The Similarities between
Adlerian Principles and Biblical Principles

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By:
Ramona Lindemann

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Abstract

The main discussion of this paper is on the similarities between Adlerian principles and biblical principles. Prior to this discussion, a preliminary foundation discussing Alfred Adler and other prominent contributors to Adlerian theory will be included. In addition, a background about the Bible and a general overview of Christianity is discussed. Because of the similarities between Adlerian principles and biblical principles, the benefits of this compatibility for Christian clients are noted. The continued discussion of the paper focuses on Adlerian principles and biblical principles that share similar concepts.
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The Similarities between Adlerian Principles and Biblical Principles

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Alfred Adler and Individual Psychology

Individual Psychology is the analytic-behavioral-cognitive theory of Alfred Adler. Adler (February 7, 1870 – May 28, 1937) was born near Vienna, Austria. He graduated from the University of Vienna and worked as a medical doctor and psychotherapist. Adler was also interested in politics and met his future wife, Raissa Timfeyewna Epstein, at the socialist political meetings that they both attended. They married in 1897 (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). In 1902, Adler joined Sigmund Freud’s Wednesday night discussion groups which grew into the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. As one of its founders, Adler also served as president for a time. However, because Adler did not agree with Freud on various issues, he chose to resign in 1911. Adler and several other colleagues who had left the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society formed their own group and called it the Society for Free Psychoanalytic Research. They worked on developing a more social view of psychotherapy that included “prevention, ego psychology, cognitive theory, child guidance, family life education, social action, group therapy, multiple therapy, family therapy, therapeutic social clubs, and the development of more effective education methods” (Lantz, 1980, p. 188). Adler was the first in his field to recognize the
importance of the unity of the person (Cheston, 2000). Adler eventually came to call his theory Individual Psychology because he believed that human beings are an indivisible whole (Lantz, 1980). The word “individual” comes from the Latin word *individuum*, which means “unity” or “whole” (Cheston, 2000, p. 296). Throughout this paper the terms Individual Psychology and Adlerian Psychology are interchangeable.

**Other Prominent Adlerians**

In addition to Adler, there are other individuals who contributed, promoted, and worked hard to utilize the theory of Individual Psychology in their research, writings, and practice. A few of these notable individuals are Rudolf Dreikurs; Harold Mosak; Heinz Ansbacher and his wife, Rowena Ansbacher; and in later years, Adler’s children, Kurt and Alexandra.

**Rudolf Dreikurs.** Rudolf Dreikurs (February 8, 1897 – May 25, 1972) was born in Vienna, Austria and died in Chicago, Illinois. Dreikurs had been a student of Adler’s as well as his colleague. Dreikurs worked as a psychiatrist and helped carry on the work of Adler after Adler’s death. Dreikurs had written many books during his lifetime one of which was the well known book entitled *Children: The Challenge*.

**Harold Mosak.** Harold Mosak is the Chair of the Doctoral Scholars in the Clinical Psychology Program at the Adler School of Professional Psychology in Chicago and was a student of Rudolf Dreikurs. Mosak, along with Michael Maniacci, wrote the book *A Primer of Adlerian Psychology*. It describes the analytic/behavioral/ cognitive psychology of Alfred Adler. Mosak has written other books and articles as well.

**Heinz and Rowena Ansbacher.** Heinz L. (1904-2006) and Rowena R. (1906-1996) Ansbacher were associated with Adler after he moved to the United States. They decided to write a book entitled *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*. It is a systematic presentation
in selections from Adler’s writings. According to Ansbacher and Ansbacher (as cited in Adler, 1964), Adler’s name was not very prevalent in the psychology and psychiatry literature of their day. They believed that the reason for this was that Adler’s writings were unsystematic and did not make for satisfactory reading. Therefore, they decided to write their book to “make Adler’s contributions to the theory and practice of psychology available in a systematic and at the same time authentic form” (p. xv).

**Christianity and The Holy Bible**

**The Holy Bible**

The word “Bible” comes from the Latin word *Biblia*, which means “little books” (McClintock & Strong, 1968). The original writings of the Holy Scriptures were written on scrolls. As time went on, and with the invention of the printing press, the Bible was printed into several different versions and languages. For the purposes of this paper, the Protestant Christian Bible shall be referenced and discussed. Several translations of the Protestant Christian Bible are currently available, and throughout this paper, the translations that will be used and noted are the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the New International Version (NIV), and the New King James Version (NKJV).

The Bible is divided into two parts. The first part is called the Old Testament and consists of 39 separate books. The second part of the Bible is called the New Testament and consists of 27 separate books, making a total of 66 books for both the Old and New Testaments. According to II Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (NASB). The Scripture is teaching that even though the Bible
was penned by men, these men were divinely inspired and prompted by the Holy Spirit to write the Word of God.

**Christianity**

Christianity is based on the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to the earth and died on the cross for the sins of humanity. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ and acknowledges that he is the Son of God who died for their sins will have eternal life in heaven. This message of salvation is interwoven throughout the Bible. The most famous verse regarding salvation can be found in John 3:16. It states, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (NASB). The Scripture goes on to say in John 3:17 “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him” (NASB).

Throughout the Bible there are many principles that Christians can practice and apply to their daily lives. Many of these principles are also used and practiced by non-Christians whether they are aware of it or not. Interestingly, there are many similarities between Adlerian Psychology principles and biblical principles. Adler studied from many different sources to gain his ideas for his theory of Individual Psychology. His principle sources were the works of Kant, Nietzsche, Vaihinger, Goethe, Shakespeare, and the Bible (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). As to Adler’s religion, he was raised Jewish and then later converted to Christianity. The reason is not clear why he converted to Christianity. It may have been that he believed the Christian doctrine, or it may have been for political or other reasons. Adler was not considered a religious man, but he was respectful of religious beliefs, language, and practice. According to Griffith and Powers (2007), Adler believed that religious fictions were necessary to appreciate the realities that would not otherwise be accessible through scientific inquiry. Adler (1964) stated the following:
The idea of God and the immense significance of this idea for mankind can be understood and appreciated from the point of view of Individual Psychology as follows. It is the concretization and interpretation of the human recognition of greatness and perfection, and the dedication of the individual as well as society to a goal which rests in the future and which enhances in the present the driving force toward greatness by strengthening the appropriate feelings and emotions. (p. 460).

Although Adler believed his theory to be of a scientific nature rather than a religious nature, he did see religion as being positive and valued certain aspects of it (Hoffman, 1994).

Watts (2000) noted there are common characteristics between Christian spirituality and Individual Psychology. Watts (2000) stated that both Christianity and Individual Psychology “conceptualize humans as creative, holistic, socially oriented, and teleologically motivated (goal directed) (pp. 319-320). Watts (2000) believed that Christianity and Individual Psychology also share the same attributes of “equality, value, and dignity of all human beings” (p. 320).

**Conservative Christians**

According to Kanz (2001) “a conservative Christian is a person who believes in the inerrancy of the Bible and tries to live life in accordance with those beliefs” (p. 342). Conservative Christians, more so in years past, have been mistrustful of psychology and hesitated to see a professional counselor. These Christians were more comfortable talking to their pastors about their problems rather than seeking professional help.

Worthington and Scott (1983) explained that a concern of many religious people in seeking professional counseling is that the counselor would not respect their religious beliefs and work within their value system but rather try to secularize them. According to Genia (1994), about 40% of people who seek help for psychological issues prefer to see a clergyperson rather
than a professional counselor. In addition to believing that a professional counselor would not respect their religious beliefs, these individuals may think that their problems are of a spiritual nature rather than a psychological nature. Therefore, these individuals would be more comfortable seeing a pastor than someone in the mental health field.

The concern of conservative Christians seeing secular counselors is valid. Presley (1992) found that counselors may avoid talking about religious issues with their clients or they may see religion as a significant part of their client’s problem. In addition, there are some counselors who are antireligious and that makes it difficult for people of faith to see them. According to the research done by Worthington and Scott (1983), several researchers have found that clients are influenced by their counselor’s values during effective counseling. Interestingly, this happens even when the counselor does not consciously try to change their client’s values.

When conservative Christian clients feel that their problem is too big for their pastor to handle, they may then seek professional counseling. Privette, Quackenbos, and Bundrick (1994) reported that religious clients were more apt to seek nonreligious professional counseling for serious mental illness, depression, and substance abuse issues. These clients saw the benefit in working with a trained professional even though their religious values may have been different (as cited in Kanz, 2001).

