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Just What Is Christian Counseling Anyway?

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Professional psychologists may be asked about Christian counseling services and wonder how to best respond. Given the diversity of methods and worldviews that might be considered Christian counseling, it is important for psychologists to understand some of the major approaches used. Biblical counseling, pastoral counseling, Christian psychology, Christian ministry, and other approaches are described briefly, and in each case implications for professional psychologists are offered. Collaborative efforts are likely to be productive when interacting with certified pastoral counselors and Christian psychologists, and ministry approaches may provide supplemental resources for psychotherapy with Christian clients. Ethical issues are considered, and a 5-step model for responding to questions about Christian counseling is offered.

Keywords: Christian counseling, religion, collaboration, pastoral counseling

A potential client asks a professional psychologist about Christian counseling services. How should the psychologist respond? The question, which may seem straightforward to the person asking, will likely be complex from the perspective of a professional psychologist. Will a posture of respect and religious sensitivity be sufficient for this client, or is the person asking about the personal religious beliefs of the psychologist? Should the psychologist even disclose personal religious beliefs at this juncture of an emerging psychotherapy relationship? Is the client asking for a particular sort of intervention, or is this a question about worldview and value assumptions? And just what is Christian counseling anyway?

Given that religion is highly or somewhat important to 80% of Americans, and 71% report their religion to be Christianity (Gal-

lup, 2009)—and given that psychotherapy often addresses issues of meaning-making and ultimate concerns—it is not surprising that some potential psychotherapy clients ask about Christian services. Fortunately, in recent years the American Psychological Association (APA) has been at the forefront in providing resources for professional psychologists to become aware of and competent in religious and spiritual issues. These resources include books (e.g., Aten & Leach, 2009; Aten, McMinn, & Worthington, in press; Miller & Delaney, 2005; Richards & Bergin, 2005; Shafranske, 1996; Sperry & Shafranske, 2005), a series of articles published in *American Psychologist* (Miller & Thoresen, 2003; Powell, Shababi, & Thoresen, 2003; Seeman, Dubin, & Seeman, 2003), this special section of *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, psychotherapy videos demonstrating spiritual and religious approaches (APA, 2009), a division (36) devoted to the psychology of religion, and a new scholarly journal, *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Less fortunately, it is not always clear what is meant by Christian counseling, which makes it difficult for a professional psychologist to know how to respond when Christian counseling services are requested.

Christian Counseling Is Diverse

Just as diverse cultural groups may fall under a common descriptor, such as “Asian American,” so also a variety of counseling approaches, faith assumptions, and definitions of healing fall under the rubric of Christian counseling. Christianity itself is diverse, with three major branches (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant) and various offshoots of each. Christian counselors reflect this gamut of religious diversity, plus additional diversity based on the extent and type of training they have received in the mental health professions. Not surprisingly, various disagreements and splits have arisen within the movement, resulting in different approaches to counseling and psychotherapy and various titles for the work being offered. Biblical counseling is quite different from Christian psychology, which, in turn, is distinct from pastoral counseling. Moreover, clients seek Christian counseling for a variety of reasons. Clients, counselors, approaches to counseling, and presenting

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problems are all diverse, which produces a mind-boggling number of permutations for what may be intended by the term *Christian counseling*.

Consider the following examples, each of which might be encountered by a Christian counselor or psychotherapist:

1. An Asian American woman from a Buddhist family has recently converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon) church. She seeks psychotherapy from a professional psychologist to resolve the guilt she feels over not pleasing her family. She does not realize that her psychotherapist belongs to a conservative Protestant denomination that considers Mormonism a cult.
2. An African American Protestant woman feels overwhelmed by the high standards she set for herself and by the expectations placed on her by friends and family. She refers to herself as a “pillar” in her church, which is a telling metaphor for how she experiences her faith. She seeks help from a Roman Catholic pastoral counselor who has previous ministry experience as well as credentials in spiritual direction and a graduate degree in marriage and family therapy.
3. A middle-aged biracial Orthodox woman works with perpetrators and victims of domestic violence, and is beginning to experience symptoms of vicarious traumatization. She wonders why so many abusers identify as Christian, and she finds herself questioning organized religion. She seeks help from a mainline Protestant pastor who has years of ministry experience but no formal training in counseling.
4. A young European American Protestant man works as a youth pastor in a conservative denomination. He seeks help from a biblical counselor to help manage feelings of same-sex attraction and determine lifestyle choices in relation to his work as a pastor and his values as a Christian.

