Cultivating Virtue Dispositions in Counselors Through Replacement Mainstreaming

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The field of counseling has long attempted to establish standards defining non-academic character dispositions for counselors and counselors in training. The struggle in establishing consensus with these standards is that character or virtue dispositions rely on a clearly stated and developed value and belief foundation. While culture can attempt to mimic biblical virtues, the virtues of faith, hope, love, wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage occur as byproducts of lives lived in the pursuit and formation of loving God and loving others. Dispositional virtues form from the telos or purposes found driving our multiple identity factors. Character is developed through the intentional relational imitation of our values from our beliefs, but for effective formation of biblical values to virtues, faith-based graduate counseling programs must cultivate a biblical worldview as a new normed lens to compete with the mainstream belief systems infused in our students from our culture.

Faith-based graduate counseling programs seek to develop counselors possessing strong personal character and clinical skills demonstrated through both academic achievement and non-academic dispositions. As Scott (2019) suggested, faith-based counseling programs are uniquely suited to develop holistic identity dispositions, but, as with their non-faith-based (NFB) counterparts, struggle to adequately define and measure the non-academic character dispositions providing holistic development as clinicians of character. While the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) provides the standards for the definition, measurement, and alignment of academic competencies and dispositions, faith-based programs are left to define the non-academic dispositions that might reflect the unique values, beliefs, and attitudes deemed essential for Christians graduating from their programs. The *ACA Code of Ethics* reiterates the necessity of awareness of personal values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors as an indispensable first step to avoid imposing them on clients, trainees, and research partici-

pants (ACA, 2014, A.4.b.). It is within this call of the American Counseling Association (ACA) to ensure we practice and train our students to practice ethically and with awareness. In this call, we see a gap in establishing value standards for faith-based counseling that provide the means for defining, measuring, and aligning these dispositions or virtues across faith-based programs to aid in promoting standards of excellence and expectation for holistic counselor identity. Kardaras (2022) suggested the necessity of a philosopher-warrior that encompasses the virtue traits of wisdom, strength, grit, resilience, and ethical discernment (p. 231), but within a value-neutral context like counseling, we lack the theological and philosophical foundation from which to establish our value system. Following the perspective of the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) work, we are, as Christians approaching the question of our values, to outline them and use them as an additive scaffold that goes beyond the suggested value-neutral CACREP standards. Values refer to the ideals and interpretations of our belief systems, often residing outside of our conscious awareness, but expressed or lived out through our behavior as our virtues (Scrivener, 2022). Values serve as a theoretical foundation that describes our beliefs, but our virtues form the observed and

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experienced reality of our behavior. One such core value within a Christian worldview is the importance of dispositional character virtues that impact and uphold clinical training and ethical competency. This awareness of values and resulting application of values through virtuous character dispositions improves our alignment with ethical practice and is necessary for the formation of holistic, virtuous counselors (Hastings, 2021). Our values flow from our belief system, but our belief systems or worldviews are influenced and informed by our culture and experiences as well as our religious systems and contexts (Gerbner, 1998; Scrivener, 2022). Christian programs that seek to foster formation and development in a greenhouse environment must enact a new Christian "mainstream" value foundation that will support an observable model of character by virtuous behaviors. Fostering formation as a spiritual process, as Clark and Johnson (2021) explain, requires "the renewal of our minds and transformation of our whole person into the image of our incarnate God and Savior" (p. 22). In this context, we can help develop counselors who love God and love others well as demonstrated by their dispositional virtues of faith, hope, love, wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage.

Cultivating a New Mainstream

To address how Christian faith-based counseling programs may enact and espouse a central set of character virtues and dispositions, we must first address what unites these programs and guides their purposes. To do this, we must visit the concept of worldview as the cultivated foundation of our values, purpose, and virtue expressions. Sire (2015) has traversed the idea of "worldview" through its development and attends to it from a Christian perspective. He suggested a worldview is

> a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions, which we hold about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being. (p. 141)