Another problem that may be encountered when counseling religious clients is the lack of religious training on the part of counselors and mental health professionals. Even though counselors are open to religious issues, they may feel uncomfortable knowing how to approach this subject with clients. Of course, those counselors who are not religious may also feel uncomfortable talking with their clients about religion. According to Weaver, Kline, Samford, Lucas, Larson, and Gorsuch (1998), “only 43% of psychologists believe in God as opposed to
95% of the general population” (as cited in Kanz, 2001, p. 344). In addition, most therapists have not had training in religious issues. A study conducted by Shafranske and Maloney (1990) showed that out of 408 clinical psychologists only 5% had reported that religious and spiritual training was part of their graduate training; 12% reported that they sometimes received religious and spiritual training; 45% reported they rarely received religious or spiritual training; and 38% reported they never received any religious or spiritual training (p. 77). Overall, Kanz (2001) believed that psychologists and counselors are apprehensive as to moving toward the integration of religious and psychological issues.

The benefit of Adlerian Psychology is that many of its principles overlap with biblical/Christian principles. Therefore, Christian conservative clients are more apt to feel comfortable seeing an Adlerian counselor as opposed to seeing a counselor whose beliefs contradict their own. The similarities between Adlerian principles and biblical principles will be discussed throughout this paper.

**Adam and Eve**

Adler believed that people should have the freedom to choose their own life paths (Adler, 1964). This fits well with biblical principles. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, the Bible speaks of a person’s right to choose and the consequences of those choices. For example, in the book of Genesis, chapter two, God created Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden. God told Adam that he could eat of the fruit of any tree in the garden except from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God also told Adam that if he ate from that tree, he would surely die. God then created Eve because he said it was not good for the man to be alone (Genesis 2:18).
Although God had given Adam and Eve a beautiful paradise to live in as well as supplying all of their needs, they chose to disobey God and ate from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. After eating the fruit, Adam and Eve did not immediately experience physical death because they both lived to be many hundreds of years old. However, they did experience a type of spiritual death and separation from God. In spite of this, as was his custom, God came down to the garden in the cool of the day to talk to Adam and Eve. However, Adam and Eve hid themselves from God. They felt guilty because they had sinned. God had allowed Adam and Eve to make their own choices, but they had to take responsibility for their actions as well. Because they had sinned, they condemned themselves to a life of labor, toll, and pain (Genesis 3:1-14). God also cursed them for their disobedience. In Genesis 3:15, God said, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel (NIV).” Barker and Youngblood (2002) gave their commentary of the above verse, specifically the second part: “he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” as the following:

The antagonism between people and snakes is used to symbolize the outcome of the titanic struggle between God and the evil one, a struggle played out in the hearts and history of humankind. The offspring of the woman would eventually crush the serpent’s head, a promise fulfilled in Christ’s victory over Satan—a victory in which all believers will share. (p. 10).

Romans 16:20 refers to the above verse noted in Genesis 3:15. It reads: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (NIV).

Adam and Eve’s sin had its consequences and their curse was passed down throughout the generations. Because of Adam and Eve’s sin, human beings have a sinful nature. However,
God in his mercy established a plan in Genesis 3:14-15 to redeem human beings back into right relationship to himself through his son, Jesus Christ. For those individuals who accept Jesus Christ’s death on the cross as a payment for their sins will be saved from eternal damnation and live eternally with God (John 3:16). This is the Christian’s goal of salvation.

**The Goal of Salvation and the Guiding Self-Ideal/Goal of Perfection**

For Christians, the goal of salvation gives them the hope that one day they will spend eternity with God. The goal of salvation is consistent with the Adlerian principle of the guiding self-ideal or goal of perfection. According to Kanz (2001), Adler believed that people where not “pushed along by past events; rather, they are motivated or pulled by some goal so that they are focused on both the present and the future” (p.345). Adler (1964) believed that the future was not the objective future but a subjective one based on the concept of a person’s goals. However, for the conservative Christian, the goal of salvation is an objective goal based on the inerrant Word of God, not a subjective one. Therefore, it is important for a counselor to have this understanding when working with Christian clients.

**Private Logic**

According to Griffith and Powers (2007), private logic is a term that Rudolph Dreikurs and H. L. Ansbacher modified from Adler’s original term called “private intelligence” (p. 81). An individual’s private logic is his or her own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and way of thinking about life. The difference between an individual’s private logic and an individual’s common sense is that common sense has its beliefs, understandings, and thinking about life in common with a majority of other individuals whereas private logic is unique to each individual.

As a therapist, it is important to understand a client’s private logic in order to know what the client believes. A client’s beliefs will be evident through his or her speech, nonverbal
communication, and behavior. By knowing this information, the therapist will be able to identify mistaken beliefs held by the client and help him or her change these maladaptive beliefs to more rational and healthy beliefs.

**Mistaken Beliefs**

According to Nystul (1994), mistaken beliefs or basic mistakes as he calls them “represent the client’s convictions about one’s self, the world, and others” (p. 272). Lingg and Kottman (1991) describe basic mistakes as follows:

Basic mistakes are basic because they are the original ideas a child develops to fulfill the needs of belonging and significance. They are considered mistaken because they are the faulty conclusions drawn from a child’s perspective while the child is engaged in the struggle to establish a place in the world.” (p. 256).

Dinkmeyer, Jr. and Sperry (2000) wrote that “basic mistakes are self-defeating perceptions” that are geared more toward a person’s self-interest rather than social interest (p. 95). Mosak (1989) believed there are five different categories of basic mistakes which include:

- Overgeneralizations, such as “People can’t be trusted.”
- False or impossible goals of security, such as “I must please everyone.”
- Misperception of life and life’s demands, such as “Life is unfair.”
- Minimization or denial of one’s worth, such as “I’m dumb.”
- Faulty values, such as “Winning is everything.” (p. 87).

Therapists can work with their clients to help them identify their basic mistakes. Once their basic mistakes are identified, therapists and clients can work together to understand where these beliefs originated from. By doing so, therapists can help their clients change their basic
mistakes to more rational beliefs. By changing one’s beliefs, a person’s behavior would change as well (Mosak, 1989).

**Albert Ellis**

Another prominent psychologist named Albert Ellis (1913-2007) also believed that if people changed their thinking by replacing their irrational thoughts with rational ones, then their behavior would change as well (Sarason & Sarason, 2005). Ellis is famous for his rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT). According to Sarason and Sarason (2005), rational-emotive-behavior-therapy is “based on the belief that behavior depends more on individual belief systems and ways of interpreting situations than on objective conditions” (p. 74). It is also explained as the ABC’s of emotions: (A.) First, an activating event would take place. (B.) Then the client’s perception of the event would involve his or her thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs. (C.) This would then translate into the client’s feelings and behavior or emotional consequence. Therefore, “A” does not cause “C,” the emotional consequence, but instead “B,” the belief system of the person, causes “C,” the emotional consequence. This is an interesting concept and one that was influenced by Adler’s theory. It is also worthy of noting that Adler’s theory was the foundation of many other theorists work such as Minuchin, Haley, Frankl, May, Yalom, Sartre, Kohut, Beck, Kernberg, Fromm, Horney, Sullivan, Guidano, Liotti, Mahoney, Safran, Egal, and Wachtel (Mozak & Moraniacci, 1999). Unfortunately, Adler was not given his due credit for his influence on these other theorists.

**Reframing**

According to Carlson and Slavik (1997), reframing can be defined as “presenting the client with a new or different way of looking at a designated event, behavior, or phenomena” (p. 158). Eckstein (1997) stated that reframing is “a shift in how the situation is perceived, in the
meaning given to the situation, or how one behaves toward the situation” (p. 420). Dinkmeyer, Jr. and Sperry (2000) wrote that when clients reframe a particular issue, they are more apt to separate themselves from the emotional context of the problem in a manner where they are able to reconstruct its meaning in a more manageable and acceptable way. As clients learn to reframe their problems, their private logic will change. Once their thinking changes, their dysfunctional behavior will change as well.

**Book of Proverbs**

In Proverbs, chapter 23, verse 7, the Scripture reads: “for as he thinks within himself, so he is” (NASB). The Scripture is teaching that the way a person thinks about himself is what he believes he is or will become. This person’s thinking will also dictate his behavior. This thinking goes hand and hand with Adler’s concept of private logic. Both the biblical principle and the Adlerian principle emphasize that whatever people believe about themselves will be demonstrated through their behavior and communication with others. Adler (1964) put it this way, “It is very obvious that we are influenced not by facts but by our opinion of facts” (p. 192).

