

Distinctives of Exchanged Life Counseling
The Approach used by Grace Fellowship International

Introduction

These distinctives and their rationale are not given through pride or an argumentative posture. We believe the wisdom and clinical confirmation of this approach deserves to be clearly defined and differentiated from other models. The goal of this summary is to help the prospective biblical counselors perceive these distinctives and the reasons behind them.

Distinctive Message

In contrast to theological sanctification viewpoints: "Keswick" perspective ¹

In contrast to Christian life literature: "Deeper Life"

Three Emphases in Deeper Life literature ²

	<u>Abiding Life</u>	<u>Crucified Life</u>	<u>Spirit-Filled Life</u>
Godhead:	Father	Son	Holy Spirit
Role:	Cause	Crisis	Continuity
Authors:	Andrew Murray	Jessie Penn-Lewis	R. McQuilkin ³
Scripture:	John 15:1-8	Rom. 6:4-14; Gal. 2:20	Eph. 1:13;4:30;5:18
Emblem:	Vine	Cross	Dove

Although each emphasis is precious and true, God has honored the Crucified Life emphasis in Spirituotherapy.

In contrast to monism and dichotomy: trichotomy.⁴

We are beings of spirit, soul, and body. This clarifies the nature of the Fall, salvation, identification, spiritual warfare, and the bodily resurrection. Without the insight of trichotomy, identification with Christ is only positional; nothing in a person's constitution is crucified, buried, raised, or ascended. (Thus, there is less to "know" and "reckon" in Romans 6:6, 10,11. This undermines the basis for the believer's new identity and ignores his/her "new past.")

Distinctive Methodology

Psychological observations (not taken from humanistic sources) are used in a *diagnostic* way. Valid insights on issues such as rejection and identity help counselees understand their unique version of the flesh and how it developed. Therefore, they become more prepared to discern what "self" to deny (Luke 9:23). As Dr. Solomon puts it, "psychology can be descriptive, but not prescriptive."

If the Taylor Johnson Temperament Analysis (TJTA) is used, the resulting profile is *not* used (as psychologists typically do) to outline a counseling agenda. Rather, the profile helps counselees see how they have been affected by rejection and how their "self-life" tends to malfunction. The answer is not self improvement in one or more of the nine scales; the answer is the great exchange!

Rather than starting the counseling by addressing the major symptoms as the problem, Spirituotherapy uses these issues to help "crowd to Christ" the counselee.⁵ These pressures become providential motivators to more completely surrender to God and appropriate identification with Christ. Clinical discipleship would usually facilitate a general freedom in Christ process as well. After "phase three," any remaining counseling problem is lessened and is dealt with on the resurrection side of the cross. Counselees may already have experienced resolving of the presenting problem(s) as a byproduct of identification and freedom.

The Holy Spirit is honored as the real Counselor. The clinical discipler should be under His control, dependent on His leading, and praying for His illumination (John 14,16). The Holy Spirit's role is the basis of the term "Spirituotherapy." This is not to say that other approaches to Christian counseling do not depend on Him, rather, this model makes His role explicit since the answer is based on His inspired revelation and illumination. He alone can accomplish transformational change in the counselee and counselor (2 Cor. 3:18).

Some ministries with a spiritual warfare emphasis agree with the exchanged life emphasis of identification with Christ, However, they usually assumed that if the person knows about Romans 6:4-14 et. al., that the cross has become an experiential reality. They see the freedom steps as a *process* but convey identification as *information*. This approach inadvertently overlooks that "crossing the Jordan" as *process* that needs to be facilitated. If the truth of our identity in Christ is presented in counseling as apart from knowing and reckoning identification as its basis, the counselee would attempt to live out of the identity in his/her own strength (trying to live Christ's life *for* Him), "Death" needs to precede Life (Matt 16:24,25).

In the early years, Dr. Solomon would challenge the counselee to appropriate Christ as life, but leave the *how and when* somewhat open ended. Then he began to invite the prepared and willing client to have his/her “funeral” during the session. “The Selfer’s Prayer” was prepared and used as a guideline to help the believers “enter in” through personally giving up on themselves, reaffirming surrender and claiming--in a faith transaction--their identification in death, burial, resurrection, and ascension with Christ. (The counselee is given the option to do business with God where and when they are prepared to do so from the heart. However, many take this opportunity to express their response with a “selfer’s prayer” of their own, or one facilitated phrase by phrase by the counselor.)

