

A Profession of many Faces: The Application and Relevance of Prayer to Social Work Counseling in Botswana

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ABSTRACT

The relevance and application of prayer to Social Work counseling is the basis of a holistic and multi-dimensional approach to social problems. Practice must not only consider its importance but its application in work with clients. If social work which is a profession of many faces does not equip practitioners to appreciate and value the spiritual expression of individuals, groups, and communities, it would have failed to address problems in an integrated manner. Although there are common principles and values used in prayer and social work counseling such as confidentiality, client self-determination, and self awareness, the author acknowledges that there are social work practitioners who do not embrace spirituality and would consider prayer as irrelevant to their work. This paper intends to demonstrate benefits of prayer in social work intervention with individuals, groups, communities and nations, particularly in the African context. It asserts that prayer is rooted in various traditional communities, religious groups, and features in national ceremonies like Independence celebrations, judicial legal year opening, and Kgotla meetings.

Keywords: *Counseling, prayer, Social Work,*

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the concept of prayer amongst different communities, individuals, and groups and its relationship with social work intervention. It will follow how prayer featured in traditional societies and different religions such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and cultural beliefs. This is based on the notion that social work practice aims at improving the lives of individuals, families, groups, and communities within their environmental and cultural context (Piccard, 1988; NASW, 1988). The improvement is informed by dynamism in the intervention processes employed in the practice. It is within this dynamism that the aspect of prayer as a spiritual expression becomes not only relevant but also fundamental to the realization of social work practice goals (NASW, 1981).

In addition, one principle that social workers uphold is respect for human diversity which emphasizes that there must be a continual studying of heritage, culture, and lifestyle of individuals and groups and analysis of values held and ways in which differences are expressed (NASW, 1981). Prayer therefore is one way of expressing cultural beliefs and spirituality in diversity. However, the relevance of prayer, its role in various practice methods, and how social workers could apply it in self-awareness raising, self disclosure, and self actualization has to be explored and articulated. Therefore, there is need for comprehensive articulation, contextual application, and relevance to social work practice. This takes cognizance of the fact that the social work profession evolved from a religious history

besides that of economics and politics (Piccard, 1988). Prayer is a socio-cultural practice associated not only with religious beliefs like Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism, but also with traditionalist societies. However, social work as a profession has to interrogate, explore, and identify what it is and how it can contribute to societal solidarity, tranquility, and peace. It has not been given the attention it deserves as an integral component associated with daily living experiences of individuals, families, groups, communities and even nations (Phillips, 1990). According to the New International Version of the Holy Bible (1985) for Christians prayer is a request to God classified into four types: (a) secret, (b) family, (c) group, and (d) public prayer.

Individual use of prayer to respond to personal problems (self-disclosure): Secret prayer according to the following scriptures is regarded as a private activity that is not carried out for public consideration but for oneself in sharing personal issues with God (Matt 6: 6). But thou when thou prayest, enter into your closet and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly (2 Kings 4: 33).

Individuals and groups can disclose sensitive issues to God through prayer. These might be issues that individuals find difficult to share with anyone else including counselors. In this case, the link with the supreme-being becomes fundamental and relevant. The supreme power is described as loving in the sacred books and as non discriminatory and non prejudicial in character. According to Pearson et al (1995) self disclosure is a necessary condition for achieving intimacy (developing a close relationship), but it may also be possible to know a lot about someone and still not develop a close relationship with him or her. The authors have noted that anxious people find it difficult to disclose because their anxiety disposes them to anticipate the worst outcomes of self disclosure. This does not have to apply to counselors because they are not supposed to like or dislike clients whom they assist (Brammer, 1993). Self disclosing messages reveal relatively public information but intimate disclosure deals more with personal matters (Pearson et al, 1995). Therefore, disclosing to the supreme-being reduces the anxiety of being disliked for personal failures, weaknesses, and mistakes by any person. Those who do not believe in God can be allowed to go into a solitary room where they will vent their anger, frustration, or disappointment (Lewis, 2009).

