁶⁶ The Anglican Church in North America, *To Be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 87.

⁶⁷ ACNA, *The Book of Common Prayer*.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 681.

123. For Deliverance from Peril

Almighty God, our strong tower of defense in time of trouble: We offer you praise and heartfelt thanks for our deliverance from the dangers which lately surrounded us [and for your gracious gift of peace]. We confess that your goodness alone has preserved us; and we ask you still to continue your mercies toward us, that we may always know and acknowledge you as our Savior and mighty Deliverer; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁶⁹

124. For the Restoration of Health

Almighty God and heavenly Father, we bless and praise your Name on behalf of your servant *N.*, and we give you humble thanks that you have been pleased to deliver *him* from sickness. Grant, O gracious Father, that by your help *he* may live in this world according to your will, and be made a partaker of everlasting glory in the life to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁷⁰

122. For Military Veterans

O Judge of the nations, we thank you with grateful hearts for the men and women of our country who in the day of decision ventured much for the liberties we now enjoy. Grant that we may not rest until all the people of this land share the benefits of true freedom and gladly accept its disciplines. This we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**⁷¹

⁶⁹ ACNA, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 683.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 684.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 682.



Selected Diagnosis, Concerns, Scriptural Responses and Prayers

Having a mental disorder of any kind is difficult, not only for the one with the disorder but also for those close, including family, friends, and others. In addition, the feelings of anxiety and depression that often accompany a mental disorder are often made more so when an individual must deal with its symptoms alone.

Mental health counseling offers help and comfort to those with mental disorders who seek our help by providing support and an outlet to discuss their hopes, fears, and aspirations openly. This is made more accessible because our clients know they are speaking in confidence to someone who is not only trained to help but also wants the best outcome for them.

Research indicates that those who suffer from mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, bipolar, etc., may also have a lower feeling of self-worth and acceptance than those without mental disorders. This perhaps applies more so to Christians, many of whom are under the false assumption that believers don't, or shouldn't have, the same mental issues and life problems as non-believers.

Also, as Alan Thomas points out, the Bible does not teach how the body and soul/spirit work together. There are good reasons, however, for regarding the body and soul as acting in union so that what happens in the body has something corresponding happening in the spirit/soul.⁷²

However, what Christians accept as truth is that belief in God is no shield against the vicissitudes and trials of life. Christians, as well as non-Christians, are prone to suffer from the same difficulties. However, Christians do have a resource that non-Christians don't have, and they sometimes must be reminded often that they are children of God. The Christian counselor's task is to come alongside their clients in those dark moments when trouble and fear are near, and God seems far away and offers the comfort and support lacking in their clients' lives.

Christian counselors must meet their clients where they are and help lead them to a better, more comfortable mental high ground. Daniela Dumulescu et al. contend that integrating religion and spirituality is challenging for many mental health practitioners. Today, Dumulescu et al. contend, the interest in this topic has increased due to its significant impact on addressing existential crises. They propose their research found that this heightened interest in spirituality has prompted scholars to propose spirituality "as a reservoir for promoting well-being and

⁷² Alan Thomas, *Tackling Mental Illness Together: A Biblical and Practical Approach* (London: InterVarsity Press, 2017), ProQuest Ebook Central.

growth after being confronted with major life stressors, integrating it into therapeutical practices would be of great value for welcoming human suffering.”⁷³

The following list of disorders and concerns is typical of those a counselor at Grace House may encounter in their daily work. General descriptions of the disorder or concern from the DSM-5-TR are included in the description section when possible. However, the listings and explanations are available, and no attempt is made to reprint the entire DSM-5-TR. When a concern or issue is not found in the DSM-5-TR, information about the problem or concern is supplied from the Bible, Psychology Today, or another reputable source.

Each description is followed by Scripture verses and a prayer from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer⁷⁴ that may help Christian therapists as they encounter their clients in the session. In addition, each counselor is invited to use other Scripture or prayers as they deem fit or appropriate for their denomination or denomination or practice.

⁷³ Daniela Dumulescu et al., “Spiritual Practices in Psychological Counseling: The Return to the Self,” in *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 21, 62 (2022): 21.

⁷⁴ The Anglican Church in North America, *The Book of Common Prayer* (Huntington Beach, CA: Anglican Liturgy Press), 2019.



Adjustment Issues

Adjustment issues can occur at any time in a person's life and may create confusion, indecision, or anxiety. The DSM 5-TR places Adjustment Disorders under the Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders section,⁷⁵ a wide array of disorders, but all involving stress and anxiety-related symptoms.

According to the DSM 5-TR, adjustment issues may occur in the presence of emotional or behavioral symptoms as a response to an identifiable stressor. An identifiable stressor is the essential feature of adjustment disorders.⁷⁶ The stressor may be a single event such as the end of a romantic relationship or multiple stressors, a move to a new town and start of a new job or relationship problems.

Stressors may be recurrent or continuous. Stressors may affect one individual, an entire family, or a larger group or community. Some stressors may accompany specific developmental events (e.g., going to school, leaving a parental home, reentering a parental home, getting married, becoming a parent, failing to attain occupational goals, retirement).

The DSM 5-TR also notes that adjustment issues also may be present after the death of a loved one (see Bereavement) when the intensity, quality, or persistence of grief reactions exceeds what normally might be expected, and when cultural, religious, or age-appropriate norms are considered, and the grief reaction does not meet criteria for prolonged grief disorder.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client suffering from adjustment disorders.

Christ has faced our problems and overcome them:

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." *John 16:33*

We have hope and solace in God's love:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. *Psalms 46:1*

God's love overcomes all earthly concerns:

Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. *1 Peter 5:7*

⁷⁵ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR)* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2022), 296.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 322.

Tribulation is often God's working good in our lives:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. *James 1:2-4*

The cares and concerns that we may face are only temporary:

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. *2 Corinthians 4:17*

God knows our afflictions and is always there to comfort us:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. *2 Corinthians 1:3-4*

Our hope is in God alone, and we must always remember to pray for His intervention:

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. *Romans 12:12*

80: For Trustfulness in Times of Worry and Anxiety⁷⁷

Most loving Father, you will us to give thanks for all things, to dread nothing but the loss of you, and to cast all our care on the One who cares for us. Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, and grant that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal, and which you have manifested unto us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

⁷⁷ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 670.



Anger

Anger and irritability are present in several mood disorders in the DSM5-TR, including, but not limited to, Bipolar Disorder,⁷⁸ Anxiety Disorder,⁷⁹ and Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder,⁸⁰ or in social conditions such as anger, abuse, marriage, and illness (see specific entries).

Of these disorders, the one most associated with anger or irritability is Mood Dysregulation Disorder. The DSM-5-TR identifies the core feature of Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder is chronic severe, persistent irritability.⁸¹ This severe irritability has two prominent clinical manifestations, the first of which is frequent temper outbursts. These outbursts typically occur in response to frustration and can be verbal or behavioral (the latter in the form of aggression against property, self, or others).

Anger and irritability are also a product of sin and often indicate separation from others as well as separation from God. The Bible admonishes us to “be angry, but sin not,” which suggests that some anger may be justified or excused. However, anger that leads to sin is neither justified nor excused and leads to judgment.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client suffering from anger include:

Anger is sometimes understandable:

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. *Ephesians 4:26-27*

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. *James 1:19*

Anger may be prevented:

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. *Proverbs 15:1*

⁷⁸ APA, *DSM-5-TR*, 139-175.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 215-261.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 521-541.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 523.

Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. *Proverbs 14:29*

Anger often leads to sinful behavior:

By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom. *Proverbs 13:10*

It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling. *Proverbs 20:3*

Anger often depends on us and our thoughts:

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. *Romans 12:18*

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. *Ephesians 4:31*

God's anger is always righteous because He is righteous:

God is a righteous judge and a God who feels indignation every day. *Psalms 7:11*

God's wrath will deal with all ungodliness and unrighteousness:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. *Romans 1:18*

Unrighteous anger is not of God and carries an eternal penalty:

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. *Galatians 5:19-21*

94. A Prayer for a Virtuous Heart (Thomas Aquinas)⁸²

Give me O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy thought can drag down; an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out; an upright heart, which no tribulation can wear out; an upright heart which no unworthy purpose can tempt aside. Bestow upon me understanding to know you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, and faithfulness that finally may embrace you. **Amen.**

⁸² ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 674.



Anxiety

Anxiety includes several disorders that share features of excessive fear, anxiousness, and related behavioral disturbances. *Fear* is the emotional response to a real or perceived imminent threat, whereas *anxiety* is an anticipation of a future threat. These two states overlap, but they also differ, with fear more often associated with surges of autonomic arousal necessary for fight or flight and thoughts of immediate danger and escape behaviors. Anxiety is more often associated with muscle tension and vigilance in preparation for future danger and cautious or avoidant behaviors.

Anxiety may manifest itself in several disorders including Separation Anxiety Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Agoraphobia, and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Criteria for disorders associated with anxiety are found on pages 215 to 261 of the DSM-5-TR.⁸³

Stress, life conditions or changes, and uncertainty all contribute to feelings of anxiety. In its more extreme manifestations, anxiety can trigger panic attacks and the fight or flight response necessary for our ancestors' survival in overwhelming situations. In the most extreme manifestations, extreme anxiety involving life, death, or great fear of bodily harm can trigger post-traumatic stress disorder.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client suffering from fear or anxiety include:

Pray for the peace that passes understanding:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:6-7*

I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. *Psalms 34:4*

In God, we have nothing to fear:

For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. *2 Timothy 1:7*

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. *Isaiah 41:10*

⁸³ APA, *DSM-5-TR*, 261.

