

Scripture-based Prayer as a Counseling Intervention

Kathryn A. Steele

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Ouachita Baptist University

Issues in Christian Counseling Conference

February 28, 2020

Scripture-based Prayer as a Counseling Intervention

- **Learning Objective 1**
- Participants will explore selected Scriptures and research related to Scripture-based intercessory prayer and how to use it as a treatment intervention.
- **Learning Objective 2**
- Participants will consider and assess ethical concerns related to using Scripture-based intercessory prayer as an intervention.
- **Learning Objective 3**
- Participants will identify client behavioral and cognitive patterns that could be impacted by Scripture-based prayer and practice formulating Scripture-based prayers for individual clients.



Transformation



Jesus always lives to intercede
for us
(Hebrews 7:25)

High priests—2 Duties

To offer sacrifices

To intercede for the people

But you are a chosen people—a royal **priesthood**, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praise of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:9

And God **raised** us up with
Christ and seated us with Him
in the heavenly realms in
Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:6



Ask of me... Psalm 2:8

Approach the throne



Pray that...



This, then is how you should pray:
Our Father in heaven, hallowed
by your name, your kingdom
come, **your will be done** on earth
as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:9

Jesus model prayer

Acknowledging who God is

Daily bread

Forgiveness-as we forgive others

Protection and deliverance
from temptation

Righteous

SELF CONTROL

JOY

love

Patience

Mercy



Longsuffering

Grace

KINDNESS

After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah: “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.” So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria.

I Kings 18:1-2

I Kings 18:41-44

And Elijah said to Ahab, “Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.” So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. “Go and look toward the sea,” he told his servant. And he went up and looked. “There is nothing there,” he said.

Seven times Elijah said, “Go back.”
The seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.” So Elijah said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.’”

- *“The necessity of man’s prayer is in no way due to a reluctance in God that must be overcome—nor is it the function of prayer to change God’s will. God has limited certain of His activities to responding to the prayers of His people.*”

- ***“Unless they pray, He will not act. Heaven may will something to happen, but heaven waits and encourages earth’s initiative to desire that will and then to will and pray that it happens.” R. Arthur Mathews***

Incredible!

**It is hard to grasp that God
Almighty—the Creator of our
universe—**

Ruler over all—

**has chosen to work through our
prayer!**

- Couple in distress: Philippians 1:9-10
- **“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10. so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, 11. filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”**



Psalm 63:3-4 “Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. 4. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

Father, help Susie learn that Your love is better than life. May she remember to praise You each day.

What should I pray for?

Known Will of God	Unknown Will of God
<p>Peace—Galatians 5:22</p> <p>Love others —John 15:12</p> <p>Faith —Hebrews 11:6</p> <p>Renewing of the mind — Romans 12:2</p> <p>Self Control —I Thessalonians 5:8</p> <p>Joy —Galatians 5:22</p> <p>Hope —Romans 15:13</p> <p>Thankfulness — Ephesians 5:20</p> <p>Wisdom —James 1:5</p>	<p>Healing from all sickness (bipolar, schizophrenia, OCD): 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 Paul's thorn</p> <p>Romans 8:20-25 Sickness from living in a fallen world</p> <p>Luke 4:42-44 Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law and many others, but didn't heal all...refused to return to heal the rest who were waiting on him.</p>

Paul's Intercessory Prayer

Ephesians 3:14-21

Verses	Possible Prayer Request
16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being	Strengthen _____ with power through Your Spirit to obey You (to trust You, to act with love, to control their anger, etc)
17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.	May _____ be aware of Your (Christ's) presence in her heart, and believe by faith
17 And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love	Help _____ to know the firm roots of Your love in her life
18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ	Grant _____ power to grasp how wide, long, high, and deep is the love of Christ for her.
19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.	May _____ grow in her knowledge of You that she would be filled to the measure of all Your fullness.

for;
which is
—In

excitable adj
re-search (ri-sürch)
vtr

—re-cu
re-sürch, re-sür
gather new
a subj
used adje
with
—re-cu

**What do Christian clients want
regarding prayer in
counseling?**

Clients desire audible prayer

**Prefer therapists introduce
subject of prayer**

What do Christian clients want regarding prayer in counseling?

Strong expectations prayer would be included in counseling
Want therapists to pray outside session

Religious conservatives had higher expectations for prayer

Prayer...

**most frequently used spiritual intervention
by Christian counselors**

78% in Christian agencies

100% pray in Christian private practices

Most research studied

When prayer was used (in session, out of session)

Attitudes toward prayer by therapists/clients

What spiritual interventions used by therapists

Scant research: studying types of prayer and efficacy of prayer in counseling

Frequent prayer by clients related to high mental health scores regardless of age or gender

Intercessory prayer (distant) with depressed clients had significant effect on cognitive symptoms of depression.

