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Abstract

Building upon a previous exploration of Spirit-centered counseling, which described its purpose as expanding the redemptive pattern of God's story by following the transformative wisdom of Jesus (Buker, 2021; Decker et al., 2021), this paper offers a model that conceptualizes how such a process might be facilitated. Depicting it via the three general phases of connection, perception, and redemption (CPR), the CPR model draws on the concept of second-order change to describe the epistemological shift that occurs when the transformative wisdom of Jesus is embraced. Spirit-centered counseling is portrayed as helping clients experience similar shifts by deconstructing the taken-for-granted epistemological assumptions that inform perception, especially their source in the conventional wisdom of culture, while constructing new perspectives based on the transformative wisdom of Jesus. The goal is to help clients, caught in repetitive cycles of struggle, enter and expand the redemptive pattern of God's story.

Introduction

Of the three general ways in which the Spirit appears to be involved in human affairs—prevention, intervention, and redemption—the emphasis in the Pentecostal tradition of my upbringing was intervention. While some attention was given to prevention as indicated by our prayers for protection, little seemed allotted to redemption. Intervention was the primary focus as reflected in our passionate efforts to impel the Spirit to intervene in undesired situations to produce

preferred outcomes. This tended to be the principal strategy in our attempts to help and only when those efforts failed did we seem open to the third and, I would argue, most common way in which the Spirit works, redemption.

By redemption, I am referring to a specific pattern embedded in God's story that is characterized by resilience in the face of despair. From managing simple frustrations, similar to a GPS response of "route recalculation" whenever we make a wrong turn, to the more profound image of a Phoenix rising from the ashes, this pattern reflects the power of redemptive responses to produce transformative effects. Involving the phases of creation, fall, struggle, redemption, and transformation, this redemptive archetype is not only reflected in God's story but also serves as a template for our own.

Set in motion whenever we embark on a new initiative with hopes and dreams for how it will unfold, e.g., education, career, business, ministry, marriage, or family (creation), the redemptive pattern recognizes the all too common reality that expectations rarely go as intended (fall). When disappointment intrudes and our attempts to salvage our plans prove unsuccessful, the pattern enters a phase of conflict. This typically involves repeated attempts to address whatever we perceive as the problem (struggle). Whenever those strategies do not produce the desired results, rather than attempt a new approach, we tend to intensify our current efforts. This stubborn determination reflects the commonsense tendency to act consistently with the reality our perception creates (Keeney, 1983; Watzlawick et al., 1974). As long as our view of a situation remains the same, so will our responses. While we may think we are trying different tactics, they are likely variations of the same basic approach. Though well-intended, our persistence eventually creates a sense of stuckness, even chaos. In such situations, a qualitatively new response is needed (redemption) if the pattern is to get unstuck and move toward a new creation (transformation). Ascertaining what that might entail, however, can be difficult, primarily due to the limitations that our underlying epistemological assumptions place upon our capacity to know and perceive (Bateson, 1972; Keeney, 1983).

Since we can only perceive what our assumptions allow and since our perception influences our actions, the struggle phase of the redemptive pattern tends to be characterized by repetitive behaviors producing similar, even worsening results. The resultant "here we go again" experiences of frustration and confusion are common denominators of what motivate clients to seek counseling. As counselors attempt to help, they often discover that before new approaches to the struggle can be identified a change in perspective is often necessary, but to facilitate such a perceptual shift, the underlying assumptions influencing perception must be addressed. This task is never easy as these deeply held premises generally operate

outside of conscious awareness and are taken for granted, thus making them resistant to change (Watzlawick et al., 1974). When modified, however, they produce new ways of knowing and seeing that lend themselves to fresh responses. Such is the nature and challenge of the deep second-order change that the Spirit is presumed to desire and the CPR model is designed to facilitate.

Spirit-Centered Counseling

As the term will be used in this paper, "Spirit-centered counseling" refers to approaches to counseling that seek to be guided by the mind of the Spirit (see Buker, 2021; Decker et al., 2021). Inspired by the Apostle Paul's admonition that those who live by the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5), Spirit-centeredness is defined as the cultivation of a mindset distinguished by the capacity to know and see in ways that are consistent with the passion and purposes of God (Keener, 2016). Cultivating this mindset involves a deep change that is essentially epistemological in nature produced by a shift in the source from which the underlying premises influencing perception are drawn, from the conventional wisdom of culture to the transformative wisdom of Jesus. Corresponding to the Apostle Paul's emphasis on renewing the mind (Romans 12:1-2), this shift may be best described via the concepts of second and even third-order change (Bateson, 1972; Keeney, 1983). Recognizing that all successful therapy involves second-order change (Fraser & Solavey, 2007), the following model conceptualizes this process in three overlapping phases for which the acronym CPR is used. Representing the processes of connection, perception, and redemption, the CPR model seeks to facilitate a particular type of deep change guided by the premises that inform the mind of the Spirit.

