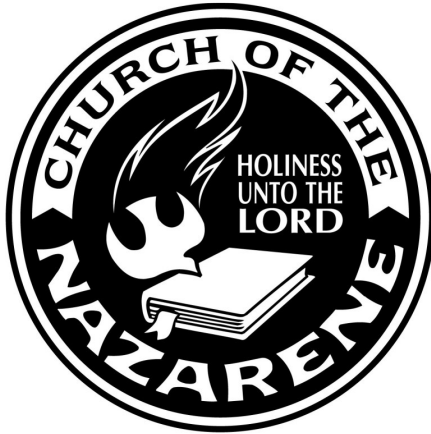


TP 302 - PASTORAL CARE



Certificate and Diploma Levels

**Teacher Handbook
Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene
Africa Region**

Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene
Africa Region

Syllabus

TP 302 Pastoral Care

Contributors:

Extensive use was made of the following sources:

RIIE Module, *Shepherding God's People*
RIIE Module, *Christian Ministry*

Also, materials taken from the following books:

1. Clinebell, Howard. *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling: Resources for the ministry of Healing & Growth.* (1984) Abingdon Press: Nashville, TN.
2. Hulme, William E. *The Pastoral Care of Families: Its Tehology and Practice.* (1962) Abingdon Press: Nashville, TN.
3. Oden, Thomas C. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry.* (1983) HarperCollins Publishers: New York.
4. Petersen, Bruce L. *Foundations of Pastoral Care.* (2007) Beacon Hill Press: Kansas City.

Compiled by: Sharon Martin

Editors: Monica Carr, Greg Crofford

Note to course leader: To correct mistakes in future editions, please send notice of errors to: admin.itn@gmail.com

Course description

This course will explore various kinds of pastoral care in the life of the church. The Bible will be the principal source for pastoral consultation.

Course rationale

Narration

According to the early leaders of the Church of the Nazarene, their main concern was Entire Sanctification that is summarized by "love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength, love God as you love yourself." To speak of pastoral care in the Church of the Nazarene, it is to speak about how to follow up on the faithful without considering the importance of their ages and background for how to best guide them toward God's love and a holy life.

This course not only puts the emphasis on the aspect of consecration, but also on love for people. It will help the minister to develop an intuition and discernment in their ministry context, meaning they will know their context and themselves to best care for the well-being of those they serve as ministers of the Gospel.

Program outcomes

The following program outcomes assigned to this module are identifiable competencies required of the student in this course.

- CON 5 Realization of the biblical, theological, and practical implications of holiness doctrine when taught from a Wesleyan perspective
- CON 11 Use the principles of evangelism, church growth, planting new churches and the missionary task of the Church in the world
- CON 12 Consider the application of Christian morality in daily life
- CON 13 Learn the principles of interpersonal relations

- COM 8 Ability to provide pastoral care through visiting the sick, important rites of passage, and give Biblical counselling
- COM 9 Ability to guide people toward reconciliation

- CAR 1 Ability to give value to Christian morality and how to apply this ethic to life
- CAR 2 Ability to show sexual purity before and after marriage and apply principles of marriage to the Christian family
- CAR 6 Ability to give value to relationships through openness, righteousness, and honesty
- CAR 12 Ability to exert self-control

- CXT 5 Ability to interpret on a scientific and biblical bases the Christian position on magic, spiritism, medicine and traditional healing
- CXT 6 Ability to understand the rights and legal responsibilities of the local church and its workers

Course outcomes for this module

For achieving the competencies listed above, this module organizes several learning activities and requirements around the following intended learning outcomes for this course. At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Explain the basics involved in pastoral care (CON 11, CON 12, CON 13; CAR 12).
2. Nurture the whole person in Christian life and practice. (CON 5, CON 13, COM 8; CAR 6; CXT 5)
3. Listen, evaluate and guide a person toward a Christian solution concerning a particular problem (CON 13; COM 8, COM 9; CAR 1, CAR 2, CAR 6, CAR 12).
4. Know how to set up appointments and how to prioritize problems for immediate response. (CON 13; COM 8; CXT 6).
5. Show the ability to know how to initiate pastoral care with a member of the church (CON 13; COM 8; CAR 6; CXT 6).
6. Choose the best methods for pastoral care CON 13; COM 9; CAR 2, CAR 6, CAR 12; CXT 5, CXT 6).
7. Recognize the gifts found in lay members of a local church (COM 8; CAR 6).

8. Know the value and importance and practice of visiting the sick, families in grief, those in crisis, etc. (CON 13; COM 8; CAR 1, CAR 6; CXT 5).

The following sessions and exercises of this course offer the following percentages of the four Cs:

Content	35%
Competency	15%
Character	35%
Context	15%

Course recommended reading and resources

1. Arnold, William V. *Pastoral Responses to Sexual Issues*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.
2. Benner, David G. *Care of souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.
3. Cedar, Paul, Kent Hughes, and Ben Patterson. *Mastering the Pastoral Role*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1991.
4. Clinebell, Howard. *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the ministry of Healing and Growth*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.
5. Peterson, Bruce L. *Foundations of Pastoral Care*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2007.
6. *Shepherding God's People*. RIIIE Module. Kansas City: Clergy Services, 2003.

Course requirements/assignments

1. **Regular attendance** to all course sessions and preparation of all assignments prior to their deadlines are vitally important to the successful completion of this course. The following minimum attendance standards should be adhered to: Courses should have a minimum of 30 hours of class time and include close to 10 hours of outside work.

Students who miss an entire day of class will receive a minimum of a 10% reduction in their final course grade, with further reductions for additional missed class time. Course credit will not be given to students who miss over a day and a half of class, or more than 10 instructional hours.

2. **Journaling or sharing**

Diploma level - You will complete journal entries throughout the course. The journal is not a diary. It should be guided thought about what is speaking to you in relation to what you are learning.

Certificate level - Find a partner and verbally complete the journal assignments as listed in the various handbook lessons. The partner will tell the class leader at the end of the week that you have completed the assignments.

3. **Sermon outline** - Students will prepare a sermon outline with the theme of your sermon taken from Galatians 6:2 (course outcomes 1,2,4)

Diploma level - This should be submitted in writing.

Certificate level - Take 3 minutes in front of the class to tell the other students the theme of your sermon and the main points of truth that you want to share in your sermon.

4. **Group activities** - On different days, students will discuss and present to the rest of the class on each of the following topics:
 - a. implications of "loving one another" in life of a believer. (course outcomes 2,5,7)
 - b. ways the local church can develop a holistic (spiritual-mental-social-physical) response to the needs in their communities. (course outcome 2)
 - c. develop and present to the rest of the class an explanation the meaning of Jesus' command in 21:16: "take care of my sheep" (course outcomes 5,7)

5. **Role play** - In groups of 3 or 4 students, students will depict a pastor of a local church showing care. in the following ways:
 - a. towards a sick person
 - b. counseling a pregnant school girl who wants to abort her child
 - c. aiding a poverty-stricken home
 - d. comforting a family in grief.Each group will be assigned one of the scenes listed above. (course outcomes 1,5,7).

6. **Drama skit** - Create a dramatic skit showing Christian parents educating their children about good Christian ways of caring for the needy. (course outcomes 1,2,4,5,7)

7. **Sing a song** - Outside of class time, students will create a song to sing for the class in your local language that will educate others on the need to show care to the needy. (course outcomes 2,7,8,9)

8. **Class trip** - Students will participate in a class trip where they will be able to offer pastoral care to the sick at a medical clinic. (course outcome 7)

9. **Quizzes & Final Exam** - After each third session, a summary quiz will be administered. There will also be a final exam.

Note - See the back of the leader's handbook for quizzes and the final exam. The written exam is intended for *diploma level*. For those at the *certificate level*, only the short answer section should be administered by the leader - *certificate level* students should sit down with the leader and answer the ten questions orally.

Grading (out of a total of 100 points)

Class attendance	10%
Journaling	10%
Group activities (participation and presentation)	10%
Role play	10%

Drama skit	10%
Sing a song	10%
Quizzes	10%
Final Exam	30%

Course Outline

- Lesson 1: Shepherding God's People and Pastoral Care
- Lesson 2: Pastoral Soul Care and Guidance
- Lesson 3: Pastoral Soul Care and the Means of Grace
- Lesson 4: Pastoral Care by the Laity
- Lesson 5: Pastoral Care in Counseling
- Lesson 6: Pastoral Presence in Conflict
- Lesson 7: Pastoral Presence in Human Suffering
- Lesson 8: Pastoral Presence in Sickness and Death
- Lesson 9: Pastoral Care in Families
- Lesson 10: The Pastor's Personal Life

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**Lesson 1**

***SHEPHERDING GOD'S PEOPLE AND PASTORAL CARE***

**Introduction**

Read John 5:1-26.

- *How did Jesus show the Samaritan woman He cared about her?*
- *How did Jesus counsel the Samaritan woman?*
- *What are some lessons we can learn from Jesus about pastoral care and counseling?*

*Ask the students to introduce themselves by telling:*

- *What is your name?*
- *Where are you from?*
- *What is the most important thing you hope to learn from this course/module?*

*Spend some time going through the Syllabus. Make sure the students know what is expected of them for attendance and assignments.*

**Objectives for this Lesson**

By the end of this lesson, students should

- understand the roles of pastoral care and counseling in order to nurture the whole person in Christ
- place the care of persons in its proper biblical and historical context
- understand the role of shepherd as modeled by Jesus
- explain the functions of a shepherd in a church context
- exercise shepherding functions in home and hospital visitation

## √ **The Pastoral Context: What Does a Pastor Do?**

- *What are the major roles a pastor must fulfill in doing the work of pastoral ministry?*

*Draw a large circle on a board, overhead, or paper pad and label it "Pastoral Ministry." Have students list the various activities while the instructor writes them on the board.*

*These could include such activities as: preaching, leading worship, teaching, administration, leadership, recruiting volunteers, training, hospital calling, counseling, evangelizing, conserving converts, community involvement, and many others.*

Pastoral ministry can seem overwhelming with so many tasks to be carried out with a certain degree of expertise.

In this sense, a pastor functions as a medical doctor who is a general practitioner or family doctor. Such a doctor must have very broad knowledge and skills but cannot be expected to be a specialist in every field. Pastors may be gifted spiritually or feel competent to do certain tasks well. However, the pastor will be expected to carry out all the functions of ministry, even those he or she may feel are not personal strengths. There may be laypeople in the church who can assist the pastor in those weaker areas.

Pastoral care incorporates all of the helping or caring functions of the pastoral role. It is a smaller part of the larger ministry responsibility of the pastor.

- *What are some of the specific helping or caring functions of pastoral care?*

*Draw a second circle half the size inside the first circle and write "Pastoral Care." Have the students list these activities while the instructor writes them on the board.*

*These could include: hospital calling, visiting shut-ins, helping those who need food or housing, comforting the dying, planning funerals, counseling those in need, discipling believers, helping Christians become involved in ministry, and other activities.*

The caring functions of the pastor fall within the biblical image of being a shepherd to the flock. We will explore this idea further in the next class session.

Pastoral counseling is understood as a specific type of pastoral care. It is distinguished from most other helping functions in that it is problem-oriented and usually the pastor does not initiate the process.

- *What are some of the specific types of problems pastors will encounter in counseling?*

*Draw a third circle inside the second circle and write "Pastoral Counseling." The instructor should write these on the board as students list the problems.*

*Among the specific counseling problems students may mention: premarital, marriage, church conflicts, crisis, spiritual, decisions, vocational, troubled teens, family, divorce recovery, substance abuse, and others.*

There is one other, smaller circle within the pastoral counseling sphere: pastoral psychotherapy. This counseling is long-term and requires extensive training, far beyond the scope of this course. Usually such psychotherapy is done outside the context of the local church and there is usually a fee for such services. People needing such care should be referred to professionals with proper training and credentials.

### √ **Historical Pastoral Care & Counseling**

Various Old Testament personalities concerned themselves with the needs of the people under their care. Moses was charged with responsibility for the physical wellbeing of the Israelites in addition to giving leadership. David, Israel's greatest king over the united nation, had a deep sense of the needs of the people. It is interesting that both of these men were trained to care for sheep before taking their leadership roles.

In the New Testament pastoral care focused on the needs of the developing church. Christ became the model for shepherding the flock. Our next lesson will deal with that image extensively. Acts 6:1-7 describes the Early Church addressing the needs of certain widows in the church by appointing seven men as deacons, specifically responsible for responding to this issue. Paul's letters are filled with exhortations for the church to encourage and care for one another. His writings to Timothy and Titus focus on the responsibilities of pastors to care for and strengthen the flock.

Throughout the centuries the developing church continued to focus ministry on the spiritual growth and physical well-being of its members. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great wrote a paper, *Pastoral Care*, instructing priests on the importance of moral and spiritual guidance for the church and the world. The Protestant Reformation rekindled an emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. Luther argued anyone could hear confession and pronounce the forgiveness of God.

John Wesley early emphasized the importance of pastoral care in his Methodist class meetings. The idea of lay Christians working to bring accountability and care to one another struck a responsive cord in the expanding frontiers of the young country of the United States.

The 19th-century camp meeting movement, which helped birth the Church of the Nazarene, stressed the need for Christian perfection



as a means of pastoral care. Spiritual maturity meant more than simply personal holiness. The movement developed concerns for social evils such as alcohol, children without education, and women being led into prostitution.

With the 20th century came an emphasis upon more formalized training for pastors and courses specifically focused on pastoral care and counseling. The development of psychiatry and psychology as disciplines also influenced the church. After much suspicion the church began developing Christian counseling centers and graduate programs to understand psychology within a biblical context. Most recently the church has placed strong emphasis upon lay counseling, small groups, and recovery groups as specific ways to provide specialized pastoral care for the twenty-first century.

## √ **Pastoral Care for Today**

### **Definition of Pastoral Care**

Pastoral Care is that branch of Christian theology that deals with care of persons by pastors. It is pastoral because it pertains to the offices, tasks, and duties of the pastor. It is care because it has charge of, and is deliberately attentive to the spiritual growth and destiny of persons.

Pastoral care is generally expressed within the context of the church and the community where the pastor serves. It often occurs naturally in the flow of pastoral activities within the ongoing life of church. The pastor sometimes gives care by his or her presence, simply because that minister represents Christ and His church to the individual in need. As Jesus' representative, the highest priority for the pastor must be the spiritual development of the flock. In a world that is becoming increasingly impersonal and uncaring, people inside and outside the church want to know there is someone who knows and cares for them. In this "high-tech age" people want a "high-touch church" where someone cares.

In groups of three or four discuss the following questions about pastoral care. Each group needs to select one person who will report back to the entire class.

**Discussion #1:** How important is pastoral care to the individuals of a local church, especially in light of the isolation many feel within their culture?

**Discussion #2:** Is there a problem with the pastor as the only caregiver in the congregation? How many people can one person realistically care for? Does the pastor have ministry responsibilities beyond pastoral care? Does the demand that the pastor be the only caregiver limit the growth potential of a local church?