The counseling process is to be Christ-centered and grace-oriented. The four phases focus on Christ’s ministry in our lives as Savior, Lord, Life, Liberator, and Leader. Through abiding in Him, the victorious life is *being in order to do*, instead of doing in order to be. Bibliotherapy may seem adequate because of the Bible's foundational role, however, if Scripture is used to exhort change apart from identification and freedom, it functions more in a law orientation rather than a grace orientation (Gal. 5:1-6).

Four Phases of Counseling

Phase:	1	2	3	4
Counseling task:	Evangelism	Exchanged Life	Tearing down strongholds	Practical discipleship
Focus:	Conversion by Christ	Union with Christ	Freedom in Christ	Dominion through Christ
Obstacles:	Spiritual deadness	Self-life	Strongholds	Worldliness
Old Testament Imagery:	Crossing the Red Sea	Crossing the Jordan	Conquering walled cities	Taking possession of the land
Romans Outline:	chs. 1-5	chs. 6-8	chs. 9-11	chs. 12-16
Deliverance from:	Sin's Penalty	Sin's Power	Sin's Perceptions	Sin's Pattern
Personal Example of Ministry Orientation:	Luis Palau	Charles Solomon	Neil Anderson	Jay Adams
Relevant Scriptures:	John 3:16-18	Gal 2:20	2 Cor 10:3-5	Eph 3:14-6:9

by John Woodward 3/2000

Distinctive use of Materials

Just as the Lord Jesus used parables and object lessons in His teaching, so counselors can benefit greatly by effective diagrams and their use in counseling. God has used Dr. Solomon's engineering background to clarify many aspects of

exchanged life counseling. One of the primary contributions is the diagrams in his books. We advocate using these original Wheel and Line diagrams because they are backed up by the foundational books such as *Handbook to Happiness* and *Handbook for Christ Centered Counseling*. These diagrams help the counselee track with the Spirituotherapy process and concepts. They also are a helpful memory and review tool. Since these diagrams are important in the counselor training process, they are instrumental in making this approach transferable and more easily grasped as additional generations of counselors are equipped for this kind of ministry.

When counselees read *The Ins and Out of Rejection*, they often begin to discern the sources and dynamics of their inner struggles. When the counselor summarizes the observations of the history-taking process, the counselee's symptoms of rejection are recognized and personalized. When the client understands the root issues through this process, they usually gain hope that the counselor also knows the Solution!

By the preliminary reading *Handbook to Happiness* chapters 1,2, and 5, the overall pattern of the counseling message begins to become more familiar to the counselee. This helps them follow the counselor since they would have a "head start" through reading the designated chapters in advance.

Additional Bible reading, literature, CDs, DVDs, etc. should be assigned to reinforce and deepen the counselee's faith journey.

Distinctive Ministry

The nature of this counseling methodology is to help the counselee discover and appropriate the indwelling Christ as his/her ultimate source of sufficiency. Therefore, the process is usually limited to between two and ten sessions. The extended weekly sessions of Christian and secular psychotherapists is markedly different. Clinical discipleship is short term; it is not our role to take the place of the local church in ongoing discipleship. We want the client to depend on Christ, not us.

In other counseling models the counselor may seek to diagnose, support and guide in coping strategies without needing a first hand testimony of an abundant life. In Christ-centered counseling, however, the counselor needs to have experienced the cross. As Dr. Solomon puts it, "Exchanged life counseling is not so much a technique to be learned as a relationship to be shared." God's love needs to be our motivation. This is not to say the counselor "has arrived," or is

perfect. Although we need to be in fellowship with God and minister in integrity, we nevertheless have this treasure "in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4).

Conclusion

If counselors in training are convinced of these distinctives and principles, they will have a sound basis for evaluating material from other biblical counseling ministries and publishers. Additional content should then be screened as to is whether it would reinforce, or distract from, the Christ-centered counseling ministry.

- John Woodward
10/08

¹ See Melvin Dieter, ed. *Five Views of Sanctification*, (Zondervan, 1987).

² See Elmer Towns, *Understanding the Deeper Life*, (ElmerTowns.com).

³ Andrew Murray, *Abide in Christ*, (Christian Literature Crusade).
Jessie Penn-Lewis, *The Cross of Calvary*, (Christian Literature Crusade).
Robertson McQuilkin, *Life in the Spirit*, (Zondervan, 1987).

⁴ See John Woodward, *Man as Spirit, Soul, and Body: A Study of Biblical Psychology*, GFI, 2007); Ch.4 of Charles Solomon, *The Rejection Syndrome and the Way to Acceptance*, (Solomon Publications, 1982).

⁵ L. E. Maxwell, *Crowded to Christ*. See also the Solomon School lecture, *Counseling on the Cross Roads* (John Woodward).