Each of these examples raises assessment, intervention, and ethical challenges, thereby illustrating the complexity and diversity of Christian counseling. The purpose of this article is neither to resolve all the questions illustrated in these cases nor to present a singular definition for Christian counseling. Instead, the goal is to explore some of the variety within Christian counseling to prepare and inform professional psychologists who find themselves in conversations with clients and potential clients about Christian counseling services. We present various approaches to Christian counseling, in each case considering implications for professional psychologists.

Biblical Counseling

Description

Biblical counseling is a movement among conservative Christians—mostly Protestants—to reclaim the role of counseling within the ministries of the church. Biblical counselors consider the Bible to be superior and more authoritative than psychological

science, theory, or technique. As such, it is highly unusual to find professional psychologists who also identify as biblical counselors. In the most extreme forms of biblical counseling, an epistemology derived from the Bible is deemed completely sufficient and comprehensive to provide effective counseling (e.g., Adams, 1970; MacArthur & Mack, 1994), which makes psychology a dangerous competitor in the care of souls. Even those who are somewhat more open to conversation with psychology emphasize that the Bible contains the theoretical parameters to create a systematic counseling theory that is more comprehensive and relevant than psychological models (Powlison, 2000).

Individuals who identify with biblical counseling often seek training and support from resources such as the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, and Light University. Light University (2007) offers biblical counseling training via DVD and online programs, and is growing in prominence in the field. Completion of Light University’s foundational biblical training courses can lead to certificates, diplomas, and eligibility for becoming a board-certified biblical counselor. Light University has more than 120,000 students enrolled in their online biblical counseling courses, and the sponsoring organization—the American Association of Christian Counselors—has approximately 50,000 members.

Implications for Professional Psychologists

If a client requests Christian counseling, it is wise to ask for clarification as to what the client is hoping for. If it is biblical counseling, most psychologists will not be prepared or interested in providing these services. Ethical challenges swirl around the professional psychologist in such a situation, as psychologists affirm both the autonomy of their clients and the importance of competence in professional work. Perhaps the best response is to explain how psychological services are distinct from biblical counseling, offer a description of the psychological services that are available, and then allow the client to decide whether to continue in treatment or not. Some psychologists will be comfortable referring a client to a biblical counselor and others will not, depending on the training of the biblical counselor and the psychologist’s understanding of the counselor’s competence. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of biblical counseling has not been researched, so ethical issues of efficacy, competency, and welfare of the consumer must be confronted when psychologists decide whether or not to refer to a biblical counselor. But whether or not a referral is offered, it is appropriate to present the client with information about psychotherapy and then respect the client’s right to choose the desired approach.

Collaborative efforts are not likely to be helpful when a client desires to work with both a psychologist and a biblical counselor. Biblical counselors, or pastors who adhere to biblical counseling models, are unlikely to have interest in collaborating with professional psychologists, and some will view psychology as an adversary to their work. In these cases, asking the client for permission to contact the biblical counselor may heighten the dissonance the client is already feeling about seeking help outside the church. It might be better to carefully explore the differences in each approach and help the client decide which approach to pursue. For clients who choose psychotherapy with a professional psycholo-

gist, it is important to recognize that they may begin with suspicion about psychology, and may be dealing with guilt for choosing psychological services instead of turning to their faith community for help.

Although effective collaboration between professional psychologists and biblical counselors is unlikely, in our anecdotal experience we have found that many biblical counselors have effective helping skills. Biblical counselors tend not to be fond of psychologists, and some are quite vocal about their disagreements, but we suggest the best response for professional psychologists is to stay out of “mud-slinging” conversations. Instead, psychologists can continue providing the services they are trained to offer while respecting the rights of religious communities to offer alternative services and the autonomy of clients in choosing which services to pursue (McMinn, 2008).

Pastoral Counseling

Description

Religious leaders—priests, rabbis, pastors, gurus, and imams—have been offering guidance and counsel for as long as organized religions have existed. Even today, amidst the prominence of various mental health professions, many people prefer to seek help from a religious professional rather than mental health professionals (Oppenheimer, Flannelly, & Weaver, 2004; Weaver, 1995).

