

# COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY IN CHRIST



THE DIFFERENCE JESUS MAKES WHEN  
COUNSELING CHRISTIANS

# Christian therapists can work with two kinds of grace

**Creation grace resources:** the earthly blessings relevant to therapy that God gives to all human beings (Mt 5:45; Acts 14:17; Ja 1:17)


Therefore, Christian therapists are always working with creation grace resources no matter the City of their client

**Redemptive grace resources:** The heavenly blessings relevant to therapy that belong to Christians now because of their union with Christ (Eph 1:3)

Therefore, redemptive grace resources are only used when working with Christians

# Creation Grace Therapy Resources

Creation grace resources include the use of any created modalities, including behavioral, cognitive, emotion, relational, and family; and any strategies and techniques that build up the capacities of the *imago Dei*, that God gives humans commonly. These include common factors, like the therapeutic alliance, transference, and insight.



# Redemptive Grace Therapy Resources

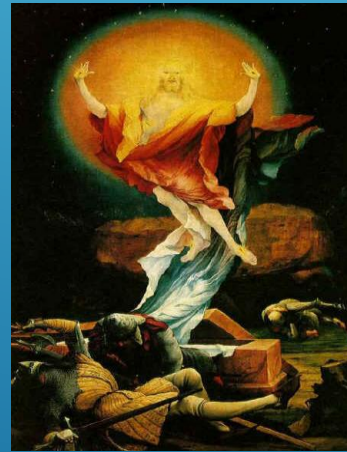
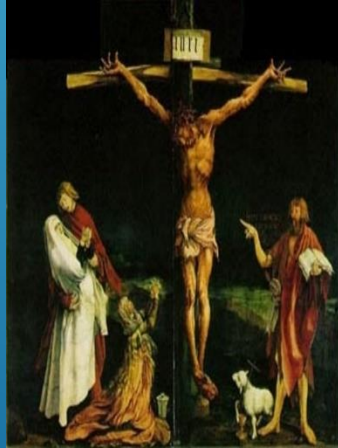
Redemptive grace makes possible value-added Christian therapy that is distinctive from secular therapy. The same creation grace modalities, techniques, and strategies are used in redemptive grace therapy, but Christ will be explicitly involved in the therapeutic process through additional strategies such as healing prayer, divine forgiveness, guided imagery focusing on Christ and other Christian symbolism, theodramatic therapy, biblical counseling, Christ-centered emotion processing, as well as Christian spiritual practices, like *lectio divina*, prayer, and meditation.

# THERAPY WITH REDEMPTIVE RESOURCES BEGINS IN UNION WITH CHRIST

- Christ and the believer are joined together forever by the Father
  - ▶ A union of representation (Rom 8:34; Eph 2:6; Heb 7:25; 9:24)
  - ▶ A union of shared meaning (Rom 5:21; 1 Cor 1:30; Rom 8:17; Eph 1:3)
  - ▶ A union of mutual indwelling (Jn 17:21-23; 1 Cor 6:19; Eph 3:16; Col 1:27; Gal 5:22-23)
  - ▶ A union of *koinonia* (Jn 17:21-23; Eph 1:3-14; 1 Jn 1:3)
  - ▶ A union of story (Rom 6:3-8; Eph 2:5-6; Col 3:3, 9-10)
  - ▶ A union of incorporation (1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 4:15-16)