In resolving personal problems through a trusted social worker, self disclosure is fundamental in the helping process. The clients have to open up and share details with the social worker who has to understand the situation to determine the appropriate intervention. At times, clients are unable to reveal to counselors the secrets that contribute to their situations for personal fear that they will not observe confidentiality or disrespect them thereafter (Brammer, 1993). Therefore understanding the dynamics of self-disclosure and associated challenges makes prayer an instrumental tool in working with different clients (Hinson, 1985). Communicating with God during prayer is a supernatural form of communication and it works because God actually answers prayer. The scriptures address the problems of self preservation, allay fears of self disclosure to God rather than another

human being like a social worker; and encourage the observance of the principles of privacy, confidentiality, genuineness of expression, and dignity of individuals which are social work principles. According to the New International Version of the Holy Bible (1984) in Matthew 6:6, individuals are encouraged to:

- a) Enter into a private room or closet
- b) Be on your own and avoid interruptions.
- c) Disclose to the Father (God) who is in secret. Letting the secrets that cannot be shared with the public be presented to the non-judgmental deity.
- d) God who sees and hears in secret will reward the supplicant openly. He will respond in answer to the disclosed challenges and bring inner healing that will be evident also to the public. He provides internal healing of the body, soul, and spirit openly for the scrutiny of others.

In Christianity's biblical Book of Kings, the prophet Elijah was said to know that when nobody could listen and understand the predicament of individuals or families, that is, bruises of the soul and spirit, healing would come through prayer to God. The healing must be generated by prayer in private without any disturbance or interference. He was convinced that the God who hears prayer in private will openly reward the supplicant (Wagner, 1997).

Prayer and the family: In Social Work, therapists can use the instrument of prayer just like the family in Caesarea of a man called Cornelius (Acts 10: 2, 30). He was a man of great standing and honour in his times and a commander in the army as the Bible describes him. He was a typical example of a family that relied on God for its administrative process, stability, and productive living (NIV, 1984). He was devoted, feared God, and reached out to other families in need with provisions, love, and prayer (Wagner, 1997; Goll, 2007). Family prayer provided stability, inner peace, joy, humility, and soundness of mind for family members. When the spirit and soul of the family is intact there is balance and rhythm, but when there is spiritual maladjustment, the family stability and progress are disturbed, leading to disequilibrium (Phillips, 1990). The disequilibrium breeds violence, physical abuse, substance abuse, alienation of individual members, and total breakdown of the system.

Na'im Akbar (1981) advocating for traditional faith which is not Christianity states that the life process of an African is regulated by his submission to the rules of life observing certain basic notions of self respect and respect for others and the recognition that the universal life flowing within himself is renewed through proper rituals (prayer) which reinforce his interconnection with the tribe as whole. Therefore, disorder results from breaking the rules of life which spreads by stages from the individual to close kinsmen, his family, his clan, and his people and it could be arrested and removed by appropriate rituals (prayer).

Group Prayer: Groups can deal with their concerns and challenges in prayer. Social group work, which is a method of social work, may be defined as the "use of small groups as an environment for teaching clients skills for effective performance of daily living tasks, communicating information to enhance social functioning, or for facilitating problem resolution

or therapeutic change" (Morales and Sheafor, 1995: 206). Social work group counseling addressing various issues like marital discord, alcohol or substance abuse, HIV and AIDs, poverty, and emotional distress can help clients draw strength from prayer. The group can take time to pray for each member's concern and solutions with lasting effect from their deity. Prayer stimulates emotional healing and stability and promotes group coherence, solidarity, and unity (Goll, 2007). By praying for each other, they are contributing positively to the solution of problems and demonstrating personal support towards the needs of others in the group. Na'im Akbar (1990: 177) states that in the African context "during time of sickness, the traditional treatment of the person entailed the congregation of the tribe's herbalist, along with the religious leader, the elders, and the immediate members of the family. Often to the accompaniment of drumming and chanting, the treatment was executed by group participation". The assertion is in symphony with the Christian scriptures that encourage two or more people to gather together in prayer in the name of the Lord. The purpose is to listen to the concerns and needs of members and present petitions on their behalf to God. This underlines the behavior and belief of any person who prays to a deity.