The CPR Model

For the purpose of simplicity, the three phases of CPR are discussed sequentially, but in practice overlap such that all three exert mutual influence and often unfold simultaneously. Each phase corresponds to one of Spirit-centered counseling's three orienting assumptions, which have been depicted as ontological, epistemological, and functional (Decker et al., 2021). CPR's first phase, connection, is concerned with cultivating a deep understanding of people based upon the ontological assumption that the Spirit's activity permeates everything. Each client, whether a professing believer or not, is considered exposed to the Spirit's influence. In assuming that the Spirit is active in all persons, connecting

with our clients involves recognizing the Spirit's movement in their lives and the value and purpose that such activity implies (Rohr, 2021).

Perception, as the second phase of the CPR model, is informed by the epistemological assumption that the Spirit's activity can be discerned. Its focus is on detecting that activity relative to a client's situation and is enhanced by understanding the principles and premises by which the mind of the Spirit is informed as reflected in the wisdom of Jesus (Buker, 2021). This discernment capacity is deemed critical to identifying new perspectives and responses.

CPR's third phase, redemption (redemptive response), is an application of the functional assumption that the Spirit's activity involves bringing order out of chaos. Within the redemptive pattern, chaos is created during the period of struggle whenever attempts to control problems only serve to make them worse, often creating positive feedback loops that eventually spin out of control (Watzlawick et al., 1974). The order the Spirit seeks to facilitate is presumed to be the product of renewed minds whose epistemological assumptions find their source in Jesus' transformative wisdom (Decker et al., 2021).

In short, Spirit-centered counseling seeks to assist clients in identifying redemptive responses to their problematic situations by facilitating deep perceptual shifts. As an epistemological process (Bateson, 1972; Dell, 1985), client experiences are reframed through the premises of Jesus' transformative wisdom, of which the mind of the Spirit is also presumed to operate. Clients' receptivity to this approach requires a strong therapeutic connection, solidified by a deep understanding of their experiences. Thus, each aspect of the CPR model is essential to positive outcomes and necessitates that counselors be adept in exercising the competencies involved, to which we now turn.

Connection

CPR's first phase, connection, is concerned with cultivating the therapeutic relationship which, as outcome studies attest, is critical to the overall effectiveness of the counseling process (Duncan et. al., 2010; Miller et al., 2013; Sprenkle & Blow, 2007). Research further reveals that the key variable to forming quality connections is the person of the counselor (Miller et al., 2013). In trying to determine what it is about counselors that seems to matter most, Miller et al. (2013) turned to the fields of expertise and expert performance where researchers have been investigating why some performers produce consistently better results than others. Their findings revealed a single underlying trait—deep, domain-specific knowledge. It appears that those who are the best at their craft know, perceive, and remember more than the others. Their instincts seem informed by a deeper level of understanding that goes beyond mere skill development. This

discovery suggests that when it comes to identifying the key variables to counseling outcome effectiveness, rather than arguing about specific interventions or common factors, a more helpful approach is to understand how the best do what they do (Miller et al., 2013). Toward that end, a consideration of the ultimate example of Spirit-centeredness, Jesus himself, seems apropos. What can we learn from him about forming connections? How is the deep understanding contained in his transformative wisdom conducive to developing therapeutic relationships?

Jesus and Connection

A simple answer I would like to propose is that Jesus' connections were informed by a mindset that viewed people relationally rather than behaviorally. Instead of evaluating others on the basis of individual performance, he focused on both their personal and collective experience, especially contextual influences, as indicated by his harsh criticism of the 'powers that be' (Matthew 23). This relational perspective reflects the capacity to see systemically. While people may be distinct, they are not separate (Becvar & Becvar, 1999). Rather, their behavior is governed by their connections to each other and the larger systems of which they are a part (Capra & Luigi, 2014). Jesus' relational mindset distinguished him from the religious elite and seemed to explain his interactional style, which was often a target of their criticism. One such occasion stands out for the insight it provides.

Upon calling Mathew the tax collector to be his disciple, Jesus shared a meal with him and a few of his friends. The Pharisees reacted with disapproval, accusing Jesus of associating with "tax collectors and sinners" (*New International Version*, 2011, Matthew 9:10). In addressing their criticism, Jesus responded by giving an assignment. He indicated that they should go and learn what it means to desire mercy and not sacrifice (Matthew 9:13). By implication, he seemed to be suggesting that successfully completing this assignment would result in a deeper understanding of his connection with people, especially those they considered outcasts.

Mercy versus Sacrifice. The religious leaders, as experts of their sacred texts, would have immediately recognized Jesus' assignment as a quote from the Old Testament prophet Hosea (Hosea 6:6), whose legacy included his infamous marriage to a prostitute named Gomer. Through the dynamics of their marital relationship, God sought to illustrate his own struggles in connecting with his people Israel (Hosea 1:2). When Gomer violated her conjugal vows and left Hosea, God directed him to go buy her back and it was in the context of redeeming his unfaithful wife that God instructed him to tell the people, "I desire mercy not sacrifice" (*New International Version*, 2011, Hosea 6:6).

