

# **Asian Christian Counseling**

- what it can be for us Asians?

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# Introduction: Bible and Psychology

Psychology is about understanding human character and behavior,

and since God as our Creator understands our human nature more than anyone else,

then the Bible must have much psychological content.



# OT Illustration: Gen 3:9-13

**9** But the Lord God called to the man, “where are you?”

**10** He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

**11** And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

**12** The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

**13** Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

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# What is “I was afraid, so I hid” in Psychology?



Defense mechanisms are mostly unconscious processes that protect an individual from anxiety-provoking, unacceptable or distressing psychic experiences.

# Defense Mechanisms

I was afraid; so I hid.

## Avoidance:

A defense mechanism consisting of refusal to encounter situations, objects, or activities because they represent unconscious aggressive impulses and/or punishment for those impulses.

The woman you put here with me

The serpent deceived me, and I ate

## Deflection:

An individual redirecting attention to another person.

# **NT Illustration: Matt 27:3-5**

**3** When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders.

**4** “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”

“What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”

**5** So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

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# Defense Mechanisms

returned the thirty pieces of silver

## Undoing:

An act or communication which partially negates a previous one.

he went away and hanged himself

## Restitution:

The defense mechanism of relieving oneself of a load of guilt by making up or reparation.

# The Practice of Biblical Folk Psychology:



- ❑ 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 does Modern Psychology develop?

## **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 a respectable body of knowledge recognized today as modern psychology.

# How does psychology interface with theology?

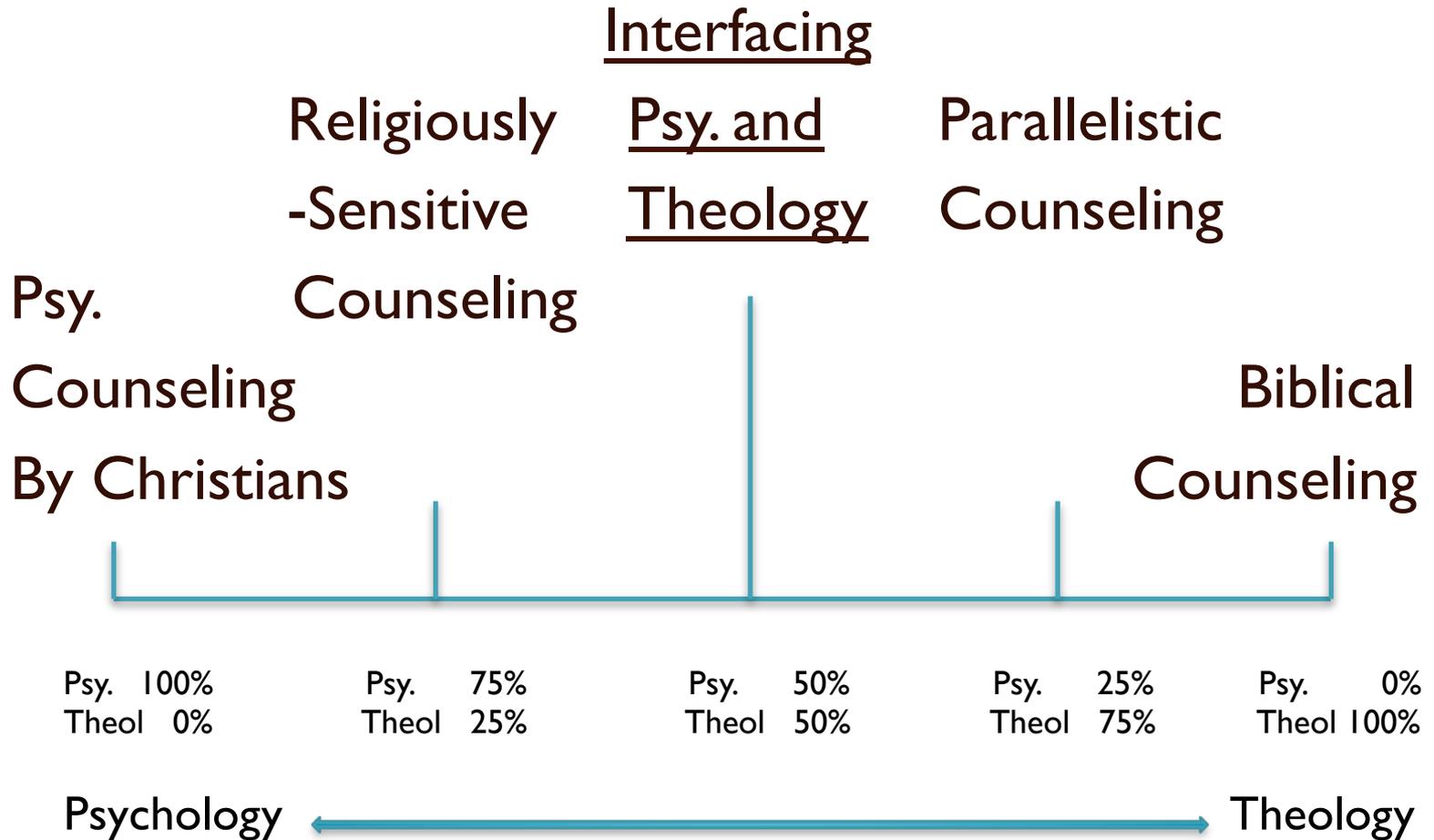
- ❑ So we see that modern psychology can inform theology and theology validates modern psychology where it is consistent with the Bible.
- ❑ The Bible covers comprehensively all aspects of life, including our human functioning and dysfunctioning, but the Scriptures are not exhaustive or explicit in **all**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

