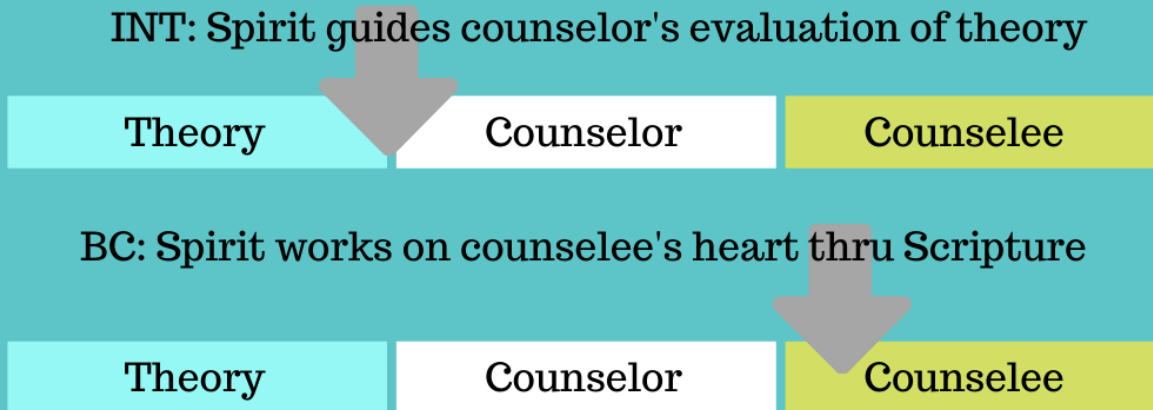


Primary Emphasis Regarding Spirit's Work



The Road Ahead

#1 Biblical counselors and integrationists hold identically orthodox positions regarding the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

#2 Biblical counselors and integrationists diverge in what aspects of the Holy Spirit's work they emphasize AND the primary material used by the Holy Spirit to affect change.

Shared Beliefs: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

On Discussing Others' Views

Exodus 20:16 Do not give false testimony against your neighbor.

This verse instructs us to speak the truth about the theological positions of those we may disagree with. Quick, prejudicial glosses like "Integrationists don't believe in the Holy Spirit" or "Integrationists reduce the power of the Holy Spirit" are false testimony. And as false testimony, it leaves the utterer of those words in violation of God's moral law. Of all people, Christians should be least guilty of presenting caricatures of positions of those they might disagree with.

A Slow-Developing Emphasis

Both integrationists and biblical counselors have been very slow to articulate a full-orbed, well-reasoned discussion on the role of the Holy Spirit in counseling. This is not to say the third member of the Trinity has been ignored entirely, but the emphasis has been on building models of counseling and not on trinitarian theology.

Why does this maybe interesting, certainly obscure tale of the counselors' writing on the Holy Spirit matter to our present conversation?

First, it means we are looking at a rather balanced group of literature. This is not the equivalent of comparing Alaska and Florida's yield of oranges to determine their value as a state.

Second, the material we will look at is rather scattershot. It's as though we are paleontologists coming across a jumble of bones and trying to reconstruct a full picture.

*Shared Belief #1: The Spirit is Operative in Regeneration*¹

*Shared Belief #2: The Holy Spirit Indwells Beliefs and Provides Comfort, Stability, and Guidance*²

¹For additional integrationist sources see also Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 110, "Spiritual conversion is seen not as a simple religious metaphor for change but as an actual change in one's inner being based on the redemptive work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit"; Gary Collins, *The Biblical Basis of Christian Counseling for People Helpers* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993), 156-159. For additional biblical counseling sources see Jay Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016) 161-163; Jeremy Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics: Roots, Beliefs, & Future* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2018), 122

²For additional integrationist sources see Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 101, 160, 254, 348, 559; Siang-Yang Tan, *Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 366. For additional biblical counseling sources see Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 128; Robert Kellemen, *Gospel-Centered Counseling: How Christ Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014) 62, 270; Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 164-165; Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro: New Growth, 2016), 78. John MacArthur, *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 82-83; David Powlison, "Who is God?" *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 17 no. 2 (1999): 12-23, 22; Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002), 50-51.

*Shared Belief #3: The Spirit Guides the Counselor*³

*Shared Belief #4: The Spirit Transforms Men and Women*⁴

³For additional integrationist sources see Tan, *Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 364-367. For additional biblical sources see Adams, *Christian Counselor's Manual*, 49; Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics*, 123.

