

Opening up to the Indwelling Spirit in Therapy

The greatest gift God has given his children is the indwelling Spirit. Christian therapists can guide Christian counselees into a number of therapeutically relevant exercises that access the Spirit's presence and healing. Some of them will be explored and practiced in this session.

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1. **Introduction: Religion, Psychotherapy, and the Secular Revolution** (Johnson & Sandage, 1999)

A. What does religion do?

B. What does psychotherapy/counseling do?

Why did they arise in different eras?

What do the Greek root words of psychotherapy mean?

Christianity (and other religions) has been in the psychotherapy business for centuries, but by seeking their soul-healing primarily from God.

Christian therapy starts with its ancient heritage of soul-healing (sometimes called retrieval), and translates the best of contemporary psychotherapy into it, to enrich it, resulting in a God-centered psychotherapy approach that is not secular.

2. **The Trinity and the Holy Spirit** (Ferguson, 1997; Smith, 2021)
The Holy Spirit's role in creation and salvation

The Hebrew and Greek words for spirit were used for breath (*ruah* and *pneuma*, respectively)

3. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the greatest gift that Christians have been given (Acts 6:20; Jn 14:20)

How does Christian experience differ from the experience of the average Old Testament believer? (Jn 7:37)

Where is the indwelling Holy Spirit in a believer?

We can reflect and meditate on its meaningfulness and significance.

4. Are there limits to working with the Holy Spirit in therapy?

A. Implicitly, no.

B. Explicitly, yes.

1) If the person is not a Christian and isn't interested in becoming one.

2) Perhaps, if the Christian has been spiritually abused

5. Working with the Holy Spirit in therapy

A. Christian therapy is a "trialogue"

1) **God is a 3rd person in the therapy room**

2) **Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, who is always *with us* (Mt 28:20)**

3) **The Holy Spirit, however, is always *within me* (1Co 6:19)**

B. Faith is a therapy word (Eph 3:16-19)

C. The Holy Spirit is the *means* of all wisdom, connection, and insight in therapy, but it derives from the Son/Word of God, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:4, 9)

D. Many Christians believe that our imaginations are more likely to convey error than Christian truth? What biblical evidence is there for the truth value of the imagination? How can our imagination be a bearer of truth? How might we use our imagination in therapy?

With our imagination we are enabled to see God's vision for our future, and thereby, help to bring it about.

6. What are some psychospiritual benefits of the HS's indwelling?
- A. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)

 - B. What does the gift of the Holy Spirit say about *us*? What is God saying to us with this gift?

 - C. **The HS is a therapeutic source of wisdom and power *within me, that is not me***
Php 2:12-13: Work out your salvation in fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and do of his good pleasure. The HS is the divine "link" between God's activity and your activity in your soul, in your life, and in your relationships.

Thomas Merton (1963): Our lives "are a personal response of love to the desire of a human Heart filled with divine love for us. The Sacred Heart of the risen Savior communicates to our own inmost being every least impulse of grace and charity by which he shares with us his divine life." (p. 64)

"We must occupy our hearts not with the thought of arduous and cold obligations which we do not fully understand, but with the presence and love of the Holy Spirit who enkindles in us the love of good and shows us how to 'do all things in the name of Jesus Christ.'" (p. 65)

"Our hearts are attentive to his Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts and in his Church." (p. 65)

Let's think about the therapeutic benefits of the following:

- D. **God makes his home in us in the Spirit (Jn 14:23)**

 - E. **He gives us a sense of our being in God's family (Ro 8:15; Gal 4:6)**

 - F. **He can also give us a sense of our being filled up in our body with *God*, that can replace a sense of emptiness**

 - G. **A sense of God's presence and companionship within my body**
7. **A couple of therapy exercises with the Holy Spirit**
- A. **Opening up by faith to the indwelling Holy Spirit**
A breath prayer:
"Fill me, holy Comforter,
I give you all of my life."

Opening up

Focusing attention on his presence within
Letting the Spirit breathe through us
Listening to the Spirit
What is the Spirit saying or doing?

Perhaps using our imagination

B. Opening up to the Spirit of adoption (based on Ro 8:15; Gal 4:6)

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