The term *pastoral counseling* has at least two distinct meanings. First, it sometimes refers to any pastor who offers counseling services. Often pastors have only one or two courses in counseling methods in seminary, and yet they are called on to provide many hours of counseling help each week in their parishes and communities. Second, it can refer to the profession of pastoral counseling, where members have dual credentials in both Christian ministry and counseling or psychotherapy. The following description pertains to the latter definition of pastoral counseling.

In the 20th century, pastoral counseling became a formalized profession, marked by establishing the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry in the 1930s, the growth of clinical pastoral education for seminary students and graduates, and the founding of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) in 1963 (AAPC, n.d.). Rather than separating themselves from psychological knowledge, as biblical counselors do, pastoral counselors attempt to employ both spiritual and psychological means to facilitate healing and foster wholeness in people. Pastoral counselors typically have dual credentials, involving a graduate degree in ministry or theology from a seminary and another graduate degree in a mental health field (e.g., marriage and family therapy), as well as postgraduate hours of supervised experience.

The roles assumed and services provided by pastoral counselors are similar to those of other mental health practitioners, although they are often based in a religious setting (Clinebell, 1984). Pastoral counselors frequently work in both religious and community settings providing therapy and offering educational programs. Whereas biblical counselors are typically associated with a conservative Protestant arm of Christianity, pastoral counselors represent the entire gamut of theological and religious diversity found in contemporary Christianity and other religious faiths as well.

Implications for Professional Psychologists

When a psychologist determines that a client is considering services provided by a pastoral counselor, it is wise to first explore what the client means. First, some may mean counseling by a local pastor with an undisclosed amount of training in counseling. Faith communities have been offering supportive services for centuries, and it is certainly within their right to do so. Still, it may be helpful for the psychologist to discuss potential concerns with the client, including the lack of credentialing for pastors who offer counseling, the potential for religious issues to overshadow mental health issues, potential boundary concerns, and so on. Second, some may be considering seeing a credentialed pastoral counselor—someone certified by the AAPC. In these situations, the psychologist can have confidence in the mental health training and religious training of the counselor. Indeed, it is likely that the pastoral counselor will have more training than the psychologist regarding religious and spiritual issues, and the shared language of faith might help the client feel comfortable and safe with the counselor (Hathaway, Scott, & Garver, 2004). Conversely, depending on the pastoral counselor’s mental health credentials, professional psychologists may offer advantages such as greater reliance on psychological science, third-party reimbursement, and rigorous treatment planning that typically occurs in psychological interventions. After exploring treatment options, some potential clients will prefer working with a certified pastoral counselor, in which case a referral is appropriate.

Collaborative experiences between certified pastoral counselors and psychologists are likely to be positive because both are trained in mental health diagnosis and treatment, and therefore share an appreciation of and respect for the insights psychological theory and research have to offer. Also, pastoral counselors, by virtue of their training, have valuable knowledge and understanding of the ways in which religious issues can be addressed and incorporated into the treatment process. Because of this unique training, pastoral counselors are helpful resources, not only for clients seeking a faith-based treatment, but for psychologists interested in learning more about religious issues in counseling and psychotherapy.

Christian Psychology

Description

Just as the term *pastoral counselor* can have two distinct meanings, so also *Christian psychologist* bears two meanings. First, some use the term to refer to Christians who are both trained as psychologists and willing to identify their faith as important in their clinical work. These psychologists are also called *integrationists*, meaning they attempt to integrate religious and spiritual understanding with contemporary psychology. Many of these psychologists belong to the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS). Although integrationists may be academic or professional psychologists, we refer to professional psychology *integrationists* in the comments that follow. Second, some restrict the term to a relatively new group of philosophers, theologians, and mental health professionals who belong to the Society of Christian Psychology (SCP). Members of SCP attempt to found their work on the ancient truths and wisdom embedded in and derived from the Bible, as well as other classic Christian texts

written throughout the centuries (Johnson, 2007). These two uses of the term *Christian psychology* are discussed in turn.