God cares for us in our anxiety:

Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. *1 Peter 5:7*

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. *John 14:27*

Do not be anxious about tomorrow:

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. *Matthew 6:25-34*

We must not lean on our own understanding, and trust God:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. *Proverbs 3:5*

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going. *John 14:1-4*

We only have to call on the Lord for help:

Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. *Psalm 55:22*

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. *Joshua 1:9*

God always restores us to wholeness:

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. *1 Peter 5:10*

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. *Jeremiah 29.11*

80. A Prayer to relive anxiety⁸⁴

Most loving Father, you will us to give thanks for all things, to dread nothing but the loss of you, and to cast all our care on the One who cares for us. Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, and grant that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal, and which you have manifested unto us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

⁸⁴ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 670.



Bereavement (Grief/Hopelessness)

Bereavement is the experience of losing a loved one to death. The DSM-5-TR does not list simple grief (the longing for a missing loved one) as a codable mental health disorder. Complicated Grief (F43.8) is codable, but the criteria states that symptoms of grief must have been experienced for at least a year for adults or six months for children.⁸⁵

Grief is also listed as a differential diagnosis for Major Depressive Disorder,⁸⁶ and Adjustment Disorders.⁸⁷ Grief and or hopelessness may trigger a response that may be intense and involve many features that overlap with symptoms characteristic of a major depressive episode, such as sadness, difficulty sleeping, and poor concentration.

Features that help differentiate a bereavement-related grief response from a major depressive episode include the following: the predominant effects of grief are feelings of emptiness and loss, whereas in a major depressive episode, they are persistent depressed mood and a diminished ability to experience pleasure.

Moreover, the dysphoric mood of grief is likely to decrease in intensity over days to weeks and occurs in waves that tend to be associated with thoughts or reminders of the deceased, whereas the depressed mood in a major depressive episode is more persistent and not tied to specific thoughts or preoccupations. It is important to note that in a vulnerable individual (e.g., someone with a history of major depressive disorder), bereavement may trigger not only a grief response but also the development of an episode of depression or the worsening of an existing episode.

The DSM-5-TR notes that Dysphoric dreams may occur during bereavement, but typically involve loss and sadness and are followed by self-reflection and insight, rather than distress, on awakening.⁸⁸ The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Also, the duration and severity of the bereavement reaction clearly exceed expected social, cultural, or religious norms for the individual's culture and context.

⁸⁵ APA, *DSM-5-TR*, 322-323.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 460.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client suffering from bereavement, grief, or hopelessness include:

Death is a temporary condition that Jesus has overcome:

Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him. *Psalm 126:5*

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" *1 Corinthians 15:54-56*

We should have no fear of death for God has conquered it:

He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces. And the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. *Isaiah 25:8*

Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." *Lamentations 3:19-24*

Jesus paid our debt, and we will all live with him in eternity:

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" *John 11:25-26*

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. *1 Corinthians 15:42-44*

For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end, Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. *Romans 14:8-9*

Do not be anxious about anything:

Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body

more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. *Matthew 6:25*

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:6-7*

In Christ, we are more than conquerors:

Know, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8:37-39*

Scripture offers us comfort in a time of loss:

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. *Matthew 5:4*

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. *Psalms 73:26*

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the *righteous*, but the LORD delivers him from them all. *Psalms 34:18*

81. A Prayer for Grief and Bereavement⁸⁹

Heavenly Father, help us to entrust our loved ones to your care. Though sorrow darkens our lives, help us to look up to you, remembering the cloud of witnesses by which we are surrounded. And grant that we on earth, rejoicing ever in your presence, may share with them the rest and peace which your presence gives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

⁸⁹ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 670.



Children

Children, according to repeated verses in the Bible, are a gift from God. After Adam and Eve are restored in God's eyes, his command to them in Genesis 1:28 is to "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it." Likewise, in Mark 10:14, Jesus admonishes the disciples to "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Clearly, God is concerned about children.

However, children often come with frustrations for parents who are concerned about their behavior. The parents bring those concerns, and their children, to mental health counselors who specialize in child therapy skills. Children often suffer from the same mental health issues as adults, but, because they have less overall restraint and patience, children react differently based on their age and maturity levels. This is all very stressful for most parents who want the best possible outcome for their children and their families.

The DSM-5-TR does not have a special section on children, but it does list development disorders such as Intellectual Development Disorders, Communication Disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Specific Learning Disorder, and Motor Disorders.⁹⁰ The Community Resource section (Appendix 6) contains an entry on Services for Children, which may help the counselor find resources not provided at Grace House.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client dealing with issues or concerns about their children regardless of age include:

The word and knowledge of God is to be handed down from parent to child:

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. Deuteronomy 6:6-7

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

We must accept the kingdom of heaven as a child

But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:14

⁹⁰ APA, *DSM-5-TR*, 35-99.

Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. Matthew 5:9

By accepting Christ as our savior, we become children of God

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. 1 John 3:2-3

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12

Discipline is for the child's benefit

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:11

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

We bless our children and grandchildren and we are blessed by them

Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers. Proverbs 17:6

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. 3rd John 1:4

And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." Acts 16:31

66. A Prayer for the care of children⁹¹

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom so to train them, that they may love all that is true, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, following the example of their Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

A prayer for children⁹²

O Lord Jesus Christ, who took little children into your arms and blessed them: Bless the children of this family, that they may grow up in godly fear and love. Give them your strength and guidance day by day, that they may continue in your love and service to their lives' end. Grant this, O blessed Savior, for your own Name's sake. **Amen.**

⁹¹ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 666.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 77.



Comfort in Various Circumstances

Mary C. Lamia in her online blog on the Psychology Today Website⁹³ notes that some of the things we do to ease stress or anxiety don't necessarily bring the result we desire. While our emotions motivate us to take various action to alter negative feelings or reduce stress, we also may be prompted to seek comfort in activities that are not, in the end, healthy.

Seeking comfort in diversions such as food, alcohol, and other substances, will, Lamia contends, "help you evade looking at the issues that lead you to seek comfort. For the moment you may imagine you have found relief, but you have only embraced avoidance."

This avoidance may ultimately lead to a plethora of other issues, which rather than reducing stress and anxiety, actually increase these symptoms and, in the end, cause more damage to the body, mind, and relationships than the initial disorder.

For the Christian counselor, the answer to a client seeking comfort may be the wisdom of Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Other Bible verses that may be helpful to a client seeking comfort include:

As God comforts us, we are to comfort others

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

God's comfort is for all situations

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:4

To share in Christ's sufferings is to share in his comfort

⁹³ Mary C. Lamia, "Seeking Comfort the Impossible Way," Psychology Today, January 30, 2015, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/intense-emotions-and-strong-feelings/201501/seeking-comfort-the-impossible-way>.

For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 2 Corinthians 1:5

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Matthew 5:4

Comfort others as you have been comforted

Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 Corinthians 13:11

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul. Psalm 94:19

If you are in God, there is no need to fear man

I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass. Isaiah 51:12

The Scriptures are written to give us hope

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Romans 14:4

To have peace, we must live in harmony with one another

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus. Romans 15:5

We are not alone for Christ is always with us

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. John 14:18

A prayer for comfort in various circumstances:

58. For a Person in Trouble or Bereavement⁹⁴

O merciful Father, you have taught us in your holy Word that you do not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men: Look with pity on the sorrows of your servant *N*. Remember *him*, O Lord, in mercy; nourish *his* soul with patience; comfort *him* with a sense of your goodness; lift up your countenance upon *him*; and give *him* peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

⁹⁴ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 663.



Depression

Depression is a serious mental condition and is manifest in several depressive disorders outlined in the DSM 5-TR.⁹⁵ Among these disorders are disruptive mood dysregulation disorder, major depressive disorder (including major depressive episode), persistent depressive disorder, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, substance/medication-induced depressive disorder, depressive disorder due to another medical condition, other specified depressive disorder, and unspecified depressive disorder.

The common feature of all these disorders is the presence of sad, empty, or irritable mood, accompanied by related changes that significantly affect the individual's capacity to function (e.g., somatic, and cognitive changes in major depressive disorder and persistent depressive disorder). What differs among them are issues of duration, timing, or presumed etiology.

According to the DSM 5-TR, thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, or suicide attempts are common among those with depressed moods.⁹⁶ These thoughts may range from a wish not to awaken in the morning or a belief that others would be better off if the individual were dead, or, in the most serious cases, a specific suicide plan that includes putting their affairs in order, acquiring the method of death (a gun, poison, or a rope). Some may even have picked a location and/or time to accomplish the suicide.

Among Christians, this thought may be expressed in the misguided belief that that they have been given "permission" by God to kill themselves to be with Him. They may even be able to cite biblical verses that give them the "permission" they need. The clinician should be careful to distinguish before a simple wish to "be with the Lord" and more serious suicidal thoughts.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client suffering from depression include:

God will never leave abandon you

It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. *Deuteronomy 31:8*

God will always strengthen and uphold you

...fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. *Isaiah 41:1*

⁹⁵ APA, *DSM-5-TR*, 177-214.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 186.

