Personal Model of Integration: Image of God Approach

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Abstract

Having a personal model of integration for counseling people can provide the foundation for how a counselor approaches his client's various life issues and stages. The model being described in this paper is called the Image of God approach. Essentially, the driving theory behind this approach is that man has fallen far away from his original form at the garden of Eden, that his or her quest is to return to that original state. The image of God approach focuses on the characteristics and relationships of man before the fall as the goal for what a healthy and functional person is. The counselor in this approach has an understanding of unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence due to viewing people as being in the image of God. Epistemology factors, psychological structure of man, and motivators for behavior are internalized and then practiced in helping clients. Additionally, the counselor must have a thorough understanding of what health and illness is, what the recovery path looks like, and what the role of the counselor is in that journey.

Keywords: image of God, original man, health, illness, recovery, role of counselor

Commented [HVD(fC&FS2]: Well done on the abstract. There are many students who do not know how to write a good abstract but write an introduction rather than an abstract. Your abstract is well structured and communicates the content of this Integration model paper and informs the reader in a way that facilitates investigation and learning.

Personal Model of Integration: Image of God Approach

Understanding the nature of man can often be a challenging task. There is no "one-size fits all" approach when it comes to appreciating the how complex it can be to conceptualize man and how he operates in the world. This complexity leads counselors to search for a fundamental view of human nature. They need a basic understanding of what "makes people tick". They need to know what motivates behavior, how people create meaning from their experiences, and how the previously mentioned factors impact their relationships. Christian counselors seek to include the spiritual component to their understanding of human behavior. They would argue that they have a more holistic approach than those who do not have a religious or spiritual orientation. Research shows that clients are reportedly seeking answers in the realms of religion and spirituality (Barker, Pistrang, Shapiro, & Shaw, 1990). This dilemma provides counselors with a great opportunity to help people for answers they are actually seeking. People are finding themselves in situations where they have tried everything except seeking religious or spiritual counsel for their issues. It is incumbent upon all counselors in training to know how to approach the problems facing people today. In many ways, they appear to be much more complex than those of old, but the root is essentially the same—they are experiencing broken relationships with people and God. Mental, emotional, and spiritual healing can come, but only as people journey back to the original man who God creating in the garden. The road to healing is the trek towards the image of God as it started before the fall of man.

Epistemology

The Bible says that God created night and day, the sky and the sea, land and its vegetation, the stars, sun, and the moon, the sea creatures and birds of the air, and then the animals. After creating these, He said that it was "good". However, after God created man, He

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looked at Creation and said it was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). This is the first time in the

Scriptures where God says that his creation is "very good". Thus, what was it about man that

made him "very good" at the time of Creation? What follows are the six characteristics of man

seen before the fall that every person is wanting to acquire.

      The first characteristic of man before the fall was his ==responsibility to care== for everything

under his care (Gen. 1:26; 2:15). Giving the responsibility over creation was important to God,

and interestingly, this is how God operates with his own creation. He is responsible and cares

for everything He has created and continues to supply what his creation needs. As a construct

for this model, the notion behind it is in reference to daily functioning since part of being

responsible is fulfilling daily responsibilities. Mundt et al. (2002) created a work and social

adjustment scale that allows the client to determine whether he or she has experienced

improvement in their overall functioning. However, more importantly is assessing how

functioning impacts one's relationships, and in order to function well in relationships one must

stay true to themselves which is to be authentic (Toor & Ofori, 2009; Vainio, & Daukantaite,

2009). Davila et al. (2009) observe healthy relational functioning through a factor known as

romantic competence (RC). They describe RC as having competence in being able to learn from

one's relationships when considering the notion of mutuality. They also explain that a person

with RC is able make decisions and behave in ways that display care and respect to all of the

parties involved. Lastly, they state that a person with RC is able to self-regulate in the process of

doing relationships (Davila et al., 2009). Consequently, these are critical to the healthy

functionality of man.