# CHRIST CREATED A REDEEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL DIVISION WITHIN HIS FOLLOWERS


- ▶ His life, death, resurrection, and exaltation are its basis



# BIBLICAL TEACHING ON THE INNER DIVISION

- New creation (2Co 5:17; Eph 2:10)
  - Remaining sin (Ro 6:1-8:2; esp. Ch 7)
  - Flesh and the Spirit (Gal 5:17-23; Ro 8:3-11; 1 Co 3:1-8)
  - Old self and New Self (Ro 6:6; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10)
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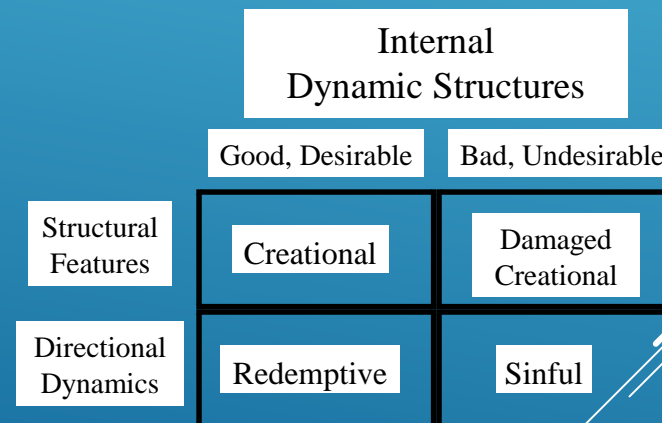
# THE OLD SELF/NEW SELF DICHOTOMY

- Each self is a a psychological structure, composed of thousands of created dynamic structures (DSs): stored in memory (psychological DSs) and constituted in neural networks (biological DSs)
  - Each self is a product of the course of one's development and consists of memories, emotions, desires, beliefs, and ways of thinking and relating to others
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# DIFFERENTIATION IN CHRIST

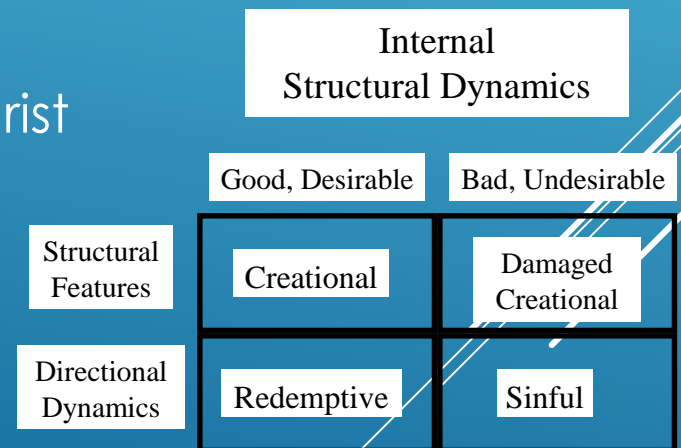
- ▶ Christiformity involves seeing all of oneself in reference to Christ: differentiating oneself into old and new

The good and the bad of the whole Christian self



# DIFFERENTIATION IN CHRIST

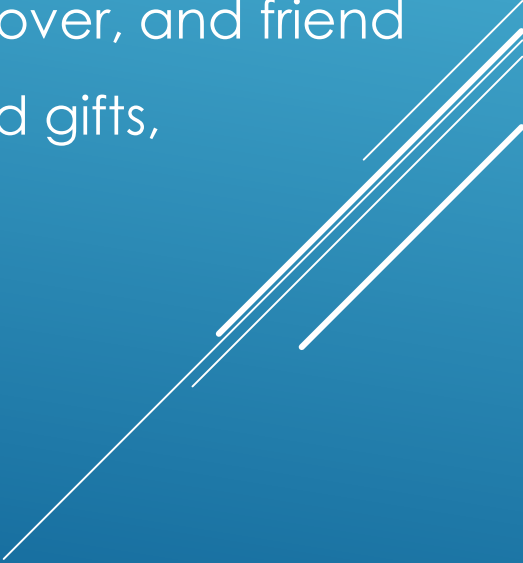
- ▶ We need to approach each quadrant differently
  - Creational: Good foundation we build on and construct
  - Damaged creational (weakness): Redeem, heal where possible, and surrender to Christ
  - Sinful: We confess/repent/mortify
  - Redemptive: All that we are in Christ
- And distinguish these aspects of our whole self