## √ **Pastoral Counseling Today**

### **Definition of Pastoral Counseling**

Pastoral counseling, one dimension of pastoral care, is the utilization of a variety of healing (therapeutic) methods to help

people handle their problems and crises more growth fully and thus experience healing of their brokenness.

A pastor, no matter the level of training, does not have the luxury of deciding whether or not to counsel. People will come to the pastor with their problems. The fact that the pastor is the spiritual leader of the church is enough reason for some to come for help. The pastor is known and respected, is available at most hours of the day or night, knows how to pray and read the Bible, and believes God can work in the lives of people. The question is not whether or not to counsel, but whether in counseling the pastor will use effective skills in helping people solve problems.

In your same groups discuss these questions on pastoral counseling. The group should select another person as reporter.

**Discussion #1:** Why would people turn first to a pastor rather than a trained psychologist for counsel? What advantages and disadvantages do pastors have?

**Discussion #2:** What are some of the helping tools pastors have available when counseling people?

### √ **The Shepherd's Psalm**

**Read Psalm 23**, or have a student read, preferably from a modern translation, so the fresh treatment of the text opens new insights.

- *Where do you see yourself in the psalm? Why?*

There are several places to be, or viewpoints in the psalm: the sheep, a shepherd, totally above the scene as a spectator, a sheep outside the shepherd's care.

- *Why is this psalm so meaningful to people?*

People make the connection between the shepherd here and Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

### √ **Jesus, the Model Shepherd**

The term "pastor" is used only one time in the Bible to explain the role of the spiritual leader of a local church: "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be *pastors* and teachers" (Eph 4:11, italic added).

The concept, however, is found throughout the Scriptures. "Pastor" is another word for shepherd. Jesus himself declared, "I am the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11).

- *What images come to our minds as we think of Jesus, the Model Shepherd?*

In your group you are to draw a symbolic picture illustrating the characteristics of Jesus, the shepherd. Each group member is to contribute one or two characteristics from the homework assignment.

As a group decide how to best picture the shepherding qualities of Jesus. The emphasis is not on artistic skill but on symbolic representation.

Is the image of Jesus as the Model Shepherd impossible for human pastors to really follow or imitate?

### √ **The Church as a Flock of Sheep**

Throughout the Bible the people of God are pictured as sheep. As Moses was about to turn over the reins of leadership to his successor, he asked God for a leader "so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd" (Num 27:17). Jesus had the same concern for the nation of Israel as He worked among the people. Matthew, one of the Twelve who worked along-side Jesus, comments in 9:36, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Sheep are defenseless animals. They lack

- the sharp teeth of a wolf
- the slashing claws of a bear
- the outer protection of a turtle
- the speed of a cheetah
- the cunning of a fox

Sheep are defenseless without a shepherd.

Sheep have a natural tendency to wander off. Isaiah put it well in 53:6, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." The sheep can be so focused on satisfying their hunger pangs that they fail to realize they have left the shepherd's sight. They are not always discriminating in what they eat. Noxious weeds go in the mouth right along with healthy grass. The shepherd has an important role in leading the flock to green pastures and quiet waters.

Sheep are in need of first aid treatment when they are scratched by briars or fall upon the rocks. Sometimes a sheep with a full coat of wool will fall down and be unable to get up without the shepherd's help.

Sheep need a shepherd. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the Master and Model Shepherd. But He calls men and women to be undershepherds. If He has called you to be a pastor, shepherding is part of the job description.

#### **Discussion: The Job Description of a Pastor/Shepherd**

There are at least 11 descriptive images of the shepherd in Scripture we will be examining closely. After we read the term and the reference, find the contemporary application to the pastor today.

**Feeding:** Psalm 23:2, "He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters."

*Discuss the preaching and teaching as one form of feeding and watering*

**Restoring:** Psalm 23:3, "He restores my soul."

*Restoring could be encouraging, helping sheep to grow, lifting up the fallen.*

**Protecting:** Psalm 23:4, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

*The pastor protects the congregation against false teaching, prepares the people for Satan's attacks, provides an assuring presence in difficult moments such as death and pain.*

**Healing:** Psalm 23:5, "You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." *The pastor brings the healing oil representing the Holy Spirit and anoints for physical and emotional healing.*

**Nurturing:** Isaiah 40:11, "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young."

*Pastors gently mentor and disciple young believers with a compassionate heart.*

**Knowing:** John 10:3, "He calls his own sheep by name."

*People in the church need to know that a pastor or staff person knows them and there is a sense of belonging. A pastor of a very large church may not know everyone, but part of the job description is to be sure someone knows and cares for each person.*

**Leading:** John 10:3, "He . . . leads them out."

*A shepherd leads his or her sheep, never driving them. You may drive cattle, but not sheep. Part of being a shepherd is a willingness to lead so the sheep know where to go.*

**Selfless service:** John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

*Jesus demonstrated humility by washing the disciples' feet in John 13. Sometimes it is harder to be a servant leader daily than to be a Christian martyr.*

**Welcoming:** John 10:16, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also."

*This could refer to cross-cultural ministry. Jesus showed His evangelistic concern for all peoples, not just the Jews.*

**Equipping:** Hebrews 13:20-21, "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will."

*Pastors are to equip the flock for works of service, just as Christ has equipped us (Eph. 4:12).*

**Modeling:** 1 Peter 5:2-3, "Be shepherds of God's flock . . . not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

*Pastors lead by showing people, not telling people what to do or acting self-righteous. 1 Cor 11:1: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."*

### √ **An Example of Present-Day Shepherding-Visitation**

*These illustrations of visitation are western and North American in context. In other world areas, the instructor should feel free to substitute culturally appropriate examples in place of these illustrations.*

Pastoral ministry is one of the few professions where our skills are taken to people. It is rare for a physician to make a house call unless it is an emergency. Yet pastors often go to the homes and workplaces of congregants and others. Calling in the North American context has changed dramatically in the last 50 years. Pastors make fewer calls today than earlier generations. There are several reasons.

#### **Reasons Pastors Make Fewer House Calls**

- **Fewer adults are at home in the daytime hours.** Both spouses work when the children are in school. People work swing shifts and may not want to be disturbed from their sleep. It may be a challenge to find anyone at home for daytime calling.
- **People value privacy.** Many live in gated communities or locked apartment buildings. They enter their homes in their cars through garages, closing the garage doors behind them. People are often afraid to open a front door for someone they do not recognize.
- **People value personal time.** People work more hours and spend more time getting there. They spend valuable private time exercising, pursuing hobbies, and taking their children to soccer games. Time is almost more precious than money for many. They don't necessarily want interruptions.

Yet, being with and ministering to people is central to what pastoring is all about. With the value of privacy comes isolation. Many people work in tiny workstations staring at computer screens all day. They travel to and from work in metal cocoons that separate them from others. Technology is a poor substitute for human contact. Pastors must find ways to connect with members of their church family to encourage them, pray for them, and most importantly, love them.

What does a pastor do to reach out to people, when it would be easier to do nothing? It takes creativity to make those important pastoral contacts. Here are some suggestions:

- Make an appointment if you know there is a crisis or there is trouble brewing. There are times when a person or family needs immediate attention and an appointment may be the only way that will happen. This may need to be in the evening or early morning.
- Take daytime opportunities to visit senior adults, shut-ins, and those hospitalized.
- Take advantage of breakfast and lunchtimes to make pastoral contacts.

- Train laypeople to make additional contacts. Utilize a small group to show personal care to keep in touch with people. We will say more about this in a later session.

### **Hospital Visitation**

People are especially receptive when they are in the hospital. Since rising insurance costs mean shorter stays in the hospital, the pastor must be alert for the brief opportunities.

- Go to the hospital as soon as possible in an emergency. Get as much information about the patient's location as possible. You can be a great comfort to both the patient and family members.
- Try to visit before serious surgeries. Patients often have great anxiety over the procedure or the disease they are facing. A prayer and a short scripture can help patients realize God is with them in the midst of their surgery.
- Remember, you are a professional and an important part of the healing team. Many hospitals are recognizing the healing potential in prayer. While you want to respect the medical personnel doing their jobs, you can be of great help to the patient as the pastor.
- Make hospital visits brief and positive for the patient. After all, you are the representative of the God who loves and cares for that person. Staying too long can drain valuable energy that is needed for the patient to get well.
- A hospital visit can be an opportunity for evangelism. People are more aware of their mortality in that setting. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading as you speak to people about spiritual matters.
- Recognize the needs of family members and friends. Your presence may be more important than any answers you may be able to give.
- Don't hesitate to touch the patient unless there is a medical reason to maintain distance. A touch on the hand or shoulder when you talk or pray communicates compassion and a willingness to connect physically.
- Try to assess the patient's emotional needs. On one day it may be an encouraging word to overcome fear or loneliness. At another time it may be overcoming the physical weakness of surgery. Be sensitive to what the patient communicates by voice strength and body language.
- If there is any question of whether you should go to visit in the hospital, go. This may be an opportunity for a pastoral moment that may never come again in the same way.

### **Lesson Close**

The pastor left the hospital room after visiting a young man in his early 30s. Outwardly he seemed the picture of health. When the pastor stepped out on the street the Holy Spirit strongly urged him to go back and talk to this patient about his spiritual condition. When the impression would not go away, the pastor walked back into the young man's room and led him to saving faith in Christ. The patient soon left the hospital but unexpectedly died within weeks. The pastor was so thankful he did not neglect an opportunity to care for a person in his congregation.

**Journaling or sharing with your discussion partner**

Diploma students: Write a journal entry telling about a time recently where you received care, pastoral or otherwise, from someone. Express your feelings to have received someone else's concern. Then write about an opportunity you took to express care, concern, or counsel to someone else. How did you feel about the experience? Would you do something different next time?

Certificate students: Use the same journal prompt (questions above) to begin your three-minute oral report to your partner.

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Lesson 2

PASTORAL SOUL CARE AND SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Objectives for the lesson

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- appreciate the significance of the soul
- understand the definition of soul care
- know ways to express soul care in the life of the local church
- explain the meaning of spiritual direction
- discover ways to provide spiritual guidance to individuals and groups

Introduction

John Frye, in his book *Jesus the Pastor*, tells of working in a medical hospital while in seminary. An attractive young woman came into the emergency ward with a split lip, a swollen eye, and abrasions on her forehead. She told the sad story of a fight with her husband outside a bar. She began to cry. It wasn't the physical injuries, she indicated, but fear for her children who might be suffering abuse from their drunk and angry father. After the medical personnel cared for her wounds, Frye sensed there was a deeper pain from the relational issues that could not be as easily bandaged and stitched. Then a question began to form within John Frye's mind, "But who will doctor her soul?"

√ **Jesus' Concern for the Soul**

In our last lesson we talked about Jesus as the Model Shepherd. Jesus was concerned for people far beyond their physical need for food and good health. While Jesus performed many miracles to alleviate suffering, it was not His primary concern. He understood **nothing is more valuable than the soul**, the individual. (The Greek word for "soul" includes the **whole** person. It is the seat of religious sensitivity, moral responsibility, and human feeling.) Christ said to His disciples, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mt 16:26).

Jesus knew the **value of the soul**, a person's religious sensitivity and moral awareness, because this was the focal point from which a human relationship with God would develop. Yet, Jesus never forced people to make decisions at the soul level before they were ready. He planted seeds in the form of parables and allowed them to germinate to life as people thought about them.

While He never made a sales pitch for cheap grace or halfhearted discipleship, He was ready to respond to the softest cry of the human soul. For those beaten down and abandoned, Jesus made the offer, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt 11:28-29).

The Apostle John prayed for his friend Gaius in 3 John 2: "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting well." As pastors and shepherds following the model of Christ, one of our unique tasks is to care for spiritual needs as we lead people to **wholeness** in Christ.

√ **What Is Soul Care?**

David Benner in his book *Care of Souls* writes:

Caring for souls is caring for people in ways that not only acknowledge them as persons but also engage and address them in the deepest and most profoundly human aspects of their lives. . . . In summary, therefore, we can define soul care as the **support** and **restoration** of the well-being of persons in their depth and totality, with particular concern for their **inner** life.

What do we understand about soul care?

Soul care is a Christian function.

- *What makes soul care Christian?*

Christians who have been born again should show great concern for the spiritual well-being of others, showing the Christian virtues of love, acceptance, and forgiveness

Soul care is done in the context of community.

- *Why is soul care done best within the body of believers, the church?*

Christianity is not an individualized religion. We are Christians in relationship to other Christians as well as in relationship to God. An important aspect of soul development is **corporate worship**. We are part of the family of God and we must not neglect our dependence on, and responsibility to, fellow church members. We are bound together, not by human kinship, but by the blood of Jesus that makes us one family.

Soul care is a compassionate focus upon others.

- *Should we not be most concerned about ourselves if this seems to be the attitude of our cultural context?*

We should be concerned about our own spiritual welfare, but soul care is focused on others and not on ourselves. Study the passages in Paul's writings where the words "one another" are used. The church has historically stressed the need for believers to care for others within and outside the fellowship.

Soul care is nurtured through interpersonal relationships.

- *Why is it so important that we really get to know a group of people within the church?*

Discuss the importance of accountability, encouragement, and burden bearing that can come through small-group interaction.

Soul care is a holistic concern of the total individual.

- *How did Jesus emphasize concern for the whole person?*

Jesus was willing to address both the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people. Read James 2:14-17.

Soul care is a privilege for everyone.

- *Does this mean pastors do not need to concern themselves with soul care?*

While there is the priesthood of all believers, there are specific responsibilities for spiritual care and nurture of the flock under your care. And pastors should also train others to assist in giving care to the spiritual needs within the church.

Discussion Activity: Providing Spiritual Guidance

In groups of 3 or 4 students, discuss the questions and select a reporter who will share the group's findings with the class.

- What are the qualities of spirituality a pastor should look for in an individual to determine that person's level of spiritual development?
- What are some ways a pastor can provide spiritual guidance to an individual?
- What are some ways to promote spiritual development within groups or within the entire church?
- How would a pastor benefit from having a spiritual director for his or her life?
- How can a pastor with limited weekly time be a personal spiritual guide for several individuals in the congregation in a given week?

Most pastors just don't have that kind of time. However, there are some suggestions for pastors who want to have personal involvement in the spiritual growth of people. One option would be to host a regular small group with the purpose of promoting spiritual growth. Another idea would be an overnight or one-day retreat. Within this small group a sense of community, caring, and accountability can quickly develop. Group sessions can include such things as singing, times of prayer, sharing needs, questions of accountability, Scripture study, and encouragement.

√ Characteristics of an Effective Spiritual Guide

Learn to be a good listener. Hear what the person is trying to say, but learn to listen between the words. What is the person conveying through the unspoken messages that come through voice inflections, body positions, and movements? Keep your eyes and your ears focused on the speaker so that person knows you are really present and listening.

- *What can a pastor do to become a better listener?*

Give helpful suggestions. Guides give guidance. Some of your sharing will come from your understanding of Scripture, the experience of the church in the past, what is reasonable, and what you or others may have experienced in real-life situations. A pastor should never try to "lord over" the life of a parishioner. History is littered with the casualties of over-controlling shepherds.