Shortly after recording the incident just cited, Matthew's gospel describes another situation where Jesus repeated this same admonition to the Pharisees. On that occasion they accused his disciples of breaking Sabbath laws to which Jesus responded by reiterating his previous assignment, "if you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent" (*New International Version*, 2011, Matthew 12:7). By referencing this quote again, it appears that Jesus is accentuating its importance. To grasp its insight, a consideration of the cultural and historical contexts may be helpful.

From cultural and historical perspectives, the contexts of both these events (Matthew 9:9-13; 12:1-14) contain actions and comments that reflected the purity system of Jesus' day (Blomberg, 2005; Borg, 1994). Purity systems were and still are common within cultures. They serve to distinguish the "righteous" from the "unrighteous" in providing rules and requirements by which to classify a population (Borg, 1994; Patterson et al., 2012). Based on birth and/or behavior, purity systems create distinct boundaries between those considered pure and acceptable versus outcasts and sinners. In operating according to the performance principle, purity codes consist of dos and don'ts that are created and enforced as a means of determining who will be granted full inclusion into cultural/religious institutions. This produces a performance-based lens through which assessments and classifications are made, primarily on the basis of image and behavior. The outcome is the creation of an exclusive system in which those deemed acceptable are embraced and those judged unacceptable, marginalized. As a result, the performance-based, image-driven premises of the purity code become the basis of a culture's conventional wisdom, which forms the mindset into which its inhabitants are socialized (Borg, 1994). Jesus' actions constituted a direct challenge to the purity system of his day, thus suggesting that he was operating according to an alternate social vision, one based on different assumptions and one that may explain his emphasis on mercy over sacrifice (Patterson et al., 2012). These radically different mindsets often play out in a battle over how to interpret and apply Scripture (Borg, 2001).

Jesus and Scripture. In both contexts, Jesus' reference to Hosea served as a challenge to the Pharisees' hermeneutic by suggesting that their performance-based interpretation of Scripture was blinding them to its larger intent (Borg, 2001). In focusing on the letter of the law, they had failed to capture its spirit. Such is the danger purity systems promote. They tend to create a perceptual lens that overly focuses on minutiae to the extent that the larger themes and intentions of Scripture are often obscured, as reflected in Jesus' oft quoted criticism that the Pharisees strained at gnats but swallowed camels (Matthew 23:24). This tendency seems to be reflected in these examples.

In Jesus' first reference to Hosea, the immediate context involved a meal that he was sharing with "many tax collectors and sinners" (*New International Version,* 2011, Matthew 9:10). The Pharisees' disapproval of Jesus' company may have been bolstered by the possibility that this meal was a celebratory event involving intimate fellowship rather than just an ordinary dinner, as suggested by the small detail that they were reclining at the table as opposed to sitting (Blomberg, 2005; Borg, 1994). Additionally, in referring to these table guests with the disparaging labels of "tax collectors and sinners," they not only classified them as outcasts and thus, inappropriate company for someone who was supposed to be righteous, but also revealed their own performance-based, image-driven mindsets. Jesus' response reflected a different perspective. He first offered a couple reframing statements by suggesting it was not the well who needed a physician but the sick, and that he had not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:12-13). Then through assigning them the task to go and learn what it meant to desire mercy not sacrifice, he refocused these religious leaders on the intent or spirit of the law, which he later clarified as being concerned with the larger relational issues of justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23-24).

In Matthew's second mention of Jesus' reference to Hosea, the immediate context involved his disciples' actions in picking heads of grain to eat on the Sabbath, behavior the Pharisees deemed unlawful. Their appraisal was apparently based on their purity code that included specific dos and don'ts for what was considered appropriate on the Sabbath. Rooted in an effort to protect their identity as God's people and transmit their Jewish traditions, of which remembering the Sabbath by keeping it holy was central (Exodus 20:8), these religious leaders had developed meticulous rules to which everyone was expected to adhere (Borg, 1994; Wright & Bird, 2019). While their initial motivation may have been sincere, in the process of implementation they seemed to have lost sight of the law's intent. This is clarified in the gospel of Mark where his account of the same incident includes Jesus' reminder of the spirit of this commandment through his statement, "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (*New International Version,* 2011, Mark 2:27).

When the emphasis is on specific behaviors, such as those contained in a purity code, it produces an evaluative perspective that tends to obscure the law's more important relational intent (Matthew 23:23-24). Take the Sabbath commandment for instance. In directing us to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy, God emphasized the importance of rest, comparing it to the seventh day on which he rested after creation (Exodus 20:8-11). The intent behind this commandment was to provide for a regular rhythm of relaxation and renewal after

a week of work. But, rather than allowing people to rest in ways they found meaningful, these religious leaders constructed a set of rules that dictated what did and did not constitute rest and respect for the Sabbath. Essentially, they took what was intended as a gift and made it a prison, thus distorting its purpose. Perhaps the most ironic and tragic illustration of what can happen when the letter is prioritized over its spirit occurred at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry.

