4MAT Book Summary: Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling

Liberty University

Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling

Mark R. McMinn, Ph.D.

**4MAT Summary**

This book was originally published back in 1996 but the revised and updated version of the book that came in 1996 represents professional reflections, progressive research, and updated information and research findings that support the use of spirituality and theology in the psychological processes of Christian counseling. Through a resources book that means to capture the real essence of Christians counseling, McMinn developed and provided substantial information tools and definitions. This information and definitions are necessary for Christian counselors to professionally and ethically use prayers and scriptures in the psychological treatment of their clients (Today, n.d.). The introduction of the book has laid the foundation for a strategic manner which includes the collaborative research efforts of students to prove the book’s biblical point of view.

The author starts with the part that has been written by him and James Wilhoit to instruct Christian counselors to focus on the implementation of strategies that are used for the treatment of spirituality, faith, and integration of psychology and theology. The challenges that are brought by theology and spirituality to the counseling sessions are discussed in this section. He also talks about counseling practices that are meant to aid Christian counselors.

McMinn spends much of his time exploring the diverse attributes of humanity, which encompass three fundamental areas: self-esteem, awareness of needs and limitations, and building a close relationship with God and man. McMinn (McMinn, 2012) presents the functional elements of spirituality, theology, and psychology in a lesson format. The book deals with the pillars of the Christian life. This includes reading the scriptures, habit of praying, dealing with sin, forgiving, confessing, and redeeming to help Christian counselors to treat their clients. In the book, the Christian counselor is accused of first participating in the methods taught in prayer before using them as a tool to heal his clients. Also, McMinn warns the counselor to understand how and when to use prayers in meetings. McMinn insists that the counselor recognizes the true influence of prayer in his own life before using prayer to treat his clients (“Interview With Mark R. McMinn About ‘Spiritually Oriented Interventions for Counseling and Psychotherapy,’” n.d.).

The book discusses the importance of using scripture and how to include them in sessions. According to McMinn, the font should be based on the needs of each client and selected specifically for their situation. Scripture helps the client recognize the sin in his life, but only if the client and the counselor have established a fundamental and acceptable definition of sin. This topic needs to be treated very carefully as the client may develop a sense of shame and that guilt can lead to depression rather than healing. According to McMinn, the desired result of using the font can bring internal changes. Not necessarily behavioral changes (McMinn, 2012).

The last three main topics of the book deal with forgiveness, confessions, and salvation. McMinn (2011) told us that confession is the door to realizing the need for God in one's life. The counselor must be compassionate and empathetic at this critical time of self-disclosure. Confession is the path to forgiveness. McMinn and Katheryn Meek explain ways in which the counselor can help the client develop a healthy sense of self in the book. Once the client has a sound psychological, spiritual and emotional perspective on his / her life, the Christian counselor can introduce the client to salvation. McMinn tells us that salvation is the goal and desire of all Christian counselors.

**4 MAT Concrete Responses**

I was about 10 years old when my mother left me and my father to marry another guy. I did not about the divorce system until I entered my teens and I began to realize the importance of mother in my life. I never knew the reason behind my parents’ divorce, all I knew was that lacked the amount of love a child should have in his/her life. I felt abandoned by my parents and I was craving for the love that had been taken away from me since I was a child. I did know how to solve the problems because my father too was in a vulnerable position as he was deeply in love with my mother. I finally decide d go after my mother and made up mind to take her along with me but after seeing my mother with another man, mu feelings suddenly changed for. The only question that kept revolving in my head was "how can she do this to us? To me? And to Dad?" I began feeling more depressed than before and felt very lonely. This led me to do drug and my condition became worse than ever before. This was the high time I could have benefited from a christen counselor but I was not a Christian so it made me very sad about my religious situation.

When I read the steps in McMinn's book (McMinn, 2012) in the section "Towards Psychological and Spiritual Health," I was able to identify many issues related to my inability to maintain a healthy self-perspective, awareness of my needs, and limitations that involved an interpersonal trusting relationship with God.   
I received no professional advice, but through a series of unfortunate events that took me to the lowest point, I accepted Jesus Christ and the work of redemption of the cross. I know that some of the things I went through to achieve a healthy self could have been avoided if I had received help from a Christian counselor who actively practiced the principles of his Christian faith.

**4MAT Reflection**

Upon ding a reflection of this book, I had a tough time making questions for McMinn and his colleagues as the text is based on instructions. However, I tried to come up with some questions that are related to and might work with teenagers, children, and individuals with mental illness.

My questions for the author are listed below:

1. Would you recommend these integrative measures in the treatment of children and adolescents?
2. How would you use the instructional tools to treat clients that have complex nature and are cognitively challenged?
3. There are many versions of the bible and many of the scriptures are difficult to understand so, which one would you recommend to Christian counselors?

**4MAT Action**

After reading this book, I am convinced that psychology, the combination of theology and spirituality will provide me with a more complete resource guide to treat clients who need Christian counseling. This book provides solid guidance for the correct and ethical integration of prayers and scriptures and reflects my own beliefs when dealing with clients.

I will continue to work on improving my knowledge of the scriptures and developing my prayer life, because, as McMinn so eloquently emphasizes in the text, the Christian counselor who uses prayer and scripture in meetings must use the methods he has applied the treatment, practice yourself. I intend to use this book as a reference for situations that occur in my personal life and in which I may need to process unhealthy thoughts that can lead to unhealthy feelings and actions (McMinn, 2012).

**Reference**

Interview With Mark R. McMinn About “Spiritually Oriented Interventions for Counseling and Psychotherapy.” (n.d.). Retrieved November 17, 2019, from Https://www.apa.org website: https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/interviews/4317258-mcminn

McMinn, M. R. (2012). *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Today, P. (n.d.). Dr. Kenleigh McMinn, PhD, Psychologist, Bloomington, IL, 61704. Retrieved November 17, 2019, from Psychology Today website: https://www.psychologytoday.com/profile/412210