**Book of Romans**

Along these same lines, the Bible discusses the importance of renewing one’s mind. In Romans 12:2 it states: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (NASB). The Scripture is teaching that people need to read the Bible (the Word of God) in order to change their ungodly thoughts to Godly thoughts. By reading the Word of God, as well as listening to Godly preachers teach God’s principles, people can change their thinking and renew their minds. As previously discussed, when a person’s mind is renewed, his or her behavior will change as well.
**Book of Acts**

A good biblical example of a person’s mind being renewed and their behavior changed is found in the Book of Acts, chapters six through nine. The Apostle Paul, first known as Saul, was an educated and religious Jewish man. Saul hated people who believed in Jesus and his teachings and chose to persecute them. To demonstrate his hatred, Paul attended the stoning of Stephen and gave his approval of Stephen’s death (Acts 8:1). Stephen was a follower of Jesus who taught and preached the teachings of Jesus; he was “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5 NIV). Stephen did “great wonders and miraculous signs among the people” and opposition arose from certain members of the Synagogue of Freedmen (Acts 6:8-9 NIV). These particular members of the Synagogue of Freedmen falsely accused Stephen of blasphemy against Moses and God and then stoned him to death (Acts 6:9-11).

After Stephen’s death, Saul went from house to house and put men and women who were followers of Jesus in prison. Saul then started to go to Damascus to find other followers of Jesus so that he could imprison them as well. Along the way, a light from heaven flashed around Saul, and he fell to the ground. Saul heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do” (Acts 9:4-6 NIV). Saul stood up but could not see anything, so the men traveling with him helped him get to Ananias’ house where Jesus instructed him to go. When Saul arrived at Ananias’ house, Ananias placed his hands on him and prayed for him. Saul was then able to see, and at once he went to the synagogues and began to preach that Jesus is the Son of God. Saul later became known as Paul, the Apostle (Acts 9:7-20).
The above passage is an example of a person changing his thinking and renewing his mind. Of course, Paul did have a miraculous encounter with Jesus that helped him to change his thinking and beliefs very quickly. Amazingly, Paul went from persecuting the followers of Jesus to being one of Jesus’ dedicated followers. In fact, Paul wrote many of the Books of the Bible found in the New Testament (Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and possibly Hebrews, NIV). In his writings, Paul shares the joys and sufferings that he undertook in living a life dedicated to God. Because Paul’s thinking had changed and his mind was renewed by the things of God, it was clearly evident in his behavior and how he lived his life.

Social Interest

According to Manaster and Corsini (1982), the strongest area of common ground between biblical principles and Adlerian principles is the relationship perspective. Adlerian Psychology is a relational psychology. Adler (1964) called this concept of his theory “social interest” (p. 135). Social interest as defined by Adler is “to see with the eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another, to feel with the heart of another” (Adler, 1964, p. 135). The German word that Adler used to describe social interest or community feeling is Gemeinschaftsgefühl. From this German word, Adler tried to think of an English word that would best translate its meaning. However, because he did not speak the English language very well, he was persuaded by others to use the words “social interest” to translate its meaning. Though, “community feeling” is probably a better English translation for Gemeinschaftsgefühl (Griffith & Powers, 2007, p. 11).
Adler (1958) believed that a person’s mental health was equated to his or her level of social interest. He noted that the meaning an individual gives to his or her life depends on the contribution that one makes. Along these same lines, Dreikurs (1971) believed that the meaning of life lay in “contribution to the common welfare without thought of reward” (p. 6). When a person is contributing, he or she feels a sense of value and self-worth. This in turn gives the individual more confidence and permits him or her to be optimistic and remain so. In like manner, Mosak (1995) stated that “if we regard ourselves as fellow human beings with fellow feeling, we are socially contributive people interested in the common welfare, and by Adler’s pragmatic definition of normality, mentally healthy” (as cited in Watts, 2000, p. 320).

Stasio and Capron (1998) defended social interest as a distinct personality construct and maintained it is the key personality trait and main measure of mental health in Individual Psychology. Their research showed that there was an overlap between empathy and social interest in the concepts of sympathy, warmth, and compassion. Stasio and Capron (1998) determined that a person’s level of social interest can be measured from a low to high range. Their research showed that on the low end of the spectrum, people tend to be more discouraged and have poor mental health. On the higher end of the spectrum, their research showed that these people have a more spiritual connection.

The Ten Commandments

In the same sense that Adlerian Psychology is a relational psychology, Christian spirituality is a relational spirituality, and the foundation for Christian teachings are found in the Bible. According to Watts (2000), the Bible focuses on relationships and affirms that human beings have a three-fold relational responsibility to God, to others, and to themselves. For example, in chapter 19 of the book of Exodus, the Lord spoke to Moses about wanting a
relationship with the Hebrew people whom he had delivered from the Egyptians. These Hebrews had gone out from the land of Egypt and were camping at the bottom of Mount Sinai waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain where he had gone to seek God. In chapter 20 of the book of Exodus, the Word of God tells us that while Moses was still on the mountain top, the Lord spoke to him about the Ten Commandments. As the Lord spoke the Ten Commandments to Moses, the Lord also wrote the words on tablets so that Moses could bring these tablets to the people who were waiting at the base of the mountain. It is interesting to note that all of the Ten Commandments are relationally focused. They are as follows:

1) ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, you shall have no other gods before Me.’

2) You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands to those who love Me and keep My commandments.’

3) ‘You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

4) ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all you work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the Lord make the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.’
5) ‘Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.’

6) ‘You shall not murder.’

7) ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

8) ‘You shall not steal.’

9) ‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.’

10) ‘You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.’ (Exodus 20:1-17, NASB).

As is evident from the above list, God’s Ten Commandments are about relationships. The first four commandments address people having a relationship with God. The last six commandments address people having a relationship with each other. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he stated in Matthew 22:37-40:

‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commands depend the whole Law and Prophets.’ (NASB).

According to Watts (2000), Jesus is stating how God wants people to be in relationship to Himself as well as how he wants people to be in relationship with other human beings. Throughout the Bible, covenants, commandments, doctrines, sins, and holiness are discussed. These concepts are all indicative of some type of relationship between God and human beings. Kirwan (1984) wrote that these concepts were not entities unto themselves that had nothing to do
with relationships but that they needed to be interpreted from the standpoint that there is a relational component within each of these concepts (as cited in Watts, 2000).

**Book of Genesis**

In Genesis 1:26, the Scripture states: “And God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (NASB). By the use of the plural words “Us and Our,” the above Scripture shows that before mankind existed, there was community and fellowship between the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God is the creator and designer of community and because humans are made in his image, they are created for fellowship and community with each other. Grenz (1994) expressed that people can only be related to the image of God when they are in community with others. He went on to say that the image of God is a community concept (pp. 232-233).

The Bible addresses in Genesis 4:3-12 another aspect of community and relationship. It is the story of the relationship between Adam and Eve’s sons Cain and Abel. Cain was the elder brother and was jealous of his younger brother Abel. Abel brought an offering to the Lord of the first of his flock and of their fat portions. Cain, on the other hand, offered the Lord the fruit of the ground. Therefore, Abel found favor in God’s eyes but Cain did not. Cain then became jealous of Abel and killed him. When God asked Cain where his brother was, Cain replied: “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9). God became very angry with Cain and punished him by casting him out of the area and informed him that he would be a vagrant and a wanderer upon the earth. Elmore (1986) noted that the lesson taught in the above story of Cain
and Abel is that we are all God’s special creation and are responsible for each other. He said that
we cannot be responsible to God without being responsible for others as well (p. 127).

**Book of Luke**

Many biblical stories convey the message that human beings are responsible for caring
for one another. One such story can be found in Luke 10:25-37. A lawyer tested Jesus by asking
him what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answered by asking the lawyer, “What is
written in the Law? How does it read to you?” The lawyer answered and said “You shall love
the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and
with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus responded, “You have answered
correctly; Do this, and you will live.” The lawyer wishing to justify himself said to Jesus, “And
who is my neighbor?” (NASB). Jesus replied by telling the lawyer a parable of the Good
Samaritan. The essence of the story is that a man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. He
was attacked by robbers, and they stripped him, beat him, and left him for dead on the road. A
priest happened to come by but when he saw the man, he crossed the street. Then a Levite came
by, and he too did not help the man. Then a third man, a Samaritan, walked by the injured man.
He did not avoid him but instead felt compassion for the injured man. Therefore, he stopped and
helped the man by bandaging his wounds and then brought him to a nearby Inn. The Samaritan
even paid the Inn’s fees for the man to stay there until he was well enough to leave. After telling
this story, Jesus asked the lawyer, “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to
the man who fell into the robbers’ hands? The lawyer responded, “The one who showed mercy
toward him.” “And Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do the same’” (Luke 10:25-37, NASB).

The above story shows that the Levite and priest, both who were well respected men in
the Jewish community, did not care or show mercy to help an injured man. On the other hand,
the Samaritan, who was despised by the Jews because he was half gentile and half Jew, was the only one who cared enough to stop and help his fellow man. His behavior showed that he was neither selfish nor prideful. The Samaritan was putting social interest into action. To this day, when someone does a good deed for another human being, he or she is referred to as a Good Samaritan. Gratefully, the legacy lives on.