At the conclusion of his earthly ministry, Jesus was arrested by the religious elite who brought him to Pilate, the Roman governor at the time, since he had the power to issue the death sentence that they desired. In John's record of this event, he notes that to avoid ceremonial uncleanness, the religious leaders refused to go into the governor's palace, lest they be defiled and unable to celebrate the Passover (John 18:28). Apparently, they had completed the ceremonial washings required for involvement in this annual remembrance of the Exodus event, but, according to their purity code, if they entered Gentile space it would make them unclean, thus disqualifying them from participation. The irony of this situation is painful. While attempting to keep the law of God, they were seeking to crucify the son of God. It begs the question, how many times in our attempts to keep the law of God do we end up crucifying the children of God? Rather than showing mercy, we sacrifice.

Grasping the insight contained in Jesus' assignment helps us appreciate how he saw people and interacted with them. It underscores the difference between a performance-based mindset and a relational perspective. Viewing people in the context of their relationships is conducive both to forming meaningful connections and to understanding their experience.

Perception

When cultivating a therapeutic relationship, counselors seek to understand and validate their clients' experiences while simultaneously processing them through their own counseling model. For instance, counselors who use a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) model would look for evidence of cognitive distortions or irrational beliefs (Beck, 2020), those who employ a Narrative Therapy model would notice indications of a preferred story and exceptions to the client's problem-saturated description (Combs & Freedman, 1996), and those who work from a systems framework would pay attention to the repetitive patterns and recursive feedback loops in which clients seem trapped (Becvar, 1999). While the insights that various counseling models provide are useful, Spirit-centered counselors are also concerned with discerning the Spirit's perspective, which is assumed to be informed by the transformative wisdom of Jesus (Buker, 2021). As a result, Spirit-centered counselors pay particular attention to their clients'

epistemology in terms of how they seem to know what they know. What underlying assumptions appear to be influencing the meaning they are constructing from their experience? To what extent do their perceptions reflect premises that are consistent with the mind of the Spirit? In other words, do the descriptions of their concerns appear to be influenced more by the relational premises that inform the transformative wisdom of Jesus or the performance-based assumptions inherent in culture's conventional wisdom?

For example, let us imagine that a middle-aged husband came to counseling because he had just been arrested for his third DUI (Driving Under the Influence), subsequently lost his job and is currently facing serious legal issues along with the threat of divorce. He is wallowing in anxiety and self-condemnation, berating himself for having been so "stupid and weak," and admitting that he "knew what was right" and "should have made better choices." He is adamant in emphasizing that this time he is going to permanently change and is committed to proving to everyone, from his former employer to his wife, that he has learned his lesson and is still a person of value who once again can be trusted. He says that there are others who have "done a whole lot worse and still bounced back to be successful" so he is going to do the same.

In this client's description, several issues stand out to which a Spirit-centered counselor would pay attention. On the positive side, this client seems to be taking an honest look at himself and accepting responsibility for his actions. He is not blaming anyone or making excuses but rather appears to be humbling himself and resolving to do better. While these encouraging responses should be affirmed, his self-assessment and proposed solution reflect the performance-based, image-driven values of culture's conventional wisdom. Even though he is honestly embracing responsibility, he condemns himself as "stupid and weak," and to prove his value, believes he has to demonstrate the ability to make permanent changes. Additionally, he compares himself with those who have done a lot worse and implies that his ability to feel better will depend on re-earning the validation of important others, such as his former employer and wife. This assessment and proposed solution suggest that he is operating on the assumption that his identity and worth are connected to his performance and image.

Spirit-centered counselors would not argue that this client's behavior does not matter or that change does not need to occur. Their interest would be in clarifying the mindset informing his self-assessment and change strategy. While clients are certainly free to choose the wisdom by which they will be guided, Spirit-centered counselors want them to be aware of how their underlying assumptions influence their meaning-making processes and lend themselves to markedly

different perceptions and actions. These distinctions are especially important when considering the goal of finding a redemptive response that positions clients for transformation.

In working with this husband, a counselor would want to understand the history of his experience. How has he sought to manage his drinking behaviors in the past, especially after the first two DUIs? Since those attempts at change were obviously unsuccessful, what was the problem? If he is like many of us when in the struggle phase of the redemptive pattern, the initial challenge is stopping the insanity of continuing to engage in the same type of behaviors while expecting a different result. This is where our underlying mindset plays a key role.