God hears your pleas, and He will redeem you

I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. *Psalm 40:1-3*

The Lord is your shield, and He will lift you up

But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. *Psalm 3:3*

God promises to be near to the Brokenhearted

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. *Psalm 34:18-19*

The Lord promises He will renew you

They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. *Isaiah 40:31*

Come to Jesus all who labor and are heavy laden

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. *Matthew 11:28-30*

Nothing can separate the believer from the love of God

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8:38-39*

In God is all hope found

Why are you cast down, O my soul and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. *Psalm 42.11*

We must be humble to receive God's blessings

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. *1 Peter 5:6-7*

59. A Prayer for the discouraged and downcast⁹⁷

O God, almighty and merciful, you heal the broken-hearted, and turn the sadness of the sorrowful to joy. Let your fatherly goodness be upon all whom you have made. Remember in pity all those who are this day destitute, homeless, elderly, infirm, or forgotten. Bless the multitude of your poor. Lift up those who are cast down. Mightily befriend innocent sufferers and sanctify to them the endurance of their wrongs. Cheer with hope all who are discouraged and downcast, and by your heavenly grace preserve from falling those whose poverty tempts them to sin. Though they be troubled on every side, suffer them not to be distressed; though they are perplexed, save them from despair. Grant this, O Lord, for the love of him who for our sakes became poor, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

⁹⁷ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 663.



Despair

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines despair as "utter loss of hope" or "a cause of hopelessness."⁹⁸ Iskra Fileva, in her online article in Psychology Today, notes that despair differs from resignation.⁹⁹ While the lack of hope is present in both situations, if one resigns themselves to their circumstances, you may be able to accept what is at hand. Those suffering from despair, Fileve contends, have "not simply lost hope but judges the pain of the current situation to be intolerable. There is no prospect for a better future, for sunnier days, but neither can one continue like this."¹⁰⁰

The DSM-5-TR does not list a disorder for despair, but it is considered a symptom of several disorders or conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention. These include Depression,¹⁰¹ Bereavement,¹⁰² and PTSD,¹⁰³ and may also involve suicide ideation or an actual attempt. Fileva says in this state of mind, "What else, besides the grim thought of ending pain by committing suicide, can a despairer find in his or her arsenal?" The answer, she suggests, depends on the case. In some cases, stories of people who have overcome despair may help.¹⁰⁴

The Christian counselor's source for such stories might include scriptural account, such as David's immense grief at the loss of his sons in 2 Samuel 12:15-23 and 2 Samuel 12:18-33. Likewise, in Mark 14:34-36, Jesus prayed alone through the night in the garden, pleading with God to find a way other than the cross. So great was his anguish, Luke 22-44 says, that his sweat was as "drops of blood."

Other Bible verses that may be helpful to a client seeking comfort include:

We may despair, but in Christ we are not defeated

⁹⁸ Merriam Webster Dictionary, "Despair," (n.d.), www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/despair (accessed December 3, 2022).

⁹⁹ Iskra Fileva, "Despair," Psychology Today, June 10, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-philosophers-diaries/202006/despair>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ APA, *DSM-5-TR*, 177.

¹⁰² Ibid., 834.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 301.

¹⁰⁴ Fileva, "Despair."

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing. 2
Corinthians 4:8

God will rescue us from our despair

He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. *Psalm 40:2*

For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;
2 Corinthians 1:8

I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. *Psalm 27:13*

We must trust and fear God, and not despair in our circumstances

Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; *2 Corinthians 1:9*

Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God. *Psalm 43*

God will hear us in our distress, and we must wait for him

In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, And my cry for help before Him came into His ears. *Psalm 18:6*

Wait for the Lord; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord.
Psalm 27:14 From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. *Psalm 61:2*

Despair sometimes leads further into sin

Keep your feet from being unshod and your throat from thirst; But you said, 'It is hopeless! No! For I have loved strangers, and after them I will walk. *Jeremiah 2:25*

Even believers' despair over their circumstances

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and come to an end without hope. *Job 7:6*
So I say, "My strength has perished, and so has my hope from the Lord." *Lamentations 3:18*

Through Christ, we can overcome despair

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. *2 Corinthians 4:8-9*

Hope in God and despair will flee

Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence. *Psalms 42:11*

A prayer to overcome discouragement or despair:

59. for the discouraged and downcast¹⁰⁵

O God, almighty and merciful, you heal the broken-hearted, and turn the sadness of the sorrowful to joy, Let your fatherly goodness be upon all whom you have made. Remember in pity all those who are this day destitute, homeless, elderly, infirm, or forgotten. Bless the multitude of your poor. Lift up those who are cast down. Mightily befriend innocent sufferers, and sanctify to them the endurance of their wrongs. Cheer with hope all who are discouraged and downcast, and by your heavenly grace preserve from falling those whose poverty tempts them to sin. Though they be troubled on every side, suffer them not to be distressed; though they are perplexed, save them from despair. Grant this, O Lord, for the love of him who for our sakes became poor, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

¹⁰⁵ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 663.



Divorce

Divorce seems to be an all-too-common relational outcome of modern life. Among the consequences of divorce are several symptoms of mental disorders mentioned in the DSM-5-TR such as anxiety, depression, and adjustment issues. Biblical marriage does not envision divorce as anything other than sin. However, it is well to remember that God forgives us of our sins if we ask him to forgive us. But God will most often leave us with the consequences of our sin. Therefore, although our sins are forgiven, we must often deal in some manner with the consequences of our actions.

Both the Old and New Testaments contain several passages indicated God plan for marriage to be a permanent relationship entered into between a man and a man and God (see Marriage). Divorce is a condition alien to God's plan for men and women. In Malachi 2:16, God says: "I hate divorce." However, we must look to Malachi 2:13 to learn why. Here God says:

"You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, 'Why does he not?' Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth."

Other Bible verses that may be helpful to a client considering or involved in a divorce include:

Marriage is sanctioned by God

So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. *Matthew 19:6*

Marriage is not to be taken lightly

To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. *1 Corinthians 7:10-11*

To divorce and remarry is to commit the sin of adultery

Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. *Luke 16:18*

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. *Matthew 5:32*

He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” *Matthew 19:8-9*

“For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless. *Malachi 2:16*

God's plan is for marriage to be for the life of the partners

For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. *Romans 7:2*

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. *Genesis 2:24*

Husbands and wives must love each other

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, *Ephesians 5:25*

However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. *Ephesians 5:33*

The unbelief of a spouse is not a reason for divorce

To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? *1 Corinthians 7:12-16*

A Prayer for Those Dealing with Divorce:

77. For guidance¹⁰⁶

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices; that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path we may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

¹⁰⁶ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 669.



Domestic Violence/Abuse in Marriage

Domestic violence and abuse, physical and mental, by one spouse on another or on children is an all-too-common complaint in the counseling room. Psychology Today defines Domestic abuse or violence as one person consistently “aims to control their partner through physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.”¹⁰⁷ Psychology Today further states that The United States Department of Justice defines domestic violence as “a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that one partner uses to gain or maintain control over another intimate partner.”¹⁰⁸

The exact causes for domestic violence or abuse vary, but generally is based on one partner’s desire to control the other partner, usually by assuming a position of superiority that may involve violence to maintain. This desire to control may originate from a family history, feelings of male privilege or superiority, depression, anxiety, or other mental disorder.

Mental health counselors are mandatory reporters for domestic violence or threats in the state of Florida, and they are required by law to report known or suspected domestic abuse or violence. Appendix 6, contains a listing of domestic violence shelters in the Jacksonville/Orange Park area if the counselor needs to find a safe place for the victim.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client suffering from domestic violence or abuse in marriage include:

Husbands are to love their wives as they love themselves

Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. *Colossians 3:19*

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. *1 Peter 3:7*

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. *Ephesians 5:25*

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. *Ephesians 5:28*

¹⁰⁷ “Domestic Violence,” Psychology Today, accessed November 12, 2022, www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/domestic-violence.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Husbands and wives are to avoid strife

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. *Proverbs 15:1*

To speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. *Titus 3:2*

Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. *2 Timothy 2:23-25*

God sees marriage as a good and proper state

He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. *Proverbs 18:22*

Beware of uncontrolled pride or passions that lead to quarrels

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? *James 4:1-5:20*

A Prayer for Those Dealing with Domestic Violence/Abuse in Marriage:

65. For Families¹⁰⁹

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you set the solitary in families: We commend to your continual care the homes in which your people dwell. Put far from them every root of bitterness, the desire of vainglory, and the pride of life. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, and true godliness. Knit together in constant affection those who, in holy matrimony, have been made one flesh; turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents; and so enkindle fervent charity among us all, that we may evermore be joined to one another with bonds of loving-kindness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

¹⁰⁹ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 666.