He went on to state that one's worldview is "situated in the self—the central operating chamber of every human being. It is from this heart that all one's thoughts and actions proceed" (p. 143). In short, Sire suggested our per-sonal and deep commitments can be expressed narratively, and these narratives held deep inside us guide our choices. Axiology, the branch of philosophy that deals with value judgments, provides nuance to Sire's ideas. Worldviews are not values, but systematically assert argumentation through their account of life and its purpose what is to be valuable. A value is a subject's assertion of goodness, worthiness, desirability (or a lack of these) as pertains to a certain object, and therefore underpins the subject's aims, goals, opinions, and actions in relation to that object (Allen & Varga, 2007; Irabor & Onwudinjo, 2022). There is long debate whether values arise intrinsically or extrinsically, and subjectively or objectively (Allen & Varga, 2007; Irabor & Onwudinjo, 2022). While full discussion is beyond our scope, we can understand how Christian's values emerge through core processes that are deontological, teleological, and relativistic. Irabor and Onwudinjo (2022) explain that deontological values are principle-based, asserting that actions are right or wrong. Prescribed value is common to a Christian understanding of life in God's kingdom where there is delineation of right or wrong action because of the world's design. Teleological value allows the outcome of action to define its worth, and we see Christian ethics uphold acts that usher in the shalom of the kingdom. Finally, relativism recognizes cultural and personal preference and "whatever is right for you," which occurs to a lesser degree within a Christian worldview as it accepts cultural contexts and lived experiences, while rejecting full self-definition. We suggest that Christians utilize all three processes in relationship to one another, and differing denominations or traditions prioritize the deontological and teleological values of God's kingdom. Critically, the storying process Sire describes establishes what to value in our belief system. However, it is not just Scripture, religion, or family that cultivates our worldviews. DeYoung, in the foreword to Butterfield's (2023) *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age*, recognized that the devil is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44), intending to "keep us from seeing and hearing what we should...speak[ing] through the half-truths and quarter-truths we find in a thousand movies, television shows, and 'news' reports" (p. xv). As Gerbner (1998) identified in his cultivation analysis model,

Television is a centralized system of story-telling. Its drama, commercials, news, and other programs bring a relatively coherent system of images and messages into every home. That system cultivated from our infancy our predispositions and preferences that used to be acquired from other "primary" sources...television has become the primary source of socialization and everyday information. (p. 177)

"Cultivation is thus part of a continual, dynamic, ongoing process of interaction among messages and contexts" (Gerbner, 1998, p. 180). While the medium of media has changed since Gerbner's initial studies on television in the 1960s through the 1990s, Hermann et al. (2021) highlighted the continued importance of shared sources of meaning and story from which "our conceptions are reciprocally cultivated by the stories we tell" (p. 25). Our values, *telos*, and virtues will always flow from the character formed through our beliefs and worldview, but this belief foundation is not a static pool but a dynamic stream through a reciprocal interaction between values and beliefs influenced by the quantity and consistency of the messages we receive about and from the world around us. Our *telos* or purpose in life provides a critical hinge between the theoretical foundation of our values and the visible practice and expression of our virtues as the shift toward a goal-oriented process (Smith & Smith, 2011).

We must recognize that all worldview positions are uniquely correct or incorrect in myriad ways compared to the ultimate truth based on the reality of embodied and cultured existence that influences us all (Watson, 2019). As Scrivener (2022) suggested in the title of his book, our worldview is reciprocally influenced in saturation by *The Air We Breathe*. Cultivating a biblical worldview requires levels of self-awareness and metacognition beyond the capacity of many children, identifying the source and bent of the mainstreaming narratives shaping the lenses of our reality. And yet, in waiting until adolescence or young adulthood to think about our thinking and identify the reciprocal influences on our belief system, our belief system is established through these mainstreamed narratives.

Because of this process, many counseling students are largely unaware of their worldview and how it orients and primes them to values,

preferences, and behaviors. Yet simultaneously, to act against such a deeply held narrative (or worldview) is known to create dissonance and discomfort (Johnson, 2011). Therefore, a counselor in training is only likely to find training and virtue development appealing if it aligns with their worldview. The conclusion that worldview issues should permeate the Christian counselor's education is sound when we accept that worldview has such great directive power over personal telos and action, and intense dissonance can arise (Scrivener, 2022; Wolf, 2011).

Just as worldview permeates our consciousness through our consumption of the mainstream media narrative, regardless of medium, the permeation of an alternative worldview through education can take many forms. Defining or outlining a biblical worldview as an alternative narrative lens can be difficult. Examining the biblical narrative of creation-fall-redemption-consummation could provide a structure for cultivating a new mainstream model (Schaeffer, 1981). Identifying and replacing worldview system elements requires a narrative arc like this model provides, but the enacted shared experience of consistent and repetitive rituals (like the *Every Moment Holy* liturgies that apply a biblical lens to everyday situations, or corporate worship) is necessary to create the mainstreaming effect that frames new beliefs and values, telos, and expression of virtue (Sandler, 2022). When practical steps are taken to facilitate Christian worldview learning, personal values and goals are continually formed alongside a desire to manifest God's wisdom, beauty, and glory (Erdvig, 2020; Johnson, 2011). Functionally, then, repeated actions are completed according to our values in the service of one's *telos*. Such functional repetition, alongside the experiences of others, forms and reveals the character virtues that are sought in the counseling field. In short, there is an experiential pathway where our worldview provides a goal for life (teleology) and commensurate values (axiology) that underpin our purposeful engagement and further personal character and behavioral formation. When repeated, this pathway culminates in the development and expression of virtues (Smith, 2016). Christian counselor education has a worldview that seeks to initiate this process for students amidst competing cultural worldview ideas. This mainstream cultivation

pathway must not be overlooked if we are to attend to the holistic formation of Christian mental health professionals.