If this husband is operating on performance-based assumptions, then any attempt to manage his drinking will reflect some version of the premise that he can and should do better, meaning that his strategies for change will ultimately depend upon his personal ability to make and maintain the desired choices. As a result, if he wants to be perceived as successful and significant, he will need to work harder to control his behavior or at least project that image. Although he may think he is attempting a new strategy for success, if it is based on his own capacities, then to that extent it is just another variation of the same performance-oriented premises and as such, an example of first-order change. Calling attention to the role these underlying assumptions are playing, especially in informing his perception and response, will be critical to facilitating second-order change.

The Competency of Second-Order Change

Effectively facilitating second-order change involves a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitude. It requires knowledge of the various levels of change, the skills to strategically address deeply held assumptions, and an attitude of expectancy motivated by the redemptive possibilities that faith, hope, and love inspire (Fraser & Solovey, 2007; Watzlawick et al., 1974). Within the context of the CPR model, this competency is vital to inviting clients into the redemptive pattern of God's story.

Knowledge. First and second-order change are distinguished by the level at which change occurs. First-order change reflects responses to problems that are based on our initial perception of the issue. Many times, those actions are effective and no deeper change is required, but whenever they are not, we tend to discover the truth of the proverb, "the more things change, the more they stay the same" (Watzlawick et al., 1974, p. 7). This proverb reflects the reality that change can occur at the superficial level of our behavior yet repeatedly produce or exacerbate the same outcome. When this occurs, it becomes important to examine the underlying assumptions that are driving our behavior. Since these embedded premises generally operate outside of awareness, clients are typically oblivious to

their influence. They can feel perplexed, even infuriated, often expressing exasperation to the counselor with some variation of the phrase, "I've tried everything I know to do but nothing has worked."

From the perspective of second-order change, this frustration is understood to be the result of a perception that has remained constant. In other words, the underlying assumptions that are influencing how clients view their situations have not changed, and thus, their options for action have been limited by what their perception allows, essentially trapping them in patterns of behavior that are simply variations on the same theme. Second-order change occurs when those taken-for-granted assumptions shift, thus allowing for fresh perspectives to emerge and qualitatively different responses to be identified. Such a shift can significantly change how a situation is seen, and therefore, how meaning is ascribed. When working with clients whose perception is informed by the conventions of culture, the deep change that Spirit-centered counselors are seeking to facilitate is related to the source of those epistemological premises.

Sources of Epistemological Premises. There are basically two sources of epistemological assumptions with which Spirit-centered counselors are concerned—those that are based on the conventional wisdom of culture and those that are rooted in the transformative wisdom of Jesus. These two sources lend themselves to differing perceptions and descriptions, primarily due to their conflicting definitions of success and significance (see Table 1). In distinguishing between the two, it is important to pay attention to how clients seem to define the four A's of appearance, achievement, affluence, and authority (Borg, 1994).[1] Conventional wisdom tends to be reflected in an emphasis on performance and image, and often uses the language of compare, compete, criticize, and control. On the other hand, the relational nature of Jesus' transformative wisdom tends to be concerned with God's perspective and expresses itself in acts of compassion, humility, gratefulness, responsibility, and advocacy. In attempting to facilitate a shift from perceptions informed by one source of epistemological assumptions to the other, interventions designed to facilitate second-order change are helpful.

Table 1

Sources of Epistemological Assumptions

Conventional Wisdom	Transformative Wisdom

• Appearance
  • externals
• Achievement
  • recognition by culture
• Affluence
  • possessions, leisure activities, status
• Authority
  • power, exerting control
	• Appearance
	  • internals
	• Achievement
	  • recognition by God
	• Affluence
	  • contentment, eternal riches, generosity
	• Authority
	  • empowered(ing), under control

Skills and Attitudes. The skills required by the competency of second-order change are essentially those involved in interventions designed to address the taken-for-granted assumptions that operate outside of conscious awareness. For these skills to be effective, however, they should be applied with the right attitude. As Fraser and Solovey (2007) remind us, interventions are relational acts. In other words, technique and relationship need to be considered as a unity such that effective interventions are outgrowths of meaningful therapeutic connections. Skills that are applied without a genuine attitude of caring are experienced as manipulative and condescending, but when used compassionately, serve to enhance the relationship, and facilitate positive self-esteem (Miller et al., 1991). When it comes to demonstrating the competency of second-order change, no one combines skills and attitude better than Jesus.

Jesus and Second-Order Change

Probably the most common strategy for facilitating second-order change is reframing. This technique recognizes the basic human need to make meaning of life's experiences, which often occurs through the method of classification (Watzlawick et al., 1974). Whenever we encounter something new, we seek to classify it into what we think is its appropriate category. Once classified, its meaning is constructed and options for responding are determined. For instance, if an adolescent daughter begins to ignore family rules by breaking curfew and

engaging in behaviors deemed inappropriate, even wrong, the parents are likely to place her conduct into the category of rebellious actions. Once classified as such, the response of the parents will be determined by how they believe rebellion should be addressed. In most families, this would involve some type of disciplinary action. If the discipline they impose is effective in restoring their daughter's behavior to a more compliant state, then their first-order strategy would be considered successful. But, as previously noted, problems tend to emerge whenever initial strategies prove ineffective.