- *How can we guard against the temptation to try to control the other person?*

Discern the voice of the Spirit. As a spiritual guide you need to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, the intent of God for the person is obvious. A person who has committed a sin needs to confess that sin to God and receive His forgiveness. Other times, you may sense the Spirit's voice to respond in a specific way. Remember, as a shepherd, you are acting on God's behalf. If you listen, the Spirit will guide you.

Be the voice of encouragement. People sometimes listen to the voice of Satan who reminds them of their failure and the probability they will not succeed. They don't need the pastor to reinforce the fact that they have fallen short. Your goal is to be a Barnabas, whose name meant "Son of Encouragement." You can affirm a person's spiritual self-worth by pointing out victories and measurements of growth. People can build on their successes more than their failures.

- *Can you think of any time when giving encouragement may be difficult for you?*

Lift the person to the Father in prayer. Being a spiritual guide has a priestly dimension of intercession. It is not that you have some kind of inside track to God. Prayer is one way of expressing to the person our confidence in God's power to work. There may be times when you need to declare, on the basis of a personal confession to God, that the person has been forgiven through the blood of Jesus. Most of the time, a person will not ask you to pray, but will deeply appreciate it when you offer to take him or her to the throne of grace.

- *What do you do if, when you ask permission to pray, the person says "no"?*

Call people to the holy life. The experience of entire sanctification can empower Christians to live the Christlike life they long for but cannot live in their own strength. Calling a believer to follow the holy life flows very naturally out of a

pastor's personal guidance. When you talk personally to a person about this experience you can answer questions and objections. You can present a realistic picture of what someone can expect God to do as well as what God expects of us as surrendered followers. Guiding a person to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit may be the most important thing we can do to promote personal spiritual growth and development.

- *What are the essential elements we need to share to enable a person to seek this sanctifying experience?*

√ **The Work of the Holy Spirit in Admonition**

God, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit not only works to console, but He also corrects and disciplines in the context of a ministry of love. And as a God-called person, the pastor is also called upon to this aspect of the care of souls. It is, in fact, a duty that a caring pastor owes to his or her people.

Appropriate admonition is not a matter of forcing or manipulating a desired change in a person, but rather a respectful dialog that presents possibilities for the person to voluntarily choose to change their behavior. It does not use harshness, blaming, despairing, or judgmental negation. Rather, always in the context of love, it is a ministry of patient, hopeful correction along with encouragement, support, and compassion. It is only the combination of gentleness and strength together that can enable admonition to be approached wisely and timely.

Holiness and Christlikeness is the expectation of the Body of Christ. However, in the Church, not all believers have been entirely sanctified, and so from time to time the carnal expressions of self-centeredness display attitudes and behaviors that are not Christlike. And these can cause much damage in the church if they are allowed to continue without appropriate admonition and at times even discipline.

The goal of admonition is "the redemptive concern for the person, the reformation of the misguided, the restoration into fellowship of persons estranged from the body of Christ." And the basis of admonition is not only moral reason and conscience, but also the authority of God's Word. The standards of a given culture or society may or may not be founded on fundamental laws as guided by the Ten Commandments given to Moses for the people of God. However, the law of love as taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), is God's higher standard for the Church in whatever society or culture that it finds itself.

Where pastors are not faithful to their people to clearly preach and teach and counsel according to the principles of holy living and Christlike character development, the church is in deep trouble. And where accountability to the law of love is not present, not only the church, but also the society at large will fall to lower and lower levels of disrespect, indignity, and destruction. Jesus said that the Church is to be salt and light in the world around it. And it is the pastor's responsibility to keep

in step with the Holy Spirit as He works through him or her to correct, redirect, and redeem fallen human freedoms.

√ **Pastoral Soul Care and the Means of Grace**

There are various means by which God's grace is extended to people. God administers his grace through such things as Christian music, small groups, Sunday School classes, church camps, fellowship dinners, accountability partners, devotional books, service to others, and many more. Here we will look at these specific means of grace for pastoral soul care.

Worship as Pastoral Care

A worship service is a natural setting for the care of souls to take place, where the pastor serves as the priest for the people, bringing them into the presence of God. Darius Salter says that the pastor has a specific task, "to make sure that all people understand that God is approachable. All laity and clergy have the right to issue an invitation to approach God. It is the responsibility of the priest to proclaim this invitation in public." The pastor has overall leadership responsibility for everything that takes place when the flock gathers to worship together. It is a privilege to lead the congregation to experience the living, speaking God, who is available and anxious to meet all who will call upon his name.

Worship is an ideal setting for people to experience the grace of God. Whenever the Church gathers, the people of God bring their needs and concerns with them into the service. In that moment when worship begins, those present cease to be simply a group of individuals in a room. Individuals become one unit: the Church, the Body of Christ, the family of God. The Church from its earliest days has understood that gathering together in worship is an important means of God's grace. Read James 5:13-15. Whenever God's people gather in worship we should anticipate God's working in our midst. Many people come to church carrying the problems and burdens of the previous weeks. They feel discouraged and hopeless rather than optimistic and hopeful. But when God makes his presence know in the midst of the singing, scriptures, prayers, and preaching, the effect can be transforming in the hearts of the worshiping people, creating a sense of hope in the presence of God. In the divine-human encounter of worship God dispenses his grace in ways people can't even anticipate. This should be a natural result of true worship.

Preaching as Pastoral Care

More than 400 years before Paul began preaching the gospel message, the Greek poet Euripides said, "The tongue is mightier than the blade." Read 1 Cor. 1:18-25. Here Paul is stating that Christ's kingdom will be built, his Church will be established, not by vast armies but by speaking words. He refers to God's plan for victory as "the foolishness of what was preached" (v. 21). The use of words continues to be one of the most powerful tools available to provide help and hope for people in need.

It is a great challenge to do what John Stott refers to as “preaching between two worlds” - taking the truths written in an ancient world and making them relevant words for our contemporary world. If preaching is the proclamation of the master story (the good news that Jesus was crucified, died, and then rose from the grave in victory), the mere telling of the story has life-changing power. However, for preaching to become a means of grace, Scripture needs to work its way into the hurts and concerns of the preacher. The pastor must preach out of the context of his or her own pain. John Piper writes:

God has ordained that our preaching become deeper and more winsome as we are broken, humbled, and made low, and desperately dependent on grace by the trials in our lives. . . . God aims to break us of all pretenses to self-sufficiency, and make us lowly and childlike in our dependence on God. This is the kind of preacher to whom the suffering come.

-- John Piper in Don Kestler, *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate plea for Preaching* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002), 259.

Jesus' ministry was characterized by his deep concern for the hurting people around him. He seemed to have a way of looking into the hearts of his listeners and sensing their concerns. One can sense his deep, compassionate understanding of people's pain in his words. Read Matt. 11:28-30.

And so, when pastors preach from their weakness, people can see Christ and understand that they are truly loved. Also, their own suffering as preachers forces them to the Scriptures for a word of hope for the congregation.

Effective preaching today often involves telling stories. People today are attracted to stories where they can identify with one or more of the characters as they struggle with the issues of life. They are looking for spiritual connection to life relevance. Thus, preaching promises many great opportunities for God's grace to be applied to people seeking a God they can know and experience - a God who cares for them and their real-life problems.

Scripture as Pastoral Care

The Bible is one of the most valuable tools pastors can use to help needy people discover God's plan and will for their lives. Read 2 Tim. 3:16-17, which shows why pastors must never neglect the public and private use of the Bible as a means of grace.

Scriptures should not be used to hit people over the head in condemnation, or jam the Word down people's throats before they are ready to receive it. People desperately need to hear about the God of hope for their hurting lives. We believe the Bible provides the antidote for sin, and thus, it is the ultimate hope for everyone.

Scriptures bear authority to the human family because their source is the Creator-Redeemer God. And it is the most complete revelation we have of who God is and what he desires of us. The stories in the Bible allow people to see themselves and their life situations in the characters and events of the biblical narratives. There is the invitation to adopt the perspectives, feelings, and attitudes of the characters in the stories, thus influencing our own lives.

The beauty of the great biblical narratives is this: although the characters may have lived from two to four thousand years ago, human nature and human predicaments have not changed at all. These were real people, living with real families, facing real problems and having to make tough decisions. And most importantly, the Bible reveals ways in which God interacted and intervened with grace and mercy to those who sought him by faith.

The Bible is ultimately a story of hope - God has made salvation available for all humans, even though no one deserves it. In that, the Bible is a means of grace to pastors and to the people of their congregations.

Prayer as Pastoral Care

Prayer as a means of grace begins in private as a pastor intercedes for the needs of the flock before God. It then moves into more public areas, such as hospitals and homes when the pastor prays with individuals and families. And the pastor's most obvious public prayer role is leading the congregation in prayers within the worship experience. In the public worship service, there are especially three specific times when the pastor's prayer can be a means of grace to his or her congregation.

1. **Invocation.** This prayer at the beginning of the worship service makes people aware that what may have been common space is now sacred space. This is especially important when the church worships in a rented facility, under a tree, or in a home's parlor or veranda. The congregation needs to be reminded that they have come for an encounter with God. Whenever the people of God join together in public prayer they need to be aware of the divine presence in their midst. Read Exod. 3:5. Common sand became holy ground. Anyplace, no matter how common, becomes a sacred space when God reveals himself to his people in prayer.

2. **Pastoral Prayer.** Bruce Petersen says:

When I was a pastor, one of the most significant components of the worship service was the pastoral prayer. It was the moment I assumed my pastoral-priestly role as the shepherd interceding to the Father for the flock under my care. Because this was the time when I publicly interceded for the congregation, I did not relinquish this role to anyone else, even staff members or visiting pastors. Since I was the representative of the people of God, my role was to voice what the congregation as a whole would pray.

-- Bruce Peterson, *Foundations for Pastoral Care*, 2007, p. 140.

The pastoral prayer often begins with adoration and thanksgiving, often with a brief scripture of praise. Next come prayers on behalf of the congregation, leading them to confess their shortcomings and their total dependence upon God for all their needs. Then may be prayers for specific needs of the congregation at that particular time. The pastoral prayer often concludes with either acknowledging the Trinity or with the phrase, "in Jesus' name. Amen."

3. **Benediction.** Too many times the benediction is often ignored completely or dismissed as a merely an official way of ending a service. Other pastors see its significance in the worship service as a blessing from God proclaimed to the congregation by the pastor. A pastor can begin by asking the congregation to stand to receive this blessing from God. Since the pastor is addressing the people of God, he or she should assure them that God will be with them, that his grace will be at work in their lives. When it is appropriate, interject a positive element of the sermon into the blessing. The congregation is going into the world to be the Church scattered. Remind them that they go with the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit. It is certainly appropriate to lift both hands toward the congregation through the blessing, indicating that God's grace is being extended to them.

The Sacraments as Pastoral Care

Communion. The pastor has the wonderful privilege of inviting the church to gather at Christ's table and eat with him and with others of the Body of Believers. John Wesley referred to it as the "grand channel whereby the grace of the Spirit is conveyed to human souls" (Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 202). At the Communion table we find Jesus uniting all who gather there into one body. Something unique and special takes place in the breaking of the bread. It is one means by which grace comes to us.

The gifts of God - bread and wine - are transformed as signs of Christ's real presence among us. The church - ordinary people of flesh and blood - is changed into the Body of Christ. . . . A meal of only bread and wine becomes a stunning victory banquet for God's triumphant kingdom.

-- William Willimon, Pastor, p. 87.

The Table is a feast. It is a celebration of our life together founded on God's work in Christ. We gather as a community broken by our sin and leave as a community healed by God's forgiveness.

-- David Hansen, *The Art of Pastoring: Ministry Without All the Answers*, p. 145.

In the Lord's Supper we do not merely accept gracious forgiveness from Christ as Priest, we renew our responsive allegiance to Christ as King.

-- Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 205.

Baptism. It is a tangible, physical ritual signifying that a person has become a part of a community of believers, the Church. Baptism testifies to the grace that comes through the divine presence in the life of the believer. Throughout its history the Church has held that baptism is more than simply a Christian ritual. It must reflect the radical, behavioral change in the life of the believer.

Baptism provides many implications for pastoral care. One is found in the renunciation of the evil practices of the past. And since baptism takes place publicly in the context of the faith community, it also has a positive impact on the church. Believers who watch often relate their own personal baptismal experiences, and the Body of Believers are strengthened by a new resolve to be faithful to the baptismal promises. Baptism is also a reminder to everyone who watches that there are others who need to know Christ's life-changing salvation in their lives. Evangelism should be a natural result of baptism, in the life of both the baptismal candidate and the witnessing church.

- *How is your church effectively using the various means of grace to lead people to salvation and into a developing, growing relationship with Christ?*
- *In what ways could your church be more effective as a means of grace to the people that it ministers to?*

Lesson Close

A physician and a pastor were talking together, discussing their roles. The doctor said, "I do my best to help bring healing to the physical bodies of my patients. But you, pastor, are a doctor of the soul." Maybe you have never thought of your role as a soul doctor. Yet, the soul care and spiritual guidance of your people is one of your most important responsibilities. One last thing, don't neglect your own soul.

Homework activity: choose one of the following

1. Personal assessment/evaluation

Read through Philippians. Find three types of spiritual guidance or methods of spiritual encouragement Paul communicated with the church in Philippi. Write a 2-page paper listing the three types and then give contemporary practical applications for each type.

2. Journaling or sharing with your discussion partner

Diploma students: Write in your journal an honest appraisal of your spiritual position. Discuss your spiritual growth in the last six months. What have been some of the obstacles to growth? What have been the spiritual victories you have recently experienced? What challenges has God given you to experience growth in the near future?

Certificate students: Prepare to do the above exercise orally with your partner.


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**Lesson 3**

**PASTORAL CARE BY THE LAITY**

**Objectives for the lesson**

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- understand the small-group dynamics of the Early Church in Acts
- appreciate the influence of John Wesley in the modern small-group movement
- realize how small groups can respond to the needs of people
- understand the need for the laity to be involved in caring ministries
- list ways the laity can be active in caring within and outside the church
- develop training opportunities for effective lay ministry
- understand the biblical role of the laity in ministry

**Introduction**

Jesus once said that when two or three people gather in His name, He would be in the midst of them. That is the principle behind small groups. A small group is generally thought of as a small number, perhaps 8 to 20 people, gathered in Jesus' name to give care, pray, encourage, and build up one another. And with Jesus in the middle of the group very significant things can happen. Jesus had His 12 disciples. He taught these men, cared for their families, and sometimes just enjoyed their company as they walked or fished. He demonstrated to us that He likes to do His work in the context of a small group.

√ **Small Groups in the Early Church**

The early followers of the risen Christ met, not in specially designed buildings, but in homes. There were times when the larger group of followers in Jerusalem came together for celebration moments in the Temple courts. However, the most common form of gathering was in a home with a small group of fellow believers.