Virtue Categories as an Expression of Worldview and Telos

When Christian counseling training programs attend to worldview and help students to make sense of and enact the shared narrative deeply held within each student, there will emerge a narrowing telos or end goal towards which action and character will attend. As Frankl (2006) identified, a key element of humanity is sustaining a sense of meaning and purpose in life. To illuminate this process, we discuss the Christian telos of glorifying God and loving others as one's self and the virtue of humility necessary to achieve such a telos. For the Christian, glorifying another (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Matt. 10:38-39; Mark 12:30-31) and being comfortable to esteem others rather than oneself (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, John 15:12; Romans 13:8) requires a high degree of personal comfort with one's position, limitations, and inherent value, all of which are not simple tasks. Humility is an enacted virtue that allows for each of the following that are needed for such a task: an accurate appraisal of self as finite and in need of help, a lack of concern for self-importance, a strong sense of one's worth for relationships, and transcendence of the self and an orientation towards others (Lavelock et al., 2017). From this example, it is clear that the virtue of humility can foster behavioral expressions, and the behavioral manifestations are the evidence of the virtue. It is also highly likely that humility would be less likely to occur without a telos that requires humility-dependent action. Critically, the Christian who displays this humility would value the acts or *telos* of glorifying God and loving others as themselves. We now turn to prior scholarship to discuss the relationships between values, telos, and virtues.

From Values to Virtues: Competencies of Character Disposition

As discussed above, and Chatraw and Prior (2019) explained, "virtue assumes telos or purpose" (p. 54). Our purpose or meaning in life flows from and expresses the theoretical foundation of our values, based in the context of our belief systems. This flow is one-direc-

tional, demonstrating our true beliefs and values through our desired purposes, expressed by our visible and evident behaviors (virtues). The counseling field has propositional values demonstrated in the *ACA Code of Ethics* Preamble (2014) of autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, fidelity, and veracity (p. 3). Still, without Christianity, these values become blind faith (McLaughlin, 2021). McLaughlin (2021) cited historian Tom Holland who explained that many Christian beliefs about humanity have been rebranded as secular:

> ...this rebranding has worked so well that even atheists now hold some Christian beliefs to be self-evident truths...Without Christianity, belief in human rights, in racial equality, and the responsibility of the powerful toward the victimized becomes blind faith. (pp. 21-22)

The field of counseling highlights the necessity of "core values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs needed to become an effective and competent professional" (Spurgeon et al., 2012, p. 97), and it seems the virtues of an effective counselor concerned for the rights and needs of others originate from the values founded in the life of Jesus Christ and the telos that comes from Christian faith. Confusion occurs when the values promoted by a Christian worldview become mainstreamed as models of expectation and practice as an outcome but reject the foundational belief system of God and these "counseling" values are expressed as virtues to reflect His love, holiness, and justice to us and through us.

The *Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014) requires that "Counselors are aware of—and avoid imposing—their values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors" (p. 5). This value stance imbued in the ACA ethics suggests, or even requires, the virtues of love, respect, and justice in the counselor, demonstrated through their insight regarding the basis of their values and the potential distinction of these values and that of their client. As even the *Code of Ethics* defines (ACA, 2014), to be a virtuous and ethical counselor, you must first identify your value base. MacIntyre (as cited in Chatraw & Prior, 2019)

> argues in *After Virtue* that in an age that no longer professes belief in a unifying transcendent telos, we still employ the language of virtue, but we do so not to name the excellences that characterize human essence but rather to name our personal preferences. (p. 54)

For counselors to be virtuous, they must have values consistent with the worth and dignity of the individual and a basis for treating others as they want to be treated (Matt. 7:12). While the field of counseling seeks to develop counselors that are virtuous and ethical, faith-based graduate programs are uniquely suited to develop students of character and virtue because the personal virtues desired by our world flow from a life lived explicitly seeking alignment with the Gospel and a pursuit of conformity to Christ. Worthington (2010) summarized multiple streams of research around virtue formation, defining virtue as "the best of human character" (p. 268), but that "virtue implies goodness… [and] something or someone must define what is good" (p. 269). We need God to define what is good and to enable, through His mercy and grace, to transform us into people who desire good (Rom. 3:10) and will love others because love comes from God (1 Jn. 4:7) and serves as the "guiding virtue" (Worthington, 2010, p. 271), forming the person and perspective for all the other virtues to follow. As Greggo (2016) highlighted, "Our training intent is not to integrate—merge disciplines—but to equip leaders to live a Christian identity wisely in a professional capacity with multicultural fluency…merg[ing] professional identity with a lifelong walk as a disciple of Jesus Christ" (pp. 30, 33).