Fears/Phobias/Apprehension of All Kinds

According to the National Health Service (NHS) of Scotland, fear becomes a phobia when “you have to change your lifestyle to manage it.”¹¹⁰ A phobia, they state, is “an extreme or irrational fear or dread aroused by a particular object or circumstance, to the point where it severely restricts your life.”¹¹¹

Both fears and phobias, and well as other apprehensions, are often seen in the counseling room and are often associated with anxiety. The DSM-5-TR describes phobias as “marked fear or anxiety about a specific object or situation (e.g., flying, heights, animals, receiving shots and/or injections, seeing blood). In children, fear or anxiety may be expressed by crying, tantrums, freezing, or clinging.”¹¹²

To be diagnosed with a specific phobia, the fear or avoidance has lasted for six months or longer and the fear of the object is out of proportion to any actual danger present in the object or situation. For more information, check the specific phobia entry in the DSM-5-TR.¹¹³ Fears and phobias may be generally considered a form of anxiety, and those Bible verses dealing with Anxiety are also appropriate.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client expressing fear or apprehension over a person, Place, or thing include:

If we trust in God, he will help us overcome our fears

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God: I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. Psalm 56:3

¹¹⁰ NHS of Scotland, “Coping with Fears and Phobias,” (n.d.), <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/fears-and-phobias/coping-with-fears-and-phobias> (accessed December 10, 2022).

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² APA, *DSM-5-TR*, 225.

¹¹³ Ibid., 224.

God is always with us and knows our fears

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:4

Make your fears known to God, and he will deliver you

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

The Lord holds our hand and is by our side

For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, “Fear not, I am the one who helps you.” Isaiah 41:13

The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? Psalm 118:6

Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

Perfect love casts out all fear, and there is safety in the Lord

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 1 John 4:18

For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. 2 Timothy 1:7

The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe. Proverbs 29:25

A Prayer for Quiet Confidence and deliverance from fear and apprehension:

82. For Quiet Confidence¹¹⁴

O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

¹¹⁴ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 670.



Physical Illness and Mental Health

There is a well-established link between physical and mental health. David Hanscom, a medical doctor, noted in a Psychology Today article that there is a connection between anxiety, stress, and other mental disorder symptoms. If one feels stressed, Hanscom said, your thoughts will create a chemical environment consisting of adrenaline, cortisol, histamines, cytokines, and other hormones that may create a sense of insecurity and dread.

Since you cannot escape or solve unpleasant thoughts, rational or irrational, Hanscom says, then your body will be exposed to higher levels of these chemicals than needed. “It is like driving your car 70 mph down the freeway in second or third gear—it will break down much sooner than if you were in fifth gear and cruising.”¹¹⁵

In addition, the DSM-5-TR includes a class of illness termed somatic symptom disorders.¹¹⁶ According to the DSM-5-TR, individuals with somatic symptom disorder typically have multiple, current, somatic symptoms that are distressing or result in significant disruption of daily life. There is commonly only one severe symptom, usually pain, is present. Symptoms may be specific (e.g., localized pain) or relatively nonspecific (e.g., fatigue). The symptoms sometimes represent normal bodily sensations or discomfort that does not generally signify serious disease. The DSM-5-TR cautions that “Somatic symptoms without an evident medical explanation are not sufficient to make this diagnosis. The individual’s suffering is authentic, whether or not it is medically explained.”¹¹⁷

In case of the actual pain caused by a diagnosed illness, there may be accompanying mental distress that may linger until and often after the illness is cured or alleviated. Fear and anxiety about the disease or illness returning may create mental distress.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client suffering from physical illness of any kind include:

God promises to heal soul wounds and physical wounds

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. *Psalms 147:3*

¹¹⁵ David Hanscom, “Solve Mental Pain to Resolve Physical Pain,” Psychology Today, November 8, 2022, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/anxiety-another-name-pain/202211/solve-mental-pain-resolve-physical-pain>.

¹¹⁶ APA, *DSM-5-TR*, 350.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Healing is a sign of God's forgiveness

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. *James 5:14-15*

He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. Psalm 107:20

Unconfessed sin can hamper and delay healing

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. James 5:16

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. *1 Peter 2:24*

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. *Proverbs 17:22*

God's word delivers us from suffering and pain

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed. Luke 4:18

The Lord loves the righteous and heals them

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. *Psalm 146:8*

You shall serve the Lord your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you. *Exodus 23:25*

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. Proverbs 17:22

God heals us as he desires, not as we desire

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. *2 Corinthians 12:7*

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise. Jeremiah 17:14

God loves the righteous

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.

A Prayer for Healing from Physical and Emotional Illness:

61. For the recovery of a sick person¹¹⁸

Almighty and immortal God, giver of life and health: We implore your mercy for your servant *N.*, that by your blessing upon *him* and upon those who minister to *him* with your healing gifts, *he* may be restored to health of body and mind, according to your gracious will, and may give thanks to you in your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

¹¹⁸ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 664.



Marriage/Anniversaries

Marriage and the origin of all male and female relationships begin appropriately enough in the first book of the Bible. In Genesis 2:18, tells the reader, “Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Adam and Eve are, therefore, the prototypes for all marriages that follow.

In the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, the service for marriage explains that marriage was established and ordained by God “as a sign of the mystical union between Christ and the Church.”¹¹⁹ Jesus performed his first miracle at the marriage in Cana of Galilee.

The union of husband and wife, then, the prayer book states, is to be in heart, body, and mind “for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord” as well as mutual job, aid, and comfort to each other, and to maintain purity.¹²⁰

But that is not the way it always works out. Couple counseling is one of the mainstays of mental health counseling at Grace House. Couples and individual married partners alike seek wisdom and advice in dealing with their spouse. Marriage counseling can be one of the most rewarding ventures in Christian mental health counseling. It can also be one of the most frustrating. The Christian mental health counselor must remember that it is God, not he or she, that does the heavy lifting with couples counseling.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client contemplating marriage or dealing with issues in their marriage include:

God is the basis for all love, and we are not whole without Him

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. *1 Corinthians 12:1-13*

¹¹⁹ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 201.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.
Ephesians 5:25

Marriage is to be held in honor by all

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. *Hebrews 13:4*

A good and prudent wife is a gift from the Lord

He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. *Proverbs 18:22*

House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.
Proverbs 19:14

An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. *Proverbs 31:10*

Husbands and wives share a special relationship

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. *Genesis 2:24*

But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” *Mark 10:6-9*

There is to be harmony and understanding in marriage

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. *1 Peter 3:7*

God does not want believers to be yoked with unbelievers

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? *2 Corinthians 6:14*

69: A Prayer for a Marriage or an Anniversary¹²¹

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his Church: Send your blessing upon these your servants [as they begin another year], that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

¹²¹ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 667.



Peace in Changing Circumstances

There have been a lot of changes in the world since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. What most people thought they knew, they found out they didn't know. Mistrust, anxiety, and uncertainty seem to be more prevalent now than in the memory of many. Robert Puff in his online article on anxiety in modern life notes that the first thing that causes anxiety is fighting change. Puff notes that if we say, "'I don't want this change! Go away,' we're going to suffer. We're going to be anxious or even mad because change is, in many ways, the new norm."¹²²

Puff said that doesn't mean that the change need be embraced. What is needed is the realization that change is a part of life now and that we must learn to adapt. Puff says that one of the best ways to adapt "is to acknowledge the change in the world. Instead of fighting change, find ways to make life go well. There are many ways we can acknowledge change without embracing it."¹²³

This may sound like the Serenity Prayer, which might be helpful to an anxious or troubled client: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."¹²⁴ *However, if a client has a great deal of angst or anxiety, it may be difficult for them to focus on serenity. There is an adage that if you want to have the peace that passes understanding, you have first to give up understanding. That may be difficult for some clients.*

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client seeking peace and a relief from the angst and anxiety of the present world:

Christ brings peace because he has overcome the world

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." *John 16:33*

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all. *2 Thessalonians 3:16*

¹²² Robert Puff, "Finding Peace in an Anxious World," *Psychology Today*, October 13, 2022, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/meditation-modern-life/202210/finding-peace-in-anxious-world>.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Fred R. Shapiro, "Who Wrote the Serenity Prayer?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 28, 2014, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/who-wrote-the-serenity-prayer/>.

Peacemakers are blessed as the sons of God

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” *Matthew 5:9*

Live with others in peace so much as it depends on you

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. *Romans 12:18*

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. *Hebrews 12:14*

Christ leaves his peace with us to rule in our hearts

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. *Colossians 3:15*

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. *John 14:27*

With peace comes joy and safety

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. *Romans 15:13*

In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. *Psalms 4:8*

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. *1 Corinthians 14:33*

Through faith, we have peace and righteousness with God

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Romans 5:1*

And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. *James 3:18*

Peace is listed as a fruit of the Spirit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. *Galatians 5:22*

The peace of God surpasses all understanding

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:6*

A prayer for peace in various circumstances:

80. For Trustfulness in Times of Worry and Anxiety¹²⁵

Most loving Father, you will us to give thanks for all things, to dread nothing but the loss of you, and to cast all our care on the One who cares for us. Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, and grant that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal, and which you have manifested unto us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

¹²⁵ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 670.



Self-Esteem/Indecision/Uncertainty

Self-esteem is typically defined as confidence in one's own worth or abilities. This lack of confidence can lead to indecision or uncertainty. The DSM-5-TR doesn't speak directly or offer a diagnosis for either self-esteem, indecision, or uncertainty. However, all three areas are found in such diagnoses as paranoia, depression, anxiety, bipolar, and other mental disorders.