Once the daughter's actions are placed into the class of rebellious behaviors, it will be difficult for the parents to see them as anything else. Consequently, their responses will continue to reflect what they believe is the appropriate way to handle rebellion. This means that if her conduct does not change, disciplinary actions are likely to increase in frequency and intensity. Unfortunately, this 'more of the same' strategy often results in what is referred to as a positive feedback loop or vicious cycle where the more the parents discipline, the more the daughter rebels, to which the parents discipline more severely to which the daughter continues rebelling, and so forth (Becvar & Becvar, 1999).

Reframing as a technique seeks to take this same situation and, without changing any of the facts, place it into a different class or frame (Watzlawick et al., 1974). In so doing, it aims to change the meaning of what is taking place so that new responses can be identified. Using this example, a potentially helpful reframe might involve suggesting that the daughter's behavior reflects maturation and a natural desire for independence. While not minimizing the potential risks in her actions, it removes them from the classification of rebellion and places them within the framework of human development. Once classified differently, new responses become apparent. In other words, how parents would respond to a maturing young lady would probably be different than how they respond to a rebellious adolescent. Rather than discipline, which requires a power differential, they might attempt coaching, which necessitates connection. While the reframe suggested in this example is not guaranteed to be effective, as each situation is unique, it serves to illustrate how a shift at the deeper level of underlying assumptions can change perception, and thus, reveal a new response.

Arguably one of the best examples of reframing found anywhere is Jesus' response to the religious leaders who were wanting to stone a woman they had caught in the act of adultery (John 8:1-11). These leaders had placed her actions into the class of lawbreaking behaviors, which in her case had serious implications. Since her conduct had violated one of God's Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17), it necessitated capital punishment. The performance-oriented assumptions

informing their perception focused on her behavior and the consequences it deserved so as they picked up stones to administer the death penalty, their actions reflected the belief that they were maintaining purity by standing for righteousness and enforcing the law. When Jesus was asked what he thought, he responded with a relational reframe that shifted everyone's perception from the woman's behavior to their own. In responding, "he who is without sin, cast the first stone" (*New International Version*, 2011, John 8:7), Jesus did not change the facts of the situation, he simply placed the action of throwing stones into a different frame. He removed stoning from the class of righteous, law enforcing behaviors and placed it into the relational category of self-examination, thus changing its meaning. Now if anyone threw a stone, rather than signifying "I'm standing for righteousness by enforcing the law," it meant "I have no sin." Since no one could honestly claim that status, no stones were thrown, and the lady's life was spared. Such is the power of a good reframe and in this situation, an example of what it means to prioritize mercy over sacrifice.

A strategy sometimes used to set the stage for reframing is the confusion technique (Watzlawick et al., 1974). It involves intentionally responding unpredictably in a manner that is designed to throw a person off balance. When thrown off balance people instinctively seek to regain a steady state as quickly as possible. This means that they become especially receptive to whatever comment or action comes next in the hope that it will enable them to regain a sense of normalcy. For instance, in working with a client who was struggling with suicidal ideation due to a harsh view of God, which left him feeling chronically inadequate and worthless, I responded by saying, "rather than killing yourself, why don't you kill your God?" Although it was something of a risky statement, I felt that we had a good enough connection to take the chance. It worked as an unpredictable response in throwing him off balance, thus increasing his receptiveness to my follow-up, which was the point I was trying to make regarding the subjectivism of his image of God. Since it was a product of his own creation, influenced by his experience growing up as a preacher's kid in a holiness tradition, it could be examined and potentially expanded if he was willing.

Jesus was a master of the confusion technique. Repeatedly, he engaged in unpredictable actions, often making outrageous declarations that threw people off balance and captured their attention. In the case of the woman caught in adultery, when asked what he thought, Jesus bent down and began to write in the ground with his finger. We are not told what he wrote but this action seems unusual enough to have tweaked curiosity such that it likely served to set the stage for his response. Other examples include statements such as "if your hand offends you, cut it off" (*New International Version*, 2011, Matthew 5:30), and "unless you eat

my body and drink my blood, you have no part of me" (*New International Version*, 2011, John 6:53-59). In both instances, Jesus was setting the stage for important reframes. The first reference comes from his famous Sermon on the Mount in which he was setting the stage to reframe righteousness, and in the second, he was setting the stage to redefine discipleship.