The image shows an open book with two hands clasped together over the pages. The hands are positioned in the center-right of the frame, with fingers interlaced. The book's pages are filled with text, though it is not clearly legible. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the paper and the skin of the hands. The background is dark, making the book and hands stand out.

**The Impact of
Scripture-based
Prayer by Mothers
on the Emotional
Adjustment of
Children**

Settings:

Private?

Public?



COUNSELING CENTER



raised by client

**Spirituality
Religious issues**

or by therapist



Spiritual Issue Raised by Client

Helmeke, K.B. & Bischof, G.H. (2002). Recognizing and Raising Spiritual and religious issues in therapy: Guidelines for the timid

**Spiritual Issue
Raised by Client**

**Spiritual Issue
Raised by
Therapist**

**Spiritual Issue
Raised by Client**

**Spiritual Issue
Raised by
Therapist**

**Religious Issue
Raised by Client**

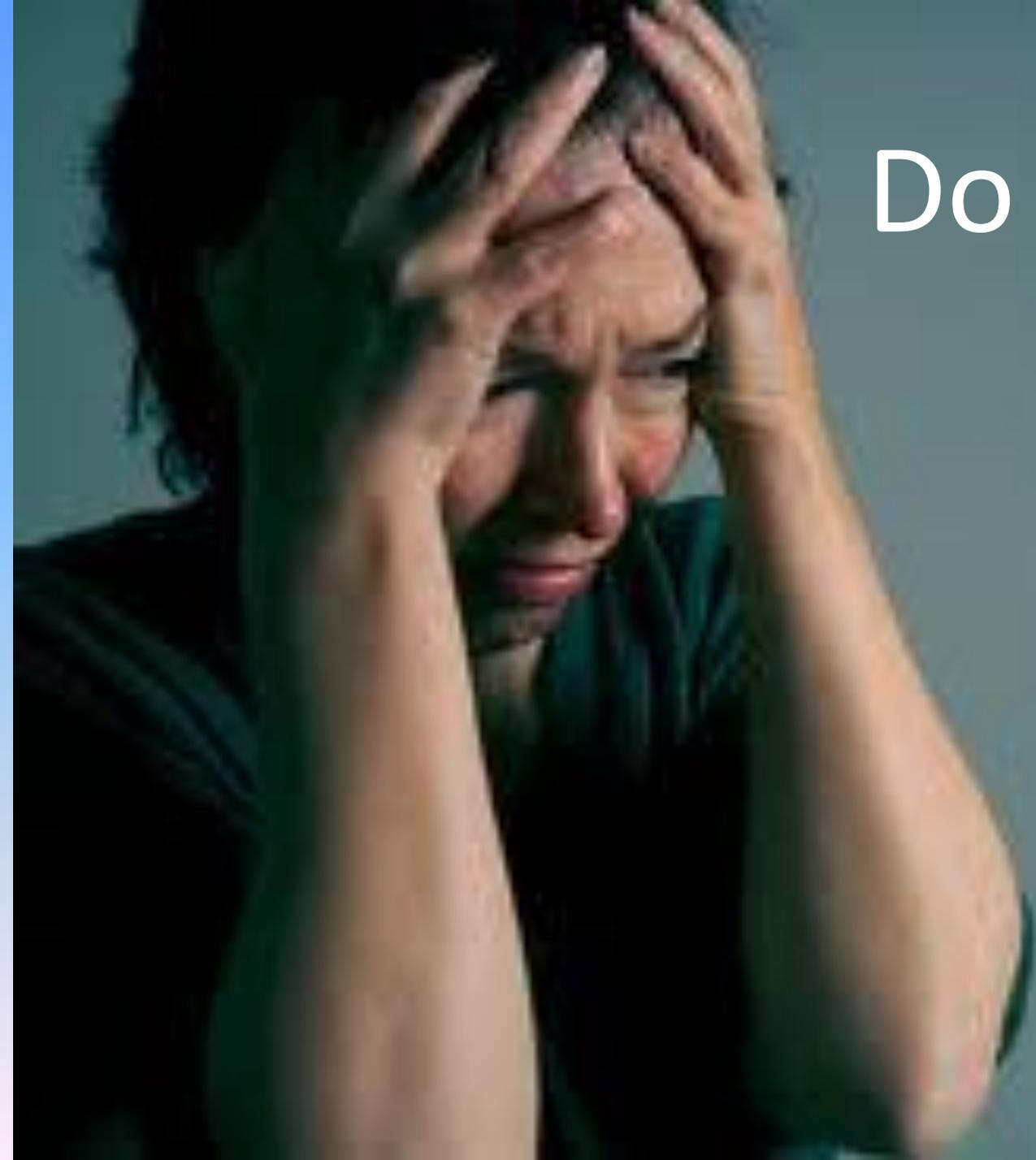
**Spiritual Issue
Raised by Client**

**Spiritual Issue
Raised by
Therapist**

**Religious Issue
Raised by Client**

**Religious Issue
Raised by
Therapist**

Is spiritual intervention
relevant to client's
presenting problem?