Christians may suffer from all three of these issues often because they lack the confidence that they are who God says they are. That is, lack of self-esteem, indecision, and/or uncertainty are not sins, though they might lead to sins, especially in not believing that God will provide for our needs, when we need them and not before. It is also worth noting that too much self-esteem, decisiveness, and confidence may lead to an arrogant attitude and a lack of reliance on God, which is a sin.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client suffering from self-esteem issues, indecision, or lack of confidence include:

God created man in His own image

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." *Genesis 1:26*

Through Christ, we are reconciled to God and are viewed as without sin

And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have now received this reconciliation through Him. Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all men, because all sinned. *Romans 5:11-12*

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into His image with intensifying glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 *Corinthians 3:18*

We are special because God knew us before we knew Him

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. *Psalms 139:14*

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations. *Jeremiah 1:5*

God chose us before the creation of the world to be with Him

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. *Ephesians 1:4-6*

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. *1 Peter 2:9*

God loved us before we loved Him

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. *Romans 5:8*

Jesus, the Lord, calls us his friends

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. *John 15:15-16*

A Prayer for those lacking self-esteem, confidence, and feeling uncertain:

71. for Christ to be formed in us¹²⁶

Lord Jesus, Master Carpenter of Nazareth, on the Cross through wood and nails you wrought our full salvation: Wield well your tools in this, your workshop, that we who come to you rough-hewn may be fashioned into a truer beauty by your hand; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, world without end. **Amen.**

¹²⁶ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 668.



Spirituality

According to the DSM-5-TR, spirituality can sometimes be considered a condition requiring clinical attention “or otherwise affect the diagnosis, course, prognosis, or treatment of an individual mental disorder.”¹²⁷ This is especially true if it helps explain the need for a test, procedure or treatment or if it plays a role in the initiation or exacerbation of a mental disorder “or if it constitutes a problem that should be considered in the overall management plan.”¹²⁸

Designated on page 834 as “Z65.8 Religious or Spiritual Problem,” this labeling may be used by the clinician “when the focus of clinical attention is a religious or spiritual problem.”¹²⁹ Examples include distressing experiences involving loss or questioning of faith, problems in the conversion to a new faith, or questioning of spiritual values that may or may not be related to an organized church or religious institution.¹³⁰

For Christians, this often involves questioning how certain actions or outcomes can be allowed by a loving and caring God. This may be stated in the age-old question, “Why do bad things happen to good people.” Often, of course, there is no good answer that will satisfy the client and, often, the question may have to be processed by the client for understanding and acceptance of God’s will.

Bible verses that may be helpful to a client who wants to grow closer to God and/or help with their spiritual questions or knowledge of God include:

Our struggle is often against unseen forces

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. *Ephesians 6:12*

The spirit of God dwells in all believers

¹²⁷ APA, *DSM-5-TR*, 821.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ APA, *DSM-5-TR*, 834.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. *Romans 8:11*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. *1 Peter 1:3*

We must walk by the spirit to receive the spirit

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. *Galatians 5:16-27*

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. *Romans 7:14*

For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. *Romans 8:6*

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. *1 John 1:6*

We must wait on the Lord who was, who is, and who is yet to come

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. *1 John 3:2-3*

The wisdom of God is foolishness to unbelievers

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. *1 Corinthians 2:14*

We can do nothing unless we abide in Christ and the Holy Spirit

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. *John 15:5-8*

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. *Romans 14:17*

For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), *Ephesians 5:8-9*

A Prayer for the peace of Spirituality:

73. A Prayer of Self-Dedication (*William Temple*)¹³¹

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

¹³¹ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 668.



Stress

Stress is an automatic response in the human mind that derives from millennia of our ancestors needing a way to protect themselves from predators and other threats. Faced with danger, the body kicks into gear, flooding the body with stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol that elevate your heart rate, increase blood pressure, boost energy, and prepare the body to deal with the problem.

It is highly likely that the fight or flight response grew from this protective mode. Our ancestors who chose the wrong response, i.e., fighting when they should have run, likely did not produce many offspring hence stress is a form of natural selection.

The DSM 5-TR lists stress among a variety of diagnoses from adjustment disorder to separation anxiety disorder and sexual dysfunctions and stimulant use disorder. Stress often builds on stress and is often referred to by clients as anxiety, nervousness, or irritability.

It is true that in some situation, stress and the accompanying fight or flight reaction may be useful survival tools. However, too much stress for too long a period can be debilitating to both mind and body. According to the Mayo Clinic, the following are common effects of stress on body, mood, and behavior:¹³²

On Your Body:	On Your Mood:	On Your Behavior:
Headache	Anxiety	Overeating or undereating
Muscle tension or pain	Restlessness	Angry outbursts
Chest pain	Lack of motivation or focus	Drug or alcohol misuse
Fatigue	Feeling Overwhelmed	Tobacco use
Change in sex drive	Irritability or anger	Social withdrawal
Stomach upset	Sadness or depression	Exercising less often
Sleep problems		

¹³² Mayo Clinic, “Stress Symptoms: Effects on Your Body and Behavior,” March 24, 2021, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-symptoms/art-20050987>.

In the Bible, stress is caused by a variety of issues and is suffered at some point by most major figures throughout the Scriptures. Even Jesus was under great stress in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night he was betrayed (Mark 14:32-52).

The following are Bible verses that may be helpful to a client suffering from stress or other issues causing worry and concern include:

God relieves all our stress if we come to Him

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. *Philippians 4:6*

Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. *Psalms 55:22.*

Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? *Psalms 118:5*

Jesus gives us his peace and his rest always

Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. *John 14:27*

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” *Matthew 11:28-30*

Stress and anxiety are heavy, but God’s word is light

Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad. *Proverbs 12:25*

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. *James 1:12*

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? *Romans 8:31*

Be not anxious, for in God, all things work for good

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. *Romans 8:28*

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. *Matthew 6:34*

And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? *Matthew 6:27*

In all things, seek God and his kingdom first

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. *Matthew 6:33*

A Prayer for Relieving Stress:

58. for a person in trouble or bereavement¹³³

O merciful Father, you have taught us in your holy Word that you do not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men: Look with pity on the sorrows of your servant *N*. Remember *him*, O Lord, in mercy; nourish *his* soul with patience; comfort *him* with a sense of your goodness; lift up your countenance upon *him*; and give *him* peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

¹³³ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 663.



In Other Times of Trouble

The troubles and woes that clients bring to the counseling room at Grace House are as varied as the clients themselves. While some of these concerns may warrant a diagnosis from the DSM-5-TR, many times the Christian mental health counselor serves God and their client best by engaging in a ministry of presence and using the skills of active listening, silence, staying in the moment, and relishing the joy and experience of the small things.

Engaging a client with the ministry of presence is showing respect for the client and for their situation. It means giving up our impatience and “moving the session along.” In showing respect for client, the Christian mental health counselor moves at the client’s pace and rhythm. In doing so, the counselor exchanges their agenda for the agenda of their client.

Galatians 6:2, believers are told to “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” In living out this command, the Christian counselors might do this by praying or providing comfort in various ways, but not excusing any sins they bring to the session. However, this sometimes means we will serve others despite our discomfort with what they may be revealing. It is well to remember the promise of 2 Corinthians 5:17 that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

The following are Bible verses that may be helpful to a client in times of trouble not covered in other sections and include:

The Lord will neither leave nor forsake you

It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. ***Deuteronomy 31:8***

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ***Psalms 23:4***

The love of the Lord never ceases

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ***Lamentations 3:22-23***

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ***Psalms 46:1***

God has promised us his peace and his love and comfort

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. *John 14:27*

Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. *Psalm 119:76*

He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. *Job 5:11*

We should not fear the world for Christ has overcome the world

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. *John 16:33*

If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. *Psalm 139:11-12*

In God will we find our comfort

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. *Isaiah 49:13*

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. *Matthew 5:4*

Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. *Psalm 55:22*

God promises us that we are more than conquerors

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8:37-39*

A Prayer for peace and comfort in times of troubles:

95. In times of suffering or weakness¹³⁴

Dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: I hold up all my weakness to your strength, my failure to your faithfulness, my sinfulness to your perfection, my loneliness to your compassion, my little pains to your great agony on the Cross. I pray that you will cleanse me, strengthen me, guide me, so that in all ways my life may be lived as you would have it lived, without cowardice and for you alone. Show me how to live in true humility, true contrition, and true love. **Amen.**

¹³⁴ ACNA, *Book of Common Prayer*, 674.



More Thoughts

This section was initially entitled “Final Thoughts,” but it was changed because “Final Thoughts” would be wrong on at least two fronts. For one, this manual is not “final” in any sense. There is so much more to say on the various subjects that were included. Secondly, as stated in the introduction, this manual is a starting point, not an end, for discussing spiritual/pastoral care at Grace House or in any setting involving Christian counseling.

Counseling with Grace attempts to provide a God-sourced resource tool for the Christian mental health counselor. This tool, if used, can highlight the right spiritual road for the Christian counselor to help their client. However, this document or any other tool is only helpful if it is used. A screwdriver sitting in a tool chest and not used is no more than a potential paperweight. Therefore, you are urged to review this manual and determine where it fits your practice.