Although the inclination may seem to be pastoral counseling in this context which is an adjunct of social work counseling, it is exclusive to believers of the same creed. Hardcastle et al (1997) also recognize the importance of community rituals in the life and progress of the community. They recommend that community or neighborhood analyses should capture intangibles such as ethics, morale, spirit, energy and enthusiasm. The analyses of spiritual ethos in the community are meant to identify what sustains and motivates community members to forge ahead in life despite hardship. Failure to capture the intangible by the community development worker may render her or him irrelevant in the event that the community is confused and discouraged (Zastrow, 1986). The author further encourages social workers to identify personal and others factors that aid or hinder people from getting the services and the ways that churches would assist individuals in particular situations. This should not apply to churches but also to traditional faith systems that could offer assistance to certain circumstances.

The Christian scripture provides evidence of God's presence whenever two or more people gather in his name and encourages corporate demonstration of effective prayer. The example is given of people being encouraged by the word of God when a young man (previously quoted) fell from the third floor of a building and died while people were gathered together in prayer. The incident could have caused disorientation, instability, and immediate interruption of the meeting. Instead the corporate prayer provided stability, courage, and faith to face the challenge and confront it to regain the man's life (Wagner, 1997). His spirit, soul, and body were restored instantly through the power of prayer. If group prayer can accomplish such fruitful results, could it not be applied in group psychotherapeutic sessions? It might be possible because prayer is engaged in by individuals and communities to gain emotional and spiritual strength to deal with challenges. Peale (1984) states that experts in physical health and well-being often utilize prayer in their therapy. Disability, tension, and kindred troubles may result from a lack of inner harmony.

It is remarkable how prayer restores the harmonious functioning of body and soul; you can't get a man physically healthy until you get him spiritually healthy. In Botswana, prayer has been a traditional practice over many years in churches, schools, and Kgotla gatherings. Public prayer permeates a number of important occasions such as the High Court legal year opening and presidential inauguration (Amanze, 1988).

Relationship between self awareness and prayer: Self awareness in simple terms is to be conscious of one's thought processes, ideas, feelings, attitudes, behavior, and experiences and how they motivate one to respond to the self. Personality development and improvement rest on the awareness individuals have about themselves and the capabilities they possess. Beebe and Masterson (1986) argue that:

The thoughts we think about ourselves, the process of introspection, is part of the spiritual self... convictions, moral perspective, and sense of right and wrong are all part of ...the spiritual self ...the spiritual self is shaped by the family (and other social systems).

The statement above cements the argument that the spiritual component contributes significantly to the kind of person one desires to be, that is, cognition, self assessment, morality, and convictions. This suggests that prayer is instrumental in developing awareness of personal spiritual processes. Hinson (1985) asserts that prayer is not only the searchlight of truth to reveal more about ourselves but communication with the God who gives strength to act and who help us to do something. Although the contribution of other factors in the personality development of individuals is not denied, spiritual factors are very significant. Some proponents argue that the lack of prayer in and amongst people stimulates anxiety, worry, instability, and disturbance more than any other factors. According to Stewart (1995)

A philosophy of life is made up of the fundamental beliefs, attitudes, and values that govern a person's behavior ...religious faith can be a powerful source of meaning and purpose. Religion helps many people make sense out of the universe and the mystery of one's purpose in living... It helps people get in touch with their powers of thinking, feeling, deciding, willing and acting. Self awareness affords individuals, families, and communities the opportunity to explore and / or examine their philosophy, values, and attitudes. In this reflection, prayer plays a crucial role in searching the inner soul, seeking divine guidance, and gaining clarity (Peale, 1984). It enables the soul to sift relevant from irrelevant issues and creates stability of body processes and chemical reactions (Phillips, 1990).