On another occasion, in an example of a second-order change technique known as 'prescribing the symptom,' Jesus unbalanced his hearers by instructing them to turn the other cheek and "if anyone wants your coat, give them your cloak also and if they want you to go one mile, go two" (*New International Version*, 2011, Matthew 5:38-42). If a person actually engaged in this unpredictable behavior, it would certainly have had an unbalancing affect such that, as Wink (1998) suggests, the injustices being inflicted would be exposed. In all of these situations, Jesus was challenging the performance assumptions of the culture's conventions by reframing them based on his transformative wisdom, yet on each occasion, probably due to what must have sounded paradoxical if not illogical, most of his audience seemed to miss the point. Such is the challenge of facilitating second-order change.

Along with reframing and the confusion technique, there are many other interventions devised to facilitate second-order change such as the strategies of blocking, accepting, normalizing, restraining, reversing, and expanding (Fraser & Solovey, 2007). While the ministry of Jesus provides helpful examples of all these methods, the limitations of this article do not permit further examination of them lest we not have room to discuss the final component of CPR, redemption. This phase comprises both the goal and process of Spirit-centered counseling.

Redemption

Redemption, as used in this context, refers both to a pattern and to a response. As a pattern, it constitutes the archetype of death and resurrection, losing life to find it that is embedded in God's story and Jesus' transformative wisdom. As a response, it is similar to the related concepts of resilience (Walsh, 1998) and repair (Gottman, 1999), in its focus on the possibilities inherent in crises and the processes by which they are realized.

As noted earlier, the pattern of redemption begins to unfold whenever we set something in motion with hopes and dreams only to discover that our plans are not going as intended. Similar to what God experienced when the creative process he initiated and pronounced good fell apart (Genesis 3), so also our sincere intentions often encounter obstacles, detours, and setbacks that leave us frustrated

and confused. When our initial attempts to salvage these situations fail to produce the desired result, our emotions intensify, typically involving experiences of disorientation, anxiety, rage, and depression. At this point, a sense of desperation often emerges making us vulnerable to overreactions and their subsequent regrets, as we attempt to exert control.

In banishing Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and preventing them from returning (Genesis 3:23-24), God may have been acting in their best interests but soon discovered that the situation was becoming increasingly dire with the passing of time. From Cain killing his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1-16) to every inclination of the human heart being evil all the time (Genesis 6:5), his creative story was going from bad to worse. As it continued to progress in an undesired direction, God became deeply troubled and not only regretted having set this story in motion (Genesis 6:5-6), but also made another choice that he came to lament. That decision was to wipe out all living creatures with a flood and start over with Noah's family (Genesis 6:7-8), a strategy over which God later repented and promised, as signified by a rainbow, never to execute again (Genesis 8:21; 9:8-17). In what must have been a painful realization, he discovered that in spite of such drastic measures, nothing had changed.

While tragic, who cannot relate to having made similar decisions only to regret them later? We either regret having set our plans in motion (e.g., marriage, career, family), or we regret how we reacted when we realized that they were not unfolding as intended. But, in spite of the chaos created by our ineffective attempts to produce desired outcomes, the silver lining is that first-order strategies often have to be exhausted before we become willing to consider the possibilities that second-order change can offer (Fraser & Solovey, 2007; Watzlawick et al., 1974). This process appears in God's story through several events, including his decisions to make a covenant with Abraham and give his law to Moses.

With Abraham, God sought to establish a relationship that would produce an offspring through whom he could ultimately redeem creation, and through Moses he provided guidance in the form of laws designed to create a holy and separate nation who would serve as a light to the Gentiles. Since these outcomes were dependent upon actions that Abraham and his descendants were to take, they essentially constituted a performance-based strategy, the ineffectiveness of which God's covenant people quickly exposed. Rather than being an influence for good on those around them, they tended to be influenced for evil by their neighbors and fell into a repetitive cycle characterized by common phrases found in the book of Judges (3:12-15)—"they did evil," "they cried out," "he gave them a deliverer," "again they did evil," "again they cried out," etc. (*New International Version,* 2011).

Such is the nature of ineffectual first-order patterns characteristic of the struggle phase in the redemptive pattern.

Redemption and Second-Order Change

In conceding that "the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure, who can understand it" (*New International Version*, 2011, Jeremiah 17:9), God appeared to be acknowledging that a deeper order of change was necessary if creation was ever going to fulfill the hopes and dreams that had motivated its inception. Toward that end, God formulated a redemptive response. As is the nature of second-order change, redemptive responses generally appear paradoxical, involving death-type experiences. Life as it is currently being engaged drastically changes.

By saying through the prophets that we needed a new heart (Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 18:31, 36:26), and later through Jesus that we must be born again (John 3:7) and whoever wants to find life must first lose it (Matthew 16:25), God seemed to be emphasizing that the way forward would necessitate a transformation that could only be adequately described through employing analogies of death and rebirth. In practical terms relevant to Spirit-centered counseling, this process involves a redefining of success and significance that shifts identity from a basis on performance to that of relationship. Such a shift requires surrender, a letting go of control, or as May (1994) describes it, a movement from willfulness to willingness. This redemptive process is exemplified well in the 12-step approach to addiction recovery, especially the first step which necessitates an acknowledgement of powerlessness and a lack of control, an admission that runs counter to the performance-orientation of conventional wisdom (Buker, 2003).