⁴For additional integrationist sources see Tan, "Cognitive Behavior Therapy: a Biblical Approach and Critique," 106-107; Carter and Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology*, 115; Jason McMartin, "The work of the Holy Spirit in natural psychological growth," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 34 no. 3 (2015): 216-227. For additional biblical counseling sources see Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 21; Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics*, 123; MacArthur, *Biblical Counseling*, 87; Pierre *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 117-119.

There is a reason that Integrationists and Biblical Counselors agree on these four points of the Holy Spirit's ministry to people. That reason is that both Integrationists and Biblical Counselors are orthodox Christians who believe in the God of the Bible. I

- Ignoring the Spirit's place in regeneration leaves you with works-righteousness.
- Ignoring the Spirit's indwelling presence leaves you without assurance.
- Ignoring the Spirit's guidance of the counselor leaves without wisdom for godliness
- Ignoring the Spirit's direct work on the heart leaves you with a form of sacramentalism or deism where God is distant from the actual hearts of his people.

Contrasting Beliefs: Emphasis and Means

The fact that Integrationists and Biblical Counselors hold orthodox Christian doctrine on the Holy Spirit in common does not erase the differences between both circles.

Emphasis: The Holy Spirit's Work on the Counselor or on the Counselee?

Integrationists have primarily highlighted the Spirit's role in guiding the counselor in wisdom. Biblical Counselors have primarily highlighted the Spirit's role in transforming the counselee.

One helpful way to see this is to compare equivalent textbooks. Gary Collins' *Christian Counseling* and Jay Adams' *Christian Counselor's Manual* are two books that seek to cover how to counsel an array of issues. Both reference the Holy Spirit with roughly the same frequency.

Gary Collins *foregrounds* the work of the Spirit on the counselor and *backgrounds* the work of the Spirit on the counselee.

Jay Adams *foregrounds* the work of the Spirit on the counselee and *backgrounds* the work of the Spirit on the counselor.

Means: What Does the Spirit Primarily Use to Affect Change?

Our emphases in life do not exist in a vacuum, but are typically driven by *something*. These backgroundings and foregroundings happen because of particular beliefs that each author holds regarding the *means* the Spirit uses to accomplish his work.

Common & Special Grace

“Special Revelation” refers to God’s direct communication to man. In our place on the timeline of redemptive history, this speaks specifically to the Bible. The Bible is God’s words to mankind, his special revelation of himself.

“Common grace” refers to man’s contemplation of what God has made. This ranges from an unbelieving doctor’s ability to surgically repair severed ligaments and tendons to the fact that $2+2=4$ to our knowing that the sky is blue not because the Bible mentions it but because we can see.

Integrationists: A Focus on Common Grace

Integrationists such as Gary Collins tend to foreground the Spirit’s work on the human counselor because they believe that common grace is the primary means by which people are changed in counseling. Integrationist Stanton Jones gives us a window into this logic here:

For the integrationist, the Bible is a “revelation of limited scope” that is an insufficient guide for counseling. Clinical psychology is necessary because it discusses what the Bible does not – namely, how people change.

Lydia Kim-van Daalen directly connects secular psychology with the Spirit’s work:

There's a major problem with secular psychological theory for the integrationist: It's secular. Therefore, the role of the Christian psychologist is to look at secular systems of change, identify elements that are true, and reject what is false. And that requires discernment – or put differently, it requires the Spirit's help to discern what is right and wrong.

The integrationist thus, having been guided by the Spirit in wisdom, takes what he or she has distilled from secular psychology and applies it to the counselee. The Spirit's work is therefore *primarily* upstream, working on the counselor. This view is driven by the belief that the Scriptures are not sufficient to affect change in counseling. The “sword of the Spirit” is pointed mainly at theory building rather than at the heart of the counselee.

Biblical Counselors: A Focus on Special Revelation

The Biblical Counseling approach to the Holy Spirit stands in contrast with that of the Integrationists. While Integrationists primarily discuss the Spirit's work as *upstream*, Biblical Counselors primarily discuss the Spirit's work as being *downstream*. That is, the Spirit is downwards from the counselor, working directly on the heart of the counselee as God's Word is applied to their particular situation and troubles.

