

Certification Process through GFI - An Overview

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As a Luther Rice student, I was introduced to *Handbook to Happiness* by Dr. Charles Solomon. I was introduced to diagrams that seemed a bit strange to me (at the time). The terms “exchanged life model” or “spirituotherapy” were new to my vocabulary, and honestly, I didn’t get it. In my stubborn, arrogant way of thinking, I thought that no one would want to be put through a series of diagrams in counseling. I was skeptical.

I tried to picture myself going to counseling to get help with grief, then someone pulled out a diagram for me to walk through. I just couldn’t imagine how that would be helpful or even appropriate.

I am not sure exactly when the “aha” moment happened for me. I trusted Dr. Ron Cobb and I trusted Luther Rice College & Seminary, so I continued to explore this counseling method and at some point, thankfully, it began to make sense. These charts and diagrams weren’t heartless, unhelpful diversions. Instead these diagrams were tools that could help teach clients about the basics of faith in Jesus. It was evangelism and discipleship! I began to understand that through this process, clients could find victory and live the abundant life that God’s Word talks about for believers.

Through Luther Rice, I had a choice when it came to the practical part of my degree completion. I could do a practicum at an approved ministry location or I could go through the GFI conference and workshop. At the time, I really wanted hands-on experience. Through God’s providence, I met a fellow “baseball mom” who worked for our local pregnancy resource center. One day as our boys were playing at her house, she talked about how she was looking for mentors and basically interviewed me in her driveway. The rest is history. I did my practicum there and now I work there. I can look back and see God’s hand as He provided this place for me, and I’m so grateful. Not only have I been able to help young women, but this place has become a place of great growth for me. The women I work with (staff) are great women of prayer, women

who study the Bible, and I am grateful for this “iron sharpens iron” type of environment (Prov. 27:17).

Through the pregnancy center, I met Pastor David Grubbs. Pastor Dave is someone who is well-respected in our community and in our center. Hanging out with Pastor Dave is not only fun, but edifying. He seems to “ooze” with Jesus qualities, and you just feel better about everything after you’ve been in his presence. One day at the center, we sat down and began to “compare notes” about our journeys that led us to the present. I found out that he had been trained in the exchanged life model of counseling in Marietta a number of years ago. We talked about ***Handbook to Happiness*** and ***Handbook for Christ-Centered Counseling***. Pastor Dave had also gone through Luther Rice many years before!

One day, Pastor Dave came to the center and took me through a power point that he and his son had created. He showed me how he took every client through this power point and how he was able to teach them or assess their understanding of the Bible truths he was sharing. He went through the diagrams in this presentation, and at that moment, the method clicked with me. I needed to be on the receiving side of the message to understand the impact this could have on future clients. At that point, I knew I needed to get my certification through GFI. THIS was the message of hope I wanted to share with clients.

The certification journey began at the conference in 2019. I had come to Pigeon Forge alone and was staying at a hotel. Each night in my room, I reviewed what I had learned that day. The last night, I cried like a baby in my room as I reflected on everything I had learned. If being honest, I had some things that I needed to fully surrender. That night I released those things I had been clinging to. Afterward, I felt free and so much lighter.

After the conference, I began all of the reading. During 2020, I read one book after the next, I watched the Solomon lecture series, and listened to the Christ is Life conference. I noticed that as I was working with clients, these truths that I had been reading about and listening to were coming out in our appointments. What comes into our mind comes out through the mouth and through our actions.

One of the most beneficial parts of the process were the Marie Marshall videos. Before then, I felt like I understood the message but I didn't understand the "how." Just like with Pastor Dave, I was able to EXPERIENCE what real-life appointments would look like. This series was so helpful to me. Watching the counselor lead Marie through the process was a beautiful thing to observe.

In August of 2020, I was able to come to the workshop. Because of the hands-on approach to the workshop, I felt like I gained confidence and understanding. I especially appreciate learning how to lead someone through the line diagram. Walking into the workshop, I felt like I had a good idea about the wheel, but the line diagram scared me for some reason. I was able to grasp the meaning and the message, and since then, I've walked a few clients through with ease.

Today, I am approaching the last few hours of my practicum. Although I know the learning, growing, memorization, and reading will continue on once the certification is complete, I have confidence in the message of the Cross and the message of a fully surrendered life. I know that life-change is possible because of this message. I know that peace can be attained because of this message. I know that new identities can be formed through this message. Comfort is within reach. Victory and abundant life are found when we surrender it all to a God who loves us, who made us, and wants us living lives focused on Him.

At this point, I want to say "thank you." Thank you for the time invested in me personally. Thank you for teaching me and allowing me the space to wrap my mind around this message. Thank you because it has impacted me personally. Because of the messages received in this process, I've surrendered outcomes and results to God and have a peace about life that I once did not have. Because of what He's done in my life, I'm able to share this message with others. And because of the training I have received, I feel like I am competent in communicating the message.

Although I have read a lot in this process, I feel like the reading needs to continue. The more I read, the more I'll be equipped to recommend articles, books, etc. for clients going through this process. I want to have a nice "toolbox" full of tools that convey the "Christ is Life" message, and I'm looking forward with anticipation as I continue to learn and grow.