**All truth is God's truth.**

# Basis for Interfacing Psy and Theo:

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. Hence, Christian Counseling should interface psychology with theology.

# Continuum of Christian Counseling Practice from the West:



# 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
	<b>Creation</b>	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.
	<b>Fall</b>	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.
	<b>Redemption</b>	To improve and optimize functioning.	To think in realistic and constructive ways.	To meet our needs and the needs of others.

# Conclusion # 1:

- ❑ Christian Counseling is a relationship between two or more persons in which a Christian seeks to help another person or persons on how to cope, recover and grow in life using knowledge, techniques and skills developed through an interface between psychology and theology with the Bible as the final authority.

# Counseling Approaches of the West:

“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)*

# Diff. bet. Western and Asian Cultures

<b>Traditional Western Culture:</b>	<b>Traditional Asian Culture:</b>
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

# Asian Ch. Counseling of John 4:

- ❑ The land of the Bible is sited in the Middle East with an Eastern culture.
- ❑ The passage in John 4 (*Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman at the well*) shows us some salient features of Asian Christian Counseling that can be somewhat different from the present Christian counseling approaches of the West.

# 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.”

# Our Basic problem is sin:

- ❑ In secular counseling, the basic cause of psychological problems is traced to the dysfunctional false self.
- ❑ But here, Jesus zeroed into the woman's sin. So from the common topic of drink, Jesus brought into the dialogue on her husband.

John 4:

17 "I have no husband," she replied.

18 Jesus said, "You are right. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband."

- ❑ In Christian Counseling, we want to ultimately trace back to the basic problem of sin, not just dealing with the dysfunctional false self, as what psychological counseling usually do.

# John 4:



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

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

# Because of sin, we need a Savior:

- ❑ 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.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ So from the common topic of drink, Jesus brought into the dialogue our need for the living water dwelling up to eternal life.

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# Only Thru Jesus, we can relate closely with God:

- ❑ “Sir, give me this water.”

Our objective in Christian Counseling is to lead the counselee to want and hunger for God, to worship Him and be dependent on Him.

- ❑ To “worship the Father in spirit and truth” is to relate oneself closely with God and be Christlike in our character.

## Conclusion # 2:

Following Jesus' approach in John 4:

- ❑ Christian Counseling, especially in less formal counseling settings, should eventually lead to our root cause in sin and our need for a Savior.
- ❑ Our perspective is 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 our character.

# Comparing with AACCC Code of Ethics (Western context):

## I-530: Working with Persons of Different Faiths, Religions, and Values

Counselors share their own faith orientation only as a function of legitimate self-disclosure and when appropriate to client need, always maintaining a posture of humility.

# Implications:

- ❑ In many Asian contexts where we can live our faith more publicly and the field of counseling is less rigidly structured, Christian counselors should be more bold to freely share our Christian faith as we have less risk of running into ethical/legal challenges.
- ❑ We can communicate the Gospel in an indirect manner as Jesus did in John 4, and build up their thirst and hunger to want to know God more.

# Summary # 1 and 2:

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

- ❑ A deeper integration between psychology and theology with the Bible as the final authority;
- ❑ A more intentional perspective that is from the Christian view of personhood in which mankind's basic problem is sin and in need of a Savior, and our ultimate goal in life is to know God, relate closely with Him and be Christlike in character.

# John 4:



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17 “I have no husband,” she replied.