Read Acts 2:42-47. They devoted themselves to:

1. **The apostles' teaching.** This consisted of both teaching on Old Testament passages and beliefs about Jesus.
2. **The fellowship.** This was fellowship based on their unity through Jesus' redemptive work. The fellowship became family when many were cast out of their own families for their faith.
3. **The breaking of bread.** Early Christians ate together in a community meal, called a love feast. Communion, remembering Jesus' death and resurrection, was a part of the gathering.
4. **Prayer.** The early gatherings made prayers an important part of their worship together.
5. **All believers were together.** There was unity from a common purpose.
6. **They gave to anyone as he had a need.** If anyone had a need, the group pooled their resources to help the person.

7. **Every day they continued to meet together in the Temple courts.** They saw the need for regular celebration times as a congregation.
8. **They broke bread in their homes.** This may refer to informal, casual fellowship times. They enjoyed being together.
9. **Praising God.** They had an attitude of thanksgiving for all God had provided.
10. **Enjoying the favor of all the people.** They built rapport with the people of Jerusalem who witnessed their mutual care.
11. **And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.** This concern for each other naturally led to an outward focus on the lost around them.

*~~ Are any of these characteristics beyond the scope (capacity) of a functioning small group?*

### √ **The History of Small Groups**

#### **John Wesley**

John Wesley was concerned that 18th-century England sense an awakening such as he had felt in his Aldersgate experience. However, the Church of England was in such a state of spiritual dryness and lethargy (weariness) that Wesley chose to work with several types of small groups. He believed small groups provided the best framework for teaching the truths of the Bible, nurturing those who had been saved, as well as providing accountability and support necessary to continue in the faith.

Every person identifying with the Methodists was a member of the basic group—the “class.” This was open to believers and those who were searching. Class meetings provided care for the individual as well as answered questions that could lead to personal faith. For those who wanted to learn the disciplines of the Christian life Wesley offered another small group, the “band.” There were also special groups designed to draw back those who had strayed from the faith.

#### **Twentieth-Century Development of Small Groups**

Following World War II the college campuses of America became the focus of ministry and evangelism. Several para-church agencies such as Campus Crusade, InterVarsity, and the Navigators began developing small groups as a way to evangelize and conserve converts at secular universities. Christian small groups encouraged people to relate to others within the group for inner strength and spiritual accountability.

During the 1980s, the evangelical church became fascinated with the rapid growth of churches in other world areas. The common factor was the use of cell or small groups within the church. Leaders in the Church Growth Movement began advocating small groups as a practical way to grow a church. Probably the pastor with the greatest single influence on the growth of small groups around the world was Paul Yongge Cho who pastored the world’s largest church in Seoul, Korea.

A new term emerged in the 1990s to identify churches with a small-group focus. The term *metachurch* means a church made up of small groups. A metachurch uses the small group as the basic building block for church care and functioning. Dale Galloway, the founding pastor of New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon, was a leading proponent of the metachurch movement in the United States during the 1990s.

In many areas of the world, house churches emerged in the early 2000's as Church Planting Movements spread through entire people groups. The idea of the House Church movement is not about growing large churches, but rather multiplying small churches of 20 - 30 people each.

- *How could small groups be important in caring for those in the group?*
- *Could the ability of a small group to know and minister to one another also be an advantage in a smaller church? In what way?*

### √ **Types of Small Groups**

**Mutual Support Groups.** These are short-term groups focusing on Bible study, prayer, and mutual encouragement in order to build relationships among the group members. There is very little emphasis on reaching to the unsaved since the chief concern is to the others in the group.

- *Have you been a part of a group like this? What were the pros and cons?*

**Sunday School Integration Groups.** These groups study the material presented either in a Sunday School class or pastor's message. It provides for teaching to continue for clearer understanding of the church's doctrine.

- *What can be some advantages and disadvantages to this type of group?*

**Cell Groups.** These are the small groups of the metachurch movement. Everyone is encouraged to be in a group, which provides encouragement to believers and motivation to reach out to the unsaved. These cell groups become the building blocks for the life of the church.

- *Why is it important for everyone in the church to have the opportunity to be a part of a small group?*

**Recovery Support Groups.** These groups focus on a specific problem of hurting people, often outside the church. Each group stresses one type of problem such as drug or alcohol abuse, or recovery from divorce. These groups offer the support and encouragement people need as they deal with these problems. They should not be considered formal group counseling.

- *What are some groups outside the church that are dedicated to meeting these types of problems?*

**Accountability Groups.** The emphasis of these groups is to promote a deep walk with God through Bible study, prayer, and accountability.

- *What might be advantages and disadvantages of these groups?*

### ✓ **Small Groups as Shepherds**

Small groups can shepherd people as well. Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, in their excellent book *Building a Church of Small Groups*, explain this shepherding role in a medical metaphor.

Small groups function much like a hospital. They provide emergency care, rehabilitative care, long-term care, and wellness care.

-- Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson,  
*Building a Church of Small Groups (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 111.*

### Small Group Experience

#### **Sharing in small groups. Instructions:**

The leader of the group is the person with a birthday closest to today's date.

- **Discipleship:** Have someone read Galatians 6:2, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Discuss the implications of this verse in your life as a believer.
- **Sharing and caring prayer:** Each person briefly share with the group the biggest personal problem, family need, or other concern facing that person. The one on the person's right pray briefly for the need. Move clockwise around the circle until all have shared and received prayer.
- Close the session by everyone repeating the Lord's Prayer in unison.

### ✓ **Pastoral Care by the Laity**

Dr. George Hunter III emphasizes, in his book *Church for the Unchurched*, that one of the characteristics of churches that are effective in ministry, is a willingness to have much of the pastoral care done by lay-people. He states:

Most people in most churches do not, and cannot, get adequate ongoing pastoral care from their pastor; crisis care yes, but ongoing care no. Christians need pastoral care when life is good, as well as when life is hard, but the pastor's expanded job description now makes that impossible for the pastor to be every member's personal chaplain. Few churches have, can afford, or can find enough ordained pastors and staff to go around. Every church has enough people within the church membership with the appropriate abilities and spiritual gifts, to "shepherd a flock". We are learning that many lay people, with training, can do 90 percent of what an ordained pastor does.

-- George G. Hunter, III, *Church for the Unchurched (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 134*

- *How do you respond to Hunter's observation that a pastor does not have enough time to provide adequate pastoral care?*

- *Do you think trained laypeople can literally do 90 % of pastoral care?*

### √ **Clergy and Laity**

The New Testament did not make a sharp distinction between clergy and laity. Read 1 Peter 2:9. Martin Luther and the other Reformers made a very strong case for the priesthood of believers. This means every believer is a minister in the church of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul informed the church in Ephesians 4:12 that the role of the pastor/teacher is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

Adult Christians have both an occupation and a calling. An occupation is the work we do to provide for our personal or family needs. Whatever the type of work that a Christian does, our occupation can be a way we can show the love of Jesus to people who may not know Him.

But every Christian is also a part of the priesthood of all believers. That means we all have a second job—a sense of calling that could be understood as a second vocation. Being part of the body of Christ means each of us has a responsibility to carry out Jesus' work here on earth. As members of Christ's church, we become His hands, His feet, His voice, as though Jesus himself is here on earth caring for people.

Some pastors are hesitant to turn over responsibility for the care of parishioners to laypeople in the church. Many laypeople also fear taking on the responsibility of caring for others because they do not have the proper training. Some would say, "Why should we do pastoral care? Isn't that what we pay the pastor to do?" Yet the New Testament is plain that we are all to care for each other within the body of Christ. It is the best way for the love of God to be shared with people in need.

**Pastoral care is simply personal care shown to others in the name of Jesus.**

### √ **Qualities of Lay Caregivers**

#### **Compassion**

Read Luke 15. Although 99 sheep are safe, all the shepherd can think about is the one sheep out in the storm, exposed to the elements, in danger of attack by wild animals, lacking the skills to find its own way home to the fold. The shepherd searches until the sheep is found, lifts it over his shoulder, and rejoices with friends over the rescue. Compassion should not be confused with manipulation or autocratic control over the person being helped. The people-helping goal is not to control people like a puppeteer pulling strings, but rather like cutting the strings to free people from the issues hindering them.

- *How can helpers guard against the temptation to become all-wise parents with all the answers for other people?*
- *How can helpers be compassionate without being controlling?*

### **Involvement**

The priest and Levite in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 have suffered at the hands of preachers across the ages who have labeled them as uncaring. Actually, these two men faced a difficult quandary. Here was an injured man who might be dead. Could they risk touching what might be a dead corpse and then be eliminated from religious service until they could be ceremonially cleansed? The issue for them may not have been a question of compassion but a question of involvement.

Christian caregivers are willing to take the step of acting on behalf of a person in need. There are risks in taking action. The help may be rejected. It could be misunderstood by the person needing help or by onlookers. The person may take your help to the point of becoming dependent on you. But generally caregivers disregard the risks because the need is great.

- *Is the whole issue of getting involved with others less popular today? If so, what are the reasons people avoid involvement?*

### **Affirming**

Picture a man standing by the road with a sign saying, "Will work for food." A compassionate person might think, "What a poor man, standing there without a job. I wonder if he is hurting in his stomach?" An involved person might roll down the car window and hand the man some money for food. An affirmer might see the man's dignity and worth, and take him to a place where he could get a job.

People-helpers see the incredible worth of every person who is created in the image of God. The late Mother Teresa of Calcutta taught the world that even the poorest of the poor, dying on the streets of the city, deserve to be treated with love and dignity in their final hours. Jesus reached out to lepers, prostitutes, and tax collectors with the same respect He gave to the rich and the powerful and the religious of His day. We need to respect people as God's creation, loved and accepted by Him.

- *How do we learn to look beyond the exterior of a person and down into his or her heart?*
- *What would it take to become more affirming to others?*

### **Encourager**

Early in the development of the church Luke introduces us to a person so quietly that it is easy to miss. In Acts 4:36-37 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. This Joseph was so encouraging to people that people started calling him "Son of Encouragement" or "Barnabas" instead of the name his parents gave him. When he starts his first missionary journey with Paul in Acts 13, he is simply called Barnabas. People-helpers are there to buoy up the spirits of those who don't believe in themselves or are convinced they are bound to fail. The words "I believe in you" from the lips of a caring friend can make the difference between giving up and trying again.

- *Does one's personality or disposition affect ability to be an encourager?*

### **Determination**

Early in Mark's account of Jesus' ministry, an event changed the lives of five men dramatically. Jesus was healing inside a home in the village of Capernaum surrounded by curious crowds. Four men carried a paralytic man on a pad to the house. When they couldn't get near the door they went up on the roof and tore a hole big enough to lower their friend down. When Jesus saw *their faith* He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mk 2:5). The helpless man was forgiven and then healed because of the determination of his four friends. An attitude of determination can make the difference when other people might be tempted to quit. Caring Christians will go the second mile to help a hurting person - that's determination.

- *How can caring Christians know when to go on trying and when to stop?*

### **Authenticity**

In John 1 we find several stories about Jesus calling various people to follow Him and be His disciples. After Philip received his call he went to tell his friend Nathanael. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching Him, He made the comment, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false" (Jn 1:47). Being authentic, real, or genuine means we are the same on the inside as we are on the outside. "In shepherding terms, being genuine involves offering ourselves as finite, fallible, and fallen creatures, redeemed by God's grace and love, called and equipped to help others in the name of the One who continues to work redemptively on their and our behalf."

-- Leroy Howe, *A Pastor in Every Pew* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2000), 30.

As we open ourselves to others with true compassion, we find that the resistance and defense mechanisms people use for self-protection are lowered toward us. The trust level goes up when we are willing to be vulnerable. Authenticity is being yourself, warts, imperfections, and all.

- *How much should you share about yourself in an attempt to let others get to know you? Is it possible to reveal too much about yourself?*

### **Being Positive**

Often people in need have lost any hope there is a solution to the problem they face. They need someone who has faith because they have no faith themselves. Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." When people are at the end of their rope they need a caring person who will come alongside and tie a knot in the rope for a handhold. Positive people-helpers do not want to instill an unrealistic hope that is not going to happen. Nor do they want to ignore the obvious pain a person is experiencing. However, when a caring individual shows a positive attitude, it can stimulate a spark of hope in the heart of

the hopeless person. Positive change can come about when needy people can lift their eyes above the circumstances to rely on a God who offers hope and change. Psalm 121:1-2, "I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."

- *How is it possible to remain positive when the situation seems hopeless, or when you don't feel positive yourself?*

**Discussion activity: Lay Pastoral Involvement**

*Break the class into groups of three or four students. Have each group make a list of activities lay pastoral care workers could do in each of the categories. Or, if you have several groups, divide up the categories so each group deals with three or four.*

*Take 10 to 15 minutes for discussion and 5 to 10 minutes for reporting by hanging the newsprint on the wall with tape.*

In your group make a list of activities lay pastoral care workers could do in each of the categories.

1. Pastoral Care for the Troubled
2. Pastoral Care for the Sick
3. Pastoral Care for the Elderly
4. Pastoral Care for Christians
5. Pastoral Care for Unbelieving Prospects
6. Pastoral Care in the Community

√ **Developing Lay Pastoral Care**

The most effective way for lay development is to present a class for training. Several issues must be addressed.

- 1. Open vs. Closed Classes** - One reason for having training by invitation only is that some people with serious problems of their own will seek training in order to find help. One way to deal with this is to announce that a lay care program is starting, but everyone will need to be approved by interview. This will remove those who are not fit and should not be a part of the training.
- 2. Commitment** - If those who are trained will be "certified" by the local church, a certain level of commitment to the training process is essential. At the end of the training all trainees need to decide if their continuing involvement is going to be formal (on call as a part of the pastoral care team of the church) or informal (responding to needs as they arise in normal life).
- 3. Conducting Classes** - Training classes can be taught during the Sunday School hour or on a weekday. It is also possible to train people on a weekend retreat or workshop with follow-up sessions. Sessions can last one hour over 10 or 12 weeks, or fewer sessions of two to three hours in length.

It is advantageous to have some actual on-the-job experiences by visiting a local hospital or clinic. Local chaplains or nurses can help connect students with people needing care. Certificate



recognition in a commissioning service is an appropriate way to let the congregation know these people have been trained and are being sent out.

**4. Training Materials** - Appropriate parts of this course guide.

**5. Lay Leadership** - For lay pastoral care to function well within a local church setting, there should be a structure of lay leadership to coordinate lay activities within the overall leadership of the pastor. An empowered laity can multiply the caring ministry of the local church many times over a clergy dominated care approach.