**Book of Hebrews**

Another example of social interest and the importance of being with others can be found in Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 23 to 25. The Scripture reads as follows:

> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. (NASB).

The Word of God is encouraging its readers to be motivated to love each other and do good deeds. It also stresses the importance of assembling together and not remaining alone. By assembling together, people can encourage each other and be a support system for one another. As believers assemble together for church, they have the opportunity to worship God and to edify each other.

**Jesus and His Disciples**

Jesus believed in community and reaching out to others—social interest. When Jesus began his ministry at the age of 30 years, he chose 12 men to come along side him and help with his ministry. These men, known as his disciples, lived, worked, and traveled with Jesus to reach out and minister to others (John, Chapter 3). In fact, Jesus and the disciples traveled throughout Israel to share the Gospel of Good News with the people. First and foremost, Jesus was
interested in saving people’s souls; however, he was also interested in meeting their mortal needs as well. An example of Jesus caring for people’s immediate needs is relayed below.

Jesus and the disciples came to the Sea of Galilee area, and a great multitude of people were following them (John, Chapter 6). The Passover feast was at hand, and Jesus was concerned that the great multitude of people should have bread to eat. Jesus asked his disciple Philip “where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?” (John 6:5 NASB). Jesus knew what he planned to do, but he asked Philip to test him. Philip informed Jesus that the money they had was not enough to buy bread for all of the people. However, another disciple named Andrew informed Jesus that there was a boy with five barley loaves and two fish, but he did not see how that could help them. Nevertheless, Jesus told the disciples to have all the people sit on the grass. There were about 5,000 people. According to John 6:11-13, the Scripture reads as follows:

Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, ‘Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost.’ And so they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten. When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, ‘This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world.’ (NASB).

The above described event is one of many recorded in the Bible that showed Jesus’ care, concern, and love for the people of the community. This certainly is compatible with the Adlerian teaching of social interest.
Relationships

Watts (2000) wrote that according to the Bible the most disruptive factors in relationships are selfishness and pride. These disruptive factors are evident in individual, family, and societal relationships. In the previous story of Cain and Abel, selfishness and pride caused Cain to kill his brother Abel. According to Elmore (1996) “selfishness and pride are in direct contradiction to the image of God in man. Love is the primal attribute of deity and, thus, also the most appropriate expression of dual affection for both God and other humans” (p. 132). When people are in right relationship to God, they are free to love others, express social goodwill, and live by the golden rule. As Jesus taught in Matthew 7:12: “Therefore whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (NASB).

According to Jones and Butman (1991), there is a relational similarity between a biblical perspective and Individual Psychology. According to Individual Psychology, people are understood through their social relationships, and it is through these relationships that people have their meaning (Jones & Butman, 1991). Jones and Butman (1991) noted that Adler’s view of the individual being rooted in relationships is a healthy balance as opposed to other psychologists who may strictly adhere to either an individualistic or collectivistic psychological viewpoint.

Forgiveness

As stated by McBrien (2004), “Adler’s contribution to the study of forgiveness is explained as the relationship between forgiveness and social interest” (p. 408). Scholars of forgiveness who have ignored Adler’s theory believe that empathy is vital to healthy forgiveness. McBrien (2004) believed that social interest can be expanded through forgiveness. He stated that two important attributes of social interest are forgiveness and empathy. He believed that
developing social interest as a therapeutic goal to forgiveness is important for counselors to recognize.

Forgiveness as a therapeutic intervention, especially in marriage and family therapy, is the subject of many current studies. According to McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997), the research on forgiveness has produced some evidence that forgiving helps married couples adjust better to each other. Another benefit of forgiveness is that it helps reduce depression, anxiety, and hostile Type-A personality traits.

According to McBrien (2004), “an operational definition of forgiveness describes interpersonal forgiveness as a shift in motivation from revenge-seeking and avoidance to contact with the offender to an increase in feelings of goodwill and movement toward reconciliation” (p. 409). McCullough and Worthington (1994b) investigated how counselors applied psychodynamic to developmental methods as they reviewed five theoretical models of interpersonal forgiveness. Their general findings showed that developmental models of forgiveness were empirically stronger. They described forgiveness as generally a four-stage process that includes (a) recognizing the offense, (b) deciding to forgive, (c) a cognitive or emotional activity, and (d) some sort of action.

Other research done by Enright (2001) defined interpersonal forgiveness therapy as having four phases: “(1) uncovering your anger, (2) decision to forgive, (3) working on forgiveness, and (4) discovery and release from emotional prison” (p. 1). According to Enright and Reed (1998), forgiveness counseling is a “psychological health intervention” (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 410). McBrien (2004) considered that Enright and Reed’s research was some of the most thorough of its time.
Another model of forgiveness was developed by Worthington (1999). He created a five-step Pyramid Model of Forgiveness with the acronym REACH which stands for the following: “(a) Recall the hurt; (b) have Empathy for the offender; (c) be Altruistic in forgiving; (d) Commit to forgive; and (e) Hold on to forgiveness” (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 410). Still a further model was created by Luskin (2002). His model of proactive forgiveness was focused on forgiveness as a choice, the importance of self-growth, and the restoration of the relationship (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 410).

McCullough et al. (1997) described forgiving as “a motivational transformation that inclines people to inhibit relationship-destructiveness responses and to behave constructively toward someone who has behaved destructively toward them” (p. 321). Worthington (1998) believed in a triad of interpersonal forgiveness that included empathy, humility, and commitment. He found cognitive-behavioral models of therapy limiting because they do not address the hurt associated with the offense and the need for its healing. Adler’s concept of social interest supports Worthington’s position as to the importance of empathy when forgiving (Adler, 1964). Ansbacher (1968/1991) also agreed that social interest is an extension of empathy. Ansbacher (1968/1991) described a person with highly developed social interest as one who is “interested in the interests of others” and is “able to understand and appreciate their subjective experience, their private worlds, their opinions” (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 411).

Forgiveness is emerging as an area that clinical and developmental psychologists are investigating. Because forgiveness psychology is described as prescientific, there have not been strong empirical studies to support the claims that forgiving others brings inner healing. On a positive note, Individual Psychology has much to offer forgiveness psychology. Adler’s theories
of life style development, striving for superiority, and the importance of belonging are valuable concepts that support models of forgiveness (McBrien, 2004).

Lin, Mack, Enright, Kahn, and Baskin (2004) have shown that forgiveness is a powerful counseling tool for all types of clients including substance abuse issues. Lin et al. (2004) used Forgiveness Therapy while working with substance abuse clients to help with their anger, anxiety, and depression issues. There were 14 clients who met individually with a counselor twice a week for 12 weeks. Some of the clients were administered Forgiveness Therapy and the other clients were administered an alternative alcohol and drug therapy. The findings showed that the clients who were administered the Forgiveness Therapy were doing significantly better than the other clients in the areas of anger, depression, anxiety, self-esteem, forgiveness, and vulnerability to alcohol. The clients who had received the Forgiveness Therapy were followed up in four months, and they were still doing well. Lin et al. (2004) concluded that Forgiveness Therapy is a valid therapy for use in drug rehabilitation.

Professionals from many different fields such as counselors, psychologists, philosophers, and religious leaders have debated about the definition of forgiveness and how best to forgive. Some of the issues raised are whether a person has to feel love and compassion in order to forgive the offender; whether forgiveness includes reconciliation; what helps or hinders the process; whether an apology is necessary before a person forgives; and the primary focus of forgiveness (Cosgrove & Konstam, 2008; Freedman, 1999; Kearns & Fincham, 2004; Malcolm et al., 2007, as cited in Freedman & Chang, 2010).

According to McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997), some people believe the role of the offender to be the determining characteristic of forgiveness. Other individuals take into account the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral parts of forgiveness as well (Enright, Eastin,
Golden, Sarinopoulos, & Freedman, 1992.) Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) define forgiveness as the following:

People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right) and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right). (as cited in Freedman & Chang, 2010, p. 6).

According to Enright et al. (1991), forgiveness is focused on morality and goodwill toward others. They described forgiveness as a gift that an injured person gives to the offender even though he or she does not deserve it. Forgiveness is a choice that the offended person makes to overcome their negative feelings, thoughts, and reactions toward the offender. When a person first forgives another, the self motivation may be to feel better. However, during the process, the injured person may begin to take the offender into consideration and wish him or her good things. In some instances, the injured person can only hope that the hurtful behavior will stop (as cited in Freedman & Chang, 2010, pp. 6-7).

Cosgrove and Konstam (2008) stated that most researchers are in agreement that to forgive someone is not the same as to forget, condone, excuse or justify their offensive behavior. However, they discussed that there are instances when forgetting an offense may help the injured person forgive but may cause the injured person to confuse the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation. In addition, they pointed out that in some instances forgiveness can reinforce injustice. For example, according to Katz, Street, and Arias (1997), individuals who forgive their partner for physical abuse are more likely to stay in their abusive relationship. However,
there are also instances where individuals will forgive the perpetrator but not return to the relationship because it is not safe (as cited in Freedman & Chang, 2010).

