



ACCA 3rd Asian Christian Counseling Conference
17-19 Oct 2019, Bali, Indonesia
PLENARY SESSION I:

ENHANCING SPIRITUALITY IN ASIAN CHRISTIAN COUNSELING

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Epistemology: What is Christian Counseling?

“There is no
such thing as
Christian Counseling!” Is this so?



My conclusion:



There is such a thing as Christian Counseling,

BUT

Most of Christian Counseling as it is practiced today is not good enough because we are more dictated by psychology and not fully applying the Word of God.

Illustration: Airplane maintenance engineer not applying fully the manual issued by Boeing.

Why the need to apply more fully the Word of God?

Two Basic Statements:

- ❑ Psychology is about our understanding of human nature.
- ❑ Since God is our Creator, He understands our human nature more than anyone else, and so the Bible must have much psychological content.

Just like the maintenance manual issued by Boeing must have much technical content of the airplane manufactured by it.



The historical background:



- ❑ Indeed, from Genesis to Revelation, we see much psychology at work.
- ❑ Jesus Himself was very psychologically minded when He ministered to others.
- ❑ Paul was strongly proto-psychological in his writings.
- ❑ Christian thinkers of the Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation like Anselm, Duns Scotus, Richard Baxter, John Owen and Jonathan Edwards wrote much on psychological reflection and spiritual direction.
- ❑ Indeed, Christians have been practicing a kind of folk psychology that is not backed up by scientific methodology.

How modern psychology developed?

Era of Modernism:

- ❑ The last 150 years or so saw the rise of a new worldview called modernism where secularism and the application of science was the order of the day.
- ❑ Knowledge exploded through empirical research while the metaphysical nature of religion, which defies scientific verification, was sidelined.
- ❑ Understanding human nature also became the object of intense methodical investigation.
- ❑ Folk psychology began to develop as a respectable body of knowledge recognized today as modern psychology.

Psychology can fill in the contextual gaps on human nature:

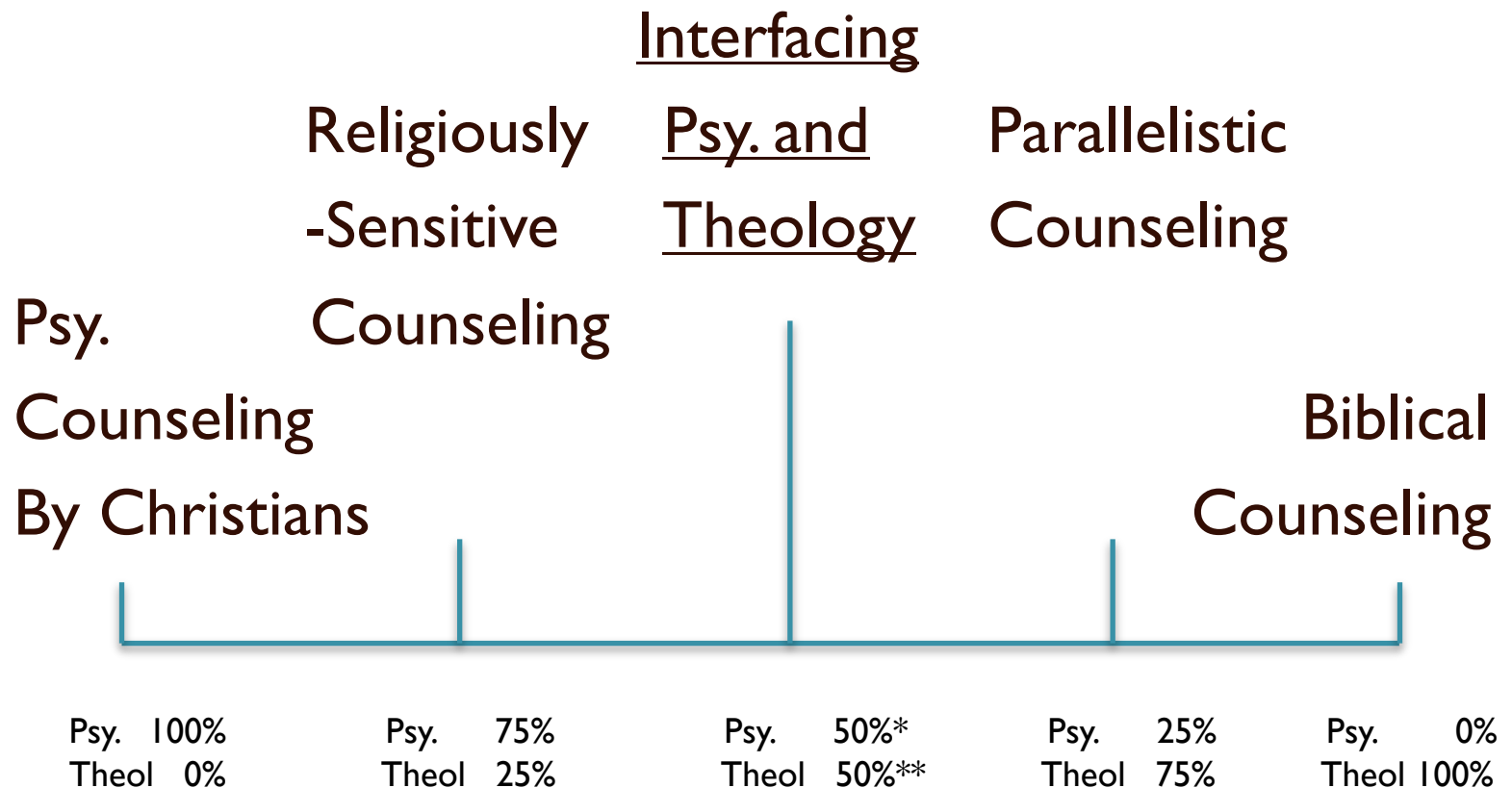
- ❑ Modern psychology can inform theology and theology validates modern psychology where it is consistent with the Bible.
- ❑ This is because although the Bible covers comprehensively all aspects of life, including our human functioning and dysfunctioning, the Scriptures are not exhaustive or explicit in all situations.
- ❑ Hence, the knowledge and techniques of modern psychology can fill in the contextual gaps of cognition, emotions and behavior in the Bible so that we can understand human nature better.

All truth is God's truth.

Therefore we can summarize as follows:

1. The Bible is full of psychological content.
2. Psychology is an applied scientific discipline on understanding human character and behavior.
3. Theology is the systematic and rational study of concepts of God and of the nature of religious truths.
4. By focusing only on Theology, we miss out on the findings of psychology through empirical research.
5. By focusing only on Psychology, we end up helping people on the humanistic level.
6. As the Bible is the Creator's manual for our lives, the Word of God is our final authority in Christian counseling, with our understanding of human nature enriched through those aspects of psychology that are consistent with it.

Continuum of “Christian Counseling” Practices today:



Psychology ←————→ Theology

* Psy. applicable only when consistent with Word of God

** Theol. is always the final authority. (Adapted from McMinn)

What Christian counseling is not:

- ❑ Christian counseling is NOT psychological counseling conducted by Christians.
- ❑ Christian counseling is NOT psychological counseling dressed up with some Bible verses to make it look more Christian.

The foundation of Christian counseling lies in the substantial interface between psychology and theology.

Interfacing bet. Psychology and Theology:

4 Models of Carter & Narramore (1979)

☐ The Against Model

- ☐ Incompatible with no possibility of integration.

☐ The Of Model

- ☐ Good psychology in the Bible but supernatural is rejected.

☐ The Parallels Model

- ☐ Both are affirmed but they can only be applied separately.

☐ The Integrates Model

- ☐ Assumes one common set of concept from both disciplines.

