

Connection Newsletter

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 WESTERN
SEMINARY

In this issue:

- ◆ Pg. 1 From the desk of the Counseling Director
- ◆ Pg. 2 CN562 PIZZA GATHERING
- ◆ Pg. 3 Practicum/Internship News
- ◆ Pg. 4-5 Good Reads by Dr. Thiesen

Upcoming Events:

- ◆ Feb. 17 PIZZA GATHERING 12:30 in B103/104
- ◆ Apr 4 Counseling Program Graduation dinner in Student Center
- ◆ Apr 13 Semester ends
- ◆ Apr 24 Graduation dinner for all graduates
- ◆ Apr 25 Commencement



A “Good Enough” GOD

From Kay C. Bruce, PsyD

Pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott coined the term “good enough” mothering in 1953.

He posited that some human parent failures are beneficial to a child’s development, stating the child “can actually come to gain from the experience of frustration”. In recent years, we have applied the term “good enough” to people as an antidote for perfectionism. Clients are sometimes encouraged to accept themselves as being good enough just as they are.

Perhaps this thought even creeps into our perception of God. We may mistakenly view God as only slightly better than good enough. We freely criticize what we believe are divine injustices. Some come to believe that God accepts people who are good enough, without a need for redemption or salvation.

In our current culture, we loathe perfectionism as pious and self-righteous because we are well aware that no human being can be perfect. God claiming to be without sin somewhat grates against our sense of reality. God describing self as flawless smacks of too much ego.

Many view God as important and predominantly loving, and one who tolerates our imperfections. Some disagree with divine decisions regarding human suffering and justice in our current experience. Some deconstruct their faith with cynicism and doubt the possibility of a truly

sinless, perfect God. Our distress over evil and suffering can cause us to question the existence and character of God.

When we work with clients, do we accept them because we have assessed them to be good enough, or do we accept them simply because they are a “client”? Likewise, are people acceptable to God because they are good enough or because they have been redeemed and have become a child of God? Is it possible that God truly is perfectly good, loving, and just by nature and that salvation of people is a necessity? If God is only good enough, then how is faith and trust in a fallible God possible? Would God be of any value to us if there are periodic failures, mistakes, and half-truths?

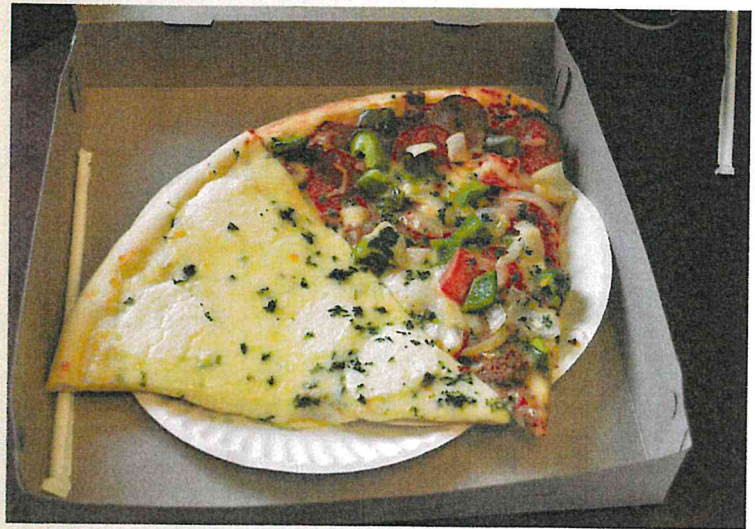
As you practice new spiritual habits this semester, I encourage you to challenge your view of God’s character. Is God trustworthy, loving, without flaw, and just, as described in the Bible? Is salvation of people necessary? How does this fit with your own real life experience and that of your clients?

Several students have requested a time to talk with peers about spiritual formation and integration questions such as the questions posed here. The counseling program will provide a pizza and salad lunch on Monday, 2/17 from 12:30 -1:20 to facilitate your opportunity to connect with other students. There will be no pressure, simply an opportunity to connect, dialog and have fun. All are invited, please come!