Individuals who have been falsely accused of hurting others have had to deal with forgiving the perpetrator as well. A particular case involves Cardinal Bernardin (1997), a minister within the Catholic Church, who had a profound experience when he chose to forgive a former seminarian who had falsely accused him of sexual abuse. Bernardin (2004) described the experience as being “a manifestation of God’s love, forgiveness, and healing I will never forget” (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 414). The accuser too felt the positive effects of being forgiven by Bernardin. The accuser stated that “A big burden has been lifted from me. I feel healed and very much at peace” (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 414). Bernardin (2004) wrote that when people are open to the Spirit “we are at peace, we find the freedom to be most fully who we are. . . we empty ourselves so that God may more fully work within us” (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 414).

According to Huber (1986), living the spiritual life that Jesus modeled and taught others demonstrates the highest level of social interest (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 414). Theologian Richard McBrien described Christians who strive to be like Jesus Christ as being “open to the Spirit” (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 414). McBrien (1980) explained that being open to the Spirit is “to accept explicitly who we are and who we are called always to become, and to direct our lives accordingly” (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 414). Veenstra (1992) described the process of forgiving as “a release of resentment and a renewal of love that surpasses human loving and approaches the love Jesus modeled” (as cited in McBrien, 2004, p. 414).

Jesus modeled forgiveness, compassion, love, and empathy for human beings. Consistent with Adlerian theory, Jesus was demonstrating social interest. There are many examples in the
Bible that discuss forgiveness. One such Scripture is found in Matthew 18:21-22. It states as follows:

Then Peter came and said to Him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’ (NASB).

In the above quote, Peter most likely is not referring to a biological brother but a fellow Christian. Peter probably thought that he was being very generous when he offered to forgive a bother up to seven times because Jewish custom recommended forgiving someone up to three times. Another possibility could be that Peter may have thought about the standard Jewish number of seven that represented completeness. In any case, Jesus is basically telling Peter that he should continue to forgive his brother whenever the occasion warranted it. Jesus’ message indicated that there should be no limit put on how many times one person forgives another (Blomberg, 2006).

Jesus goes on to tell Peter a parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:23-31). This parable is about a king and his servants. A particular servant owed the king money and could not pay it. Therefore, the king had mercy on his servant and forgave him his debt. Then this servant went to a fellow servant who owed him money. The fellow servant told him he could not pay his debt and begged for mercy. The forgiven servant did not have mercy on him but had the man arrested. The king heard about this and called the servant whom he had forgiven to him. The Scripture goes on to say in Matthew 18:32:

‘You wicked servant, he said. I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he
owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart (NASB).

From this Scripture, it is clear to see how important forgiveness is in relationship to others. Not only is forgiveness important in promoting social interest, but it is also God’s command to us when dealing with those who have hurt or offended us. On a larger scale, the entire Christian faith is based on God’s forgiveness of peoples’ sins by the sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ to those who repent and accept him (John 3:16).

**Empathy**

Forgiveness and empathy for others go hand-in-hand. In order for a person to truly forgive others, he or she needs to have empathy for them as well. McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) described empathy as a person having emotions that are congruent with another person’s emotions even though their emotions may not be identical. They noted that individuals who are empathetic tend to have the characteristics of sympathy, compassion, and tenderness for others.

Adler (1964) believed that empathy was at the core of social interest and is the key through which the transformation of a person’s identity occurs. Adler (1964) described social interest in terms of empathic understanding. He stated the following:

By social interest or social feeling, we understand something different from that which other authors understand. When we say it is a feeling, we are certainly justified in doing so. But it is more than a feeling; it is an evaluative attitude toward life . . . . We are not in a position to define it unequivocally, but we have found in an English author a phrase which clearly expresses what we could contribute to an explanation: ‘To see with the
eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another, to feel with the heart of another” (p. 135).

Watts (1998) contends that noteworthy similarities exist between Carl Rogers’ core conditions and Adler’s social interest. Rogers had studied with Adler during 1927-28 while he was an intern and Adler was a visiting instructor at the Institute for Child Guidance in New York City. It seems that prior to his death, Rogers did acknowledge that he learned a great deal from Adler (Watts, 1998). Rogers (1951) described empathy as follows:

> It is the counselor’s function to assume, in so far as he is able, the internal frame of reference of the client, to perceive the world as the client sees it, to perceive the client himself as he is seen by himself, to lay aside all perceptions from the external frame of reference while doing so, and to communicate something of this empathic understanding to the client. (as cited in Watts, 1998, p. 5)

O’Connell (1965) stated that social interest “covers the intellectual, affective, and behavioral aspects of the optimal relationship to others, namely, understanding, empathizing with, and acting in behalf of others” (p. 27). Ansbacher (1983) commented that social interest “actually means not merely an interest in others but an interest in the interests of others” (as cited in Watts, 1998, p. 5).

One of the greatest displays of empathy in the Bible can be found in the twenty-third chapter of Luke. The Scripture states that Jesus was falsely accused by some of the Jewish religious leaders and brought before the Roman leaders, Pontus Pilate and Herod. However, neither of these men found any guilt in Jesus. It seems that some of the religious leaders of that time feared Jesus and were jealous of his popularity amongst the people. Therefore, they brought false accusations against him so that he would be put to death. Jesus was arrested by the
Romans and beaten beyond recognition (Isaiah 53). He was mocked, spit upon, and totally humiliated. Jesus was then nailed to a cross and left to die. While Jesus was in extreme pain, suffering and dying on the cross, he spoke out to the Father saying “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they are doing” (Luke 23:34 NAS).

Hallowell (2004) stated that “whether or not you believe that Jesus was divine, what he said on the cross is one of the most extraordinary examples ever recorded of empathizing with the people who have hurt you” (p. 148). Hallowell (2004) brought an interesting psychological point to the story of Jesus’ crucifixion. He believed that the religious leaders who were so angry and jealous of Jesus were displaying projective identification. Jesus had become very important to the people and the chief priests envied him. Actually, the chief priests were mad with envy toward Jesus. Therefore, as Hallowell (2004) described it, “they projected their own hostile hateful feelings onto Jesus, thereby turning him into a dangerous man guilty of blasphemy and deserving death, in their eyes. So they demanded that he be put to death” (p. 147). Jesus could have fought back, but he did not. Not only did he not fight back, but he had compassion for the people who betrayed him and killed him. Jesus has modeled empathy and forgiveness so beautifully for all of humankind.

Another biblical example of empathy and forgiveness can be found in John, chapter eight. Jesus came to the temple on the Mount of Olives and many people came to hear him teach. As Jesus sat down and began to teach, the Pharisees and scribes brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught in the very act of adultery. The Pharisees knew that the Law of Moses commanded that she be stoned to death. Therefore, the Pharisees and scribes asked Jesus what he had to say. Jesus knew that they were testing him and were looking for grounds to accuse him. Jesus responded, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at
her” (John 8:7, NASB). When they heard this, each of them left one by one beginning with the older ones. So then, Jesus and the woman were left alone. Jesus said to her “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you? And she said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more” (John 8:10-11, NASB).

In the above Scriptures, Jesus is not only showing his empathy and forgiveness for this woman, but he is also communicating to others that rehabilitation is more important than condemnation. In Romans 8:1, it reinforces this point: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (NASB).

**Encouragement**

Encouragement is one of Adler’s important principles for helping people to change. Adler defined encouragement as having “courage with activity plus social interest” (Adler, 1964, p. 341). According to *Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* encouragement is defined as “the act of encouraging, the state of being encouraged, something that encourages” (Random, 2001, p. 641). The root word ‘encourage’ is defined as “to inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence” (Random, 2001, p. 641). According to Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1996), encouragement is defined as “the process of facilitating the development of a person’s inner resources and courage toward positive movement” (as in Cheston, 2000, p. 298). McKay (1992) believed that to perform this process an individual must focus on their strengths and assets not their liabilities (as cited in Cheston, 2000).

It is difficult to be an encouraging person in a world that focuses on negative issues such as mistakes and blame. Once a person accepts his or her imperfections and comes to the conclusion that it is acceptable to make mistakes, he or she is then free to take the first step in developing an encouraging way of being with self and others (Cheston, 2000). Sofie Lazarsfeld
(1927/1966) summarized this very well in her famous phrase that encouraged people to have “the courage to be imperfect” (as cited in Mosak, 1991, pp. 311-312). Basically, this saying means that people do not have to be perfect before they try something new or venture out to take a risk. They do not have to be fearful about being imperfect at something. Dreikurs later popularized this phrase and stressed that individuals need to have the courage to be imperfect before they can encourage others (Chestson, 2000).