Interfacing bet. Psychology and Theology:

5 Views of Eric Johnson (2010)

☐ A Biblical Counseling View

- ☐ Bible is sufficient, psychology is rejected (Scripture only)

☐ A Levels-of Explanation View

- ☐ Both are valid but applied separately (reason only)

☐ A Christian Psychology View

- ☐ Psychology purely developed from theology (Christian tradition)

☐ A Transformation Psychology View

- ☐ Shape psychology according to the work of the Holy Spirit (spiritual experience only)

☐ An Integration View

- ☐ Assumes one system in both disciplines (synthesis only)

Integration Approach:

- ❑ Integration seeks to fuse the domains of psychology and theology that are common to both disciplines, discarding whatever psychological content that is inconsistent with the Scriptures.
- ❑ Correlation retains the two systems in each while genuine integration assumes there is only one set of system in the two disciplines.

Illustration of Theoretical Integration Model:

P s y c h o l o g y				
T h e o r y		Functional	Structural	Relational
	Creation	We need to produce and multiply, therefore we work and manage.	We need to organize and understand, therefore we make meaning.	We need to be known, accepted and understood, therefore we relate.
	Fall	We don't function optimally and we develop symptoms.	We distort reality about ourselves, others, the world and the future.	To think in realistic and constructive ways.
	Redemption	To improve and optimize functioning.	To think in realistic and constructive ways.	To meet our needs and the needs of others.

All said, how do you define Christian counseling?

- ❑ “Christian counseling is a fairly embryonic and disorganised enterprise.”

(Clinton & Ohlschlager, 2002)

- ❑ “we don’t agree on what Christian counseling is”

(McMinn, 2011)

- ❑ “experts disagree on defining what is Christian counselling”

(Sutton, Arnzen, & Kelly, 2016)

An attempt to define Christian counseling:

- ❑ Christian counseling is any conversation where a Christian helper, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is a conduit of God's grace for the benefit of another.
- ❑ Professional Christian Counseling is any conversation whereby a Christian Mental Health Professional, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, employs psychotherapy, the Word of God and Pastoral Acts to support fellow pilgrims on their journey of discipleship.

(Shannon Hood, 2019)

What ACCA aspires to promote as Asian Christian counseling:

Christian counseling is a Christ-centred relationship between two or more persons in which one person seeks to help another person or persons on how to cope, recover and grow using the knowledge, techniques and skills of Christian counseling developed with the following salient features:

- ❑ A deeper interface between theology and psychology with the Bible as the final authority;
- ❑ A perspective from the Christian view of personhood in which mankind's basic problem is sin and our ultimate goal in life is to know God, relate closely with Him and be Christlike in character;
- ❑ The counseling process involves guidance from the Holy Spirit and may include spiritual resources like prayer, deliverance, forgiveness, inner healing and the operation of spiritual gifts.

Illustration of salient feature I:

- ❑ A deeper interface between theology and psychology with the Bible as the final authority;

APA/ACA Code of Ethics:

A multiple relationship occurs when professional and the person,

- 1) at the same time, one is in another role with the other;
- 2) at the same time, one is in a relationship with a person closely associated with the other; or
- 3) both will enter into another relationship in future.

Illustration 1: Arguments for:

- ❑ Non-sexual multiple relationships (NSMR) involves crossing of boundaries, hence loss of objectivity or effectiveness.
- ❑ NSMR risks exploitation or harm to the person with whom the professional relationship exists.

Illustration 1: Arguments against:

- ❑ A study showed that therapists who took greater liberties in engaging in NSMR were not more likely to violate the ethical standards.

(McCray, McMinn & Meek, 1998)

- ❑ Buying into a model of therapy that tends to isolate the therapist from the outside world, actually increase the risk that the therapist might exploit or harm a client presumably in an effort to meet his or her personal needs.

(Zur, O, 2005, quoted by Sanders, 2013)

Bible as the final authority in Christian counseling:

Lk 24:29 But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

- ❑ After Jesus counseled the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He ate and stayed with them. Jesus had no qualms about NSMR.
- ❑ This is Christian counselling in its informal and communal setting as modelled by Jesus as our “Wonderful Counselor” (Isa 9:6).
- ❑ We are not asking professional counselors to disregard certain professional standards and ethics, but in Christian counselling, we want a deeper interface between psychology and theology, recognizing that the Bible as the final authority.