Building from this acknowledged value position of Christian faith defined by biblical standards, we can establish a framework for determining the personal character dispositions of effective Christian counselors as standards of alignment for faith-based graduate counseling programs. While many lists of character virtues exist, they need a consistent or acknowledged value base, ignoring the necessity and contribution of the Christian faith as their propositional foundation. Both Tan (2019) and Worthington (2010) cited Peterson and Seligman's six core virtue strengths and twenty-four-character strengths (see Table 1). While these core virtues align well with the proposed dispositions of effective counselors, they lack an acknowledgment of the necessary core of Christianity, rendering the concepts a hollow morality devoid of functional applicability and denying (or at least foregoing) the reality of sin and immorality as contributing factors to motivation and behavior. Spurgeon et al. (2012) acknowledged the desire for counseling trainees to demonstrate character dispositions or virtues for years but explained how a lack of consensus on which personal dispositions were necessary prevented CACREP from requiring them. Spurgeon et al. (2012) gathered lists of personal dispositions, including personal qualities and specific outcomes, from a variety of counseling-related educational programs, identifying the nine dispositions of respect, multicultural acceptance, use of sound judgment, self-reflection, boundaries with others, flexibility, advocacy for self and profession, personal responsibility, and lifelong learning (p. 102). A semi-structured faculty focus group then refined the list for clarity and concreteness to "five dispositions that [the] faculty believed captured the heart and identity of the programs: commitment, openness, respect, integrity, and self-awareness (CORIS)" (Spurgeon et al., 2012, p. 102). These dispositions included operational definitions explaining the specific character traits or strengths similar to Peterson and Seligman's positive psychology list (see Table 1). Spurgeon et al. (2012) suggested that dispositions "describe a presence" (p. 104) and that these non-academic character dispositions are critical foundations for effective clinicians and are "shaped by the program's faculty member values" (p. 106) without identifying the value base for these virtue expressions. The Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC, 2021) presents a similar situation with competencies for addressing spiritual and religious issues in counseling, assuming virtuous responses but without acknowledging consistent value standards or the necessity of the Christian faith to support these standards.

Summary of a Christian View of Virtue Formation

Worthington (2010) noted that while "some psychologists identified 140 virtues and found… that four factors undergirded the virtues… empathy, order, resourcefulness, and serenity…[concluding] that virtues are a function of personality rather than of moral reasoning" (p. 261). This finding supports our values to virtues through spiritual formation conclusion. "In Christianity, virtue is a fruit of the Spirit. Virtue is a manifestation of something inside, worked by the Holy Spirit, and a part of Christian iden-

tity" (Worthington, 2010, p. 262). Once again we can see how a Christian worldview provides a rich story with commensurate values and telos that promote behaviors, and in time, they develop into virtue. The empowering work of the Holy Spirit for growth and change helps align wayward personal values (that are relativistic) with God's standards (deontological) and purposes (teleological) in the world, to produce virtues exhibited within the community. We become virtuous through imitation as we are discipled by those modeling an enacted Christian *telos* to us. Said differently, the Christian environment "mainstreams" virtue, and becoming virtuous is a progressive formation requiring engaged practice (Smith, 2016). As we practice new behaviors, what we desire corrects to purify and refine our values, aligning our beliefs to our values through our telos to express behavior (or virtue) congruent throughout.

A Christian Virtue Framework

In an attempt to create a virtue framework that aligned with the categories and dispositions from existing research by filling the *telos* or values gap of said virtues, Watson (2018) used a Christian value-based virtue framework to demonstrate the source and expression of dispositional virtues across a developmental lens (see Table 1). Watson (2018) also introduced the acknowledged need for an education in virtue, noting how mental health professionals recognize that ethical practice as a counselor begins by forming character virtues in the educational environment. "A virtues-oriented framework brings a holistic theological and psychological understanding of how character is formed" (Watson, 2018, p. 25), with Christian teaching providing the theoretical value base that "prioritizes the development of mental health professionals to be conformed to the likeness of Christ as faithful, hopeful, and loving practitioners who seek above all to serve Christ's kingdom" (Watson, 2018, p. 26). Watson (2018) suggested that the purpose (or *telos*) of character virtue development is not simply to be virtuous but so that counselors may be formed in character to love God and neighbor as the actions of virtue. In agreement with Worthington's (2010) and Howard's (2018) argument for love as the guiding virtue (1 Cor. 13:13; Heb. 10:22-24), Wat-

son's (2018) list of character virtues has "three theological virtues (faith, hope, and love) and four moral or cardinal virtues (wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage)" (p. 27).