Integrationists. Integrationists see value in both professional psychology and Christianity, and consequently seek to connect their psychotherapy skills with their faith and values in their work with patients. They are psychologists who strive to look through two lenses simultaneously—the psychological and the religious (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). Consequently, they often perceive their role as fully exploring both psychology and spirituality in their pursuit of evidenced-based treatments. Integration approaches are evident in some chapters of edited books published by the APA (e.g., Miller, 1999; Richards & Bergin, 2000; Shafranske, 1996).

Along with publishing in mainstream psychology journals and books, integrationists also contribute significantly to the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* and the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. Some are graduates of or faculty in APA-accredited doctoral programs in clinical psychology that integrate Christianity and psychology. Such programs are available at Azusa Pacific University, Fuller Theological Seminary, George Fox University, Regent University, Rosemead School of Psychology, Seattle Pacific University, and Wheaton College. Most of these programs are in the evangelical Protestant tradition of Christianity. The Institute for Psychological Sciences offers doctoral training in clinical psychology that integrates Roman Catholic theology. Other doctoral programs, such as Loyola University in Maryland and Brigham Young University, do not appear to be explicitly integrative but are housed in departments and institutions where historic faith commitments influence the training mission.

SCP. The second use of the term *Christian psychology*, as defined by identification with or membership in SCP, is less identified with contemporary psychology. Instead, SCP members seek to uncover the psychology implicit in historic Christian writings, including the Bible. Whereas biblical counseling makes no effort to consider psychology, SCP members are interested in psychology, albeit mainly the psychology of the Bible and other historical Christian sources. Pastoral counseling differs from the SCP in that the former draws on contemporary counseling and psychological theory, then applies it in religious settings, whereas the SCP looks first to ancient sources for its theoretical base. The distinction between SCP and integration centers on the primacy given to sacred writings (Day, 2006). SCP members tend to be philosophers, theologians, and psychologists who place primary authority on Christian sources of knowledge and wisdom. In contrast, integrationists tend to be psychologists who place relatively more confidence in contemporary psychological science. Still, SCP members do not assert a blind ignorance toward science. They acknowledge that Christianity may need to be reconsidered in light of scientific findings at times, but the primary priority for SCP is to be true to biblical revelation and Christian writers in centuries past. So, for example, an SCP conference might include a workshop on how Jonathan Edwards—a great American theologian of the 18th century—described emotions in his classic work, *Religious Affections* (Edwards, 1746/1996). An integrationist might be interested in Edward's understanding of emotions, but would place greater emphasis on contemporary psychological theory and scientific findings pertaining to emotions.

Implications for Professional Psychologists

Professional psychologists will likely find it relatively easy to establish referral and other collaborative relationships with Christian psychologists, especially those who are integrationists. In fact, because many Christian psychologists are active members of the APA or the National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology, with some even holding key leadership positions, many professional psychologists may already have frequent and perhaps close contact with integrationists.

In situations where clients ask for a Christian psychologist, it is good to clarify what they mean in relation to what can be provided by the psychologist. There are at least four possible meanings. First, they may be looking for a Christian person who is a psychologist because they want someone who will understand their worldview, much as an African American client might ask whether any African American therapists are available. Second, they could be looking for a psychologist who is open to using spiritually oriented interventions while being respectful of Christian beliefs. This psychologist may or may not be a Christian, but is respectful of Christianity. Third, they might be looking for someone who meets both the first and second criteria (i.e., an integrationist). If no one on staff meets these criteria, a referral to a CAPS member (<http://www.caps.net>) might be most appropriate. Fourth, they could be looking for an SCP member, although this is unlikely because SCP is new and relatively small. In this case, the professional psychologist would need to decide whether a referral to a member of SCP is appropriate (<http://christianpsych.org>).

Referring to a Christian psychologist may raise ethics questions for some professional psychologists who question the effectiveness of religiously based interventions. Although the research to date is sparse, it appears that most of the religiously accommodative psychotherapy approaches that have been studied are as effective as standard psychotherapy approaches (Hook et al., in press).

Ministry Approaches

Description

There are various ministry-based approaches to helping. We consider three here: inner healing (illustrated with Theophostic Prayer Ministry), lay counseling (illustrated with Stephen Ministries), and explicitly religious recovery groups (illustrated with Celebrate Recovery).