# DIFFERENTIATION IN CHRIST

## ▶ Vivification: Strengthening one's new self

Much of this requires “soul-work” time

- Worship, love, and enjoyment of the beauty of the triune God
  - Special love of Christ as one's lord, savior, lover, and friend
  - Gratitude to God for one's created self and gifts, fulfilled in the new self
  - Gratitude to God for one's salvation
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# DIFFERENTIATION IN CHRIST

## ▶ Vivification: Strengthening one's new self

Step 1: Identifying God's goodness towards oneself

Step 2: Reception of God's goodness in Christ

Step 3: Thanksgiving

Step 4: Celebration with Christ

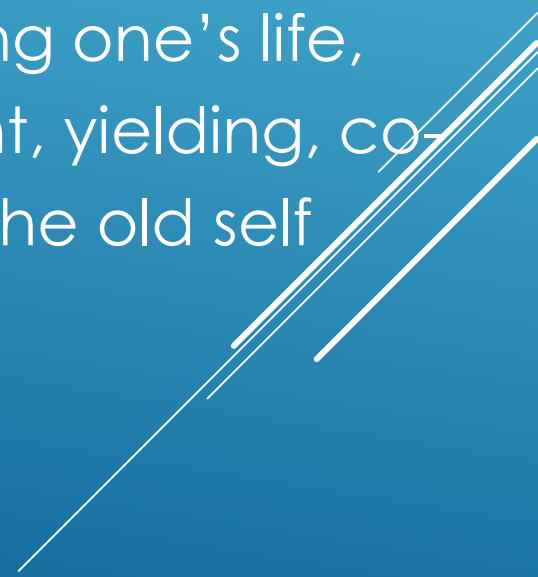


# PROMOTING DIFFERENTIATION IN CHRIST

## Promoting Participation in the Cross: Mortification and Surrender

Ownership and distancing from one's fallenness

From the Bible: confession, repentance, denying one's self, carrying one's cross, losing one's life, hating oneself, mortification, lament, yielding, co-crucifixion with Christ, laying aside the old self



# PROMOTING DIFFERENTIATION IN CHRIST


## Promoting Participation in the Cross: Mortification and Surrender

Ownership and distancing from one's fallenness

From the Christian traditions: Detachment,  
discrimination and dispassion, renunciation,  
resignation, surrender, transparency, and  
watchfulness




# CONVERGENCE OF THERAPEUTIC GOALS

- ▶ Many secular models of therapy have been converging on helping clients objectify their internal-relational world, in order to modify it
    - Classic CBT: exposure therapy and learning to tolerate the distress
    - Mindfulness: non-judgmental observation of one's internal-relational world
    - ACT: accepting one's internal-relational world
    - Contemporary psychodynamic therapy: preventing automatic responses and promoting mentalization
    - Relational and attachment therapy: creating conditions for clients to safely explore their internal-relational world
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# PROMOTING DIFFERENTIATION IN CHRIST


## Promoting Participation in the Cross: *LOVERS*

1. **Lift** up your heart
  2. **Open** up your heart to the Lord
  3. **Verbalize** the negative emotion  
**Lamentation** or **Confession**
  4. **Empty Out** the negative emotion  
**Surrender** or **Repentance**
  5. **Replace** the negative emotion with a modified emotion or a new emotion  
**Comfort** or **Forgiveness**
  6. **Serve** others from a new creation emotion
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# DIFFERENTIATION IN CHRIST


- ▶ What do we do about created damage?
  - It is not sinful; it is damaged goods
  - So we seek to bring Christ's healing into it
  - Gradually, by faith we bring change in our memories, emotions, thinking, and relational structures can change
  - In addition, we may have to accept that the damage will not be completely healed in this life