Many papers have been written on the topic of how encouragement positively affects a person’s psychological well-being and improves his or her mental health (Cheston, 2000). According to Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1980), “encouragement is effective because it describes (not judges), highlights social values, accentuates progress and improvement (not comparison to prior performance), emphasizes effort (not outcome), and focuses on the good feeling one has as a result of positive performance” (as cited in Chestson, 2000, p. 299).

Clinicians and writers have declared the effectiveness of encouragement on clients and students. To support their claims, researchers Pety, Kelly, and Kafafy (1984) administered the Praise-Encouragement Preference Scale to children who were in the fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth grades. A teacher that was trained by the researchers used encouraging phrases and praising phrases with the children. The children were divided into two groups. The same teacher worked with both groups. For one group, the teacher gave the children encouragement. For the other group, the teacher gave the children praise. The outcome of the study showed that the encouraged group rated the teacher more favorably than the praised group. The praised group felt the teacher was controlling and manipulative. Because the group that was encouraged rated the teacher more highly indicates that an encourager would have a stronger influence on children and perhaps on adults as well. The implication of this study would also suggest that
therapists who encourage their clients would have more successful results than therapists who do not.

If encouragement affects people holistically, then it must affect them physically as well. For example, when a baby smiles at someone and that person returns the smile, the baby receives acknowledgement of his or her smile. This encourages the baby and creates a warm feeling for the child (Cheston, 2000). Cheston (2000) also noted that encouraged people walk differently than discouraged people. As a therapist, Cheston observes her clients’ countenance and how they hold themselves. When she greets clients, she shakes hands with them and invites them into her office. Cheston watches them closely. The clients’ physical manifestations express to Cheston what they are feeling on the inside. The discouraged person appears to be carrying the weight of the world on his or her shoulders. The discouraged person does not smile much and avoids eye contact. On the contrary, the encouraged person smiles, makes eye contact, and walks with an enthusiastic bounce.

Cheston (2000) stated that Adler’s concepts and spirituality integrate well together. Adler (1954) believed that each person is unique and that uniqueness is the existence of his or her soul (as cited in Cheston, 2000). It is through encouragement that a person’s soul as well as their mind and body are nurtured. Encouraging others also helps them to achieve their purposes. Cheston (2000) concluded that the common thinking among various writers is that encouragement is communicated by “listening and understanding, being nonjudgmental, remaining patient with others, instilling faith and confidence in the person and his or her abilities, recognizing effect, focusing on effort or improvement, and focusing on strengths and assets” (p. 301). To communicate to people that they are valued is the essential nature of encouragement.
Those in the Christian faith believe that Jesus is their eternal friend. Jesus encourages his followers by being an eternal friend who loves and supports them when they are discouraged. The third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, is also an encourager for the Christian. In fact, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Paraclete, which means “encourager” in the Greek language (Cheston, 2000).

**Book of Psalms**

There are many verses in the Bible that speak of the Holy Spirit encouraging and helping people. Some of these verses are found in the Book of Psalms. The Book of Psalms is a variety of songs, laments, and praises that was primarily written by King David. The Psalms were a way for David to express his innermost feelings to God. He did so in both lamenting and crying out to God or by giving his praise and thankfulness to God. In Psalm 51, David cries out to God about his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah but only after being confronted by the Prophet Nathan (2 Samuel:12). In Psalm 51:10-13, it states:

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me with a willing spirit to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. (NIV).

David is asking God not to remove his Holy Spirit from him. He understands the importance of having God’s Holy Spirit with him. David knows that within his own strength, he is not strong enough to keep from sinning but with the help of the Holy Spirit, he is strengthened and encouraged to stay in a right relationship with God. Having the Holy Spirit with him gives David the hope and encouragement to keeping moving forward. It also brings joyfulness and peace to his life.
**Book of Luke**

Jesus gives encouragement to two of his followers in Luke 24:13-33. This story takes place after Jesus was crucified, died, and his body was laid to rest in the tomb. Two of Jesus’ disciples were walking along the road to Emmaus and were discussing the events that just occurred regarding Jesus’ death. Jesus came up along side the two disciples; however, they did not know it was Jesus because they were kept from recognizing him. The disciples’ faces were downcast, and they were confused and discouraged over what had happened. Jesus asked the two disciples in Luke 24:17 “what kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?” (NKJV). The two disciples were amazed that Jesus had not heard what had taken place in Jerusalem, so they told him. Jesus explained to the disciples that the prophecy had to be fulfilled by Jesus Christ dying for the sins of humanity. Jesus then went to the disciples’ home and ate with them. He also revealed his true identity to them and then disappeared. These men became very encouraged and at once returned back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples.

According to Cheston (2000), the above story indicates that the disciples’ enthusiasm was generated by their encouragement. Cheston wrote that this is what clients should feel after a counseling session. She goes on to say that when clients come to their first counseling session, they feel discouraged. However, after clients experience “empathic listening, some instruction, revelation of insight, and an encouraging word, they should feel energized when leaving to work on their behaviors, thoughts, and feelings during the week” (p. 302).

**Children**

In the Book of Matthew, Chapter 19:14, some children were brought to Jesus so that he could lay hands on them and pray. However, the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, “Let
the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (NASB). Jesus then laid his hands on the children and prayed for them. By Jesus receiving these children into his midst, he demonstrated that he does not exclude any person from coming to him. Jesus’ acceptance of the children was encouraging to them as well as to the disciples and the other followers. Jesus modeled the correct behavior that adults should have toward children—to accept and encourage them.

Dreikurs and Stolz (1964) wrote that encouragement is the most important aspect of raising a child. They believe that without it, a child will become discouraged. Each child needs encouragement to grow and develop and gain a sense of belonging. Without encouragement, a child will become discouraged and misbehave. Unfortunately, at times parents unintentionally discourage their children. For example, a small child may want to help mom set the table. Mom may tell the child that he or she is too small and does not know how to do it correctly at this time. When the child hears this, he or she feels insignificant and incapable of being able to do things right. Then the child may become discouraged and give up.

Parents need to help encourage their children by using a positive tone of voice and corresponding actions. This will communicate to the child that he or she is capable and competent. It will also encourage the child to try new things and help establish a healthy level of self-esteem within the child. Dreikurs and Stolz (1964) wrote that parents can only build on a child’s strengths not his or her weaknesses. When children make mistakes or do not accomplish their goals, parents must be careful not to use words that communicate they are a failure. An example of this would be “it is too bad that did not work out for you.” It is always important to separate the behavior from the person. Failure, whether for children or adults, only indicates a lack of skill in a particular area. It does not affect the value of the person in any way.
As adults, a good way to promote encouragement within children is to be careful not to discourage them in the first place. Being overprotective, humiliating, or lacking to support a child’s faith in him or herself creates discouragement. Therefore, it is important that parents learn how to encourage their children in a supportive manner. According to Dreikurs and Stolz (1964), children’s behavior shows what they think about themselves. If children doubt their abilities and value, it will be evident in their deficiencies. Dreikurs and Stolz (1964) stated that “Encouragement, then is a continuous process aimed at giving the child a sense of self-respect and a sense of accomplishment. From earliest infancy he needs help in finding his place through achievement” (p. 39).

Lew and Bettner (2000) reported that research had been done in the past regarding why some children become successful and others do not. The research showed that “children who succeed have close relationships to others, feel valued in their communities, and have a sense of control over some aspects of their lives; children who are in trouble feel isolated, useless to society, and powerless” (pp. 2-3).

The four necessary attributes needed for a child to be successful are what Lew and Bettner (2000) call the “Crucial C’s.” They are as follows: “connection”—a child needs to be connected to others in a family and be part of a community; “capability”—a child must be capable of taking care of his or herself; “counting”—a child needs to be valued and know that he or she counts and makes a difference; and “courage”—a child needs to have courage. These attributes are not rules that children consciously need to remember and work on, but rather beliefs that parents can instill within their children. These beliefs will encourage children as well as unconsciously guide them as they live their lives (p. 3).
Counseling

To corroborate Cheston’s (2000) previous comment about the importance of clients leaving the counseling session feeling encouraged, Watts and Pietrzak (2000) reported that Adler and other Adlerians consider encouragement a vital aspect of human growth and development especially in the counseling field. Mosak (1979) noted that Adlerians have forsaken using the medical model (as cited in Watts and Pietrzak, 2000). According to Manaster and Corsini (1982), “Adlerians do not see people as psychologically sick, but discouraged. The process of psychotherapy is not seen by Adlerians as ‘curing’ anything, but as a process of encouragement” (p. 160).