Illustration of salient feature 2:

- ❑ A perspective from the Christian view of personhood in which mankind's basic problem is sin and our ultimate goal in life is to know God, relate closely with Him and be Christlike in character;

Secular counseling is from the perspective that our basic needs comes from our drives, aggression, attachment and other humanistic causes, for the ultimate goal in life is to gain human wellness.

John 4:



7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a **drink?**”

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a **drink?**”

10 Jesus answered, “If you knew the gift of God ... he would have given you **living water.**”

13 “The water I give will become in him a spring of **water welling up to eternal life.**”

15 The woman said, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty.”

16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

23 Jesus declared, “A time is coming and has now come when the **true worshippers** will worship the Father in spirit and truth.”

Bible as the final authority in Christian counseling:

- ❑ From the common topic of drink, Jesus brought into the dialogue our need for the living water dwelling up to eternal life.
- ❑ The ultimate goal of Christian Counseling is to lead one to the personal realization that due to the fall of mankind through sin, we are in need of salvation through a Savior.
- ❑ To be a “true worshipper” is to relate oneself closely with God and be more Christlike in our character - **SPIRITUALITY.**

Illustration of salient feature 3:

- ❑ The counseling process involves guidance from the Holy Spirit and may include spiritual resources like prayer, deliverance, forgiveness, inner healing and the operation of spiritual gifts.

Secular counseling is based on the knowledge and techniques of modern psychology that is basically humanistic and incomplete in our understanding of the complexities of human nature.

Example of the blind-folded man

John 4:



15 The woman said, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty.”

16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

17 “**I have no husband,**” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband.

18 **The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.** What you have just said is quite true.”

Bible as the final authority in Christian counseling:

- ❑ When Jesus told the woman she had five husbands and the man she then lived with was not her husband, He was led by the Holy Spirit to operate in a word of knowledge.
- ❑ Psychology alone is insufficient, hence in Christian counseling, we must be led by the Holy Spirit and operate in His power.

Why set up ACCA?

- ❑ ACCA is set up in 2017 to promote Asian Christian counseling in Asia with an approach that is more authentic to God's Word and contextualized to our local needs.
- ❑ ACCA's vision and mission is to set the direction and pace in Asian Christian counseling through:
 - a) equipping and strengthening the existing national Christian counseling bodies across Asia;
 - b) facilitating the set-up of new national organizations in all the Asian countries where they are not already existent.

Election/installation of Protem Committee in Chiang Mai, 2017



Existing Members of ACCA:

Founding Members:

Indonesia (AKKI)



Philippines (PACC)



China (CCCC)



India (ACCI)



Malaysia (NACC)



New Members:

Singapore (ACCS)



Mongolia (MCCA)



Associate Member:

Australia (CCAA)



Potential Members of ACCA:

<input type="checkbox"/> Thailand	<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistan
<input type="checkbox"/> Cambodia	<input type="checkbox"/> Hong Kong
<input type="checkbox"/> Sri Lanka	<input type="checkbox"/> Bhutan
<input type="checkbox"/> Bangladesh	<input type="checkbox"/> Japan
<input type="checkbox"/> Nepal	<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnam

Different theoretical orientations and approaches:

ACCA adopts an inclusive position to accept the different Christian counseling theoretical orientations and approaches, namely:

- ☐ Integration
- ☐ Levels of explanation
- ☐ Biblical counseling
- ☐ Christian psychology
- ☐ Transformational psychology
- ☐ Christian spiritual direction

Distinctives between Spiritual Direction and Christian counseling:

Spiritual Direction	Christian Counseling
Goal: To assist a person to discover God acting in his or her life and facilitate that person's loving and creative <u>response</u> to Him.	Goal: To facilitate the person's growth to a greater personal <u>integration</u> of self and freedom of choice.
Presupposition: A certain degree of healthy psychological functioning and a <u>commitment</u> to personal prayer.	Presupposition: One has a crisis or a <u>life issue</u> .
Process: The director and directee together attend to and <u>discern</u> the primary relationship and call of God in the latter's life and his or her response to the mystery of grace.	Process: <u>The therapeutic relationship</u> is between the therapist and the client, although in Christian counseling, the Holy Spirit is often cited as the third person guiding the process.