Prayer provides calmness and stability needed in decision making process. Examining self is not an easy process but is rather, an extremely challenging engagement. It requires critical personal examination of emotions and attitudes (without pressure from the environment) and coming to terms with ones identity. It includes private failures, strengths, and weaknesses of individuals, families, and communities without personal condemnation. It is at that level that a person develops inner strengths to face opposition, challenges, and criticism without losing the self (Peale, 1984). According to Derezotes (2006) spirituality oriented social work practice holds that "the awareness and expression of feeling is a necessary developmental goal of adulthood, but not the highest developmental goal of

emotional maturity. Spiritual maturity in the emotional dimension also includes the ability to transform unhelpful and destructive emotions into spiritual lessons and creative emotions. Such maturity also includes the ability to listen deeply to and care about the experiences of other people, other living things, and ecosystems". The argument signifies decisive personal assessment and determination of growth and maturity, that is, the ability to acquire survival skills in unfriendly environments.

Self-actualization: Prayer in African traditional societies, its utility, and benefits African traditional beliefs have been with the people for years and are not the same as Christian beliefs which finally influenced many cultural ideologies. According to Na'im Akbar (1980) religion comprises rituals for regulating the rhythms of life which flow from the forces of oneness which permeates all things. It is a primary vehicle for affirming shared experiences and contacting the commonality which exists between people. African ethnic groups have been and still are to a large extent spiritual. They apply spirituality in their socio-economic activities such as agro farming, livestock, business or the market place, the academic field, and political life. The dominance of spirituality in their lives is evident in relationships like marriage, child bearing and upbringing, death or loss of any kind, fears, aspirations, and sustainability of their economic base (Karenga, 1990).

It is the tie to spirituality that gives African ethnic groups their identity, meaning, and connectivity with the environment. Amanze (1988: 2) followed the Tswana religion and argues that "wherever the African is, there is his religion; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician, he takes it to the houses of parliament". Inferences can be drawn from this statement. Individuals, groups, and communities seeking social work intervention do so with their spirituality forming part of that request. It is fundamental that it should not be ignored because it might be the source of a solution to the problem at hand. Amanze (1988: 3) further alludes to the fact that "as a living faith, Tswana religion (the spirit world of ancestors) ...provides answers to the baffling problems of human existence on this planet.

It provides protection, security, hope, confidence, and a better life to Batswana in their struggles against evil powers that threaten the very survival of the Tswana nation. It is the sacred antidote to fears and anxieties of people in the face of evil forces such as witchcraft, sorcery, drought, uncertainties, disease and economic and spiritual phenomena..." It is like medicine that allays the fear and anxiety of people and gives them the courage to deal with the inevitable challenges of life. Lesser and Pope (2007) alludes that spirituality is essential to understanding many cultures as it provides values and beliefs that indicate particular patterns, guides, interpretations, and ways of making meaning out of life's circumstances. They further contend that exploring indigenous healing practices and beliefs provides an important source of information in understanding human growth and development across cultures. The healing practices and beliefs are based on the spiritual foundation of the community constructed by the traditional leaders and the priests who are mainly traditional doctors and diviners. This is besides the Christian beliefs and practices which were incorporated after the arrival of the missionaries (Amanze; 1988).

Amongst the Basarwa, who are by nature hunters and gatherers, prayer to the supreme-being is the basis of their success in hunting. Prayers are conducted to seek guidance for hunters and to make their expeditions successful. When connected to the supreme power, the priest would fall into a trance and many expressions would follow which are understood by community members. This is not a Christian practice amongst the Basarwa community but an illustration that they connect (prayerfully) with the spiritual world for their socio-economic progress, in this case hunting and gathering. The tradition has been with the Basarwa for as long as they have been in existence. Gray (1997) argues that the relationship between wildlife species and humans develops throughout a lifetime as people have contact with spirits and develop techniques of hunting, fishing, and gardening. It is this relationship that ties people's souls to the invisible world that is manifest within Basarwa religious beliefs. Barnes (1980) confirms this assertion in a study she conducted on religion and folklore amongst the Basarwa in Letlhakane, Botswana. She intimates that they revered a praying mantis that they called Yo/Wa and, when seeing a picture of the creature, "responded with voices and facial expression of obvious affection and even, it can be said, tenderness" (pg 5).