Inner healing ministries employ prayer to address the wounds of past and present trauma. One prominent form of inner healing is Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM), developed by Ed Smith, a Southern Baptist pastoral counselor. Although all religiously based inner healing employs prayer as a primary means of bringing healing to past hurts, Smith contends that what distinguishes TPM from other inner healing approaches is its focus on the person's interpretation of the past event rather than their memory of the experience (Smith, 2004). Smith's ministry is predicated on the notion that emotional pain stems from the "lies" people have come to believe as a result of the meaning they have assigned to troubling and traumatic experiences in their lives, and that true healing can come only through a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit who can reveal the lies and supplant them with divine truth

(Entwistle, 2004a, 2004b). This process is briefly summarized by Smith (2004) as follows:

People's minds are renewed as He [Spirit of Christ] illuminates their lie-based thinking with truth. This encounter results in the recipient embracing truth and experiencing lasting and abiding peace. This renewal is then validated as the person is able to walk in "a new way of life" through being "transformed" (Romans 12:2) in thoughts and behavior. (p. 12)

Critics of TPM have questioned the validity of the theological and psychological assertions Smith makes throughout his theory. Other criticisms include concerns about the production of iatrogenic memories using TPM techniques, possible inadequacy of training required to practice this approach, and claims of assured healing and superiority of methods that are not supported with sound empirical evidence (Entwistle, 2004a, 2004b; Maier & Monroe, 2002).

Lay counseling has been defined as "people helping by nonprofessionals or paraprofessional counselors, with either no training or limited training in counseling skills" (Tan, 1994, p. 264). The lay counseling ministries adopted by various Christian denominations are not a monolithic group. Some lay counseling programs aim to bring healing and spiritual deliverance, and others advance evangelism and discipleship training (Tan, 1994). However, most lay Christian counseling services focus on individuals, couples, or family counseling (Jung, 2009; Tan, 1994). Of the many lay counseling programs in Christian churches, perhaps the most prominent and recognized lay counseling curriculum is Stephen Ministries.

Stephen Ministries was founded in 1975 by Kenneth Haugk, a pastor and clinical psychologist, who realized that lay counselors (called *caregivers* in Stephen Ministries) could meet the needs of more people than he could on his own (<http://www.stephenministry.org>). Congregations that incorporate the Stephen Ministry program train lay caregivers (called *Stephen Ministers*) to provide one-to-one care to the "bereaved, hospitalized, terminally ill, separated, divorced, unemployed, relocated, and others facing a crisis or life challenge" (Stephen Ministries, n.d.). Stephen Ministries has been implemented in more than 10,000 congregations, representing more than 150 Christian denominations, and has trained more than 500,000 Stephen Ministers. Their training often includes knowing their limits of care in order to refer to mental health professionals as needed. Whereas some ministry-based programs, such as TPM, are primarily found in conservative Protestant churches, Stephen Ministries can be found in most Christian denominations, including Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox.

Explicitly religious recovery groups are ministry-based support groups designed with the goal of empowering participants to overcome a besetting problem. A prominent example is Celebrate Recovery—a 12-step program that began in the early 1990s out of Pastor Rick Warren's Saddleback Church. It is patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), with the higher power in the AA model identified as Jesus Christ and the New Testament Beatitudes (e.g., blessed are the poor) incorporated into the 12 steps. In addition, the focus of care has been opened beyond alcoholics to incorporate people with codependency, eating disorders, sexual addictions, anger, physical or sexual abuse problems, financial recovery, and various other concerns. Celebrate Recovery has been

implemented in more than 10,000 churches nationwide, and more than 500,000 individuals have completed the program (Celebrate Recovery, 2008).

Implications for Professional Psychologists

Some faith-oriented clients may seek a psychologist's advice on what ministries will help them. Educating clients about the limitations and strengths of a particular ministry approach can assist them with making the right decision, but it will require the psychologist to first understand the ministry approach being considered.

Large churches in a psychologist's local area will often have several ministry-based approaches. These ministries can be helpful supplements for psychotherapy and provide clients with a source of social support. For instance, a Christian client desiring a faith-based environment will likely appreciate a referral to Celebrate Recovery over AA. AA's notion of a higher power (representing any power greater than oneself) may be interpreted as too generic for many Christian clients. Providing a referral that suits the client's religious preferences may help strengthen the alliance with the psychologist providing the referral.

