

## Implicit Spiritual issues in therapy

**INTRO:** When persons come to a pastor, pastoral counselor, or church-based counseling center, they expect to talk about spiritual issues

- if you plan to work in such a context, you should not be surprised, but should be prepared to do so

Persons who work in "secular" settings have been taken by surprise when clients bring up topics with spiritual implications. Several alternative approaches have been taken by various counselors:

- (1) some, have simply referred clients to a "religious professional"
- (2) some, believing such ideas to be problematic, have tried to change the clients' beliefs
- (3) some have chosen to deal only with the psychological issues, and refer the spiritual ones
- (4) some have tried to reframe the spiritual issues in psychological terms

### **WHAT ARE SOME ISSUES THAT COUNSELORS HAVE GRAPPLED WITH?**

- (1) Counselor Self-Disclosure- especially religious beliefs

- Summary: there is a time for a witness or testimony, but therapy is about the therapist; it is about the client; if we feel the need to tell our story more than to listen to theirs, we may be missing an important point

- (2) How to deal with religious authorities

(Discuss) What are some examples of religious authority?

(Discuss) Should religious authority ever be questioned? Why? Why not?

(3) Theoretical issues - Can a spiritual counselor use psychological theories in counseling? Can a secular counselor use spiritual approaches? Can a faith perspective be integrated with a scientific perspective? Or are they mutually exclusive?

Opinion: There are persons on both sides of the faith-science continuum who are saying essentially the same things for different reasons

EX: Freud: Id-Ego-Superego - people are essentially self-seeking

EX: Carl Rogers: Unconditional Positive Regard - Doctrine of Grace

EX: Secular humanism vs. Theistic humanism

(4) cognitive-behavioral approaches - have the best biblical support of all "secular" theories (Eph. 4:17-24)

- also have very good outcome research evidence for some disorders

(5) the worth of persons- we won't be naturally drawn to all clients

- modern culture communicates worth by performance; biblical Xnity communicates worth by creation

(6) the role of sin in human experience

- biblically, sin is both action (Or inaction) and attitude  
- what role does human play in human suffering? (diff views)  
- is there a source of moral authority outside the individual? If so, where do we find it?

(7) the real possibility of change in human beings

- the "power" of sin; can a person really say "NO"?  
- human freedom is limited; change is hard, but possible

(8) the difference Christ makes - Christians are not perfect; they are a people in process