**6. Cautions for Lay Pastoral Care**

- **Confidentiality:** The tradition of confidentiality has been a part of the Christian church across the centuries. When an individual shares a confidence with a person representing the church, whether the listener is lay or clergy, that person has the right to understand the words will be held in strictest confidence. A lay caregiver must be bound to the same restrictions as would a clergy person. There are two exceptions to this principle: when a person expresses the intent to do harm either to oneself or to another person. In the case of a suicide threat, the helper must take steps to try to protect the counselee from harming himself or herself. If a threat is made on someone else's life or safety, the helper must act to protect that person if possible.
- **Unsuitable helpers:** Churches must be sure individuals who may be manipulative, emotionally unstable, or prone to gossip not be sanctioned as pastoral caregivers. Those who are people-helpers need to understand the limitations of their skills and not overstep their training and abilities.
- **Lay burnout:** There are those in a congregation who will demand more attention than a caring person can possibly give. Both lay leadership and the pastor must be alert to the signs of emotional or physical burnout. Part of the answer is to have monthly support meetings for the caregivers to be able to share their personal needs. Also, the group can give guidance and help for the chronically dependent people who may sap one person's strength.
- **Referrals:** Just as clergy need to develop a network of helping professionals in the community, lay helpers should have access to that network or establish their own referral system. The object of all pastoral care is to provide help for needs whether that is within the church or outside the walls.

√ **EQUIPPING AND EMPOWERING LAY MINISTRY**

**The New Testament Basis**

Look at the football game as a symbol of what is often seen in the church. Someone described football as a few men on the field

desperately needing rest and thousands of fans in the stadium desperately needing exercise. Or consider the army general who says to the 1,000 troops in his command, "I am a well-trained professional. I have been educated at the best military academy in the world. I have faced the enemy before and know what to expect. Besides, you might make a mistake. And so I have decided, I will go out and fight the battle against the enemy army of 1,000 . . . all by myself."

What's the problem here? While football may be a spectator sport, the church cannot afford to have people who simply watch. Everyone needs to be involved. An army will never win if only the general fights. The general will be overwhelmed, and the troops need to be active participants if the army has any hope of winning. And yet many churches believe it is the pastors' job to do all the ministry. "After all," they say, "that's what we pay them for."

Read again Eph 4:11-12. Paul is very clear the people in roles mentioned in verse 11 are to focus on carrying out the responsibility of verse 12. The pastor/teacher role is not doing ministry. It is to prepare God's people (the church) for works of service.

Jesus took 12 ordinary, uneducated, unsophisticated, men and equipped them for a little over three years before sending them out to change the world. These men trained others and the church spread as an expanding tidal wave—from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth. It is the pattern Paul instructed Timothy to follow, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim 2:2). To do this the pastor must take on the role of player/coach, equipping and empowering the laity to do the work of ministry.

Each Christian has been gifted by the Holy Spirit to do some type of ministry. To release the laity for ministry brings a sense of personal fulfillment. While the pastor may not be able to find enough hours in the day to do all the ministry needed, when the laity become involved in ministry all the needs of the church can be addressed.

- How do we equip and empower the laity to become effective in ministry?

### √ **Employing Volunteers for Ministry**

John Ed Mathison, "Most churches recruit people to do various tasks . . . we do not recruit anybody to do anything. Rather we say to every member 'As a follower of Jesus, you are expected to volunteer to serve someplace in the life of the church.' Then they are given the opportunity to freely decide where they will serve."

-- John Ed Mathison, "Niche-Pickin'—New Paradigm for Lay Ministry," in *Building Teams in Ministry*, ed. Dale E. Galloway (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2000), 56.

Frazer Memorial Church has an annual commitment time where a person can volunteer for one of many ministries for one year of ministry service. At the end of the year the volunteer can either recommit for the same task or switch to a new area of service. This provides for a person to leave one ministry for another without feeling burned out or guilty. Individuals can identify their own interests better than anyone else, with guidance from the Holy Spirit. People who volunteer tend to take their responsibility seriously. Even volunteers must be trained. Frazer Memorial trains each January so the volunteers can serve effectively.

- *Do you think this idea of volunteering would work in the church you attend or pastor?*
- *What would be needed to implement this at your church?*

**Where do you begin** the process of developing a volunteer ministry force?

- **Compile a Ministry Inventory.** List every ministry currently being done in the church. Organize this list by categories such as Sunday School, missions, discipleship, and maintenance. List all the weekly, monthly, and seasonal tasks.
- **Develop a Ministry Dream List.** This could include things that should be done or could be done if there were enough volunteers and resources. What concerns in the church have been neglected? What community needs seem to be unmet by any other church or organization? This is the time to envision ministries that would bring glory to the kingdom of God. This list could be developed by the church board, or better still, a survey of the church members.
  - **Matching Ministers to Ministries.** Jesus was concerned about workers. Matthew 9:37-38: "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'"
- Begin by gathering the church for a prayer time for workers. Then begin the volunteering process. This could be done by simply making a list of current Ministry Inventory Tasks and Dream List opportunities. Have an annual Sign Up Day a month or two before the beginning of the church year.

### √ **Motivating People for Lay Ministry**

In most churches the needs are far greater than the financial resources. Lay volunteers can provide those needed ministries at little or no cost and often with outstanding effectiveness. One of the keys of ongoing volunteer ministry is motivation. There are several things a pastor can do to motivate laypeople who are involved in ministry.

**Respect Them.** People who volunteer for church roles are sacrificing their time, their energies, and often their resources to serve in a ministry role.

- *What are ways pastors can show respect for those doing lay ministry?*

**Train Them.** The equipping role of the pastor in Ephesians 4 is nothing more or less than training people to do effective works of service. Training can take place in periodic classes designed to educate people in leadership or skill development.

- *What training opportunities would you recommend for lay development?*

**Resource Them.** What equipment or curricular resources would help the layperson do a more effective job in ministry? Many times the church finances will not allow for expensive purchases. But doing something to help might provide the motivation a person needs to keep working at the task. As a pastor, find creative ways to keep ministry programs operating with the resources available to you.

**Communicate with Them.** The pastor needs to take the initiative to communicate so that volunteers feel connected to the vision and plans of the pastor and the Church board. When information is flowing volunteers feel good about what they are doing. They sense the pastor's heart, understand the church's vision, and feel positive about being heard. Communication is the glue that holds the ministries of the church together.

- *What are some specific ways a pastor can communicate effectively?*

**Develop a Team Spirit.** We have all seen examples of athletic teams or work teams who lost the sense of teamwork. When people start doing their own thing for their own reasons, the team loses its effectiveness. Teamwork can be developed in several ways. Hold staff meetings that include the volunteers. Invite key leaders to workshops for planning and team building.

- *What are other team building strategies a pastor can apply in a church?*

**Build Them Up.** Find ways to brag on lay volunteers in public services. One church featured a "Lay Worker of the Month" highlighting the person's current ministries. Mention successes in lay ministry in the services. People work harder if they know their efforts are noticed and appreciated.

- *How does your church express appreciation to its lay workers?*

**Reward Them.** Give people in charge of significant ministries a title. Remember lay leaders with Christmas gifts. Present a small gift when an important ministry task has been accomplished. Gifts do not always need to be large. The old adage is true: it's the thought that counts.

- *What are the dangers or cautions in giving such rewards?*

**Release Them to Minister.** Nothing discourages lay workers more than a pastor or staff member looking over their shoulders, worrying the work will not be done right. Laypeople do need to be held accountable to carry out assignments. However, workers will respond much better when they are trusted to carry out the task. Releasing others to minister means the pastor has more time to carry out responsibilities that cannot be shifted to others.

**Discussion Activity: Assessing Gifts and Abilities**

Divide the class into groups of three to four students. Then combine to compile a class list.

When compiling the list of spiritual gifts, give attention to Raymond W. Hurn's list of gifts given below. There are other lists, but this is a guideline.

- Romans 12—prophesying, serving, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, showing mercy
- 1 Corinthians 12—wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing spirits, tongues (languages), interpretation of tongues (languages)
- Ephesians—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers

Raymond W. Hurn, *Finding Your Ministry* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1979), 21. Also see his leader's guide, *Strategy Manual for Finding Your Ministry*.

In your group look at Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:4-11, 28; and Eph 4:11.

List as many spiritual gifts as possible. After you list the spiritual gifts, give at least one present-day expression of that gift.

List the gifts and applications on a large piece of paper or newsprint and tape them in the front of the classroom.

√ **Retaining the Workforce**

One of the best ways to keep people working is to make sure they are well-trained for their task. If there are several who need to be equipped, a training class can be effective. To help an individual understand a new role, the pastor or a staff member may need to do one-on-one training. Another option is for several churches to work together for training. Equipping may be simply reading a book or instructional material on the assignment.

Write a job description for the ministry task. Anyone will do a better job if the expectations are clearly spelled out. Explain in this job description what the person is responsible to do, the chain of accountability, and membership to committees and boards that accompany the position.

A coordinator of volunteers is empowered by the pastor to lead and administrate the lay ministry workforce. The coordinator works to collect and organize the list of available tasks, evaluate the spiritual and natural gifts of workers, and then connect opportunities for ministry with those interested in volunteering. There will also be times when this person may need to deal with people who are not a good fit for the responsibility they have taken.

Since the church is a voluntary organization, the spiritual growth and well-being of volunteers should always be of top importance. We want people to feel positive toward the church and be willing to

volunteer again for another task in the future. A lay coordinator of volunteers can be a valuable link between the pastor and the lay ministry workers in a local church.

**Lesson Close**

Gary Morsch and Eddy Hall tell the story of a Nazarene layman, Jim Couchenour, who has served on many committees and boards at the general church, district, and local levels. He has invested many hours each year as the chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Mount Vernon Nazarene University. But Jim also understands ministry to his own hometown.

In 1987 Jim responded to the desperate call to help a friend at a local tavern. Although the man had left the establishment, Jim couldn't get the people sitting at the bar out of his mind. God began leading him back to minister to the needs of people. A singing group from the church spent a Saturday evening there sharing the gospel through music. And Jim began going back each Wednesday night to talk to people about their spiritual needs. Out of that concern a multifaceted outreach ministry called The Way Station developed to address issues such as sexual abuse, drug dependency, eating disorders, and a multitude of community programs. Jim Couchenour—a layperson—and a host of volunteer lay persons have found a way to care for the needs of an entire county. The tavern has closed but The Way Station is flourishing.

**Journaling or sharing with your discussion partner**

Diploma students: Write in your journal. Reflect on your own attitudes toward the laity doing pastoral care in the church. What are some ways you can encourage laypeople to become more involved in caring ministries?

Certificate students: Use the same journal prompt (questions above) to begin your three minute oral report to your partner.

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Lesson 4

Pastoral Care in Counseling

Objectives for the lesson

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- understand how Jesus worked in the lives of people to bring wholeness
- appreciate the skills needed to be an effective pastoral counselor
- understand the advantages of short-term model of counseling for pastors
- be aware of what takes place in the first session of counseling
- understand how to lead a counselee to make changes to reach the desired goal
- know how to find resources needed for referrals

Introduction

John came to the pastor for an appointment with his sister's pastor. The pastor spent a few minutes getting acquainted before John launched into his story. Although John had been raised in a godly home, he moved away from his mother's prayers to live a self-centered life. Now his marriage had fallen apart, his children had pushed away, his teaching position was not fulfilling. John summed it up by saying, "I feel empty and very depressed." Very gently the pastor began to probe at the spiritual issues and the man prayed in the pastor's office to receive Christ as Savior and Friend.

In the next three months the pastor disciplined John and they began working together to bring his life back together. Although the marriage was beyond repair, John came to the place of acceptance. He worked to mend the broken relations with his children, and they readily accepted this new and different dad. And as the issues of his life became in line with God's will, his depression began to lift. Then, one Sunday John stood before the church and became an official member of that church. The pastor was especially satisfied as he recounted in his mind the journey they had made together through the counseling sessions to John's present state of wholeness.

David Benner defines pastoral counseling as:

a helping relationship where, through a series of structured contacts, the counselor seeks to alleviate distress and promote growth in the one seeking help. Such counseling aims to help the person think, feel, and behave differently, and it does this through dialogue within a relationship.

-- David G. Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 18.

√ **JESUS, THE WONDERFUL COUNSELOR—OUR MODEL**

Discussion Activity: Jesus, the Model Counselor

Divide the class into three equally sized groups. If your class is small divide into two groups. Assign two gospel passages to each group—three passages if two groups. The instructor or a class member should write the characteristics on the board. As these are written, ask students about the implications for pastors today.

Possible responses:

- *Listened to people*
- *Compassionate*
- *Confrontation*
- *Encourager*
- *Valued people*
- *Supported behavior changes*
- *Required personal responsibility*
- *Taught people how to live and act*
- *Sensitive to people's needs*
- *Spoke with authority on certain issues*
- *Lifted their gaze from their problems to God*
- *Prayed for people*
- *Healed them*
- *Personally involved in their lives*
- *Stood with the downtrodden and the powerful*

In your group, after studying the passages answer this question:

- *What were the qualities or characteristics, mentioned or implied, that made Jesus so effective in working with people?*

Each group is to record the responses with one member reporting when the class reconvenes. There will be 15 minutes for group discussion and 10 minutes for reporting and discussion with the class.

Group 1

Mark 7:31-8:13
John 8:1-11

Group 2

Luke 7:1-17, 36-50
John 5:1-15

Group 3

Mark 9:14-32
John 4:1-26

√ **Foundational Principles for Pastoral Counseling**

1. A pastor must understand his or her own strengths and limitations.

A pastor in active ministry does not have the luxury of choosing whether to do pastoral counseling. As long as there are people with problems in the church, the pastor will be called upon to counsel. So, the real question is whether to counsel in an unskillful way or work hard to develop skills in order to counsel to the best of one's ability and education. However, the role of pastor is usually one with general knowledge and skills, rather than as a specialist. There are those who have earned advanced degrees focused on pastoral counseling, but most pastors must be content with a course or two on counseling, with extended training coming through books and workshops.

This module will not equip you to put a sign on your door as a licensed pastoral counselor. However, the church has long understood that a caring pastor can be very effective in helping people work through problems. For these needy people, the pastor may be the first, and sometimes the only one a hurting person will turn to for help.

- *How can a pastor overcome his feelings of inadequacy?*

2. Every person coming for help is created in God's image with value.

Just as Jesus valued the unappreciated in society, such as tax collectors, lepers, and prostitutes, the pastor must resist the temptation to devalue people based on social status, personal appearance, or repulsive actions. The unspoken attitude of acceptance can be a powerful word to those who may doubt God's love for them.

- *What are some situations where this could be difficult for a pastor?*

3. The primary goal of pastoral counseling is to help the counselee solve problems and find wholeness in Christ.

This focus on the spiritual issues separates pastoral counseling from secular counseling and even from some Christian counseling. A pastor's concern is first of all, the care of souls. Many, if not most problems people face have a spiritual dimension. The pastor is uniquely equipped to do spiritual counseling because of the theological and biblical preparation required for ministry. However, helping people with spiritual needs requires great skill and a dependence on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

- *Why does the spiritual dimension of pastoral counseling provide an advantage over other types of counseling?*

4. Every person has the right to choose to receive help or reject help.

Part of what makes humans unique in God's creation is the God-given right to make choices. Jesus had real compassion for the rich young man in Mark 10. When Christ shared the one requirement lacking for him to experience eternal life, this man was left with a choice. He chose earthly treasures over heavenly treasures and walked away sad. Jesus did not run after him because He knew everyone has the power to choose his own destiny. A pastor can offer help, but the individual in need must be willing to receive it.