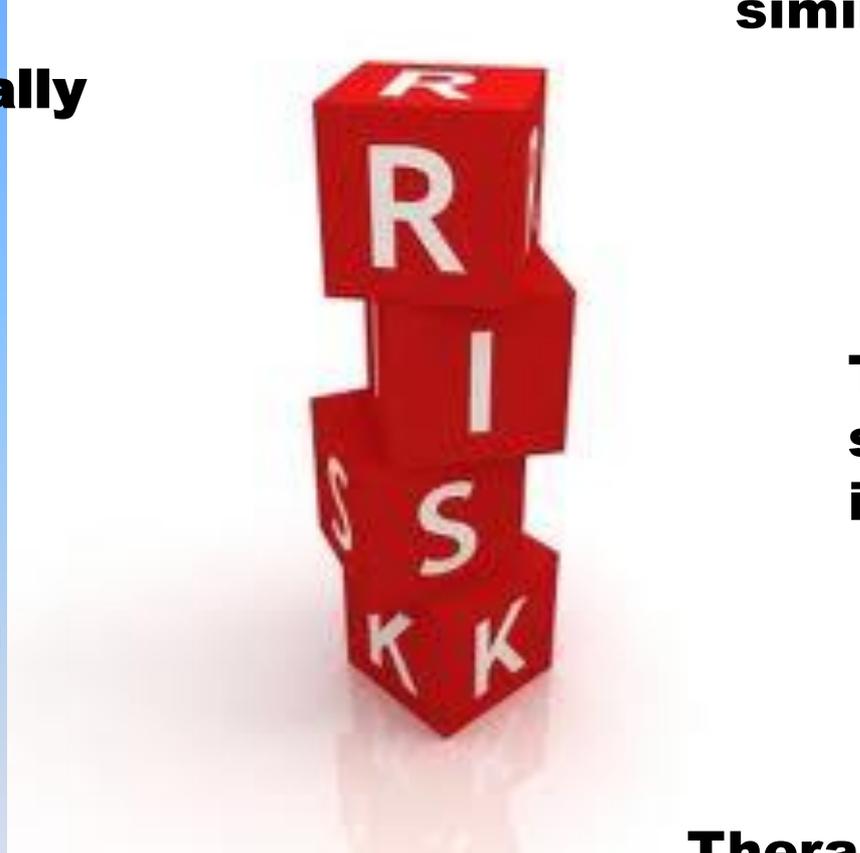
A person with dark hair, wearing a dark green t-shirt, is shown from the chest up. They have their hands pressed against their forehead and eyes, suggesting a state of intense stress, pain, or emotional distress. The background is a solid, muted teal color.