Dinkmeyer (1972) wrote that encouragement from a counselor to a client can be given by both verbal and nonverbal methods that would enable the client to experience and become aware of his own self worth. It is important that the counselor show clients that she has faith in them and totally accepts them for who they are, not as they could or should be. Dinkmeyer (1972) goes on to say that encouragement by his definition does not mean that counselors should praise, bribe, or reward clients. On the contrary, it means that counselors need to place value on their client’s “uniqueness and humanness and indicate to him that because he is human he of worth and value” (p. 177). When a counselor is encouraging to a client, it helps the client know that he is not inferior to others, and that he is a capable human being.

In Adlerian counseling, there are four main objectives that correspond to four stages in the counseling process. They are as follows:

1). Establishing an empathic relationship between counselor and client, in which the client feels understood and accepted by the counselor.
2). Helping clients understand their beliefs and feelings, as well as their motives and goals that determine their lifestyle.

3). Helping clients develop insight into mistaken goals and self-defeating behaviors.

4). Helping clients consider alternatives to the problem behavior or situation and make a commitment to change. (Dinkmeyer, Jr. & Sperry, 2000, p. 61).

Working with clients and helping them through this process will encouragement them to make positive changes in their attitudes, behaviors, and life choices.

**The Five Tasks of Life**

Adler (1964) stated that a person’s life style, the way a person thinks, sees, and feels toward life, is adaptable until an issue arises that a person is not adequately prepared to handle. In life, Adler believed that there were three main challenges that people must confront. He referred to these as the three tasks of life: the work task, the social task, and the love task.

According to Dreikurs and Mosak (1966, 1967), the thinking among some Adlerians is that in his later writings Adler addressed two other tasks of life but did not articulate them or discuss them in detail (as cited in Mosak and Maniaci, 1999). These other two tasks are the self task and the spirituality task.

However, there has been some controversy in the Adlerian community as to whether Adler wanted three or five tasks of life. Gold and Mansager (2000) stated that after reviewing Adler’s writings, they do not believe that Adler wanted two more tasks. On the contrary, Mosak and Dreikurs (2000) believed that Adler alluded to two other tasks and are therefore supportive of all five tasks. For the purposes of this paper, all five tasks will be discussed.
Ansbacher and Ansbacher (as cited in Adler, 1964) commented that Adler believed the main problems in life have to do with people being cooperative. They believed Adler implied the following:

In present society the satisfaction of almost all conceivable needs depends on the solution of these problems of cooperation. These problems represent the ties of the individual to social life and are somewhat loosely classified into problems of occupation, social relations in general, and love and marriage (p. 131).

Adler (1964) believed that these tasks of life were interwoven together. Therefore, if a person encountered a problem in one of the tasks, his or her problem could not be solved separately from the other tasks.

**The Work Task**

Adler (1964) believed that everyone needs to have an occupation and contribute to society. This could mean being self-employed, working for an employer, being a homemaker, being a student, or volunteering to help out in some capacity. When a person contributes in some way to family or society, he or she feels useful. Feeling useful helps encourage a person to keep moving forward in life. In addition, those who work and contribute to society are able to earn an income so that they can take care of themselves and their families. Homemakers contribute by taking care of the family and the home. Those individuals who volunteer their time are rewarded by a sense of fulfillment in helping others.

**The Bible and the work task.** The Bible discusses the importance of work in people’s lives and many references to work can be found throughout the Scriptures. In the Book of Second Thessalonians 3:10b it states: “if anyone will not work, neither let him eat’” (NASB).
The Scripture is teaching that people need to be responsible and work for their own food. They should not be a burden to others (2 Thessalonians 3:6-9).

After Adam and Eve had sinned, God told Adam that he had to work in order to eat. In Genesis 3:17-19 it states:

‘Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field; By your sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return’ (NASB).

From the beginning of time, the plan was set in motion for people to work hard to produce food so that they would be able to sustain their lives.

In the Book of Luke, Chapter 10, Jesus commissioned 70 men to help minister to the people. Jesus sent them out two by two ahead of him to every city and place where he planned to minister. Jesus told the 70 men that when they came to a house where people of peace accepted them, to stay there for a time. Jesus said, “And stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house” (Luke 10:7, NASB). Jesus was teaching that those who do ministry work should be paid or compensated for it. This Scripture can be applied for other professions as well.

The Apostle Paul worked as a tent maker in addition to his ministry duties so that he could make a living. While in Corinth, Paul stayed with his friends Aquila and Priscilla. Aquila was also a tent maker, and he and Paul worked together during the week making tents. However, on the Sabbath, Paul would minister in the synagogue which was his true calling (Acts 18:1-4).

Paul understood that those who preach the Gospel should earn their living from the Gospel, which was the Lord’s command (1 Corinthians 9:12-14). However, Paul did not use this
right because he did not want to do anything that might hinder the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul believed that if he preached voluntarily, he had a reward. On the other hand, Paul believed that if he received payment for his services, he was “simply discharging the trust committed to me” (1 Corinthians 9:15-18).

The Social Task

Adler (1964) taught that human beings are socially embedded people and therefore are designed to interact with others on this planet. To make life more pleasant, people need to try to get along with others. They also need to show an interest in others and learn to be flexible and adaptable when relating to others. A problem that a person may have in the social area can be remediated by “friendship, social feeling, and cooperation” (p. 132). When a person’s problem is solved in the social task, it will invariably help solve problems that are related to the work task as well.

The Bible and the social task. The Bible shows that God is socially minded. In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve and had fellowship with them in the Garden of Eden. This shows that Adam and Eve were important to God, and he enjoyed spending time with them (Genesis, chapters two and three).

In Philippians chapter two, the Apostle Paul wrote the following:

If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in
yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:1-8, NASB).

The above Scripture shows that if people want to be more like Jesus Christ, they need to be humble and lead a selfless life. According to Gaffin, Jr. (2002), the above Scripture emphasizes the importance of unity among Christians. When the Scripture discusses being of the same mind, it is not referring to everyone thinking exactly alike but is referring to everyone being in common agreement and willing to work together.

The Love Task

Adler (1964) wrote that each human being is a member of one or the other sexes. He did not like to use the term “opposite sex” because he believed this would bring opposition between the sexes. Therefore, he chose to use the term “the other sex.” Adler believed that the two sexes complemented each other. Adler (1958) described the love task as follows:

“Love, with its fulfillment, marriage, is the most intimate devotion towards a partner of the other sex, expressed in physical attraction, in comradeship, and in the decision to have children. It can easily be shown that love and marriage are one side of cooperation—not a cooperation for the welfare of two persons only, but a cooperation also for the welfare of mankind’ (p. 263).

Eckstein and Kern (2002) wrote that in order for a love relationship to be healthy, it should include intimacy, trust, and self-disclosure. The parties involved must be able to give and receive affection, respect each other’s uniqueness, be caring but not possessive, be nurturing
toward the other person’s growth and potential, and see that sexual and/or physical needs for
closeness and touch are being met.

In addition, Eckstein and Kern (2002) noted that people need a family or family-like
support system that consists of “shared coping and problem-solving skills, commitment to the
family, good communication, encouragement of individuals, expression of appreciation, shared
religious/spiritual orientation, social connectedness, clear roles, and shared interests, values, and
time (pp. 88-89).

The Bible and the love task. Genesis 2:18 states: “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not
good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’” According to Genesis
2:21-24, the Scripture states the following:

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one
of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place. And the Lord God fashioned into a
woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. And the
man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called
Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ For this cause a man shall leave his father
and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (NASB).

Youngblood (2002) wrote that the above sentence referring to a man leaving his father
and mother and cleaving to his wife means that the man and his wife are no longer under their
parents protective custody but have established their own family unit. Youngblood (2002) notes
that “as parents and children are of the same ‘flesh and blood,’ so husband and wife should be
bound together as ‘one flesh’ as long as they live—of which sexual union is an expression” (p. 9).
Another Scripture that involves love and marriage can be found in Ephesians 5:33. It states: “Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband” (NASB). The Scripture shows the importance of love and respect in a marriage relationship. A further Scripture referring to love and marriage is found in the Song of Solomon. The Song of Solomon tells the story of the romance and marriage of Solomon and the Shulammite woman. This Book of the Bible discusses Solomon and his wife’s courtship, their marriage, the consummation of their marriage, the deepening of their relationship, and the maturity of their love (Song of Solomon, chapters 1-8).

**The Self Task**

This was the fourth task that Dreikurs and Mosak (1967) proposed after they decided that Adler had made implications about it. Dreikurs and Mosak (1967) believed that this task was related to a person’s sense of adequacy. The level of adequacy that a person felt would be reflected in how successful he or she was in dealing with the other life tasks.