- *Why would a pastor find it difficult to allow a person the right to choose?*

5. Pastoral counseling is the shared work of the pastor and counselee.

The counselee can't enter a counseling relationship expecting the pastor to solve all their problems. Neither can the pastor sit there uninvolved while the counselee struggles alone. Pastoral counseling is more than advice-giving. Effective counseling involves teamwork, a commitment from all parties concerned to work together to arrive at a satisfactory solution.

- *What can a pastor say or do to help the counselee understand that effective counseling must involve all the people in the situation?*

6. The pastor should make use of the church's spiritual resources.

Pastors have the opportunity to use Scripture for insight, instruction, hope, and faith in a counseling setting. Bible homework can also be a source of help and encouragement between sessions. Prayer can be a powerful tool for both the pastor and the counselee.

Prayer of confession and forgiveness can bring spiritual healing to the soul. Church tradition also includes the use of the sacraments, anointing, and the laying on of hands for healing. The congregation itself is a wonderful resource. There are people with resources and skills who can be used to bring resolution to many problems. Every pastor should understand the need for depending on the Holy Spirit to give insights needed to help the person in need. The Spirit can also be at work in the heart and mind of the counselee to give self-understanding and a desire to make the right spiritual decisions.

- *Should a pastor ask permission from the counselee before using Scripture or prayer in a counseling setting?*

√ **Skills of an Effective Pastoral Counselor**

Listening. Listening may seem so obvious that it would not need to be mentioned. Yet many pastors find it difficult. Listening is hard work. It is easier to give advice than listen to problems. It is easy to ask how a person is without really listening to the reply. In order to keep our minds from wondering, Gary Collins suggests: "An occasional head nod, smile, 'un-huh' or general question (such as 'What then?' 'How did you feel about that?' or 'Anything else?') can keep the counselee talking."

-- Gary Collins, *Effective Counseling*
(Carol Stream, IL: Creation House,
1972), 25.

Listening also involves the eyes. What is the counselee's body language? Nervous hands, quickly darting eyes, or slumped posture communicate unspoken messages about the person. A good counselor also listens to the silences without feeling the need to say something.

Empathy. Empathy is the skill of trying to enter into feelings and emotions of that person's current experience. Sympathy expresses pity from an outside, objective view. But empathy, while admitting it cannot fully know what the other person is feeling, does its best to understand the other person's state by trying to walk in the other person's shoes. The counselor needs to think, "How would I be thinking, feeling, or deciding, if I were experiencing this person's situation as I understand it?"

Presence. The pastoral counselor should devote full attention to this person in need. Looking out the window, shuffling papers, glancing at a watch, all say the counselor is not really paying attention. There is something powerfully comforting in simply having someone standing with you in a time of need.

Openness. The counselee wants to feel the pastor is a real, genuine person. Sometimes the pastor is placed on a stage, with a lot of superhuman expectations. The pastor needs to show instead that he or she is sensitive, vulnerable, honest, and sincere, not hypocritical, or trying to project a false image. Your genuineness will encourage the person in need to be open with you.

Acceptance. Jesus certainly did not approve of the lifestyle of the woman at the well in John 4. However, it is obvious from the narrative that He accepted her as a person of value. Jesus showed us that God loves sinners. He sometimes enjoyed eating with them more than with the self-righteous religious leaders.

√ **Mistakes in Pastoral Counseling**

1. The pastor who is desperate for human relationships

The pastoral life can be lonely even when there are many people around. Counseling does provide an opportunity to make a connection at a deeper level with an individual than one might have with a crowd. It is possible for the pastor to continue counseling longer than necessary because of the satisfaction that comes from being a helper in a close personal friendship.

- *What might be a solution for the pastor who needs closer friendships?*

2. The pastor who tries to solve his or her own personal problems

If a pastor is currently dealing with a similar issue as the counselee or has been strongly impacted by that issue in the past, it may make counseling difficult. Gary Collins states, "When the counseling session becomes a place for solving your own problems, counselees are not likely to be helped, and you could be tempted to make statements or act in ways that would be regretted later." -- Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 29

- *What should a pastor do when he or she seems to be too involved with the problem or the person at a personal level?*

Responses may include:

- *finding someone else to do the counseling*
- *discussing the issue with a fellow pastor, associate, or friend*

3. The pastor who takes the role of parent or dictator to the flock

One of the problems of pushing the shepherd-sheep motif too far is that shepherds make all the decisions for the flock, where they eat, drink, and sleep. That doesn't work with people. It's easy for the pastor to think that because of spiritual training and experience, he or she can see a better solution than the counselee. This is especially true if the pastor is a rescuer, desiring to save people from the personal responsibility of their actions. While pastors will at times give spiritual advice, the parishioner must make the final decision and accept the consequences.

- *What can a pastor do to keep from falling into the trap of being a parental authority over the members of the church?*

4. The pastor who is a voyeur

It is possible for a pastor to find a fascination in the intimate details of others' lives. This may simply be an interest in how other people live their lives. Or, it can involve the sexual gratification of peering far too deep into the intimate, private part of a person's life beyond what is necessary in the counseling process. This is a dangerous tendency and can lead to the next mistake.

5. The pastor who becomes entangled sexually with the counselee

The openness in sharing intimate personal details, even if they are nonsexual in nature, can create a connection between pastor and counselee that can move quickly to sexual attraction and arousal. This is not an uncommon experience, and if the pastor is not careful it can mean the loss of one's reputation, ministry position, and even one's marriage.

Since this will be covered in greater detail later, reserve discussion for that time.

6. The pastor who takes sides in a dispute

It is easy to listen to one side of an argument and decide the person telling the story is right. People give their version of a story from a prejudiced position, wanting to persuade the listener they are correct. However, when a pastor chooses a side, he or she often becomes an adversary to the other side, eliminating the opportunity to work redemptively with all involved.

- *What can a pastor do to try to be available to all parties in a dispute?*

7. The pastor who can't keep confidences

People come to their pastor assuming their words will not leave the counseling setting. If they hear their story as a thinly veiled illustration in a sermon, or referenced by a fellow church member in conversation, the counselee may forever lose confidence in the pastor. The only exceptions to confidentiality of the confessional would be if the pastor felt the counselee intended to do bodily harm, either to himself or herself or to someone else.

- *How can a pastor seek guidance from other professionals to help a counselee, without violating confidentiality?*

Answers may include:

- *gaining permission from the counselee to share information with a specific person*
- *develop a "what if . . ." scenario with no information that could identify the counselee*

8. The pastor tries to be an amateur psychoanalyst

Sometimes a little knowledge is more dangerous than no knowledge at all. Pastors who try to provide psychological treatment beyond their knowledge and training can often do much more harm than good. Wise pastors recognize their limitations and are quick to make referrals when the need is beyond their skill level.

Review

The Bible shows Jesus Christ as the Wonderful Counselor, the counselor's counselor—ever available to encourage, direct and give wisdom to people—helpers. When the counselor's work brings anxieties and confusion, these can be cast on God himself, who has promised to sustain and help. — Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 36.

Call on one student—for each of the following—to name:

- *one characteristic of Jesus as the model counselor*
- *one skill of an effective pastoral counselor*
- *one mistake in pastoral counseling*

√ Short-term Counseling

For many reasons shorter counseling treatment has become the norm for professionals. While most seeking counseling finish in six to eight sessions, many see the counselor only once. Studies have shown that people who may come for a single session still leave feeling they have been helped.

The Basis of the Short-term Model is built on the following principles:

1. A focus on a specific solution the counselee wants to see. Most people want to focus on the problem, which means looking at the negative side of the issue. While problems cannot be ignored, success is better if the major effort is aimed at the solution to the situation. The counselee is the one who selects the preferable future. Counseling is about the counselee, not the counselor. This takes the pressure off the pastor to be the expert, or to figure out what is best for someone else. The pastor's task is to work with the counselee in moving to a creative solution.

- *Why do you think focusing on a solution rather than the problem is helpful in working with a counselee?*

2. A dependency on God's grace at work. Read Romans 8:28. God is already working in the situation graciously to bring good, even in difficult circumstances. The pastoral counselor should seek to understand what God seems to be doing, and seek to work in harmony with God's leading. This requires the pastor and the counselee—if a believer—to seek God's guidance through prayer, and to develop sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's working to bring about a good solution.

- *What are some ways we can recognize God's grace working in the person's life situation?*

3. A willingness to change. The basis for helping people is anchored in the understanding that people do have the ability to change. Paul reminds us "that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6). Change is inevitable in people's lives. Only Jesus is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. "When we recognize that change is always occurring and that people are continuously changing, we are much more likely to look for change in our clients' lives. We also realize that people's problems are always changing."

-- Oliver, *Promoting Change*, 104.

Generally we don't make change in big steps. In counseling, change is made in small, seemingly insignificant movements. Change is an action step. If a person takes even a tiny action of change, it means more change is possible.

- *Why is it so important that a counselee be willing to change?*

4. A limited time frame. With the many time demands on a pastor's life, counseling must be kept in balance with other duties. Some people like to talk about their problems but don't really want to change.

One of the hardest aspects of counseling for most pastors is setting the necessary limits on the relationship. Limits are a God-ordained part of life . . . In the long run counseling is never helpful if limits are consistently ignored. Limit setting is, therefore, a part of all responsible counseling.

-- Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 44.

What is a reasonable limitation? While there are always exceptions, generally four to six sessions should be a reasonable time frame in dealing with a solution. If more time is needed, a pastor should consider referring the counselee to someone who may be more qualified.

5. A commitment to spiritual development. Our spiritual life in Christ is related to all aspects of our human existence. "The master goal of pastoral counseling is the facilitation of spiritual growth. This involves helping people to understand their problems and their lives in the light of their relationship to God and then to live more fully in this relationship." Our primary calling is to a pastoral ministry that is sound biblically and theologically and concerned about the spiritual growth of the person.

-- Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 27-28.

And the relationship with God lives itself out practically with God's love into the relationships of the people involved with the situation.

- Give your personal response to Benner's statement about the master goal of counseling. Why do you agree or disagree?

√ The First Session

People make contact for a counseling session in any number of ways. The most common way is by calling the pastor by phone or asking for an appointment while at church. But a counseling appointment can develop through a hospital visit, a referral from another individual, and even by a chance encounter in the community. Often the person seeking help will state the issue at the initial contact, but sometimes will wait until the initial session.

1. Develop the relationship. If the counselee is well-known to you, this will not take a long time. However, if the counselee is a stranger or not well-known to you, you need to begin a relationship of trust. You may choose to share some of your own life as you ask about the counselee's family history. And often more information will be revealed as the counseling progresses. Taking brief notes as the session begins will help you to keep information accurate.

2. Set the boundaries. Early in the session you should address the issue of confidentiality. The counselee needs to know that anything said in the counseling sessions will be held in strictest confidence. The only exceptions to this pledge of confidentiality would be if there is threat of physical harm to oneself or to

others. It would also be helpful to let the counselee know the limitations of the counseling process, about six sessions. If you are unable to help the counselee within that time, or if the issue would be better handled by someone else, assure that you will endeavor to refer them to a professional.

3. Establish the goal of the counseling. Rather than identifying the problem, it is good to help the counselee focus on the desired end result. What solution is the counselee seeking? You can ask questions such as:

- What goal would you like to see as a result of our working together?
- How would you know this goal has been reached?
- What types of things would need to happen for you to reach your goal?
- As you look ahead, how would you describe this preferable future?

4. Identify and clarify the solution. Focus on the solution, which brings hope, rather than focusing on the problem. For a person to change, there must be a good reason to move from the present to a better future. The future solution needs to be as clear as possible. The clearer their picture of the solution, the more focused the counseling sessions can be to reach it. Write the solution down. Clarify the wording so you both are clear on it.

5. Examine the adjustments already made. With the decision to seek help, the counselee may already be taking steps to change the situation. People are often aware change starts within, and they begin the process before the first counseling session. Ask questions such as, "What have you done already to make the situation better?" It is helpful for the pastor to know what the person has already taken to move toward a solution. Talk about what seems to be helpful and what has not. You need to give support and encouragement for even small positive changes.

6. Utilize spiritual resources. You, as a pastor, need to assess the spiritual state of the counselee. Does this person have a personal relationship with Christ? What is this person's pattern of church attendance and involvement? Is there a consistent practice of prayer and Bible reading? Does the person understand the concepts of grace, faith, and forgiveness? These questions are a core concern for a pastor desiring to help a person. You need to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit to know when to approach an unsaved person with the gospel in the counseling process. If the person is a believer, you can draw upon the resources of prayer, Bible reading, worship, and small-group support.

7. Take the first small step now. There is no time like the present to begin to move toward a solution. In the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, the son began to move toward a solution with the words of verse 17, "When he came to his senses, he said. . ." He decided he could find work as a servant at his father's house and stepped out of the pigpen. The old saying is true: the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

You can ask a question like, "What is something you could do right now that would help you to know that you are on your way?" If the issue involves relationships, you could ask, "What would that person notice that would help them know that you are changing?" Emphasize that although the change may be small, it shows movement in a positive direction. Sometimes the person may suggest several small changes. These steps need to be doable and not something that almost guarantees failure from the start. Help the counselee to use his/her strengths or abilities to make this step effective.

8. Conclude the session. End the session on a positive, hopeful tone by reinforcing the person's strengths, courage, and the progress already made. Emphasize that you, as pastor, are there and will continue to work as a team member. Assign homework to be done before the next session. It might be important for you to write out the homework. The homework should include the first step the counselee is to take before the next session. Also, include spiritual resources such as Bible reading and church attendance that would be helpful in leading to a successful solution. Emphasize that continued counseling depends on the person doing the homework assignments to make the solution possible. You can either set a date for the next session or have the counselee make an appointment when it is needed.

Role-playing the First Session

This is a brief, role-playing exercise beginning with establishing the goal of the counseling and going as far as one can in 10 minutes. The counselee is to present the problem as he or she thinks it would be given in a counseling situation.

Have groups of two gather together for a role-playing exercise.

Scenario 1

The counselee is 32 years old and works in a small factory, tightening the last bolt in an assembly line process. There is no break from the day-after-day, mindless job, and the counselee is really depressed by it all. It is affecting the relationship with the spouse. Maybe a new and different job would help, but jobs are hard to get. There has to be more to life than spending eight hours a day tightening a bolt on an assembly line.

Scenario 2

The counselee is a 32-year-old who has been married for eight years with little desire to be unfaithful. However, recently a very attractive, new employee has come to work in the department. The counselee is not sure the other person has any attraction to the counselee. However, the counselee has become almost obsessed with thinking about this person. The counselee is a Christian and does not want his or her own marriage to be destroyed, but thoughts of this fellow worker persist day and night. The counselee needs help getting past this.

✓ **Who Are the Counselees?**

Counselees come to the pastor's study for many reasons. It sometimes helps to understand the motivation of the people coming for counsel.

The Attention Seekers. Some come to the pastor simply because they want another individual to look and listen to them. These people may not have problems more serious than the desire to spend time with someone they consider important. Nothing would make them happier than being able to spend an hour or two with the pastor each week.