18 Jesus said, “**You are right. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.**”

28 The woman went back to the town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did.”

# Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit in his Word of Knowledge:

- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Indeed, the woman told the people in the town, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did.”

## Conclusion # 3:

- The Christian Counseling process involves guidance from the Holy Spirit and includes spiritual resources like prayer, deliverance, forgiveness, inner healing, spiritual formation and the operation of spiritual gifts.

# Comparing with AACCC Code of Ethics (Western Culture):

## **I-330: Consent for Biblical and Spiritual Practices in Counseling**

Christian counselors do not presume that all clients want or will be receptive to explicit, spiritual Judeo-Christian interventions in counseling and therefore, obtain consent that honors client choice, receptivity to these practices, and the timing and manner in which these elements are introduced. This includes, but is not limited to the following: (1) prayer for and with clients; (2) Bible reading and reference; (3) spiritual meditation; (4) the use of biblical and religious imagery or music; (5) assistance with spiritual formation and discipline; (6) incorporation of fasting in the treatment plan as a spiritual discipline; and (7) other common spiritual practices.

## **I-340: Special Consent for More Difficult Interventions**

Christian counselors obtain close or special consent for more difficult and potentially controversial practices. These include, but are not limited to: (1) deliverance and spiritual warfare activities; (2) cult deprogramming work; (3) recovering memories and the treatment of past abuse or trauma; ... and (7) engaging clients who are struggling with same sex attraction, crisis pregnancy/abortion decision-making and/or end-of-life issues.

# Implications:

- ❑ In many Asian contexts, while obtaining informed consent is advisable, Christian counselors, especially in less formal counseling context, would have more liberty to pray, operate in Spiritual gifts like the word of knowledge, or more openly make known our Christian positions in same sex attraction issues, crisis pregnancy/abortion, end-of-life decisions, etc., as we have less risk of running into ethical/legal challenges.

# John 4:



6 Jesus sat down by the well. **It was about noon.**

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

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**28 The woman went back to the town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did.”**

**39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony.**

# Christian Counseling as Mission for Christ:

- ❑ The Samaritan woman came to draw water in the heat of noon to avoid facing other people of her community. She was having a psychological problem of shame, as she was ashamed of herself for “everything that I ever did” (she had five husbands and living with a man not her husband).
- ❑ After her encounter with Jesus, she went back to town to face the people without shame. She was set free from her shame.
- ❑ Jesus counseled her not only to heal her of her psychological problem of shame, but also to lead her to know God. We should do Christian counseling not just as a professional practice to help people in their psychological problems but also as Mission for Christ.

# Considerations for Christian Counseling as Mission for Christ:

Traditional Western Culture	Traditional Asian Culture
<p>Christian Counseling Education more for clinical practice catering for individual clients.</p>	<p>Education to emphasize on both individual counseling and informal and/or group and communal counseling (e.g. mission trips and post-disaster work). (Refer to Lausanne Movement's 2011 Cape Town Declaration)</p>
<p>Christian counselors providing the professional services.</p>	<p>Includes "task-shifting" in group/communal counseling to equip and empower church and community leaders to carry on with the work.</p>
<p>Adopting a Gospel that is mainly individualistic and guilt-based (the individual's transgression in sin and in need of God's forgiveness through Jesus).</p>	<p>Includes a Gospel that is more collectivistic and shame-based (shame of expulsion from God and restoration to God's family in honor through Jesus).</p>

# Individualistic and Guilt-based Gospel:

1. God loves mankind and He has a wonderful plan for each one of us.
2. Humanity is tainted by sin and is therefore separated from God. As a result, we cannot know God's wonderful plan for our lives.
3. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through Jesus Christ, we can have our sins forgiven and restore a right relationship with God.
4. We must place our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior in order to receive the gift of salvation and know God's wonderful plan for our lives.

**This is the Four Spiritual Laws of the West that is Individualistic and based on Guilt.**

# Fall of Mankind – Gen 2:25, 3:8-10

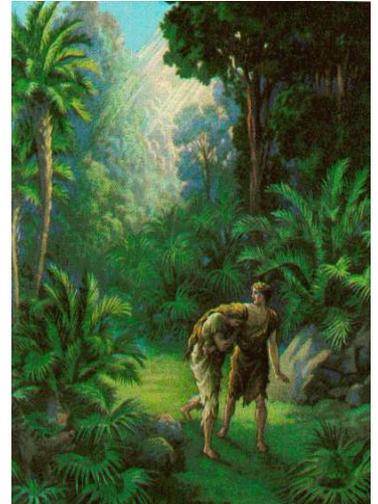
**2:25** The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.