Do no harm

Therapist initiated

**Low therapist-
client religious
similarity**

**Denominationally
specific**



**Therapist is
spiritually
immature**

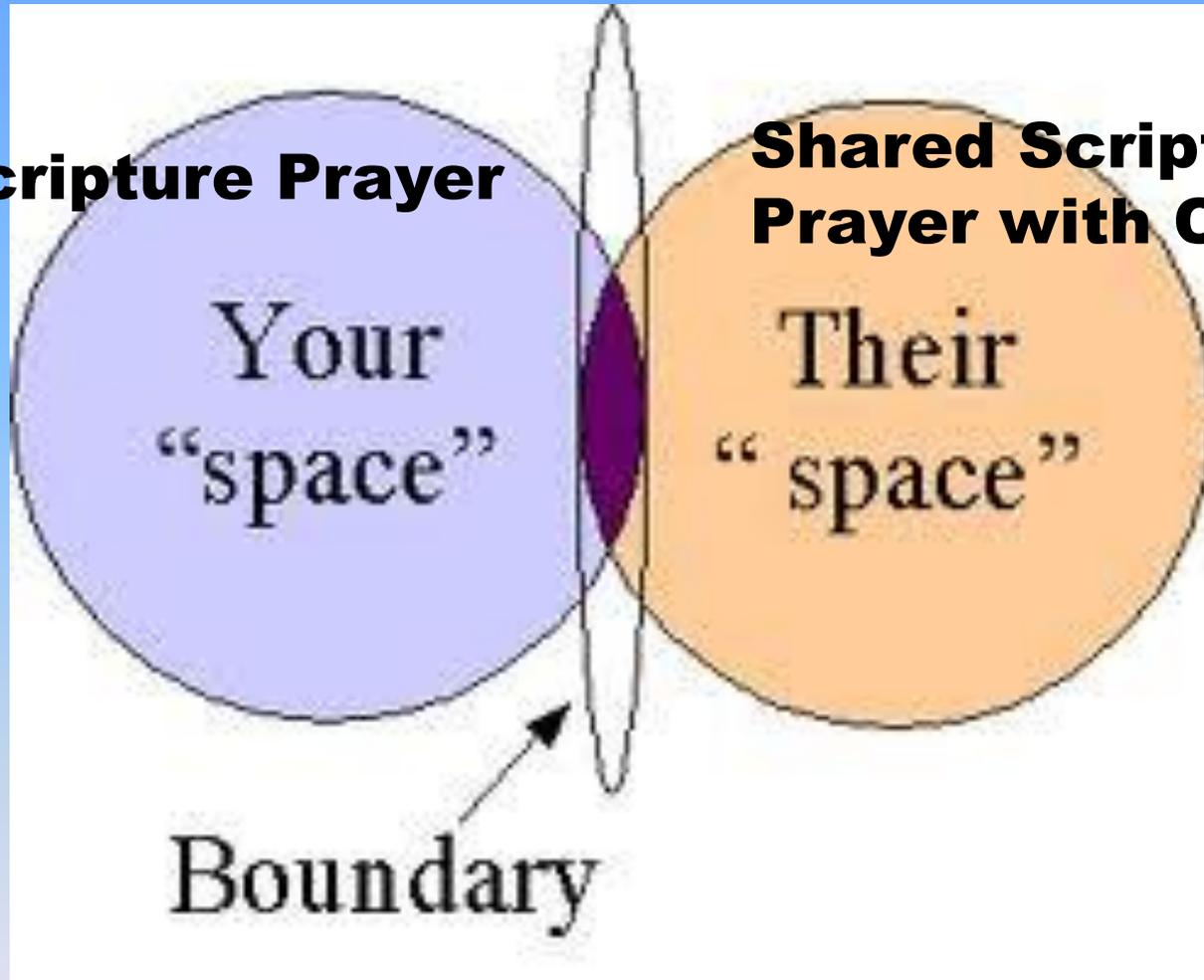
In session

**Therapist
lacks
multicultural
sensitivity**

**Weak therapeutic
alliance**

Client Welfare Must Be Considered

Private Scripture Prayer



Shared Scripture Prayer with Client

Boundary

disrespect

Coping Skills







GOAL



professional competence



Know your key struggles

Understand how struggles started

CONNECT WITH PERSONAL
SPIRITUALITY

How do your vulnerabilities
present you with challenges
today?

Process used to meet the
daily challenge?

Belief

Righteousness on part
of person praying

His Will

ROMANS 12:2

Relationship

**Draw near
to God**

BE TRANSFORMED
BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND

God's
Perfect
Timing



Ethical Summary

- Appropriate setting
- Spirituality or religious issues (client or therapist?)
- Do no harm
- Informed consent (risks)
- Welfare of Client (respect/do not ignore)
- Competency (spiritual)

Objective 3

**Identify Client Behavioral and
Cognitive Patterns that could
be impacted by Scripture-based
Prayer and Practice Forming
Scripture Prayers**

Patterns: Behavioral/Thoughts

Relationship to

Self

Others

God

Ask God to Give You Wisdom to Know How to Pray

- As you read the Scriptures daily, ask God to guide you to see truths that you could ask God to bring about in the life of your client.
- As you think about their presenting problems, allow God to direct you to see underlying issues that only He can impact.

Philippians 4:4-7

- 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:8

- 8. finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Psalm 37

- Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- Father, help _____ give her desire for financial security to you, and to trust that you know exactly what she needs. Help her to delight herself in you (not in financial security), and to believe that you will meet her needs.

Practice

- In your small group, each person select one of the following passages, read it, and ask yourself...**“Are there any truths in this passage that would impact the life of the client I’m working with?”**
- **Colossians 1:9-10** **Colossians 3:1-17**
- **Ephesians 1:15-21** **Ephesians 3:14-21**
- **Ephesians 4:29-32** **I Peter 1:1-9**
- **Psalms 139** **Romans 12:1-21**
- **Pray the request for your client in your group. Each group member can form a request for their client. Please do not use the client’s name.**