This manual and its Scriptures are anticipated to be more beneficial to the novice Christian counselor than the more experienced therapist. Therefore, the novice therapist is urged to explore the various diagnoses and become familiar with the attached Scripture verses and the suggested prayers. The more experienced Christian mental health counselor is likely to find some benefit from the manual, but this may be on a more selective basis. As stated earlier, the Scriptures or the prayers are intended to provide a starting point, and the therapist is encouraged to add their verses or prayers.

Pursuing humility is the starting point of receiving any grace of God. It is also an essential spiritual discipline for the Christian counselor. Paul advances both thoughts in Romans 12:1 when he urges his readers, as a part of their spiritual worship, to be “living sacrifices.” Andrew Murray develops this theme of dying to self through *Humility: All Christ's teaching to his disciples*, he says, “were the needful preparation for his entering into them in divine power, to give and be in them that He had taught them to desire.”¹³⁵

Christian counselors must remember clients pay for non-judgmental and unconditional positive regard. Therefore, Christian Counselors must walk a line between hearing and doing God's will and not imposing one's beliefs on the client, who may be offended and cease therapy. Counselors who invite Jesus into their therapy sessions along with their clients are therefore walking the path of the cross, which in this life means self-sacrifice, abuse, and, perhaps, death.

Following Jesus means a Christian counselor must take up his cross daily. Michael Gorman calls this action “cruciform love.” This love, he explains using a paraphrase of 1

¹³⁵ Andrew Murray, *Humility: The Path to Holiness* (Morgantown, KY: Tote Publishing, 2018), 40.

Corinthians 13, “is hospitable and generous, especially to the poor and weak—those marginalized or rejected by others. If it has worldly status, it becomes downwardly mobile to lift others up. It gives of itself and its material possessions. Cruciform love, in a word, continues the story of the cross in new times and places. Cruciform love is imaginative.”¹³⁶

The decision to show Cruciform love in the counseling room should not be expected to be universally applauded. There is always the possibility that the Christian counselor will not be considered for continued therapy by some clients. These outcomes may mean a decreased income and inability to continue in a ministry many Christian counselors believe they are called to practice.

In his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, William Barclay says this is part of the decision to follow the cross. He says that in Matthew 7:21, Jesus warned those who follow him of the danger of the cross and where the road to Jerusalem might eventually lead. “In the most vivid way possible, he told him that the man who followed him was not on the way to worldly power and glory but must be ready for a loyalty that would sacrifice the dearest things in life and for a suffering that would be like the agony of a man on a cross.”¹³⁷

It is indeed a daunting challenge. Fortunately, we have God to help us.

(Date)

Larry M. Nichols

¹³⁶ Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: William E. Eerdmans, Publishing Co., 2021), 267.

¹³⁷ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), 196.

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Appendix 1

History of Grace House Counseling Center

Grace House has a long history in Clay County, first in Orange Park and now in adjacent Fleming Island. Grace House was conceived and organized, by the Rev. B.E. Palmer and Janie Simpson, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, in 1999. Grace House began as a ministry outreach of Grace Episcopal Church.

The counseling center first opened on Grace Episcopal Church property in a small brick house at 133 Stowe Avenue in December of that year. It remained a Grace ministry until the bulk of Grace's congregation separated from the Episcopal Church in 2006 over the issues of ordaining homosexuals as priests and other issues.

Unfortunately, during that separation and our housing in temporary quarters, there was no place to relocate Grace House and its counselors. The Episcopal Dioceses of Florida almost immediately directed Grace House to be closed or moved from the Grace campus. Janie, her husband, Bob, and the resident counselors relocated the ministry to a location on Village Way in Orange Park.

In 2009, Janie and Bob sold the rights to the center to Grace Clinic, a for-profit Christian counseling agency based in Orlando. Less than ten months later, in January 2010, Grace Clinic announced it was closing Grace House because the Orange Park center needed to make a profit or attract clients or counselors the way its business model indicated it should.

At that point, Larry and Frances Nichols felt called to buy Grace House from Grace Clinic and, with God's help, continue the vision that the vestry of Grace Episcopal, B.E., and Janie had embraced in 2000. This call included reconnecting with New Grace and other churches, Anglican and otherwise, in Clay County.

Hebrews 10 proclaims, "it is an awesome thing to fall into the hands of the living God." However, to Larry and Frances, the call was not an easy step. Larry was then 65 and was a retired journalist and National Guard officer. He was a State Registered Counselor Intern who would not be licensed for another year. Frances also had concerns, but they decided to step out in faith. Larry became the director/promoter/recruiter/PR person, and Frances and two employees would handle the office tasks.

Since acquiring Grace House in 2010, Grace House has been blessed with the addition of a host of independent Christian counselors, including two off-campus sites and four staff members. The monthly client load averages almost 900 hours a month. In addition, two college

interns also provide more than 500 hours of free counseling to the community every year. It is an awesome thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

Grace House moved to Fleming Island in 2016, where the center and its staff and mental health counselors continue to enjoy God's blessings. In addition, the Center is affiliated with two off-site independent Christian mental health counselors for administration and billing. The daily prayer of all associated with Grace House is that the center would be a light on a hill for the hurting community members and Christian counselors, especially novice Christian counselors.

Grace House seeks to be a place where Christian counselors can sojourn for a while. A place where they can be further equipped and, if it is God's will, be sent out into the world to provide Christian counseling and healing to those beaten and battered by the evils of everyday life.



Appendix 2

American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) Statement of Faith

There exists only one God, creator, and sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally co-existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures, both Old and New testaments, are the inspired, inerrant, and trustworthy Word of God, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of human beings, and the final authority for all matters about which it speaks.

Human nature derives from two historical personas, male and female, created in God's image. They were created perfect, but they sinned, plunging themselves and all human beings into sin, guilt, suffering, and death.

The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ and his bodily resurrection provide the only ground for justification, forgiveness, and salvation for all who believe. Only those who trust in Him alone are born of the Holy Spirit and are true members of the Church; only they will spend eternity with Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration and renewal for believers in Jesus Christ. He makes the presence of Jesus Christ real in believers, comforts, guides, and convicts and enables believers to live in ways that honor Christ.

Ministry to persons acknowledges the complexity of humans as physical, social, psychological, and spiritual beings. The goal of Christian counseling is to help others move to personal wholeness, interpersonal competence, mental stability, and spiritual maturity.



Appendix 3

The Apostles' Creed

What we now refer to as the Apostles' Creed is an enlargement of the Old Roman Creed dating from the early second century of the church. The first known occurrence of the Apostles' Creed, in a form nearly equivalent to its final form we have today, is in the Latin tract *De singulis libris canonicis scarapsus* by the monk Priminus (sometimes spelled "Pirminius") from the early eighth century. Century (J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, Third Edition, London: Routledge, 1972. 413.)

The process by which the Old Roman Creed became the Apostles' Creed is unknown. However, Kelly said creeds "practically identical" to the Apostles' Creed began appearing in South Gaul (France) in the fifth century. (Ibid)

Over the next few centuries, the Apostles' Creed in its final form was widely accepted throughout France and Germany. The Creed was officially recognized by Charlemagne throughout the Frankish Empire in the early ninth century and was eventually incorporated into the liturgy of the Church of Rome.

The following version of the Apostles' Creed is from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (2019).

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

*He was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.*

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.*

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

*He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*



Appendix 4

The Fruit of the Spirit and The Way of Love

Keep in step with the Spirit

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21** envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. *Galatians 5:16-24.*

The Way of Love

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. **3** If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant **5** or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; **6** it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. **7** Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. **9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part, **10** but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. **11** When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. **12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. **13** So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love—*1 Corinthians 13.*



Appendix 5

The Serenity Prayer

The origin of the Serenity Prayer has been disputed for years. According to The Prayer Foundation Website, the prayer has been variously attributed.¹³⁸ The Prayer Foundation Website reports that Reinhold Niebuhr allegedly denied writing it, and he credited Friedrich Oetinger, an 18th-century theologian, with its authorship. Other sources attributed authorship to around 500 A.D. by a philosopher named Boethius who was martyred for the Christian Faith.

Recent scholarship, however, does give credit for the prayer to Neibuhr (he did claim credit for it, according to The Prayer Foundation Website). Niebuhr was a major influence on the German Pastor and Nazi resister, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The Serenity Prayer has become a standard fixture for 12-step and other recovery groups. However, the origin of the prayer has been disputed for years. The Prayer Foundation Website notes this controversy when it reports that the prayer has been attributed to various groups and church notables, including a Sixth Century Christian martyr.¹³⁹ Most sources today, however, hold that the prayer was composed by Niebuhr, an American Reformed theologian, ethicist, commentator on politics and public affairs, and professor at Union Theological Seminary. Niebuhr reportedly composed the prayers in 1933.

According to the Lighthouse Treatment Center Website, the prayer was adopted and popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous in 1941 and soon after by other 12-step programs.¹⁴⁰ Niebuhr used the prayer in a 1943 sermon at Heath Evangelical Union Church in Heath, Massachusetts. The prayer also appeared in a sermon of Niebuhr's in the 1944 *Book of Prayers and Services for the Armed Forces*. Niebuhr first published the prayer in 1951 in a magazine column.

¹³⁸ The Prayer Foundation, "Serenity Prayer," accessed March 10, 2023, https://www.prayerfoundation.org/dailyoffice/serenity_prayer_full_version.htm.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Lighthouse Treatment Center, "The Complete History of the Serenity Prayer," August 3, 2017, <https://lighthouse-treatment.com/the-complete-history-of-the-serenity-prayer/>.