Eckstein and Kern (2002) noted that the self task would relate to a person’s self-esteem, self-concept, or self-worth. They concluded that a person with “high self-esteem is excited by new challenges and seeks self actualization” (p. 84). Eckstein and Kern (2002) also believed that having positive self-esteem helps protect a person from illnesses because “it enhances recovery from illness and all well-being” (p. 84). Eckstein and Kern (2002) wrote that in most studies that have been done on positive mental health, the important key concepts that were prevalent were a “positive self-concept, a sense of autonomy, social support, and an internal locus of control or sense of self-efficacy” (p. 84).

According to Baruth and Manning (1987), the self task involves an individual being able to get along with him or herself. The ultimate goal of the self task would be for a person to
achieve inner peace. However, it is difficult for people to achieve an inner peace because they tend to be “more critical of their abilities and strengths and more sensitive to their weaknesses than the people around them” (p. 433).

**The Bible and the self task.** As previously mentioned, Proverbs 23:7, states “for as he thinks within himself, so he is.” The Scripture is teaching that the way a person thinks about himself is what he believes he is or will become. Christians can study God’s Word to help renew their minds to understand who they are in Christ. By gaining this understanding, people will become more confident and feel a greater sense of self-worth. Listed below are a few Bible verses that are helpful in renewing one’s mind:

Romans 8:1: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (NASB).

Philippians 4:13: I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (NASB).

Philippians 4:4: Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, rejoice! (NASB).

Philippians 4:6-9: Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you (NASB).

By meditating on the above Scripture verses, individuals will grow stronger in their faith, renew their minds, and feel more confident in their relationship to the Lord. They will also find
“the peace of God that surpasses all comprehension” (Philippians 4:7, NASB). Gaffin, Jr. (2002) commented on the above verse found in Philippians 4:7 and determined it is not referring to simply a psychological state of mind but to an internal tranquility that can only be achieved by a person having peace with God. This can be accomplished by having one’s sins forgiven. In addition, when individuals know that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for their sins, they can gain an understanding as to how valuable they are to God. Knowing that they are valued and loved by God will help improve their self-esteem and sense of worth.

**The Spiritual Task**

Mosak and Dreikurs (2000) believed that Adler alluded to this task when he referred to human beings having a place in the cosmos. Mosak and Dreikurs (2000) also noted that Adler would refer to “the spiritual or the search for meaning” many times through his communications with others (p. 433). However, Adler did not specifically identify this as a one of his tasks.

Mosak and Dreikurs (2000) wrote that in the past, psychologists did not like to discuss this task because they believed that the issue of spirituality should be dealt with in the realm of philosophy or theology. However, throughout the years, there has been increasing growth of the existentialist movement in the United States and Europe. This indicates that psychotherapists are more aware of the importance of people’s spirituality and the affect it has on their overall well-being.

Mosak and Dreikurs (2000) believed that there are five subtasks of the existential or spiritual task. The first subtask involves a person’s relationship to God. Each person makes a decision to either believe in God or not to believe in God. This can be a conscious or unconscious decision. Then there is the question of how the individual describes God. Does the person see God as his or her Father, a Creator of the universe, a Supreme Being, or a Higher
Power? Then after an individual describes God, the next question would be “how does one relate to God?”

The second subtask involves what a person does about religion. A person may have a personal faith in Jesus Christ and find that more important than adhering to formal or ritualistic religious practices. Another person may accept and embrace his or her religion, whereas a different person may not identify with his or her religion and decide to convert to another religion, or to rebel against it. The person who rebels against his or her religion may take a humanistic view of life and consider this a type of religion. In addition, this subtask involves how people define their goals of religion such as their love for God, service to God, or their good deeds.

The third subtask, according to Mosak and Dreikurs (2000), is “the individual’s conception of the place of man in the universe and the psychological movement to which this conception leads” (p. 260). This third subtask involves how people view themselves. Some people may believe that they have little significance in this universe whereas other people believe they have the potential and creativity to become a self-actualizing person (Baruth & Manning, 1987).

The fourth subtask involves what a person believes about immortality, whether it is of a religious, philosophical, or practical nature. Religious and philosophical questions that people may have about immortality are as follows: “Is there life after death?” “What happens to a person’s soul when they die?” “Is there a heaven and hell?” “Is there eternal salvation as well as eternal damnation?” On the practical side, a person may want to achieve immortality by having children. In addition, many children are named after their parents in order to carry on the family
name. Another practical example would involve individuals who want to be immortalized by having a building, street, or city named in their honor (Mosak and Dreikers, 2000).

The fifth subtask involves the meaning of life. A question that people will ask is “What is the meaning of life?” Another question may be “Does life have an inherent meaning or not?” All human beings are unique and look at life’s meaning differently. Some people may see life’s meaning from an abstract perspective such as “Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all we know on the earth, and all we need to know” (Mosak and Dreikers, 2000, p. 261).

There are individuals who find their meaning in life as hedonists—seeking their own pleasure. Then there are other individuals who give of their time, effort, and money in helping others. Yet others find meaning in overcoming or having overcome something in their lives. Adler (1963) believed that “the life of a human soul is not a ‘being’ but a ‘becoming’” (as cited in Mosak and Dreikurs, 2000, p. 262).

Several people find meaning in life through suffering. Viktor Frankl (1984) learned the meaning of his life while he was a prisoner at Auschwitz and Dachau concentration camps. While a prisoner, Frankl was tortured, beaten, and suffered greatly at the hands of the Nazis. In spite of this, Frankl was able to reframe his thinking about his circumstances, and that together with his faith, helped him survive his horrific ordeal (Frankl, 1984). In his book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Frankl (1984) wrote the following:

The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity—even under the most difficult circumstances—to add a deeper meaning to his life. (p. 88).

**The Bible and the spiritual task.** Many people in the Bible learned the meaning of life through their sufferings. Job was one example (Book of Job). Job was a good, upright, and
blameless man before God. He hated evil and desired to be righteous before the Lord. Job was a wealthy man with much land and thousands of animals. He was married and had seven sons and three daughters (Job 1:5 NIV).

One day the angels and Satan came to see the Lord. The Lord asked Satan where he had been, and Satan told him he had been roaming the earth. The Lord told Satan how pleased he was with Job. Satan stated to the Lord that Job did so well because the Lord blessed him and protected him. Satan commented that Job would not do well and rebel against the Lord if the hedge of protection was taken away from him. Satan also told the Lord that Job would curse him if everything were taken away from him. Therefore, the Lord told Satan that everything Job had was now in his power, but he could not kill Job. As the story goes, Job lost all of his animals, his children, his money, his health, and everything that he had except for his wife and a few close friends. Even throughout all of this hardship, Job still trusted God. However, Job’s wife advised him to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9 NIV). Job refused and endured to the end of his trial. Because Job was faithful to God, God blessed him more during the latter part of his life than the first. Through this experience Job gained a deeper understanding and meaning to his life (Job 1-42).

Christians find their ultimate meaning in life knowing that they have eternal salvation through Jesus Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection (John 3:16). The Christian’s hope of salvation through Jesus Christ propels them to share the Gospel with other people (Matthew 28:18-20). Christians can also find meaning in serving others in the church as well as serving people in the community.
Furthermore, Christians find meaning in praying to God and reading their Bibles (Matthew 7:7-12). By reading God’s Word, Christians can know what God says about them. In 1 Peter 2:9-10 it states:

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (NKJV).

Another Scripture found in 2 Corinthians 6:18 states: “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (NKJV). From these Scriptures, it is evident that God wants a close relationship with his children and desires to be their Father.

As previously mentioned, all of the tasks of life have an impact on an individual. If a person is having issues in one of the tasks of life, it will invariably affect the other tasks as well. Because people are complex, multifaceted human beings, it is important for therapists to take a holistic approach to helping their clients understand and improve their level of satisfaction in each of the tasks of life. Adler understood the importance of treating the whole person and named his theory Individual Psychology because the word “individual” comes from the Latin word *individuum*, which means “unity” or “whole” (Cheston, 2000, p. 296).

**Conclusion**

Alfred Adler was the founder of Individual Psychology, also known as Adlerian Psychology. Other prominent individuals helped contribute to the work of Adlerian Psychology as well. It is apparent from the discussion of this paper that the similarities between Adlerian principles and biblical principles are significant. This information is helpful for Adlerian counselors who are working with Christian clients. Adlerian counselors who are familiar with
biblical principles will have an opportunity to incorporate them into their counseling sessions, if clients so desire. On the contrary, Adlerian counselors who are not familiar with biblical principles may find it beneficial to educate themselves when working with Christian clients.

Overall, Adlerian Psychology is a relational psychology that involves treating the “whole” person. Therefore, it is suitable for working with all clients—Christian clients, clients of other religions, or clients who are not religious. All of these clients can be encouraged by Adlerian counselors to pursue their individual goals and reach their ultimate potential.
References