      Secondly, He gave man the ==freedom to choose==. The implication comes in Genesis 2:16

when he tells Adam that he is free to eat from any tree in the garden, but not from the tree of

knowledge of good and evil. In other words, he has to choose one and not the other. This is also

an aspect of the image of God since He is sovereign over his creation, and He does what is good

for it. He gave man this same freedom since he was also good before the fall. Yalom (1980)

would iterate that "To be aware of responsibility is to be aware of creating one's own self,

destiny, life predicament, feelings, and if such is the case, one's own suffering" (p. 218). The

responsibility in this case would be man's awareness of using his will to create his desire life and

consequences.

Next, God gave man the desire or need for relationship. Genesis 2:18, 20-21 and

confirms this was necessary, because it was "not good for man to be alone". Man was made to

connect, and to not connect is to not be healthy. Larry Crabb (1997) states that "the life of Christ

in one person is poured into another and awakens in the emptiest recesses of that other person's

soul the experience of life" (p. 44). He understands that people have areas of emptiness in their

lives, and thus can only heal when they are able to pour what Christ has done in their lives into

the lives of others. When seeing the problems of today, broken relationships are at the core of

unhealthy functioning.

Another element of man before the fall is creativity and intelligence. God expresses both

of those attributes through his creating of the universe and man. Both are highly complex and

difficult to fully understand, and yet, he gave man the ability to use his intelligence to create and

be creative in doing so (Gen. 2:19-20). Interestingly, Wu et al. (2005) discuss how knowledge

can add to a person's creativity. Specifically, they address the aspects of experience, thinking,

language ability, and motivation as key factors to creativity in children and discuss how

significant their results were. God has ingrained even from an early age the ability to use our

minds to gather knowledge and be creative with it. When man pursues knowledge and can apply it creatively in daily life, it is a sign of healthy functioning.

The next attribute seen at creation is the desire for independence or autonomy. This is seen in Genesis 2:24 where man leaves mother and father his earthly authorities to make a life of his own with God and his spouse. This relationship espouses the first union and institution that God established as a marriage between man and woman. They become one. Together, they seek independence from their parents, but now enter a new relationship in which they walk through together. Erikson uses Webster's definition of autonomy as a "self-governing…self-directing freedom and especially moral independence" (Webster, 1983, p. 118). The focus of the image of God model is the ability for people to not only grow out of their dependence on parents, but also grow into a comfort with their own independence and self-governance (Graves & Larkin, 2006).

Lastly, Genesis 2:25 discusses the freedom Adam and Eve experienced was without even a hint of shame. Shame in relationships and in one's relationship to God are now prominent issues plaguing people. In religious circles, this shame often stems from others holding their beliefs over that of others, and it is done so in a judgmental manner. The one asserting lordship over others does so in very much the same manner as the Pharisees did. Exploring shame and understanding why it happens is key. In the Scriptures, shame is associated with hiding, and people hide because they feel they did something wrong. However, research differentiates between the two by showing the effects of each. Feeling bad about doing something wrong leads one to feel guilt, but identifying one's self as "bad" leads to shame. Leith and Baumeister (1998) explain that guilt can have some positive effects such as being able to change one's perspective on the flow of relationships. They explain that shame can actually harm a person's ability to develop relationships (Leith & Baumeister, 1998). The key characteristic of original man here is

providing truth to the client so they do not identify themselves as the sin or wrong they are

doing, but rather that they are able to identify it as a bad behavior and change course in order to

remove the shame associated with the behavior.

Mankind

Man is impacted by the fall, and is on a journey back to original man. Certain constructs

proposed by Freud and many other psychoanalysts are the id, ego, and superego. From a biblical

perspective, these are understood to be a person's sinful nature, free will, and God-given

conscience.