It is worth acknowledging that not only the san communities in Botswana that utilize prayer for successful undertakings, but also different Tswana speaking groups in the country. The Baherero yearly rituals of remembering their ancestors (Dikgafela in Moshupa, and the recent Bbogwera graduation in Mochudi) are typical examples of communal prayer rituals which are non Christian. In the past, gatherings would be called and prayers for rain and a good harvest would be offered at the kgotlaKgotla by the chief priest in the community. Amanze (1988) states that religious specialists were assigned the duty of praying for rain in times of drought using traditional medicine to entice the clouds of rain. He further posits that, in recent times, the role of rainmakers has declined and been replaced by prayers for rain held at the kgotlaKgotla with the help of church ministers. Community representatives would visit sacred places like the Hill of Lovers (Baratani Hill) in Otse, and many like it which are believed to be habitations for the spirits that guide life in the village. Success stories are told by elders and community leaders who advocate for the reinstatement of this practice.

Religion represents a cultural codification of important spiritual metaphors, narratives, beliefs, rituals, social practices, and forms of community among a particular people (Lesser and Pope, 2007). This helps in attaining spirituality, most often expressed in terms of a relationship with the god of that religion. Spirituality is a commitment to choose, as the primary context for understanding and acting, one's relatedness with all that is. One attempts to stay focused on relationships between oneself and other people, one's physical environment, one's heritage and traditions, one's body, one's ancestors, and the higher power or God (ibid). The argument would be that the gods are angry and that there is need to appease them. In this case, it is not the deity that is in question but the fact that prayer played a central role in the lives of the people. Lesser and Pope (2007) attest that it is important to understand cultural explanations and belief systems about behavior as part of social work assessment and intervention. Respecting diversity leads to developing

alliances and cooperation in implementing intervention strategies. Satir (1988) argues that spirituality is peoples' connection to the universe and basic to their existence. It is, therefore, essential to the therapeutic context. She further asserts that when people have been nourished, they can then nourish others. Thus successful living depends on making and accepting a relationship to the life force while at the same time recognizing, reorienting, and transforming behaviours' to fit ethical and moral ideas. The spirituality of the client is an important factor in the helping process but this does not necessarily mean that the social worker provides the pastoral element. It should be used as part of assessment and intervention with, ideally, the spiritual counselor working hand in hand with the therapist.

Role of prayer amongst other religious groups: Prayer is not only a practice for Christians and African ethnic groups as other religious groups also value its significance in life. These include the Muslims, monks in China, Buddhists, and Sikhs. Muslims even close their businesses at noon on Fridays for prayer at the designated areas of worship. The commitment to prayer is high in these religious groups and they regard as non-members those that do not attend. Even when they are waiting to board a plane they would observe time for prayer because progress comes through connection with the supreme-being. Serkan Tufan (2009) states that Muslims pray in obedience to God because they believe that human beings were created for no other purpose than to worship God. They pray five times a day and make supplication by raising their hands asking for God's help, mercy, and forgiveness. The purpose is to ask God to erase their sins. Prayer to them includes bowing and then prostrating themselves all the while proclaiming God's greatness, glory, and majesty. Muslims acknowledge their weaknesses and limited power before Allah's infinite might and ask for help from him. Buddhists consider prayer as a practice to awaken their inherent inner capacities of strength, compassion and wisdom rather than petitions based on fear, idolizing, and worldly and / or heavenly gains (Lewis, 2009). The Buddhist prays to replace negative feelings, express an aspiration to access some new energy or purifying influence, and use this energy as a form of self-talking or self therapy. In the process, the person would mentally talk through a problem aloud in the hope of gaining some new insights or make better decisions. It serves frequently as part of a decision making process (Lewis, 2009).