As highlighted in Table 1, using these theologically and biblically grounded behavioral expressions of character (virtues) provides a value-based framework for pursuing the character formation of counselors of virtue while also providing connection and consistency to the existing models of character and virtue strengths. These virtues are lifelong character dispositions demonstrated across both our personal and professional lives (Spurgeon et al., 2012; Watson, 2018), providing the "scaffolding for professional formation" (Watson, 2018, p. 186) and the means for "facilitating growth in Christian maturity and formation...[for] the long-term flourishing of...students" (Watson, 2018, p. 188) in faith-based graduate programs. Only through the context of a Christian integrative approach that intentionally cultivates a new mainstream mindset for contextualizing clinical training within a Christian worldview, biblical teaching, and spiritual practices (by providing the biblical worldview narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration as the broader interpretive lens) can students begin the formation process to become counselors of self-aware and shared virtuous character. Character formation is a process of maturation and transformation into the likeness of Christ, requiring relationship and time both in the community and with Christ through the Spirit (Howard, 2018). The primary seven virtues of faith, hope, love, wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage provide core categories within which relevant character virtues can be organized for specific measurement, formation, and development, similar to Peterson and Seligman's virtue and character strength model. However, a critical source and capacity for development comes through our active partnership with God as the "Spirit's deep work within us, and among us, for God's glory and our ultimate fulfillment in Christ [occurs]" (Tan, 2019, p. 47).

A non-Christian may logically contend that the primary seven virtues offered above are only semantically different, rather than substantively different, from alternatively named or organized lists of dispositions and virtues. Indeed, the expression of the seven virtues

may appear somewhat similar because—as discussed above—many of the virtues esteemed in the helping professions find their origins in Christian thought or other similarly person-affirming belief systems. Rather than dismiss the necessity and utility of Christian virtue due to apparent similarity, one must look closer to find the differences, which we suggest returns us to a question of *telos*. The Christian *telos* provides a *direction or orientation* to life and behavior, a critical component for thriving humanity (Frankl, 2006; Kardaras, 2022). Subsequently, the Christian virtue of love, for example, is *directed* towards a specific purpose rather than a generic sense of "this is how I might like to be treated" or "it is better for us." Those sentiments may be accurate, but Christian love as a virtue is teleological, intending to allow the recipient to experience their dignity, a proper ordering of relational care, and the forgetfulness of self that provides worship and ultimately reflects the Lord Himself. Watson's (2018) descriptions of the seven virtues lead the discerning eye beyond "what the virtue does" and into "what the virtue intends for human flourishing." The goal in developing said virtues is not for the counselor to be virtuous but, instead, for developing people who love God and love others, exhibiting these virtues as byproducts of this larger telos.

Additionally, a recent study by Christensen et al. (2018) explored the dispositions specifically reported by 177 CACREP-accredited counseling programs. After coding the 964 dispositions, Christensen et al. (2018) presented "seven categories or themes indicative of the personality traits, values, and attitudes of professional dispositions expected of counseling students. The seven dispositions were (1) openness to growth, (2) awareness of self and others, (3) integrity, (4) emotional stability, (5) flexibility, (6) compassion, and (7) personal style" (p. 8). The seven categories presented a generally more myopic perspective. They lacked teleological import, which further strengthens the case for faith-based virtues and dispositions that respond to the demands of the ASERVIC requirements.

New Mainstream through Mentoring Relationships in a Professional Greenhouse

In their recent book on brain science and spiritual formation, Wilder and Hendricks (2020) highlighted that "our character is formed by imitating those to whom we are attached" (p. 101) and that "we are formed by our strongest attachment and the shared identity of our community" (p. 111). Character is "our embedded automatic responses to our relational environment, our instantaneous behavior that flows naturally from our heart" (Wilder & Hendricks, 2020, p. 115) with these acquired habits of virtue gaining positive automatic responses through practice and repetition (Smith, 2016, p.187). This occurs within the relationships of a supportive community "that has a well-developed group identity-based in the character of Jesus" (Wilder & Hendricks, 2020, p. 115). We cannot behave virtuously without a theoretical value framework that defines what virtue looks like, and these value frameworks or belief systems are acquired through our group identity in community (Boswell et al., 2017; Howard, 2018; Wilder & Hendricks, 2020).

As noted earlier, the mainstream perspective of our culture provides its versions of these virtues, cultivating an anemic and value-neutral worldview lens that is devoid of the depth necessary to sustain natural life and practice (Butterfield, 2023; Kardaras, 2022; Sestir, 2020). Faith-based graduate counselor training programs have unique opportunities to develop counselors of character by cultivating a new mainstream message founded in a Christian worldview and its values that frame a theory for defining the expressed character virtue traits encouraged within the personal and professional relationships of the community. Watson (2018) referred to this concept as a "Professional Greenhouse" (p. 183). This professional greenhouse describes the atmosphere of a program that promotes growth in Christlikeness by forming the character strengths that demonstrate these dispositional virtues as part of average group identity in the training process (Scott, 2020). As Smith (2016) identified, "virtues are habits that take practice" and are "woven into character" through imitation and repetition (pp. 18-19). Watson (2018) explained how enabling institutions or professional greenhouses are those program environments that "prioritize relationships, encourage Sabbath-keeping toward work-life balance, and [foster] shared values and virtues across institutions and programs" (p. 189) while not forgetting to have fun. In research evaluating the practice of gatekeeping and discipleship in such greenhouse

Table 1

Proposed Alignment of Character Virtues with Existing Virtue and Dispositional Models