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Id, Ego, and Superego

The psychodynamic theorist, Sigmund Freud, would argue that mankind's structure

consists of what he notes as the id, ego, and superego. The id and the superego are related in that

they are opposite to each other. The id is primarily driven by instinctual impulses while the

superego is driven by the desire to do what is moral or right (Stock, 1961). Stock (1961) and

Fancher (2014) explain this relationship further by expounding how the ego finds itself tugged

between these two aspects of human nature before initiating any action. These elements of

human personality are important to mention because there are some correlates to a biblical

understanding of man. From a biblical perspective, the id is man's sinful nature, the ego would

be man's free will, and the superego would be the Holy Spirit (moral conscience). These are an

important part of the image of God approach because it allows for the counselor to see how

secular theorists conceptualize characteristics that can be seen in the Scriptures.

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Motivation

Man is motivated to seek relationship with his fellow man and God. Before the fall, both

of these relationships were available to man and both relationships were perfect. Part of man's

journey to health is to recreate these relationships in modern day. This can fall also in line with one of Maslow's hierarchy of needs which is love and belonging. The physiological and safety needs in his hierarchy are important, but in this model they are not key source for explaining why man does what he does. Man is driven by seeking security in relationships through feeling loved and as one who belongs to a particular group. This is what was established at Creation, and the journey back to the original man is always on course.

Sociocultural Factors

A couple of factors that need to be considered when describing motivation stems from are childhood experiences, particularly attachment theory. The impact of attachment in early childhood relationships is undeniable. Bowlby and Ainsworth (1967) agree that experiences with parents in early childhood become ingrained in their brains and nervous systems, and can become activated whenever their secure base is close or far. Thus, this is one of the sociocultural factors that needs to be addressed.

Generational Sins

In many respects, when the Scriptures discuss generational sins, they are in response to negative, harmful behavior from previous generations. In Exodus 20, the Scriptures state that God will "visit the iniquities of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations", and the question then becomes, why should the latter generation pay for the mistakes of a previous generation. Then, we read in Deuteronomy 24:16 that neither the sons or the fathers will pay for the sins of the other. In Galatians 6, we then read that people reap what they sow. How can someone who sows "well" reap the consequences of his or her parents? Or, why is this even possible? Then, we read the story of the blind man in John 9, and Jesus answers that the reason for the suffering experienced by him was to display the glory of God. How can a person

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You must have become busy and missed this. If you are thinking that this paragraph is an intro paragraph, thus doesn't need citations, remember that everything needs citing in these papers.

know whether they are suffering as a consequence to sin, or as a way to display the glory of

God? The problem and answer is that these two are not necessarily exclusive of each other.

Commented [HVD(fC&FS7]: You have asked too many questions for such a short answer. There needs to be more in-depth treatment for this area. I think it is a good area under motivation, but needs more.

Interdisciplinary Fields of Consideration

Two-Book Theory

The two-book theory or view of revelation holds that God has provided man insights into

his creation through nature (general revelation) and the Scriptures (special revelation) (Entwistle,

2010), and because of that, both hold equal and substantive value in the process of counseling.

Larry Crabb (1981) proposed that both types of revelation "provide Christians with equally clear,

equally meaningful, and equally authoritative expressions of truth from God" (p. 307). The

image of God model would hold this to be true since at Creation, everything God made was

good. Because health is the journey back to the original man, general revelation would be

considered as an equal contributor to one's overall understanding of man. The caveat, however,

is that one's understanding through general revelation must not directly or indirectly contradict

clear and key teachings of Scripture. For example, when the Bible teaches not to commit

adultery, it is a direct and clear command, and is not a behavior to be tolerated or encouraged.

The image of God approach would argue that committing adultery is to move farther away from

the original man, because it separates man from its first human connection and institution which

is marriage. Essentially, the core argument of the two-book theory is that "all truth is God's

truth"

Defining Health and Illness

Though the core issue with all of man's problems stem from sin, McMinn (1996) would

add that these issues are complicated by a faulty understanding of self, brokenness, and

relationships. Therefore, health would be the growth one experiences in understanding self,

because this leads to an awareness of one's needs which can then direct one to healing

relationships (McMinn, 1996).

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Defining Recovery

McMinn (1996) states that the goal in the counseling relationship is to "move clients

from a state of "brokenness and sorrow to hope and restoration" (p. 13). From the image of God

model, this would be moving from the image-bearer who has fallen away from God, and moving

him or her back to a healthy relationship with God and others. These steps are outlined in the

section below.