Distinctives between Spiritual Direction and Christian counseling:

Spiritual Direction	Christian Counseling
Techniques: Include self-disclosure, support, questions, clarifications and <u>reflection</u> on patterns of prayer and the redeeming, sanctifying actions of God.	Techniques: Premised upon <u>theology</u> and <u>psychological</u> knowledge and skills.
Focus: The directee's <u>relationship with God</u> as experienced and developed through prayer, life experience and relationships.	Focus: The client's <u>past and present experiences</u> , including those in the family of origin, thoughts, emotions, behavior, relationships and areas of pain and anxiety.

Spiritual direction and Christian counseling can be mutually enhancing if we seek to address spirituality issues in the psychological context and psychological issues in the spiritual context.

Why spirituality?

- ❑ The goal of Christian counseling extends beyond human wellness to promote Christlikeness in us, so that we all can live lives that are more fruitful and fulfilling.
- ❑ This means that for Christian counseling to be most effective, we integrate not only psychology and theology, but spirituality as well.
- ❑ This is because in Christian counseling, the value of our interventions is found less in our technical knowledge and skills than in our character and relationships that we live as Christian counselors.
- ❑ In the end, our Christian maturity and spirituality will inevitably be reflected in what we say and do to influence the outcome on the part of our counselees.

What is spirituality?

- ❑ There is no single, widely agreed-upon definition of spirituality.
- ❑ Spirituality is associated with personal, transcendent meaning (that may or may not involve one's religion) to bridge between feelings of hopelessness and a renewed sense of faith and hope. (Frankl, 1959)
- ❑ Spirituality is inherently individual while religion is more communal. (Miller, 1994)
- ❑ Spirituality vs Godliness

One Asian definition of Christian spirituality:

- Christian spirituality is the integral and interconnected relationships with God, oneself, the community and the environment. These varied relationships are what affords meaning and purpose in life and thus shows a person's spirituality. Spirituality permeates our being and gives meaning to all of life.

(Amanda Shao-Tan, 2018)



First Asian Christian Counselors Conference in Kuala Lumpur in 2014 focused on interfacing between Theology and Psychology.



Second Asian Christian Counselors Conference in Chiang Mai in 2017 focused on a deeper interfacing between Theology and Psychology.



Third Asian Christian Counselors Conference in Bali in 2019 focuses on Enhancing Spirituality in Asian Christian Counseling.

3rd ASIAN CHRISTIAN COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 2019



Integrating Spirituality in Christian Counseling

Enhancing Asian
Christian Counseling
through Spirituality.



**17-19
Oct 2019**

**UNGASAN
BAY VIEW HOTEL
& CONVENTION
Bali - Indonesia**

Plenary Speakers:

 Dr. Edmund Ng President of ACCA (Malaysia)	 Rev. Yakub Susabda Ph.D. Founder AKKI (Indonesia)	 Eric Scalise, Ph.D., LPC, LMFT President of LIV Enterprises & Consulting, LLC (USA)	 Dr. Carolyn Russell Med Practitioner & Educator, Counselor & Supervisor (Australia)	 Rev. Siang Yang Tan Ph.D. Prof at Fuller Seminary & Senior Pastor at Glendale - California (USA)
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+ 20 WORKSHOP SPEAKERS

For more details:
Please see our website: akkindo.org
or follow our instagram: [accabali2019](https://www.instagram.com/accabali2019)

Hosted by  **ASOSIASI KONSELOR
KRISTEN INDONESIA**

Concluding remark # 1:

- ❑ We don't want Asian Christian counselors to be merely qualified but properly-trained, skilled and spiritually-mature people-helpers with a heart for others, reaching out in love and compassion.
- ❑ That is why for this conference, we are focusing on spirituality and the next conference in Singapore will focus on missions.