- *How can you deal with the attention seeker compassionately, without allowing that person to monopolize your time?*

Those Who Love Problems. Jesus asked a question in John 5 to the invalid man by the Pool of Bethesda, "Do you want to get well?" (v. 5). Jesus was not being cruel or insensitive. Some people like their illnesses. This man had people carrying him around town. He didn't have to work. He didn't have to cook. Sometimes life is better if you have a problem, because if the problem were suddenly gone, all excuses for not changing would be gone as well. If a person is unwilling to change, the pastor cannot force change upon the person. For some, the cost of change is more than they are willing to pay.

- *How would you deal with a person who does not want to make the changes necessary to make life better for himself or herself or others?*

The Reluctant Participants. Some people do not want to be in your office but are forced or manipulated into being there by someone else. This could be a teenager dragged into a counseling session by a parent hoping the pastor can straighten out their child. In marriage conflict it is not uncommon for one person to be reluctant or resistant to the counseling process. This person may refuse to cooperate or sit passively, unwilling to work for change.

- *What can a pastor do when confronted by a counselee who would rather not be there?*

The Not-Responsible Recipients. These people come because of the problems of others that affect them personally. While they do not have the problem themselves, they want to solve the problem for the other person. A wife living with an ungodly husband who is unfeeling and verbally cruel may come to the pastor wanting the problem to be solved.

- *How can a pastor address an issue not the counselee's problem to solve?*
- *What will happen if things do not change?*
- *What has been done by the counselee to help the situation in the past?*

The Hurting Seekers. Most people who come to the pastor for help desire to find a solution to the problem they face. They come because the problem has become important enough to do something about it. The key to helping people is their willingness to make the changes needed in order to bring about the solution they seek.

√ With an Eye on the Goal

The format of the second and any sessions following will be similar. The last session established that with a solution-focused approach, the final goal is of utmost importance. The book *Promoting Change Through Brief Therapy* says,

Goals are specific objectives that you and the client develop to define what the end product of treatment will look like. Clearly defined goals answer the question, 'How will we know when the client is done with counseling?' Effective goals communicate what the client wants to change and sets up ways to recognize when the client has accomplished the goals.

-- Oliver, *Promoting Change*, 143.

Characteristics of a Good Goal

1. **Recognizable.** The goal should be something both the pastor and counselee should be able to recognize and identify as:
 - qualitative—I will have a sense of confidence when I do my job.
 - quantitative—I will be able to pass my exams from Junior Secondary School to enter Senior Secondary School.
2. **Realistic.** The goal needs to be within the reach of the counselee. Lifelong goals that may be impossible dreams just don't work in a short-term counseling setting. A realistic goal gives hope.
3. **Detailed.** When the goal is very detailed the counselee and the counselor will be able to recognize when it has been reached. If a child is lost, saying the child is four years old and has short hair is not nearly as helpful as having a colored photograph of the child. The details help us tell between people we see. It may help to write down the details so they will not be forgotten.
4. **Optimistic.** The goal focuses on the solution, not the problem. What will life look like when the problem is overcome? Viktor Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist imprisoned in a holocaust prison camp, was able to survive by having a meaningful goal. Those around him without a positive goal were dying. He pictured himself in a comfortable lecture hall lecturing on the psychology of the prison camp. He saw himself telling others what he would learn from the experience.

Because the goal or solution is central to the counseling process, you must keep it as the focus of each session. Progress means change as the counselee moves toward the goal.

√ The Second Session and Beyond

Begin with what change has taken place since the last session. Ask the counselee a question like: What progress have you made since we last met as you have worked toward your goal?

Your purpose is to find any positive change the counselee has made and applaud the gains. Work together to understand what brought about the change and why it seemed to be effective. Could this be done again? Is there something that would make it even more effective? A cook who creates an especially delicious dish will analyze what ingredient made the difference. Asking the counselee for details helps the person think through exactly what made the action effective.

Affirm and encourage any successes toward the goal. You want to encourage even a small success. Change is progress. Small changes can lead to larger changes.

- *What are some ways we can give positive reinforcement to changes?*
- *Why is it so important to give encouragement to any changes the counselee makes?*
- *Encouragement motivates the counselee to try even harder.*

Suggestions for discussion

- *Words and sounds: Wow! Great! That took a lot of courage! You have done well!*
- *Gestures: Smiles, nods, clapping, shaking hands, etc.*
- *Emotions: Enthusiasm, joy, celebration*

Help the students understand that focusing on change shows the counselee that positive change is progress toward the goal.

Maintain the gains. The old saying, "Old habits are hard to break" is true. The changes made prior to this session may have been very difficult. It may be easier to slip back into the old rut. When you are climbing a hill you don't want to slip and then slide all the way to the bottom. You want to save all the gains you have made climbing. You can ask the counselee, "What will help you to keep the progress already made? Is there any improvement needed to the steps you have already taken?"

What if there are no gains? The counselee may have had the mind-set that dramatic changes would happen immediately. Actually, there may have been several small changes from the previous session. The counselor should explore what has taken place and look for even small changes. God is at work even if it may not be immediately evident. You as pastor need to encourage even the smallest movement toward the goal.

What if things are worse? You might ask how the person has managed to get by until now. If one positive movement is mentioned in the midst of four negative comments, capitalize on the encouraging information. Perhaps the plan of last session is not working and it is time to try a different approach. Progress is not always steady and positive. It can seem like three steps forward and two steps back. Try to maintain a spirit of hope and encouragement if the counselee is trying to journey toward the goal.

- *What words would you have for such a person to allay feelings of discouragement or defeat?*

Plan for the next step. You and the counselee should work together to develop a plan for the next step. You can ask a question such as, "In addition to the changes you have already made, what would be another thing you can do to move closer to the solution you seek?" This is a time to affirm again the strengths the person has shown and the positive gains. If the person is uncertain about the next step, suggest two alternatives, giving the counselee the choice. Let the person feel he or she is in control of shaping the future, not the counselor.

- *Why does this person need to feel in charge of the steps that are taken?*

Provide resources. Some people find that having something tangible, physical, mental, or spiritual can give a sense of assurance in moving toward the goal. It can be a picture of a goal or a person, a smooth stone in the pocket reminding the person that Jesus is the rock. For someone overcoming worry, you could give the person a card with Philippians 4:4-7 printed on one side. You might assign that these verses be memorized and quoted when feeling anxious.

Prayer is a very powerful tool. You might ask the counselee to pray if it is appropriate. It can be very effective to pray for small changes rather than asking for miraculous intervention with no human involvement. The primary thrust of prayer can be focused on taking one step at a time. Encourage the person to find support through the worship services and small group in the church. There may be someone in the church who could provide specific encouragement to the person. You could help them make the contact.

- *Can you think of any additional resources that would be helpful for counseling assignments?*

Give homework assignments. One effective assignment could be to read a scripture such as Psalm 1 each day and meditate for five minutes on what God is saying. When you meet again, ask about how the assignment helped him or her make progress. If the counselee is unwilling to follow through on doing assignments, it can be an indication that the person is not serious about change.

It may be helpful for you to write out the assignment as a medical doctor would write out a prescription. Also, list the specific next steps the person will work on before you meet again. This can be a reminder and a point of reference after the counseling session is over.

Termination. Regular counseling sessions can end whenever the goal of the counselee has been met or he or she has the resources that will bring about a successful solution in the future. If you feel the person is not making progress or the issue is beyond your expertise, you may need to refer the individual to another professional. Even after the sessions have ended, there may be a need to meet together periodically to evaluate progress and give encouragement. Let the counselee know there is always an open invitation to review this goal or deal with another one in the future.

- *This has been a very brief overview of the counseling process. Are there any questions on pastoral counseling?*

Role-playing the Second Session

The counselee will role-play the first scenario as a part of a second session. After 15 minutes, or half the time left, reverse roles with the new counselee taking the second scenario.

Have the class divide up in twos with someone other than the person they paired up with in the last class session.

Scenario 1

A man or woman, 45 years old, lost a spouse in a tragic car accident about six months ago. The counselee has been having trouble sleeping at night. Going to work has been difficult because the person has not been motivated to do anything. Every night after work the person goes to the cemetery and talks to the dead spouse for an hour or two. In the first session the counselee began focusing on the goal of trying to live with the reality that the spouse is really gone and moving on with life. Since the first session, the person has been able to sleep for six hours without waking up, which was progress over getting only about four hours of sleep a night.

Scenario 2

A single parent of a 14-year-old son has come for help in dealing with the boy's absence in school. The young man is in real danger of failing his classes because he is absent so often. Much of the situation seems to result from a combination of wanting to have more freedom and anger at his parents for getting a divorce. In the past the parent has tried to deal with the absences by grounding the boy from all activities, including the youth program at church. This was totally ineffective. The parent is focusing on the goal of having the son attend all his school classes and earn a passing grade. There was very slight progress after the initial session.

Review

- Call on one student to answer the question of "Who are the counselees?"
- Call on another student to name the characteristics of a good goal.
- Call on another student to give four steps of the second session.

√ Community Resources and Referrals

Howard Clinebell says,

Properly conceived, referral is a means of using a team effort to help a troubled person. It is a broadening and sharing, not a total transfer of responsibility . . . Only by drawing on the specialized helping skills of others can ministers have time and energy to fulfill their unique pastoral function as spiritual growth enablers for an entire congregation.

-- Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care*, 310-11.

- *What are some of the significant words in Clinebell's quote and why are they important?*

√ **When to Refer—Pastoral**

The limitation of competence

The pastor is a generalist in that he or she is asked to be at least adequate in preaching, teaching, leading, administrating, comforting, and the list goes on and on. By gifting and training a pastor will be better at some tasks than others. Very few pastors have the opportunity to take enough specialized training to be considered competent to counsel at a professional level.

- *Do you think referring a parishioner to someone else may be a reflection on our lack of good pastoring skills?*

The lack of rapport

Counseling is based on a working relationship of trust between the counselor and counselee. There are some instances where you simply don't connect with the person. Neither party may be able to identify the problem but there is a sense that it just isn't working.

Lack of time

Because of all the other responsibilities connected with the ministerial role, the pastor may not have time to give all the time needed to help the counselee to health. There are high-maintenance individuals who seem to be constantly in crisis and will take as much time as the pastor will allow. Since pastoral counseling can eat up a lot of weekly time, it is prudent to do only the necessary counseling and refer the rest.

- *How does a pastor find a balance in time between counseling needs and other church needs?*

Threat of danger

People living under stress often view life in an irrational manner. If you perceive the counselee poses a threat to other people, especially coworkers, family members, children, or the aged, you must seek additional help immediately. People's lives may depend on your quick action.

- *Where would you refer a person who is a threat to others or himself?*

Physical problems

Pastors need to be careful not to make a medical diagnosis or recommend medication. However, you may recognize the possibility of a physical connection to the counselee's concern.

Personal issues

There are times when, because of the other demands of ministry, the pastor simply does not have the emotional strength needed to help. There are times when the counselee may present a problem that strikes a raw nerve in the pastor's life. A counselor who had an alcoholic parent or suffered sexual abuse as a child needs to learn to step away from counseling situations where it would be easy to lose objectivity. If a pastor finds himself or herself sexually attracted to a counselee of the opposite sex, looking forward to

sessions when they can be together, he or she must refer this person to someone else.

- *What are some other personal issues that would make referral a wise choice?*

√ **Where to Refer—Community Resources**

Most community resources fall under one of three general categories: private practice individuals, community agencies, and religious organizations.

Private Practice

Medical doctors

The pastor may work more with physicians than any other professional helpers. Some contacts may be more informal in the context of visiting with people in the hospital. When a counselee is facing an issue that may have connections to the physical body, it is natural that a physician may be the first step to health. In recent years physicians and medical schools have come to recognize the importance of prayer and personal faith in a patient's recovery process. By making referrals to a physician, that doctor may feel more open to calling on the pastor when spiritual resources are needed.

Psychologists and professional counselors

Psychologists have earned professional degrees and have fulfilled the requirements to be licensed to counsel. A pastor should find out as much as possible about the counselor's philosophy and approach before making referrals. Some psychologists and counselors see religious experience as a source of personal problems. Others understand personal faith as foundational to good mental health.

Psychiatrists

Psychiatrists are qualified to prescribe medications for emotional and psychological problems while psychologists cannot prescribe medicines. Generally, psychiatrists handle the serious psychological illnesses that may require hospitalization.

Community Agencies

There are organizations in some large communities to address major needs people face. Some of these are governmental or non-government agencies. Some are private agencies that are part of a larger, national or international organization that provides wonderful networking benefits. Other organizations are locally operated. Usually community agencies respond to any individual who needs help and is qualified to receive their services.

- *What are some examples of some agencies or organizations in your community?*

Religious Organizations

Sometimes churches will band together to form a structure to respond to such needs as hunger, clothing, and shelter. The Christian church

has historically been at the forefront in responding to hurting people. Rescue missions preach the gospel and meet the physical needs of a unique group of people living at the edge of society. Many religious helping organizations receive little financial help from the community at large. It is up to the churches to provide the financing and staffing resources to keep these religious organizations in operation. When churches or a district joins together they can provide resources few churches could do individually.

- *What are some ways a local church can show support to community religious helping agencies?*

√ **How to Refer—Making the Connection**

1. **Learn the resources available** in your community.
 - *What resources can you find for your Community Resource Notebook?*
 - *Do you think this notebook would be beneficial for a pastor?*
2. **Make a referral to an individual** rather than an agency when possible. This is one reason for making personal contact before you need to make a referral. Having the phone number of Mr. Saffa or Mrs. Hernandez at an organization helps the counselee feel there is an individual who will give personal attention.
 - *Why is it important to empower the counselee moving toward referral?*
3. **Help the counselees feel you are not abandoning them.** Explain why this referral is necessary. Make the reason clear.
 - *How would you respond if the reason you are referring the person is that you simply don't have time to work with the person?*
4. **Let the counselee make the appointment** when possible. This gives the person some ownership and control over what takes place in this next stage of the helping process. When counselees are given the power to choose, it is not so much the pastor's idea but their own idea.
5. **Maintain contact with the counselee** after the referral is made. David Switzer likes the term "transferral" rather than "referral." Even after you make a referral you probably will continue to be this person's pastor.
6. **Follow up with the referral agency on progress.** Has this person attended sessions? Are there ways I can support this individual as the pastor? Many agencies exist through referrals and so it is in their best interest to cooperate with you for future contact.
 - *What should you do if you feel the help the person is receiving is not the right help?*

√ **Problems with Referring**

The lack of resources. While large cities may have the specific help you need for the person, this is not always the case in provincial areas. Sometimes people have to travel some distance to work with the person who will be the most help. If that is the only alternative, ask the person how much he or she wants help. Travel and time are worthwhile sacrifices when we can see a brighter future.

The lack of money. Seeing a professional can cost money. It may be helpful to ask the counselee how much he or she would be willing to pay if the problem was a heart that needed repair. Is it worth money to invest in repairing a marriage that is hurting? Sometimes it is simply an issue of realigning resources. But in other situations, the person is destitute. This may be a situation where the church or people in the church can provide the resources. If that is not a possibility, professionals sometimes have a sliding fee schedule based on one's ability to pay. Your role may be to help find the resources to see this person receives help.