# DIFFERENTIATION IN CHRIST

- ▶ What do we do about created damage?
    - Read, reflect, and meditate on relevant Scripture
    - Discriminate one's internal dynamics: Be on the look out for the old and the new
    - Talk and journal *about* one's old and new selves
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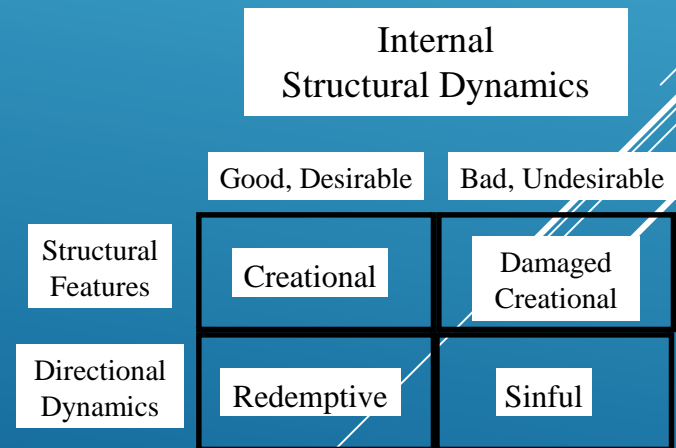
# PROMOTING DIFFERENTIATION IN CHRIST

## Techniques for promoting differentiation in Christ


- Describe one's old self and one's new self verbally and in journaling
  - Have the two selves talk to each other, switching chairs
  - Use one's imagination to picture the two selves, fighting and the new self killing the old self
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# INTEGRATION IN CHRIST

- Vivification 2: Becoming a whole New Self through the activity of “integration by faith”
- ▶ Integrating one’s soul involves believing one’s union with Christ, so that it permeates every aspect of one’s self-representation
- ▶ This is the therapy analog to taking “every thought captive to Christ” (2Co 10:5) and “setting one’s mind on things above” (Col 3:1-4)




# INTEGRATION IN CHRIST

- Christ, the Holy One, remained holy and whole while becoming sin for us (2Co 5:21). He is the foundation of integration in Christ
  - Through union with Christ's life, death, resurrection, and exaltation, believers are enabled to integrate their created, sinful, broken selves in Christ giving them increasing unity and purity of heart (Mt 5:8)
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# INTEGRATION IN CHRIST

- By faith we bring everything in the soul into its already established union with Christ: thoughts, beliefs, desires, memories, and emotions
- This means consciously taking “everything” in the soul through Christ’s death and resurrection
- This undermines and reduces the power of indwelling sin
- This also gradually cleanses, purifies, and heals one’s damaged created structures, so more and more of them are joined to and become part of the new self

# INTEGRATION IN CHRIST

- ▶ Integration begins with grounding one's identity on one's union with Christ
    - *Identification* with the real self in heaven
    - Deep reflection on the blessings of declarative salvation
    - Planning of future godly actions
    - Practice of godly actions in dependence on Christ
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# INTEGRATION IN CHRIST

- ▶ Integration of the whole self involves undermining one's internal division through union with Christ, in which
    - 1) one increasingly accepts the reality of one's remaining sinfulness and brokenness, and
    - 2) the created, but damaged dynamic structures of the old self are brought into the new self by the Holy Spirit and faith, and
    - 3) The new self expands in influence through the indwelling Holy Spirit and faith
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# PROMOTING INTEGRATION IN CHRIST

- ▶ Bringing everything in our souls into the light of our conscious awareness in Christ
  - Undermining sin by bringing God's truth into sinful desires
  - Combining the negative emotions associated with the cross into the positive feelings associated with the resurrection
  - Lamenting and mourning one's suffering and weaknesses and eventually boasting in our weaknesses in Christ
  - Owning God's creational and redemptive gifts to me: My strengths are in Christ; redemption works with my strengths

# PROMOTING INTEGRATION IN CHRIST

## Techniques for promoting integration in Christ

- Believing that one is a complex actual self—*simul iustus et peccator*—fundamentally perfect in Christ, but still a sinner
  - Using one's imagination to picture a complex actual self, perfect in Christ and yet still a suffering, broken sinner
  - *Retroactive redemption*: dealing with past deeds and events by uniting its memory with Christ using our imagination
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