Character Virtue (Watson, 2018, pp. 31–32)	Professional Ethical Principles & Values (Watson, 2018, pp. 31–32)	Spiritual Formation: Individual and Community Practice (Watson, 2018, pp. 31–32)	Activity to demonstrate character virtue**	ASERVIC (2021) Framework**	Spurgeon et al. (2012) CORIS alignment**	Peterson & Seligman PP Virtues & Character Strengths (Tan, 2019; Worthington, 2010)**
"Faith: trust, belief, and obedience to God; intellect and will assenting God's truth."	"Fidelity and responsibility to individuals, community, and public; establishing trust, upholding standards of conduct, honoring commitments, fulfilling one's responsibilities"	"Contemplative prayer" Christian community, liturgy, and the sacraments"	Professional Performance Review (PPR) for Faithful Engagement with a Community of Believers & Spiritual Development	Addresses spiritual themes competently and therapeutically	Commitment, Integrity	(6) *Transcendence* (appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, religiousness)
"Hope: expectation and trust in God as our meaning and purpose; pursuing Christ's kingdom as our desire"	"Beneficence: benefit to others, working for good, promoting health and well-being in society"	"Sabbath Worship"	Advocacy Assignments — Personal Care Plan in CNS 6310 HG & D — Preparing for Practice Presentation in CNS 6810 Career Development	Counselor recognizes that clients may view Christian faith as an additive choice in life, rather than a worldview. — Does not falsely separate spirituality from all of life in client assessment and conceptualization	Integrity, Self-Awareness	
"Love: agape/caritas, love of God and neighbor, mercy, compassion"	"Relational competencies and respect for dignity and rights: respect worth of all people; respect privacy, autonomy, confidentiality, and self-determination"	"Interpersonal spiritual disciplines" Intercessory prayer"	Advocacy Assignments	Can work with clients' stated spirituality while still holding to one's spirituality without internal conflict. — Addresses spiritual themes competently and therapeutically	Respect	(3) *Humanity* (kindness, love, social intelligence) Peterson & Seligman
"Wisdom: practical wisdom and good judgment"	"Competence and ethical decision-making"	Scripture study and meditation Discernment"	PPR for Willingness to Accept & Use Feedback	Counselor recognizes that clients may view Christian faith as an additive choice in life, rather than a worldview. — Counselor does not impose their worldview on the client's goals.	Respect, Integrity, Self-Awareness	(1) *Wisdom and knowledge* (creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective)

Table 1 (continued)

Proposed Alignment of Character Virtues with Existing Virtue and Dispositional Models

Character Virtue (Watson, 2018, pp. 31-32)	Professional Ethical Principles & Values (Watson, 2018, pp. 31-32)	Spiritual Formation: Individual and Community Practice (Watson, 2018, pp. 31-32)	Activity to demonstrate character virtue**	ASERVIC (2021) Framework**	Spurgeon et al. (2012) CORIS alignment**	Peterson & Seligman PP Virtues & Character Strengths (Tan, 2019; Worthington, 2010)**
"Justice: wanting what is fair and reasonable for others, compassion"	"Justice: fairness, equality, eliminating biases, treating individuals equally, respect for diversity and individual differences"	"Attentiveness Hospitality Service"	Advocacy Assignments Education/Prevention/ Treatment Project Presentation for CNS 6620 Treating PTSD	Can work with clients' stated spirituality while still holding to one's spirituality without internal conflict.	Respect, Openness	(4) Justice (fairness, leadership, teamwork)
				Awareness of the centrality of worldview in influencing psychosocial functions.		
"Temperance: self-control, restraint, and humility" [*Diligence*]**	"Nonmaleficence: do no harm, awareness of our health in practice, self-regulation, and humility"	"Self-Examination Fasting"	PPR for Awareness & Conflict	Awareness of the influence of one's spiritual worldview on clients and the counseling process	Openness, Self-Awareness	(5) *Temperance* (forgiveness, modesty, prudence, self-regulation)
				Recognizes limitations of own spiritual perspectives/ understanding		
"Courage: fortitude, endurance, resilience, commitment, confidence, and magnanimity" [*Diligence*]	"Integrity: accuracy, honesty, and veracity in clinical and research practices"	"Stories and examples Rule of life Silence Solitude"	PPR for Flexibility, Initiative & Motivation, & Openness to New Ideas	Recognizes limitations of own spiritual perspectives/understanding. Can work with clients' stated spirituality while still holding to one's spirituality without internal conflict.	Integrity, Commitment	(2) *Courage* (authenticity, bravery, persistence, and zest)