Be all things to all people:

We are to be “all things to all people” (1 Cor 9:22).

Christian Counselors ought to be ready and flexible to make the following switches anytime:

- ❑ from secular counseling based on psychology to Christian counseling interfacing psychology and theology, with the Bible as the final authority;
- ❑ from Christian counseling to secular counseling with Christian values without even mentioning the name of Jesus.
- ❑ from professional practice to informal counseling in ministry;
- ❑ from one-to-one clinical to communal setting.

Concluding remark # 2:

“Most counseling techniques are derived from counseling approaches developed by and for White, male, middle-class, Western clients. These approaches may not be applicable to clients from different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.”

- Gerald Corey
*Theory and Practice of
Counseling & Psychotherapy
(2005)*

Differences in primary cultures:

Traditional Western Culture:	Traditional Asian Culture:
Individualistic	Collectivistic
Faith is private	Faith is public
Self-reliant	Interdependent
Communication direct/open	Communication is indirect
Personal achievement	Interpersonal relationships
Competition	Cooperation
Cause-and-effect thinking	Group-oriented thinking
Focus more on future/past	Focus more on the present
Change is inevitable	Change is upsetting
Guilt-based mindset	Shame-based mindset

Need for our own resources:

- ❑ Whilst understanding the contributions and limitations of Christian counseling knowledge and techniques from the West, given our differing focus and contextual realities, we need to develop our own resources that are uniquely Asian.
- ❑ Indeed, what will bring us together as Asian Christian counselors are our Eastern identities, common theological persuasions, economic and environmental struggles and the urgent need for more Christian counseling resources that embrace the sufferings and pains of Asia.

Encouragement to write:

- Hence, I encourage more Asian Christian counselors to engage in thinking and writing, especially with regards to the many portions of the Bible that contain much of folk psychology presently left untapped by Christian counseling interpretations, to develop a deeper interface of psychology and theology that is spiritually and culturally-sensitive, holistic, existential and transformational for professional practice, people-helping and ministry in Asia.

List of books on Christian counseling written by Asian authors:

ACCA is compiling for promotion in our website a list of books on Christian counseling (interfacing psychology and theology) written by Asian authors.

If you want your book to be considered for inclusion in the list, kindly email to president1@asiancca.org the following details:

- i) Title and synopsis of the book (max. 200 words);
- ii) Photo of the front cover
- iii) Name and C.V. of the author (max. 150 words);
- iv) Price in USD
- v) Where to order the book

Submission of short articles for ACCA Newsletter:

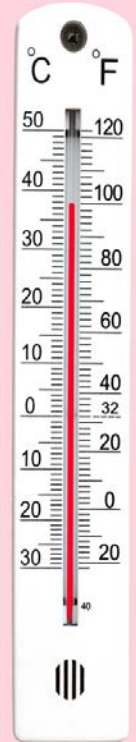
ACCA invites the contribution of short professional articles on Christian counseling written by Asians for publication in our ACCA Newsletters.

Kindly email to president1@asiancca.org the following details:

- i) Article in Word format (max. 1,000 words);
- ii) Content comprises a substantial interface of psychology and theology, and not just on psychology alone;
- iii) Short C.V. of the writer (max. 150 words);
- iv) Email address for feedback from readers.

Concluding remark # 3:

- ❑ Christian Counseling ought not be like thermometers that steadfastly follow and mirror the standards and practices of modern psychology that is structured according to the humanistic values of this world.
- ❑ In Asia, we have more liberty than elsewhere to practice Christian counseling that is more authentic to the Word of God.



Thermostat instead of Thermometer:

❑ Instead, Christian Counseling ought to be like thermostats that sets the standards and techniques of the Kingdom to advance the knowledge and practice of modern psychology in this world.



❑ Overall, Christians are called to bring the culture of Heaven to earth in all stratas of influence, and this includes the Counseling profession.