Winnicott, D. W. (1953). Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena—A Study of the First Not-Me Possession¹. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 34, 89-97

PIZZA GATHERING

Our fall counseling pizza party was so much fun that Norm Thiesen suggested we should do it again in spring semester. Students have asked to talk with one another about their Spiritual Formation practices. We thought this is a perfect pairing—a lunch hour with salad and pizza and a time for students to connect over common experiences. There will be just enough structure so that you will not feel awkward, but plenty of time to get acquainted. Please plan to join next Monday, 2/17, from 12:30-1:20 in B103/104.



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My Experience of the Spiritual Formation Class in Fall 2019

To be frank, I was not sure that this practice would be that beneficial during this semester. What I learned is that even a small shift in my daily activity and a small shift in my mental framework towards celebration, helped me close the gap in the current distance and burnout I was feeling surrounding my faith. It was nice to take a step back and remember how sweet it is to simply meditate on the Word and be with God in a personal and intimate way. Additionally, I had a great time celebrating and enjoying the life that God has given me over good food and time with friends. Prior to this, I was actively pursuing God, but I think that the extra time in the Word and the journal processing just made it that much more intimate. I used to journal quite a bit, but over the last few years I have not made it a priority. This experience helped me to remember.

Thank you for having us participate in these exercises.



Calling All 2020 Graduates

Counseling Graduates: please save the evening of April 4th for our counseling graduation dinner. It is a wonderful evening for you and a guest of your choice, including food, fun, and awards.

This is a personal time for the counseling program graduates. Unlike the counseling graduation dinner, the banquet on April 24th is for graduates from all degree programs.

You will not want to miss either of these memorable events—after all, you have worked hard to graduate!

Practicum/Internship News

Some of you may be looking for a practicum or internship site for fall. Here are a few tips to assist you in your search. Be sure to read the student handbook starting on pg. 26 for specific practicum/internship instructions. Also, check the guidelines for supervision of students so that you know what qualifications both the site and supervisor have to meet (in the handbook). Here are a few quick facts:

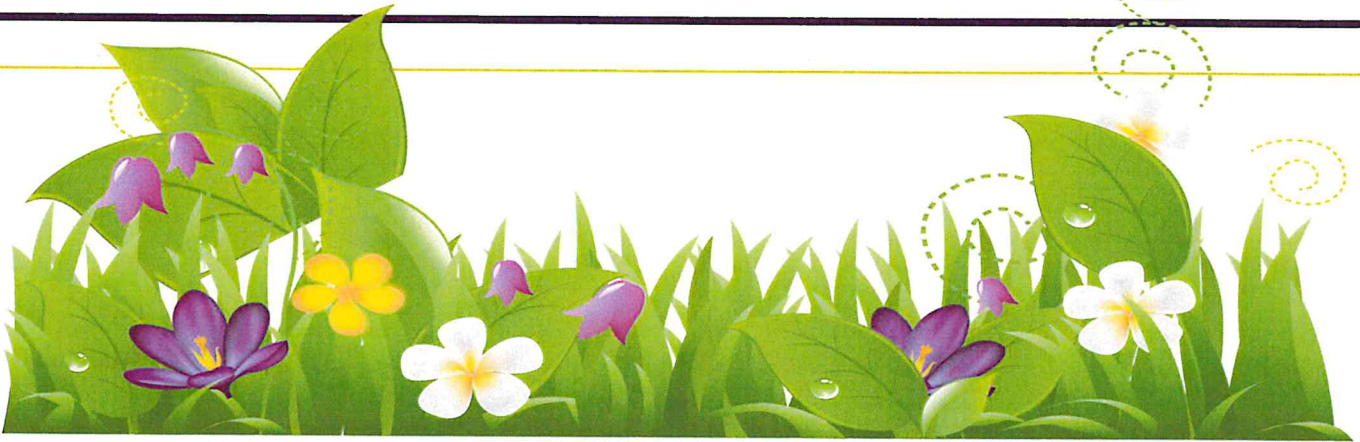
- ◆ Please choose an already approved site for Practicum. You can look through the site books to find out if a site is approved for practicum students located next to the Admin. Asst. desk. Or online on the All Counseling Students moodle webpage.
- ◆ You will not be permitted to choose a site where you work or attend church due to possible
- ◆ dual relationship conflicts.
- ◆ If you would like to look into a new internship site, please see Sandy to pick up a packet. Allow up to three months for approval of a new site.
- ◆ If you are considering a new site something you need to consider is that an administrator, clinical team member, or supervisor needs to be in the building when you are conducting sessions. The person on site needs to have some advanced education and training in people helping skills and crisis interventions.