** Additions to the table to show the alignment of the model and comparison of virtue lists.

environments, Scott (2020) discovered that the formational virtues desired in the students must be actively experienced, practiced, and demonstrated by the faculty through intentional relationships with the students. It is not sufficient to know what virtues are necessary to be an effective counselor, but "we need to see what it looks like to live in God's kingdom [because]... our character is formed by imitating those to whom we are attached" (Wilder & Hendricks, 2020, p. 101). This concept mirrors the cultivation effects of mainstreaming across media models to cultivate group-think perspectives within our cultural worldview (Hermann et al., 2021). However, as discussed above, the *telos* or purpose of virtue formation is not to be a virtuous and ethical counselor, as demonstrated by the presence and development of these virtues, but to love God entirely and to love others as ourselves. These character virtues of faith, hope, love, wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage and their related character strengths are not the goal but the means for our purpose in loving God and loving others. This is the Greatest Commandment (Mk. 12:29-31) and the value foundation driving our ethical and dispositional values in working with others. As 1 Corinthians 13:13 highlighted, "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, 1 Cor. 13:13). It is the experience of God's love for us within the professional greenhouse of a faculty/student mentoring relationship and the resulting group identity from the program that creates a new mainstream worldview that forms our character over practice and time, providing the attachment context for cultivating and sustaining these "habits, dispositions, and, eventually, virtues" (Inazu, 2016, p. xiv). Capturing the beginning and end of this pathway—God into virtue—Loosemore (2020) found that the quality of Christians' relationship with God directly correlated with increased character virtues.

As C. S. Lewis (1996) explained in *The Abolition of Man*, "No justification of virtue will enable a man to be virtuous. Without the aid of trained emotions, the intellect is powerless against the animal organism" (p. 35). For Lewis, "men without chests" are people attempting virtue through rationality or reason without the will based on objective values to govern the space between our base desires (stomach) and

pure reason (head). Virtue is formed as a habit through repetitive practice within a community united around a central *telos*, where refinement and support are expected within relationships. With this new mainstream framework of cultivation established, it is time to attempt a model for practicing the cultivation of virtue within a faith-based graduate counseling program.

Mainstreaming the Virtues: Beginning a "How to" Plan for Application

Later, we conclude this discussion by affirming our desire to see a unified, Christian faith-based list of dispositions consisting of faith, hope, love, wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage. Here, we provide ideas and examples of how Christian faith-based faculty may model and measure one of the seven virtues, hope, within a new mainstream worldview expression to drive behavioral results. We assert that modeling the virtues and structuring environments that foster their development is as important as measuring them because of the argument above that faith-based counselors develop these virtues experientially and relationally. Furthermore, once we understand how virtue is intended to be lived and shared (its *telos*), it will be easier to see how we might measure it. Of course, measuring signs of Christian virtues in students is a complex task. Educators and supervisors must use careful discernment and consideration to assess the lives and actions of their students. To evaluate students' virtues, we recommend that consideration is given to student actions, statements, choices, and relationships in each of the following areas: (a) clinical work, (b) supervision responses and participation, (c) papers and other coursework, (d) relationships with educators, supervisors, and other students, and (e) any other meaningful student contact, such as their dealings with school administration.

Hope

There are many possible expressions of, and opportunities to model, the virtue of hope. Christian hope is the eager and full expectation that God's redemptive work will be completed and shared by His people (Williams, 2005). The Bible speaks plainly of the rich glory that is to come in the consummated earth (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Eph. 1:18) and that to

know this future is to be guided and ushered in a new way of living—one full of hopefulness. In short, Christian hope looks to the day of Christ's return and the end of pain, weeping, and despair and subsequently focuses on the blessings of being united to Christ in freedom (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Eph. 2:5-7; Rev. 21:3-5). As Watson (2018) discussed, Christian hope provides a solid foundation for life, which can be relied upon as an anchor when clients (or others) are adrift and attempting to find meaning (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Heb. 6:19). The acknowledgment of the definition anchored within a worldview system is necessary for these virtues to retain their values and purposes in a world of existential subjectivity and personal, individual meaning-making devoid of social and community consideration and practice. Grounded hope within this new mainstream worldview creates congruence in the flow of our values to virtues for greater insight and effectiveness as counselors because the final expression of our assumptions flows from a place of regular self-evaluation and personal worldview scrutiny.

The anchor of hope provides stability, a foundation, a sense of fortification within one's life, and the promise of eventual rescue (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Ps. 18:1). In response to their foundation, Christians make choices and engage in activities, such as keeping Sabbath rests, attending worship, meeting to pray, or conceptualizing suffering and clinical work in the light of eternity, that illuminate, bolster, remind, and give them tastes of their hope (Watson, 2018). What emerges is a Christian hope that is sustaining and active and something by which Christians allow their lives to be guided (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, 1 Pet. 1:13). When Christians experience such long-term, foundational sustenance, they are empowered to contend with complexity, client resistance, hopelessness, and much more, with depths of resource and personal stability.