Those who pray believe that they are connected with the divine world and the supreme-being. Wagner (1997) asserts that "the essence of prayer is a personal relationship between a believer and God. Some call it intimacy with the Father". The relationship accords people the opportunity to reach far ahead of those who do not seek for similar blessings. They acknowledge that it is with the help of the supreme power that an individual can attain their aspirations with more limited struggle and hardship (White, 1987). White (1987) states the root of anxiety is fear, fear of the future, fear of failure, fear of the unknown, and fear of impending disasters and in prayer, declaring dependence on God either to change or prevent circumstances, will broker breakthrough of peace flooding the mind and body. They believe that prayer soothes the soul and cultivates nourishment of the spirit thus preventing the fast degeneration of body, soul, and mind.

The dynamics that are manifest and promoted in prayer are essential to self disclosure, particularly where the person is not willing to disclose to another person. It might be because of emotional battering and woundedness to a point where they have lost trust in others (Brammer, 1993: Adams, 1986: Pearson et al, 1995). These individuals should be assisted to enter a solitary place to disclose to their spiritual deity. Satir (1988: 338) argues that the challenge of becoming more fully human is to be open to, and able to contact, the power called by many names, god being the one frequently used. She believes that successful living depends on making and accepting a relationship to the life force.

Self disclosure is not an easy process because it requires a number of factors to be in place prior to the process. Stewart (1995:214) states that "accurately revealing who you are is hard work. Sometimes you think, why struggle to explain? Why risk rejection? And yet the need to be close to others, to let them inside keeps reemerging". The one needing help must trust the person, have assurance of confidentiality, respect of individualism, and understand the goal of disclosure. Such an environment should facilitate open communication and build trust in the individual, group, or family (Pearson et al, 1995).

Normally there is a high risk of losing respect and personal dignity in self-disclosure depending on the issues and the person listening to the narrative. Where individuals, families, and groups lack confidence in the process, the tendency is to resort to silence and keep sensitive issues undisclosed (Brammer, 1993). Thus people may prefer to suffer inwardly as long as they maintain their social status and respect. If prayer and spiritual support can be utilized simultaneously with clinical counseling the results could be more positive. Egan (1994) states that counselors can help clients empower themselves by identifying and developing unused or underused opportunities and potential. Prayer becomes one such opportunity that counselors could explore with clients and utilize in different circumstances to improve the equilibrium of the soul, body, and spirit in their lives (White, 1987).

Relevance and applicability to social work: Thus, spirituality and social work are meaningfully related and cannot be divorced from one another. According to Lesser and Pope (2007) this occurs in three dimensions of practice. The first is concerned with clients recognizing that spiritual needs are inextricably related to the growth and development of the whole person. To ignore this would be tantamount to detachment of people from their foundation and wholeness. The second dimension concerns the roots of social service agencies because many have been founded under religious auspices. The third dimension is associated with the individual social worker who has to understand that for social work to apply holistic and strengths based models of practice, it cannot ignore the spiritual component of human life. It is on the basis of the arguments raised in this paper that prayer appears to be relevant to the practice of social work within the African context. Hutton (1992) argues that social workers in African settings must come to situations as fellow seekers of knowledge not experts because that will enable them to respond to African communities in culturally appropriate ways. They must learn what has made families, groups, and communities hold together and strongly advance their course. Africans understand not only the spirit world or how it operates but also function within it. They know that there is power and authority exercised in the spirit, to consult and communicate with the spirit, and

to function in spiritual dimensions (Karenga, 1989). Any profession not understanding the African in that context will fail to provide meaningful leadership in their development. Nobles (1980) argues that African philosophy is rooted in religion which is a life practice, not sect or church, or Sunday or proselytizing but the unity of humans with God and the whole universe. The practice of social work that overlooks the aspect of prayer in its methodological approaches would be irrelevant to the growth and development of communities. Social work will bring meaning and make more impact by taking the spirituality component more seriously than before. It is in the African setting that problem identification, analysis, and resolutions involve spiritual tools in their divine form.