Steps to Recovery

First, the nature of any type of recovery begins with the choice to change. As Stanton (as

cited in Myers et al., 2010) states, though people may have certain propensities to certain types

of sins, there is no excuse for them to *not* use their free will to obey God's laws. However,

before even arriving at this point, one must first help the client understand that he or she has the

ability to make these decisions. They need to understand that not only do they have a free will,

but they must also be empowered to use it. Their ability to do so will stem greatly from what

motivates them to change.

In the Image of God model, recovery is the process trekking back to the original

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characteristics of man before the fall. In the counseling process, the client must take the

following steps:

Step 1: Acknowledgement of current fallen state.

Step 2: Learn to define what a healthy functioning individual looks like by studying

Genesis 1-3 which is a description of man before and after the fall.

Step 3: Acknowledging the freedom they have to choose change over stagnation.

Step 3: Determining what aspects of original man are deficient or weakened in their current state in order to work on those areas.

Step 4: Discovering how those aspects have impacted their relationship with God.

Step 5: Discovering how those aspects have impacted their relationship with others.

Step 6: Moving towards healing by exposing the pain in those relationships and then taking steps towards growing in those areas.

Step 7: Accepting what cannot be changed and choosing to change where possible.

Step 8: Realizing that the key to life is growth and not necessarily seeking pleasure or removing pain.

Step 9: Commit to pursuing the original man and understand that it will ultimately come to fruition in Heaven.

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> Good section.

As the client seeks to grow and continues to build on his or her relationship with God and others, the original man will begin to flourish once again.

The Counselor and Counseling Techniques

McMinn (1996) discusses the role of the counselor as being an active, ongoing participant, observers and evaluators of the therapeutic relationship, and as adjusters to what needs of the client arise. Additionally, and more importantly, Rogers reflected on the fact that when unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence are evident in the therapeutic alliance, change is most likely to happen (Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005). From his perspective, these do not operate separate from one another, but must operate cohesively throughout the counseling process. However, Wilkins (2000) notes that counselors must acknowledge that although their goal is to offer unconditional positive regards, a key insight is to also know that they are limited in doing so. The goal ultimately lies with the counselor

communicating as effectively as he can that he is willing to accept the person and address their

individual needs (Wilkins, 2000).

The secondary role that the counselor has is that of challenging the negative or inaccurate

beliefs a client may have of him or herself. This is done by using a cognitive behavioral centered

(CBT) approach. The most common disorders in the U.S. are anxiety and/or depression related

(Anxiety and Depression Association of America), and CBT has shown to be an effective

approach for treatment. Thus, most clients will at some point be counseled with some form of

CBT treatment. Research has consistently shown that spiritually tailored psychotherapies are

beneficial in patients with GAD (Koszycki, Kelley, Aldosary, & Bradwejn, 2010). Cognitive

behavioral treatments such as identifying maladaptive thoughts and beliefs, challenging those

maladaptive thoughts and beliefs, and behavioral activation, are all used when counseling the

client. Specifically, biblical truths are implemented when challenging thoughts and beliefs.

Conclusion

Though there are various approaches and views to how healing takes place in counseling,

it is of utmost importance for Christian counselors to have a thorough understanding of how they

want to travel the therapeutic process. Having a fundamental understanding of what is the source

of man's pain, what the healing process looks like, and how he or she can be used in the process

is essential. There are multiple facets of counseling explored, and the counselor must develop a

process that is both clear and effective. For the Christian counselor, the approach must be

supported by research and be biblically-based.

> **Commented [HVD(fC&FS11]:** Sam,
> You have done a fairly good job with this paper. You will notice my comments in the paper related to possible weak areas.
> I do want you to be ready for the QE once you get there, thus my comments for a wide range of knowledge on each content area. It is important for all students to understand. Many of your content areas are really good but there are a few that may need more Biblical and Secular orientation elements.
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