First, the Christian faith has “comprehensive *internal* resources” – that is to say, there is nothing exterior to the Christian faith that is necessary to affect change.

Second, Christ, through the Word, is the engine producing effective counseling. Although he is not explicitly mentioned here, the assumption is that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, is the direct agent for how Christ works.

Because of this assumption, Adams and others place their focus on the Holy Spirit's direct ministry in the heart of the counselee.

Impact: The Use of Scripture in Counseling

Ideas have an impact, and the way in which Biblical Counselors and Integrationists understand the Spirit working through special revelation or common grace has a significant impact upon what happens inside the counseling room.

A survey of members of the Christian Association of Psychological Studies (something of the ACBC of Integrationists) inquired as to the frequency with which members used Scripture in their counseling. Responses indicated that 13% of counseling encounters used the text of Scripture. This number dips to 3% during critical incidents in counseling. Only 2.1% of counseling cases involved the assigning of Scripture memory to aid in transformation.⁵ While Integrationists affirm the value of Scripture, McMinn accurately summarizes the data, “[I]t appears that directly using Scripture as a part of counseling is relatively rare, even among Christian counselors.”⁶

Biblical counselors have not conducted empirical studies of themselves. However, built into the ethos and methodology of biblical counseling is the fact that we use the Bible in biblical counseling.

So how do we wind up with two sets of entirely orthodox Christians who both work with struggling individuals, yet primarily use very different means in counseling?

This is what happens when you have two very different understandings of what the Holy Spirit primarily uses to change people in counseling. If common grace is central to change and the Spirit’s primary role is to give a counselor discernment regarding what aspects of a theory to adapt or not, then you use common grace to help people change. If special revelation is central to change and the Spirit’s primary role is to change the heart of the counselee through the Scriptures, then you use the Scriptures to help people change.

Summary

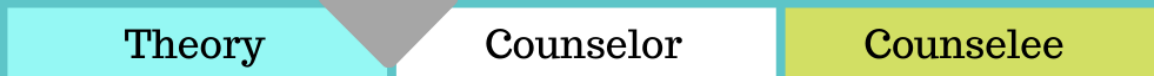
Anytime you’re dealing with a theory of counseling, you’re looking at several different movements of thought that are inherently interconnected. The integrationist focus on the Spirit’s guidance of the counselor is directly tied to the integrationist focus on common grace. There’s far more *evaluative* work that needs to be done by the counselor as he distinguishes falsehood, poison from balm, death from life. The biblical counselor focus on the Spirit’s direct work on the counselee is directly tied to the belief that the Bible speaks what is necessary for transformation. Instead of evaluation, the biblical counselor’s role is one of *application*, as he or she takes what is already known to be entirely true and helpful and connect it in appropriate ways to the life of the counselee.

⁵Robert A. Ball and Rodney K. Goodyear “Self-Reported Professional Practices of Christian Psychotherapists,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 10, no. 2 (1991): 148.

⁶Mark McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1996), 120. Note that “Christian counselors” here does not include those of a biblical counseling persuasion.

Primary Emphasis Regarding Spirit's Work

INT: Spirit guides counselor's evaluation of theory



BC: Spirit works on counselee's heart thru Scripture



Significance

In answer to the question posed by our title, the answer is simultaneously yes and no. Yes, as integrationists and biblical counselors understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the same way as human beings united by Christ. No, as biblical counselors and integrationists place different emphases on how the Spirit works due to significantly different beliefs regarding how the Spirit brings about his promised transformation.

What are significant lessons for us to learn as counselors from what we have learned?

- 1) Our rhetoric towards those who disagree with us needs to reflect Christian charity.

John 13:34-35 I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have love you, you are also to love on another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Love does not preclude disagreement. The things we have looked at today are of no small importance. But love changes the way we *do* disagreement. You deal differently with a guest and a home intruder.

- 2) We do not believe in a counselor-centric approach to change.

At our core, biblical counselors are not people who place change in their own hands. It's rather strange when you think about it, but everyone here believes that at the end of the day all of our training, study, practice is secondary to the Spirit's work in someone's life.

Conclusion

How we understand the means the Holy Spirit uses to affect change is going to have a significant impact on what we use to counsel. The clearer our understanding of how the Spirit works in hearts, the purer our counseling will be.