Stephen Ministry approaches tend to provide support and acceptance in a client's life, and they tend not to be focused on narrow religious dogma or adherence to strictly defined behavioral standards. Because of the diversity of congregations that have a Stephen Ministry program, the specific nature of the program will depend a great deal on the nature of the church that sponsors it.

Some spiritually oriented approaches may be dismissive of psychotherapy, such as TPM. Ministers who are opposed to professional psychotherapy may attempt to convince clients to terminate psychological services by suggesting that their particular approach is sufficient. However, some inner healing approaches are quite respectful of psychotherapy, and some have even been proposed or advocated by Christian psychologists (e.g., Tan, 1996). To determine whether an inner healing prayer ministry approach is open or closed toward psychologists, making contact with the leader is helpful.

Other Approaches

Because of the diversity of Christian counseling approaches, many Christian counselors will not fit into the categories described above. For example, an individual with a master's or doctoral degree in counseling might have a private counseling practice that is marketed as Christian counseling, yet not be affiliated with biblical counseling, pastoral counseling, Christian psychology, or church-based ministry approaches. In our experience, independent Christian counselors vary widely in terms of theoretical approach, attitudes toward psychology, and overall effectiveness.

When communicating or collaborating with a Christian counselor who does not identify with the major approaches described above, it may be helpful to ask about the counselor's license(s), theoretical approach, and affinity for psychological science. A brief conversation about such matters is likely to help the professional psychologist discern how to best proceed.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, we have attempted to highlight how a professional psychologist might respond to inquiries about and

requests for Christian counseling. We suggest a five-step process. First, the psychologist needs to have enough information to speak knowledgeably about the options. A major point of this article is to provide basic background information while also providing Web site addresses and other information for those who wish to read further. Second, when a client or potential client asks about Christian counseling, the psychologist can then explain the nature of psychological services in relation to other options. Third, the psychologist needs to determine whether the Christian counseling services would compete with a professional psychology intervention. Some services, such as spiritual direction, religious education, and focused ministry-based approaches have different goals and methods than mental health interventions. In these cases, it may be best for the psychologist to continue providing mental health services. In other cases, such as biblical counseling or pastoral counseling, the psychologist might determine that the services offered would compete with the psychological intervention, making it necessary for the client to choose one approach or the other. Fourth, if the client prefers Christian counseling to the intervention that the professional psychologist offers, the psychologist needs to engage in an ethical discernment process. Is it in the best interest of the client to refer the person to a Christian counselor? Are competent counselors available to receive referrals? Finally, the psychologist then offers referral information if it is deemed ethical to do so. Whether or not referral information is offered, the psychologist respects the autonomy of the client in deciding what sort of psychological and spiritual care to pursue. In general, the preferred referral option for most psychologists will be a Christian psychologist or a pastoral counselor certified by the AAPC, which assures that the counselor has graduate-level expertise in mental health care as well as training in religious issues.

Some understanding of Christian counseling approaches is also useful when psychotherapy clients speak of past experiences with counselors and when determining whether it might prove useful to request previous treatment records or to otherwise collaborate with Christian counselors. Those who have seen biblical counselors in the past may experience some shame or sense of failure in seeking professional psychological services, and it is possible that the client will be reluctant to have the psychologist contact the previous counselor for records. For clients who have formerly seen certified pastoral counselors or Christian psychologists, there is a high likelihood that a standard treatment approach will have been used and that both the client and the former counselor will be open to requests for records. For those former or currently involved in ministry approaches to Christian counseling, it is unlikely that treatment records will be available. Most ministry approaches do not involve record keeping.

Throughout this article we have attempted to emphasize the diversity of the Christian counseling movement. Even a common label, such as biblical counselor, pastoral counselor, Christian psychologist, or inner healing prayer ministry, can have multiple meanings. If it is important to understand the nature of past or present counseling services, then it may require the professional psychologists to ask some specific questions about the counseling received. For example, "What sort of training did your counselor have?" "How would you describe what happened in your counseling sessions?" "Do you recall if your counselor ever mentioned a diagnosis or a treatment plan?"

As professional psychologists increase in their understanding of religious and spiritual diversity, it is important to enhance awareness of the forms of counseling being provided within various religious traditions. Our hope is that this article is a step in this direction and one that will promote dialog among professional psychologists.

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