For an example of application, we focus on Christian counselor educators and supervisors regarding clinical work. In the face of challenging clients, supervisors may start by assisting students in identifying the counselor's expectations and assumptions for how the world should work, exposing the framework of their existing mainstream worldview to assess, critique, and adjust it to align with a biblical belief system or new mainstream. Processing with student counselors could then progress to include exposing the emotional cost, the internal perspective, and the subsequent choice of interventions that hold onto hope. Drawing from the prior theorizing, we suggest this experience explicitly identifies the progression of an expression of virtue as flowing from one's *telos* (purpose or desire) and values that are established from foundational beliefs. We must remember that enacted virtues may or may not reflect what you state you believe but could be an expressed conglomerate of learned behavior informed by unidentified mainstream assumptions about the world. When juxtaposed against a Christian narrative and telos, these mainstream assumptions may appear accurate or inaccurate about life but control our values, purpose, and virtue regardless of awareness. This is why assisting student counselors in the process of identification and exploration is a critical ethical training approach (ACA, 2014).

In sum, the following may each express a Christian mainstream of hope. First, supervisors may model how to use hope to address the experience of meaninglessness in life that arises for many clients. Clinically, this entails pursuing meaning that undergirds a re-engagement with life and working to support a client's internalized sense of meaning (Watson, 2018). Second, supervisors may model the telos of hope by demonstrating how to bring beauty and culture before the Lord for His glory and support a joyful community. Hope is a critical element of connecting the self beyond what is currently seen or known to something more significant and is conspicuously absent within our existing cultural worldview (Kardaras, 2022). When clients struggle with direction and choices, the orienting presence of working towards the redeemed world can facilitate the discovery of personal gifts, work-gifting-fit, renewed vision, and joy. Third, supervisors can model personal dependence on the refreshing sustenance and rejuvenation of the hoped-for reality to come. They may model how they help clients lean into a solid foundation and vision of life so that they experience motivation and care for their earthly bodies because of their eschatological significance. Said concisely, hope provides an anthropologically sound rationale to work, rest, and play.

Measurement Statements for the Virtue of Hope

The task of developing others is greatly enhanced by measuring current levels of attainment. In this case accurate measurement helps the educator assess virtue development and discern what scaffolding might be necessary. We offer some initial thoughts on measuring the virtue of hope that could be operationalized. We recommend discerning to what degree students demonstrate (a) personal (while never perfect) growth and client care in the context of life's telos, where the expressions of meaning and purpose are consistent with the human condition and anthropology; (b) freedom and comfort with ambivalent emotional experiences within self and others, intense lament, and joy while refraining from rationalizing these experiences outside God's story; (c) a willingness to attend to meaning-making processes with clients without fear or imposing control on others; (d) effective and healthy practices for re-engaging their source of hope and meaning in such a way that they draw from, rather than distort God's story; and (e) articulates and finds sustenance through a self-aware joy in the hope of their Christian future, even during the mixture of life's sorrow and pain.

Specific Activities to Evaluate and Cultivate Hope

While we maintain that measuring any of the seven Christian virtues we have discussed is best done across multiple events and relationships, we offer suggestions for measuring the virtue of hope using the criteria above that may be readily adapted to fit within current counseling programs. To calculate the virtue of hope, educators and supervisors may ask students in group supervision to conceptualize a case study or an existing client's treatment regarding future redemption. Subsequently, a group discussion can be facilitated to improve students' understanding of client care guided by a Christian *telos*. Additionally, an online class group discussion board can be initiated where students must contribute at least twice, with practical examples, to the following prompt, "How does a Christian counselor respond to the Bible verse 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away

(*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Rev 21:4),' in a complex, comforting, and realistic manner with their clients, especially when the counselor is currently struggling with life's difficulties?"

Conclusion and Call to Collaboration

We have attempted to make a case for improving the means of identifying, developing, and measuring the holistic character dispositions of counselors in training by acknowledging the necessity of Christianity and faith-based graduate education as the value base for such virtues. Virtue formation occurs through imitational mentoring relationships that are embedded in and cultivate a new mainstream biblical worldview between counselor educators and students. These dispositional traits develop as byproducts of lives lived in pursuit of loving God and others well, tethered to the *telos* and values of biblical truth and Christian faith. Faith-based graduate counseling programs are uniquely suited to acknowledge this foundational purpose of formation and alignment to the person and work of Christ as a goal of the counselor development process, recognizing how a virtuous counselor demonstrating faith, hope, love, wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage occurs as a consequence of loving God first.

We suggest establishing these virtues, their development and measurement, as dispositional characteristics of effective Christian counselors and for them to become cultivated mainstream standards across faith-based graduate counseling programs. The counseling world has attempted to define these character dispositions for years but has failed due to an inability to acknowledge a unified *telos* or value foundation. Faith-based graduate programs can unify around the Bible's redemptive narrative, allowing us to expand this formational model to become a new standard of practice and process within our programs. This article invites faith-based graduate counseling programs to apply this model of virtue-based holistic character development with students and to expand what we have developed to incorporate measures and descriptions for each of the seven virtues. We hope that we work together as faith-based schools to lead the counseling field with excellence by acknowledging how the necessary foundation for clinical work requires that we first love God to love people well.

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