Below are two versions of the prayer from The Prayer Foundation Website, one labeled “The Full Version,” and the second “The Original Full Version.”

The Full Version

God, grant me the Serenity
To accept the things I cannot change...
Courage to change the things I can,
And Wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it.
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His will.
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.
Amen.

The Original Full Version

God, give us grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish
the one from the other.

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.
Amen.



Appendix 6

Community Resources

Referral List for Client Assistance



Prepared by Annie Sea & Katie Westfall
Grace House College Interns
(2022-2023)

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Community Resources Referral List

Aging

1. Aging True Community Senior Services
904-807-1203
4250 Lakeside Drive, Suite 116
Jacksonville, FL 32210
Summary of services: Nonprofit. Offers health, nutrition, and home care programs for the elderly. Includes mental health services.
2. Clay County Council on Aging
904-284-5977
604 Walnut Street
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
Summary of services: Offers case management and in-home services to seniors.
3. Department of Elder Affairs State of Florida
850-414-2000
4040 Esplanade Way
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Summary of services: Offers information about and contact information for services throughout the state/offered by the state for the elderly.
4. ElderSource
904-391-6600
10688 Old St. Augustine Road
Jacksonville, FL 32257
Summary of services: Aging and disability resource center. Helps with assessing local agencies, services, and programs.
5. Florida Senior Legal Helpline
888-895-7873

Summary of Services: Offers free legal advice/services by phone to eligible Florida seniors. Helps locate legal providers in local communities.

Bereavement/Grief and Loss

6. Community Hospice & Palliative Care
352-204-9876
1355 US Hwy 1 South
St. Augustine, FL 32084
Summary of services: Periodically offers free 1-hour presentations on identifying normal responses to loss, helpful coping strategies, and self-care related to grief/loss at their locations throughout northeast Florida. It also offers free virtual grief presentations/seminars periodically.

7. GriefShare River Christian Church
904-458-4809
5900 US HWY 17
Fleming Island, FL 32003
Summary of Services: GriefShare has 13 sessions in each program cycle. Participants may begin attending at any time. The program is for people “grieving the death of a family member or friend.” It is not for other types of loss, such as employment or divorce. Each week, participants watch a video on grief, participate in group discussions, and utilize a grief workbook.

8. The Compassionate Friends Orange Park-Jacksonville Chapter
Southside United Methodist Church
904-536-6914
3120 Hendricks Avenue
Jacksonville, FL 32207
Summary of services: Support group for friends and families grieving the death of a child.

9. The Vision Foundation
904-509-2749
8613 Old Kings Road South
Jacksonville, FL 32217
Summary of services: Offers support groups and one-on-one support for individuals who have lost a loved one to suicide.

Career

10. CareerSource Northeast Florida
904-356-5627
1845 Town Center Blvd., Suite 250
Fleming Island, FL 32003
Summary of services: Offers free support and resources for job seekers.
11. Jacksonville Job Corps Center
904-360-8200
4811 Payne Stewart Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32209
Summary of services: Offers free education and job training for young adults.

Disabilities

12. Agency for Persons with Disabilities
904-992-2433
3631 Hodges Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32224
Summary of services: Works with local communities to assist individuals with disabilities and their families living in those communities. Resource directory on the Website for disability services/resources.
13. Angelwood
904-288-7259
5600 Spring Park Road, Suite 200, Administrative Office
Jacksonville, FL 32216
Summary of services: Provides services for adults and seniors with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
14. [Bestcolleges.com/resources/students-with-disabilities/
contact@support.bestcolleges.com](http://bestcolleges.com/resources/students-with-disabilities/contact@support.bestcolleges.com)
1101 Red Ventures Drive
Fort Mill, SC 29707
Summary of services: Offers “College Guide for Students with Disabilities” and college rankings.

15. Challenge Enterprises
904-284-9497
3530 Enterprise Way
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
Summary of services: Offers programs/services to assist individuals with disabilities with becoming more self-sufficient. Non-profit. Also, it helps families find services they are eligible for.

16. Child Find (FDLRS)
904-346-4601
4124 Boulevard Center Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32207
Summary of services: Offers parent training, screening for developmental delays in individuals ages 0-18, and assistance with placing children in appropriate ESE programs within the community.

17. Clay County Special Needs Registry
888-353-8387
<https://snr.flhealthresponse.com/Account/Register>
Summary of services: Individuals with special needs can register to receive assistance from local emergency management agencies in the event of a disaster. Offers emergency assistance and housing/shelter.

18. The Arc Jacksonville Village
904-355-0155
1050 North Davis Street, Downtown Program Site and Administrative Offices
Jacksonville, FL 32209
Summary of services: Provides mental health services and individual and group therapies to increase the independence of adults and the elderly with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Food Pantries

19. Catholic Charities
904-354-4846
1470 West 13th Street
Jacksonville, FL 32209
Summary of services: Offers food pantry. Families can return once every two weeks.

20. Food Bridge Middleburg United Methodist Church
904-282-5589
3925 Main Street
Middleburg, FL 32068
Summary of services: Provides food weekly.

21. Food Pantry of Green Cove Springs
904-284-0814
1107 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
Summary of services: Provides emergency food for the poor and individuals waiting to receive food benefits. Need referral from church partner or social services agency.

22. Lutheran Services Nourishment Network Market and Backpack Program
904-448-5995
4615 Philips Highway
Jacksonville, FL 32207
Summary of services: Offers food distribution. Clients may visit once each month. It also provides food for schoolchildren who receive free or reduced lunch each Friday for the weekend.

23. Salvation Army of Clay County
2795 County Road 220
Middleburg, FL 32068
Summary of services: Offers food bank and rent and utility assistance.

24. Weekly Food Pantry of Orange Park
904-264-6255
152 Stowe Avenue
Orange Park, FL 32073
Summary of services: Offers weekly food pantry. No appointment needed or referral is needed.

Health

25. Clay County Health Department
904-529-2800
3229 Bear Run Boulevard
Orange Park, FL 32065
Summary of services: Offers medical services such as primary care and immunizations for adults and children. Sliding fee scale/takes Medicaid/some services free.

26. Duval County Health Department
904-253-1000
921 N. Davis Street
Building A, Suite 251
Jacksonville, FL 32209
Summary of services: Offers medical services, including dental care and mental health counseling.

Mental Health

27. Child Guidance Center
904-448-4700 x1000
5776 St. Augustine Road
Jacksonville, FL 32207
Summary of services: Offers comprehensive mental health and support services for children and their families. It also has a rapid response team that intervenes during critical/crises when children are a danger to themselves or others. Accepts Medicaid and alternate funding sources for individuals for qualifying.

28. Clay Behavioral Health Center
904-291-5561
3292 County Road 220
Middleburg, FL 32068
Summary of services: Mental health and substance abuse counseling for adults and children. Mental health mobile response team for people in need of immediate assistance available 24/7. Accepts Medicaid and Medicare. Sliding scale. Takes walk-ins.

29. Community Rehabilitation Center
904-358-1211
623 Beechwood Street
Jacksonville, FL 32206
Summary of services: Promotes mental, physical, and emotional well-being of individuals and their families. Provides mental and physical health services.

30. Daniel Kids
904-296-1055
4203 Southpoint Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32216
Summary of services: Provides community and residential mental health services for children. It also provides homeless services for youth and young adults.

31. Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Greater Jacksonville
904-790-0421 or 904-465-6577 or 800-826-3632
greaterjacksonvilledbsa@gmail.com
Summary of services: Offers peer-based support groups and resources for individuals with mood disorders, including depression and bipolar disorder.

32. Family Foundations Mental Health Services
904-396-4846
40 East Adams Street, Suite 120
Jacksonville, FL 32202
Summary of services: Provides counseling services for children, adolescents, adults, and families.
33. Flagler Hospital Behavioral Health Services St. Johns
904-819-5155
400 Health Park Boulevard
St Augustine, FL 32086
Summary of services: Provides services to evaluate the mental and emotional status of people experiencing disturbances.
34. Heretomorrow, A Mental Health Collaborative
904-372-9087
910 3rd Street
Neptune Beach, FL 32266
Summary of services: Offers free mental health support group twice a week. Also, it has Recovery Peer Specialists who discuss mental health concerns with clients and help them find appropriate resources.
35. Mental Health Center of Jacksonville Adult Crisis Stabilization Unit
904-695-9145 x2
11820 Beach Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32246
Summary of services: Provides short-term inpatient psychiatric care for individuals who meet Baker Act criteria.
36. Mental Health Resource Center North
904-695-9145
3333 West 20th Street
Jacksonville, FL 32254
Summary of services: Nonprofit. Offers “a wide range of behavioral and social services to the community.” Including inpatient (children, adolescents, and adults) and outpatient services and programs for adults with severe mental illness. It also has two programs for the homeless.
37. Northeast Florida State Hospital
904-259-6211
7487 South State Road 121
Macclenny, FL 32063
Summary of services: Provides hospitalization for individuals who have acute psychiatric disorders.