**3: 8** Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

**9** But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

**10** He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid **because I was naked; so I hid.**”

**Question: What made Adam hide from God:  
Guilt or Shame?**



# Collectivistic and Shame-based Gospel:

1. In the beginning, God existed in full glory and honor. He created Adam and Eve crowning them with glory and honor. They walked naked on earth and were not ashamed.
2. The disobedience of Adam and Eve brought shame on them and to God and so they hid from God. As Adam and Eve are the prototypes of humans, their sin caused the fall of mankind and we were expelled from God's eternal family.
3. In our brokenness, mankind became engaged in a perpetual effort to avoid shame and build a counterfeit honor apart from God (as illustrated by the building of the Tower of Babel, Gen 11: 1-8).
4. God sent His Son Jesus Christ to live and die for our sin and shame, so that His death and resurrection reversed the shame that Adam brought on God and humanity. In placing our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, God restores us from shameful orphans to be His honorable children, so that we have the Father's eternal honor and empowering Spirit to live and love others in the community and glorify God in Heaven.

Same Bible story but from the perspective of shame and the community!

# Bible Themes:

In the Bible,

the words guilt or innocence are used 198  
times,

but

the words shame or honor are used 358 times!



# Asian Christian Counseling

## - what it can be for us Asians?

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

- ❑ A deeper integration between psychology and theology with the Bible as the final authority;
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# Asian Christian Counseling

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(contd.)

- ❑ The Christian Counseling process must always involve guidance from the Holy Spirit and may include spiritual resources like prayer, deliverance, forgiveness, inner healing, spiritual direction and the operation of spiritual gifts.
- ❑ The Christian Counseling practice is more orientated towards care and counsel as mission for Christ, incorporating both the individualistic guilt-based Gospel and a collectivistic shame-based Gospel.

# Community Support Groups: An illustration of Christian Counseling that is informal, group and mission-orientated.



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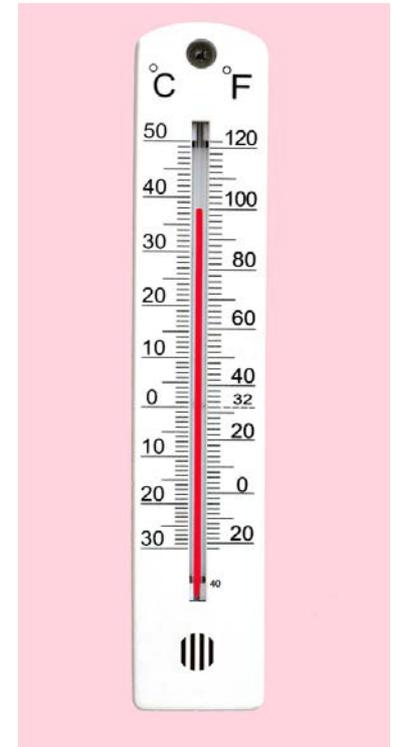


An illustration of Christian Counseling that is informal, group, communal and mission-orientated.



# Final Remarks:

Christian Counseling ought not be like thermometers that steadfastly follow and mirror the advancements and practices of modern psychology that is structured according to the humanistic standards of this world.



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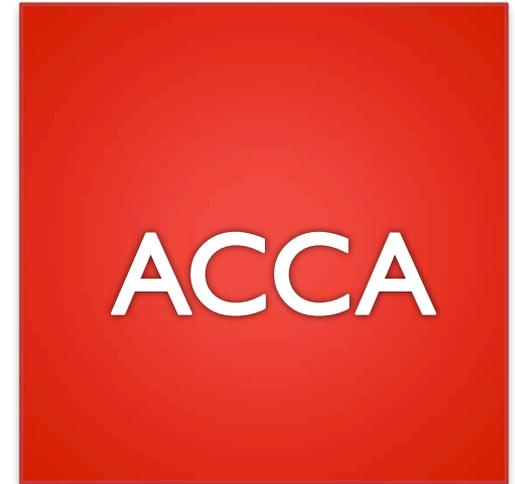
Instead, Christian Counseling ought to be like thermostat setters that sets the standards and techniques of the Kingdom to advance the knowledge and practice of modern psychology in this world.

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



## Final Remarks:

For Christian Counselors in the East, there is more scope for us to practice Bible-based Christian Counseling than in the West, so let us be bold enough to do it!



In doing so, we must go beyond professional clinical practice to be involved in more informal counseling as well as group and community counseling, integrating more deeply psychology and theology and intentionally more focused in care and counsel as mission for Christ.