Hutton (1992) asserts that the use of knowledge about human behavior drawn from social science must be applied within a context that will include the social environment and the culture. The instruments vary but will include incantations, divine bones, prayers, and pouring libations. If the gods are not appeased solutions will not have any lasting effect upon individuals, groups, families, and communities (Na'im Akbar, 1981). The aim of social work is to improve the social functioning of its clientele and cease dependency on residual policies. Any improvement in the functioning of individuals, groups, and communities must take cognizance of the curses that result from disobeying communal spirits and / or ancestral covenants. Lesser and Pope (2007) state that social workers must recognize the spiritual needs of each person and, moreover, recognize that these needs are inextricably related to the growth and development of the whole person".

Prayer can be therapeutic because it connects the individual, families, groups, and communities with the divine power and promotes restoration of the relationship between them. Restored relationships with the supreme-being remove guilt and provide peace as well internal stability for the person. Hope is rekindled providing assurance that blessings will flow and hurdles will be removed. However, it is important that communities take responsibility and play their part as well otherwise dependency is fostered (Phillips, 1990). The benefits are multifaceted. Some people who were paralyzed were healed immediately they prayed and released the long hidden anger against self and others. It is indicative of the fact that self-harm is derived from the emotional and spiritual state of the individual. Africans are initiated in the African religion the moment they are born, when they get married, and the process will continue when they die to join the world of ancestors. Therefore upon growing up, they can choose either Christianity or other religion but in the African religion, a choice has already been made for them by the forefathers (Na'im Akbar, 1981).

Derezotes (2006), in his work on spiritually oriented social work practice, argues that "the overall purpose of the spiritual momentum paradigm is to foster individual transformation of spiritual momentum, which is the general direction that the soul of the person is moving in. Momentum is positive, when the person is moving towards her or his own multi-dimensional healing (while maturity) is learning to love oneself and the world more deeply. Momentum is negative when the person is losing a connection with parts of himself and his world, and is becoming increasingly regressed and stuck in some stage of his development". He argues that people may be stuck in the past or future which inhibits their ability to be fully present in the here and now. Gestalt theory is a theory that counselors

employ because it is congruent with cultures that look beyond words for messages and work with clients who have cultural injunctions against freely expressing feelings (Corey, 2005). Also these symptoms are part of a person's spiritual momentum that his soul brought into his life time. Derezotes (2006) suggests that the person should be taken through a process or an imaginative journey which is used to travel intentionally from the past moment to other moments across time-space in seven steps:

1. Intent shared by both practitioner and client
2. Focused relaxation
3. Departure, involving visualization of moving forward
4. The story, imagination, and narrative
5. Re-entry, returning to the here and now
6. Process: talking about the story
7. Practice: emergence of new beliefs and behaviour

This can be applied by any practitioner to assist the client to be in touch with his or her spirit, visualizing what has gone wrong in his or journey. The client would then carry on from there to maintain constant touch with the spiritual being in prayer, ensuring that internal harmony continues. This is applicable in all religions and is sometimes equated with meditation.

CONCLUSION

Spirituality, it would seem, cannot be divorced from social work practice with individuals, groups, and communities. The practitioner must equip himself or herself with relevant knowledge, skills and techniques of addressing and managing the spiritual needs of their varied constituents. Satir (1988) motivates practitioners to engage in spiritual self work throughout their career in order to foster their own spiritual development through service to themselves, other people, and ecosystems. The practitioner engages their own personal exploration of every method to be used with clients. This makes social work not only appropriate but relevant in addressing the needs of different cultural groups through expression of spiritual selves. In this case prayer, as a mode of expression, is vibrant and facilitates the balance between body, heart, and spirit (Satir, 1988).

Prayer as a medium of communication with a spiritual being has been used in ancient times and is applicable today. It serves all cultural groups and brings relaxation to the body, mind, and heart of individuals. It also promotes solidarity, common identity, and unity crucial values of life of those who pray together. Prayer provides an appropriate environment for upholding social work values of non-judgmentalism, client self-determination, individuality, confidentiality, and empathy. All these values are fundamental to social work practice without which the profession will lose its operational and ethical base. This does not ignore the fact that not all clients pray and that prayer will not characterize the entire clinical counseling process but it has to be explored alongside pastoral counseling when necessary.

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