38. OCD Jacksonville affiliate of the International OCD Foundation
info@ocdjacksonville.com
Memorial Hospital
3625 University Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32216
Summary of services: Offers free member-led OCD/anxiety support groups for various age groups. Meets at Memorial Hospital.
39. River Region Human Services, Inc.
904-899-6300
3901 Carmichael Avenue
Jacksonville, FL 32207
Summary of services: Offers mental health, substance use, and primary care services. It also offers HIV/Aids services and housing. Free residential services for people who are eligible. Offers income-based services for uninsured individuals and individuals who do not have insurance accepted by River Region.
40. United States Department of Veterans Affairs Jacksonville Vet Center
904-399-8351
3728 Phillips Highway, Suite 31
Jacksonville, FL 32207
Summary of services: Offers counseling services for military/veterans and their families. Individual, group, bereavement, and trauma counseling. It also offers referrals for other needs.

Services for Children

41. Anastasia Baptist Church
904-471-2166
1650 A1A South
Saint Augustine, FL 32080
Summary of services: Assistance and ministering to children and families. Offers Christian education and care for young children.
42. Baker County Schools Family Service Center
904-259-7871
392 South Boulevard East
Macclenny, FL 32063
Summary of services: Provides a range of services to the community, including childcare provider referrals, head start programs, student health programs, and youth enrichment programs.

43. Boys Town North Florida
904-448-3000
3555 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32303
Summary of services: Provides behavioral and medical healthcare to at-risk youth and their families.
44. Camp Boggy Creek
352-483-4200
30500 Brantley Branch Road
Eustis, FL 32736
Summary of services: Provides a safe camping environment at no charge for children with chronic or life-threatening illnesses and their families.
45. Child Guidance Center Clay County
904-291-5561
3292 County Road 220
Middleburg, FL 32068
Summary of services: Provides services for children and their parents to obtain the access they need to medical, social, and mental health services.
46. Children's Home Society of Florida
904-493-7744
3027 San Diego Road
Jacksonville, FL 32207
Summary of services: Offers free home-based programs for infants, toddlers, and their parents.
47. Children's Medical Services Children's Crisis Center
904-244-4670
655 West 11th Street
Jacksonville, FL 32209
Summary of services: Provides crisis services for children with special needs.
48. Department of Children and Families
904-723-2000
5920 Arlington Expressway
Jacksonville, FL 32211
Summary of services: Provides services to protect adults and children from abuse and neglect.

Shelters

49. City Rescue Mission

904-421-5161

234 W. State Street

Jacksonville, FL 32202

Summary of services: Offers emergency shelter and meals for the homeless. It also has an addiction recovery campus and thrift store.

50. Clara White Mission

904-354-4162

613 W. Ashley Street

Jacksonville, FL 32202

Summary of services: Offers meals, transitional housing, and job training for the homeless.

51. Mercy Support Services

904-297-4052

515 College Drive

Middleburg, FL 32068

Summary of services: Helps families by providing housing and support for a minimum of 90 days up to 6 months. Also provides Care Coaching and online Financial Coaching to families while they are receiving housing support.

52. Sulzbacher Downtown

904-359-0457

611 E. Adams Street

Jacksonville, FL 32202

Summary of services: Offers emergency shelter/services for men. Also offers adult health care based on a sliding scale and individual's ability to pay.

53. Sulzbacher Village: A Community for Women & Families

904-394-4950

5455 Springfield Boulevard

Jacksonville, FL 32208

Summary of services: Offers emergency shelter/services for women and families. It also offers healthcare for children.

54. Trinity Rescue Mission

904-355-1205

622 West Union Street

Jacksonville, FL 32202

Summary of services: Offers emergency shelter and meals. It also offers transition services.

Substance Abuse

55. Alcoholics Anonymous
904-399-8535
3128 Beach Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32207
Summary of services: Support groups for members who are struggling with alcohol use disorder.

56. Al-Anon Family Groups Mandarin Presbyterian Church
904-680-9944
11844 Mandarin Road
Jacksonville, FL 32223
Summary of services: Support program for individuals affected by another person's drinking.

57. Celebrate Recovery Hibernia Baptist Church
904-529-8944
7100 US Highway 17
Fleming Island, FL 32003
Summary of services: 12-step program for individuals who struggle with addictive behaviors, grief, depression, loneliness, and other struggles.

58. Celebrate Recovery River Christian Church
904-458-4809
5900 US Highway 17
Fleming Island, FL
Summary of services: 12-step program for individuals who struggle with addictive behaviors, grief, depression, loneliness, and other struggles.

59. City Rescue Mission/Emergency Support Programs
904-387-4357
234 W State Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202
Summary of services: Provides services for drug use recovery, halfway houses, and soup kitchens.

60. Epi Behavioral Healthcare Counseling Center
904-417-7100
3574 US One South
Saint Augustine, FL 32086
Summary of services: Provides assistance and support for individuals who struggle with drug use.

61. First Coast Area Narcotics Anonymous
904-723-5683
230 Kingsley Avenue
Orange Park, FL 32073
Summary of services: Offers support group for individuals who are addicted to drugs or believe they have a problem with drugs.
62. Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling
407-865-6200
121 East 1st Street
Sanford, FL 32771
Summary of services: Offers assistance for individuals with a gambling addiction, as well as support for their family members.
63. Gateway
877-389-9966
555 Stockton Street
Jacksonville, FL 32204
Summary of services: Offers addiction services for adults and adolescents. Sliding pay scale.
64. Narcotics Anonymous First Coast
904-723-5683
3925 Main Street
Middleburg, FL 32068
Summary of services: Offers information about drug use and methods of treatment.
65. Orange Park Group of Alcoholics Anonymous
904-264-2621
1835 Smith Street
Orange Park, FL 32073
Summary of services: Offers support groups and meetings for alcoholics.

Utility Assistance

66. Northeast Florida Community Action Agency
904-297-7500 x3333
321 Walnut Street
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
Summary of services: Provides assistance with paying utility companies for low-income families. It also provides families with assistance in obtaining services/education to become more self-sufficient.

67. Society of St. Vincent De Paul St. Catherine of Siena Financial Assistance
904-639-5839
1649 Kingsley Avenue
Orange Park, FL 32073
Summary of services: Assistance with rent/utility bills.

Veterans Services

68. City of Jacksonville Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program
904-255-5550
117 West Duval Street, Suite 175
Jacksonville, FL 32202
Summary of services: Provides services for homeless veterans and offers access to local support services.

69. Lifeline for Vets
888-777-4443
Summary of services: Helps with crisis management and referral for the needs of United States Veterans and their families.

70. Military OneSource
800-342-9647
Summary of services: Referral services for active duty, the National Guard, and their families. Provides services for a variety of topics.

71. Naval Hospital Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program
904-546-6302
2080 Child Street
Jacksonville, FL 32214
Summary of services: Provides therapy for military individuals and their families with drug use problems.

72. Once a Soldier
904-477-9995
337 Van Gogh Circle
Ponte Vedra, FL 32081
Summary of services: Assists veterans with anxiety screening and supports the families of veteran suicide.

Women's Services

73. Alpha Omega Miracle Home
904-823-8588
2860 Collins Avenue
Saint Augustine, FL 32084
Summary of services: Offers adoption counseling, post-pregnancy shelter, and transitional housing.
74. Another Way Domestic Violence Hotline
866-875-7983
Lake City, FL 32056
Summary of services: 24-hour crisis intervention and emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence.
75. Betty Griffin House
904-824-1555
2450 Old Moultrie Road, Suite 202
Saint Augustine, FL 32086
Summary of services: Provides emergency placement for abused women and their minor children, shelter for rape and trafficking victims.
76. Divine Mercy House
904-268-6282
4118 Loretto Road
Jacksonville, FL 32223
Summary of services: Provides services for women over 18 facing an unplanned pregnancy and having little to no help.
77. First Coast Women's Services-Clay County
904-231-9374
105 Old Jennings Road
Orange Park, FL 32065
Summary of services: Offers confidential, free information about pregnancy options. It also offers housing referrals and maternity and infant supplies.
78. Hubbard House
904-400-6300
6629 Beach Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32216
Summary of services: Domestic violence center. Offers 24/7 Hotline, emergency shelter, relocation assistance, and counseling for women and children.

79. Lee Conlee House Transitional Housing and Outreach
386-325-4447
2509 Crill Avenue, Suite 950
Palatka, FL 32178
Summary of services: Provides services for victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault.
80. Micah's Place
904-491-6364
474311 East State Road 200
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034
Summary of services: Certified domestic violence center. Provides prevention and intervention services for victims of domestic violence in Nassau County.
81. Quigley House
904-284-0340
3373-1 US Highway 17
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
Summary of services: Offers 24/7 crisis helpline, emergency shelter for men, women, and children, sexual assault center, counseling, and housing services. Domestic violence and sexual assault center.
82. The Women's Center of Jacksonville
904-722-3000
5644 Colcord Avenue
Jacksonville, FL 32211
Summary of services: Offers rape recovery and prevention services, 24-hour rape crisis hotline, sexual assault forensic exam, advocacy, and support for elder abuse survivors, counseling, and education.

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 30, 2022

Larry Nichols
Jason Whitehurst

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY22-23-561 Improving the biblical and spiritual skills and knowledge of Christian mental health counselors at Grace House Counseling Center in Fleming Island, FL

Dear Larry Nichols and Jason Whitehurst,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your project is not considered human subjects research because it will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46.102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. **If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.**

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office