If you have questions regarding practicum/internship site placement, you can contact Dr. Mary Aguilera, the Clinical Site Placement Coordinator at maguilera@westernseminary.edu or 503-517-1867.

Happy site hunting!

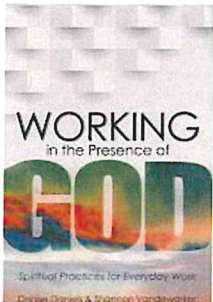
Possible Internship Site for Fall

The team at the Domestic Violence Resource Center (DVRC) is making decisions for fall internship placement. If you are interested in an internship there, you can contact Evanna Bradley at evannab@dvcr-or.org



Good Reads by Dr. Norman Thiesen

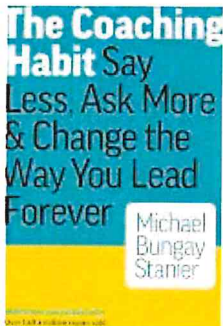
Books to consider for your reading list — and everyone should have one!—at least after graduation.



Working in the Presence of God: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Work

By Denise Daniels and Shannon Vandewarker

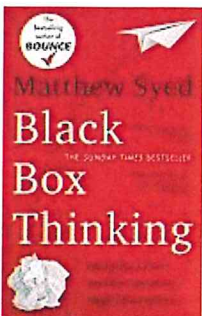
Have you ever wondered how to practically have your faith and relationship to God involved in your work life? How do I bring God to work with me (especially in a secular environment)? This is a great book that will show you the path on how to do that. Highly recommend.



The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever

By Michael Bungay Stanier

An easy and quick read on the basic principles of coaching. He provides you with seven questions that form the basis of a good coaching conversation. Some really good transferable concepts to counseling to consider.

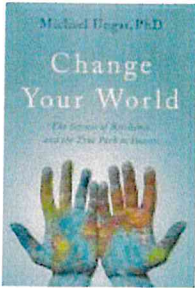


Black Box Thinking: Marginal Gains and the Secrets of High Performance

By Matthew Syed

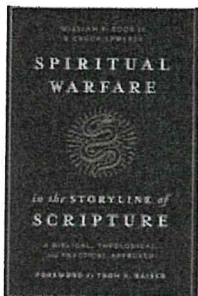
From real world examples and solid research he shows what often makes the difference between success and failure. The key is the willingness to acknowledge our failures and learn from them. Great implications from both a faith and counseling perspective. Very interesting read.

Continued from pg. 2 Spring 2020 Reads by Thiesen



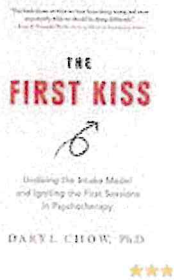
Change Your World: The Science of Resilience and the True Path to Success
By Michael Ungar

An interesting critique of the self-help movement and why the principles espoused don't work. The author asserts that our successes in life have more to do with our context of life than with our personal abilities or efforts. If true (and I think he makes a good case) then some of our therapeutic assumptions need to be questioned and practices modified. This might generate a great heated discussion in a counseling class.



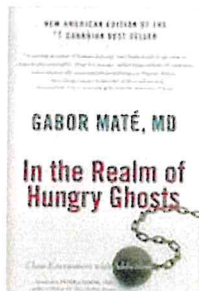
Spiritual Warfare in the Storyline of Scripture: A Biblical, Theological, and Practical Approach
By William Cook III, Chuck Lawless

If you are looking for a book on spiritual warfare this is the best one I have read to date. The authors comprehensively cover every text in the Bible addressing this issue. In the second half of the book they provide the practical concluding observations of how to address this issue biblically. Something every Christian counselor should read.



The First Kiss: Undoing the Intake Model and Igniting the First Sessions in Psychotherapy
By Daryl Chow

If you want to improve your intake skills this is a must book to read. How you begin your relationship with clients influences their likelihood of continuing in treatment, having a positive experience in treatment and a host of other significant results. I'm sure this will become required reading in some future class of mine – that good!



In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction
By Gabor Maté

A student told me this is the best book they had read on addictions – I would have to agree with him! This is a must read book that will provide you with an interesting take on addictions. Though not my area of expertise, I found his arguments compelling. Plus, he is a very good writer and story teller – this one will not bore you!