Rather than encouraging continued effort to control behavior, the 12-steps take a relational approach. They facilitate second-order change by allowing people to exhaust their first-order change strategies and eventually hit bottom, at which point it is hoped that they will finally admit powerlessness rather than attempt yet another performance-based strategy. For those who can humble themselves with such a candid admission, the recovery process continues by acknowledging that a Higher Power exists whose help is available for those who surrender control. It continues by requiring an honest look at self, a confession of moral failings to a trusted ally, an attempt to make amends wherever possible, a commitment to ongoing accountability, and a pledge to help others do the same (e.g., see www.aa.org/the-twelve-steps). Moving through these steps cultivates a systemic mindset that reorients identity from its previous reliance on personal autonomy and accomplishments to a recognition of connectedness to God and others. In so

doing, it grounds identity in a relational network that accepts interdependency and seeks to fit within and expand God's redemptive story.

Conclusion

To summarize, the competencies required to expand the redemptive pattern of God's story are essentially those related to forming therapeutic connections and facilitating second-order change, with one caveat. As clinicians who are seeking to be Spirit-centered, special attention must be given to the discernment practices through which we cultivate ears to hear and eyes to see what the Spirit is saying and doing. While basic knowledge of the Spirit's patterns in Scripture and history is helpful, as is a deep understanding of the transformative wisdom reflected in Jesus' life and ministry, ultimately Spirit-centeredness necessitates that we experience the same epistemological shift that we are seeking to facilitate in our clients. The degree to which this is personally occurring is likely a determining factor in our capacity to detect the Spirit's activity and the witness or resonance (Brown, 2004) with which it is discerned. In fact, allow me to be so bold as to state that a performance-based, image-driven mindset is inherently incapable of acting redemptively. Our ability to facilitate a redemptive process is directly related to the extent to which our perception is informed by the transformative wisdom of Jesus. Toward that end and for the benefit of our clients, may we lose our lives to find them.

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Notes:

[1] Borg suggested that a culture's conventional wisdom, into which it socializes its members, could be summarized by the three A's of Appearance (how they should look in order to be attractive), Achievement (what they should accomplish in order to be recognized, and Affluence (what they should possess in order to be admired), to which I added a fourth, Authority (the level of power and control they should be able to exert to be considered significant).

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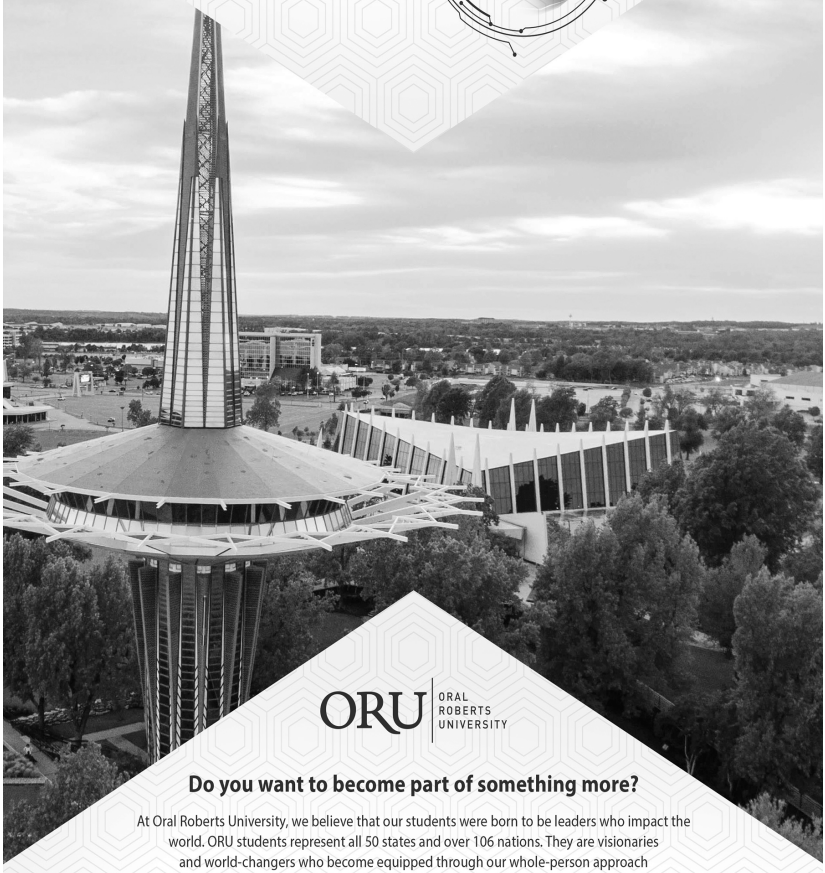

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