The counselee's refusal to go. Some people do not want to leave the security of the pastor's office for the unknown of a referral agency. If you are simply not competent to help this person, you may need to admit you can't help the person, and then end the counseling. You may need to help the person to the extent you can. But ultimately, the person who has resources available and refuses to utilize them has made a personal choice. In that case, you cannot be held responsible for what someone else refuses to do.

Lesson Close

Pastoral counseling is much more than simply learning proper techniques. There are pastors who are excellent counselors even though they lack specific training. What they may lack in education is overshadowed by an intense concern for the person in need. They are good listeners who work with people to bring positive change. Good counseling is an integral part of good shepherding. Remember, you are the hands and voice of Jesus, sent to bring help. You can make a difference through your counsel.

Journaling or sharing with your discussion partner

Diploma student: Write in your journal. Spend time reflecting on the way Jesus responded when people came to Him with needs. What are the aspects of counseling you find most difficult to deal with, from present experience or as you anticipate ministry in the future? Reflect on how God can help you in the areas you find most challenging. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 and respond to what the scripture is saying to you about being a comfort to others through counseling.

Certificate students: Use the same journal prompt (questions above) to begin your three minute oral report to your partner.

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**Lesson 5**

**PASTORAL PRESENCE IN CONFLICT & CRISIS**

**Objectives for the lesson**

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- understand the causes of church conflict
- know some of the steps to take to resolve church conflict
- explain the types of crises
- understand how a crisis develops
- know what to do when dealing with a crisis

√ **PASTORAL PRESENCE IN CONFLICT**

The man in the pastor's office was angry. It was written on his face and amplified in his voice. "Pastor, if you don't do something about the music in our church services our church is going to break apart at the seams. Until Bill took over leading worship, things were going great. I knew all the music because we had used the same songs for years. Now it seems like we have new music every week. And those drums and guitars . . . they are so loud you can't hear your own voice. If you don't get rid of Bill in the next month, pastor, we are going to leave this church we love, and take our tithe with us."

This is just one example of conflict a pastor can face. Conflict is not new. It has been around from the time the church was in its infancy.

Look at the church in Corinth.

*Divide the class into groups of three or four. Have the group discuss what they discovered in their papers on 1 Corinthians 3-6. Have them select two conflicts and answer the following questions for each conflict. Select one in the group to report their findings.*

*Allow eight minutes for group discussion and four minutes for summary statements.*

1. What was the nature of the conflict?
2. What were the causes of the conflict?
3. What had been done to resolve the conflict?
4. What was Paul's suggestion to resolve the conflict?

√ **Persons in Conflict**

**Jesus' Model for Resolving Personal Conflict**

Even Jesus understood that conflicts will sometimes develop when you have a group of people together. Matthew records Christ's teachings on dealing with conflict between two or more people within a local church. We need to hear them today as well.

Read Matthew 18:15-17. The fact Jesus uses the word "sins" in verse 15 would lead us to believe this was a pattern for addressing church discipline in the local church. However, in a situation of conflict one or more people may well feel they have been sinned against by the other party. There are four steps that should be followed in order that all parties will be treated with dignity and with a goal of quick resolution.

**Step 1. Personal Confrontation (v. 15)**

Too often when conflict develops, the issue is never discussed between the two parties. A person will talk to the pastor or complain to other members of the church. Many conflicts begin as misunderstandings that could have been resolved if the people involved would have discussed the problem.

People respond in ways that make sense to them, not necessarily to others. In private conversation each person has the opportunity to explain his or her actions. The love of God in the hearts of Christians can be a powerful force to overcome misunderstanding and hurt. Paul explains this love in 1 Cor. 13:4-7. A private conversation is a most natural setting for healing conflicts.

Jesus says that if he listens, you have won your brother over. The conflict can be resolved or at least you may agree to disagree.

Not all conflicts will be solved at the first stage. However, if the first step is skipped, the conflict will often escalate very quickly. As a pastor, when someone comes with a complaint, ask, "Have you talked to the other person directly about the situation?" Some people will find it hard to confront someone else who has hurt them. In the long run it can be much easier to deal with the situation quickly than hope that the conflict will simply go away.

- *What are some things pastors can do to encourage the congregation to take this first step when conflicts arise?*

**Step 2. Small-Group Conversation (v. 16)**

If the conflict has not been settled, you should arrange for another meeting, this time with two or three people with you. You, as pastor, may want to arrange for such a meeting in your office or another neutral setting. It is very important that you remain neutral if possible. To side with one party will alienate you with the other person or group. The goal is to bring resolution to the conflict all the involved people can live with.

- Why would it be good to have two or three people along for this meeting?

*You need to bring out that the others can verify what is being said, guard against exaggeration on both sides, and indicate the seriousness of the situation. The witnesses can attest later to what took place in the conference together. This avoids the "he said-she said" arguments where there are no witnesses.*

**Step 3. Public Forum (v. 17a)**

While private conflicts should remain as private as possible, some serious issues involve a larger group of people or the church as a

whole. The person in the opening story may have voiced his complaints about Bill's music leadership to enough people that the congregation has been taking sides.

When personal and small-group conferences have failed to bring resolution, the next step may be to discuss this in a church board meeting. All board meetings are open to the public unless the board decides to be in executive session, which is limited to board members and others asked by the board.

Another alternative is to call a special public meeting—not a worship service—of the congregation to discuss the conflict. The pastor is the chairperson of such meetings. Again, the purpose of any public forum is to provide information, defuse rumors, and attempt to bring resolution.

If there is public sin known to the congregation as a part of the conflict, a public confession or acknowledgment of wrongdoing may be necessary to bring healing and forgiveness. This is the intent of James 5:16 that we read earlier. Generally, it is not helpful to force a person to confess who is unwilling to do so voluntarily.

The goal is healing and restoration. If a person confesses a serious sin, the church may have to place restrictions on the person's leadership participation for a time until restoration is complete. Private sin usually requires private confession to one or a small group of wronged individuals.

- *Are there reasons public forum is seldom used in the life a congregation?*

*You may want to bring out issues such as the disruptive nature of such a forum. People may feel embarrassment and want to leave the congregation rather than accept the corrective discipline. Sometimes it is easier to hope the situation will go away than deal with sin that is hurting the church.*

#### **Step 4. Public Ruling (v. 17b)**

When all else fails, the church may have to take a stand in conflict. Hopefully, it can be a win-win solution where all parties go away at least partially satisfied. However, there are times when the church must take drastic action in order to maintain integrity. Paul's instruction to the church in 1 Cor 5 was to remove the immoral brother who was living with his father's wife.

This radical step of removal was necessary to keep the church from becoming corrupted (verses 6-8) to show the seriousness of the transgression, and most important, to bring about the ultimate restoration of this sinful brother. A church simply cannot allow a pastor or board member living a sexually immoral life to continue in his or her role of leadership. Paul was always concerned about restoring those who had fallen. He writes in Gal 6:1-2, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

- *What are some of the important cautions Paul gives to us about restoration?*

## √ Church in Conflict

### **The Causes of Church Conflict**

While the specifics of conflict in the church vary with each situation, many can be consolidated into four general categories.

**Changing Cultural Stresses.** A church within a large city looked back to a glorious past. Many had been saved through this church. They could look back at church leaders who claimed this as their church. But the neighborhood changed and the church members moved further and further away until they stopped transporting back into the city to church.

Serious conflict arose over what the church should do. Sometimes churches can make the cultural shifts needed to welcome new community groups to become a part of the congregation. Some churches try to relocate where its members live. Sadly, this church closed its doors, selling the building to another denomination with members willing to minister to the community. It was the problem the church faced in Acts 6.

- *What are some ways a church can adjust to large cultural changes within the community?*

**A Strong Power Structure.** It is not uncommon for a church to be controlled by a single individual or family, the so-called church boss or bosses. Sometimes these people hold positions of leadership in the church. They may also control the church behind the scenes. The power structure can be the pastor and a small group of leaders who run the church. You can usually tell who holds the power in a meeting by watching who the rest of the members look to when a decision needs to be made. The primary issue for a small power structure is control. Whenever the controllers sense there is a challenge to their authority, a crisis is likely to develop in the church. It is very difficult for new people or ideas to gain a hearing if they challenge the power of those in control.

- *What makes dealing with a church power structure so difficult?*

**Financial Stresses.** No church can operate very long when expenses exceed income. When there is a serious dip in giving or an unexpected bill spoils the church budget, everyone looks for a way to make the finances adequate again. The crisis develops over priorities—what should be cut to balance the budget. Those entrusted with making difficult choices may be split over deciding on what is of primary importance for the church finances. The whole idea of cutting back can create a negative atmosphere of defeat and disillusionment.

- *What are the possible choices a church faces when income does not meet expenses?*

**Style and Image.** Churches develop an image of themselves. Ask any long-term member to describe what makes his or her church unique from other churches in the community and you will get a sense of the church's style. Style may be the kind of worship music, the people they want to attract, the preaching style of the pastor, even the way the building looks to the community.

The person most responsible for maintaining this image for the congregation is the pastor. At times pastors end up leaving a church because the style differences are so great neither side can make the changes necessary to adapt to each other. On the other hand, pastors who stay long-term in a church have either accommodated their style to the church's or have attracted enough new people who fit the pastor's style.

- *Is it wrong for a church to have a certain style? After all, shouldn't a church be all things to all people?*
- *Which factor do you feel is most significant to church conflict, and why?*

### √ Resolving Church Conflict

It is impossible to deal with such a complex subject in one class session. However, there are some steps to take in trying to bring resolution to church conflicts.

Give personal examples if possible for each of the steps.

**Give accurate and helpful information on the subject.** The people who receive the information must believe it is true and will be helpful to them in understanding the situation.

**Encourage good communication from all concerned.** People must be free to be able to speak freely on the issue so people can make a proper choice when the time comes for a decision. Help people to understand they should not jump to any premature decisions before all the facts are in.

**Draw together feelings and information that show united concern.** People who are members of a church do have many areas of mutual agreement. Otherwise they would never have joined together in the first place. The issue of conflict may be one of methodology or approach, rather than theology or ethics. Emphasize those things that bind people together—the things they value and honor together. If possible, celebrate their unity, while not discounting differing viewpoints.

**Negotiate a settlement on those points of disagreement.** It helps to try to work out a win-win solution if possible. No one wants to go away feeling he or she has lost in the conflict. Begin with the points of agreement. Separate wants from needs. What are the things both sides must have? Then bargain with those things people would like but could live without. There may be some issues that cannot be negotiated, and in that case, some people may have to live with less than they wanted. It takes a mature attitude to believe you don't need to get your way every time.

**Covenant to abide with the decision of the group.** When a decision is finally reached, it is helpful to find some way of acknowledging the process back to unity. Sometimes a formal covenant should be written up with all parties signing it. Other times it is helpful to have a time of prayer, Communion, or a service of reconciliation where people can ask forgiveness of one another. You may want to provide an evaluation time later to assess the progress of living together within the new agreement.

**Group Activity: How would you handle this?**

*Divide the class into groups. Each group will work on one case study. Select a leader for the group. The scribe is the person sitting to the left of the leader. The group should discuss the issues of the conflict, both obvious and less obvious. How would the group work to bring about a resolution to the conflict?*

*Allow seven or eight minutes for the groups to give a brief summary of their work.*

**Case Study A**

A volunteer youth worker in your church has done a great job of building the youth group from 4 to 6 attendees to over 50 young people in a span of three years. There is a house next to the church for sale and the youth leader is asking the church to buy it and turn it into a youth center. She and her supporters envision being able to reach as many as 150 neighborhood teens a week with this facility. A group of members opposes this purchase. These are primarily families with small children in the church. They want a special addition on the church dedicated to children's ministry. They believe if the money was spent on the children's department facilities, we would be able to reach more children and eventually that would help the teen department to grow as well. There is not enough money to do both things, and each group feels their approach is the only right one. How would you handle this if you were the pastor?

**Case Study B**

The church hired a part-time secretary several years ago thinking this woman would be a great help to the pastor and church programs. A new pastor came to the church and the secretary did not agree with the new direction of the church. She began to gossip and spread untrue stories about the new pastor. While not outwardly resistant, she slowed the work of the church office until some who utilized her services began to complain. The pastor finally decided to give the secretary a 30-day notice of termination. The husband of the secretary has been the most influential person in the power structure and she also has family in the church. The secretary's family and other supporters have quit paying tithe and resigned from many responsible positions in the church in protest. The pastor's supporters have felt this family has had far too much power in the church and the firing of the secretary is long overdue. The church is split down the middle on this issue. How would you handle this if you were the pastor?

## **Review**

Conflict is often a normal part of the interaction between people with different backgrounds and different outlooks on life. While some differences are no more significant than whether to paint the walls blue or green, other differences go to the values and goals and theology people cherish. Add to that the emotions when we or our family members have been hurt because of conflict. Listen to Paul's words in Rom 12:16, 18, "Live in harmony with one another . . . If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Make that the goal of your ministry to your church.

- *Call on a student to state what he or she learned about persons in conflict.*
- *Call on another student to state what learned about a church in conflict.*
- *Call on another student what was learned about resolving church conflict.*

## √ **PASTORAL PRESENCE IN CRISIS**

A 56-year-old woman stops by the church to see you. Her husband died of cancer about eight months earlier. She tells you it has become increasingly difficult for her to leave her house. Her husband did not leave much in the way of financial security, and the woman really needs to work. At first working was an outlet. Now she does not want to be around people. She hasn't been to church for six weeks. She refuses to answer her phone when her church friends call. "Pastor," she says, "I feel I am turning into a recluse and I don't know what to do about it. I've even thought about how easy it would be to end my life so I wouldn't have to deal with things anymore. What's the matter with me, as a Christian, even to think those thoughts?"

It's late Saturday evening and you, as pastor, are finally ready for Sunday's services. Just as you are about to drift into that much-needed rest in preparation for tomorrow's activities, the phone rings. Three teenagers from your church were involved in a car accident. One boy escaped with only minor scratches and bruises. A second boy suffered a broken leg and a severe concussion. The third, a girl whose parents are leaders in your church, sustained very severe head and neck injuries and is in surgery right now. The doctors are not sure she will survive. The families of all three teens are going to the hospital. "Pastor, can you get to the hospital as soon as possible to be with the families?" the voice on the phone pleads.

- *How would you feel if you were called into one of these crises?*

## **Discussion: What Is a Crisis?**

The dictionary defines it as a crucial time, a turning point in a person's life. "The Chinese character for crisis is made up of two symbols: one is for despair and the other for opportunity."

-- H. Norman Wright, *Crisis Counseling: What to Do During the First 72 Hours* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books/Gospel Light, 1993), 20.



Howard Clinebell says, "A crisis occurs within persons when their usual problem-solving activities are ineffective, allowing the stress of unmet need to rise unabated."

-- Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care*, 185.

### **There are two types of crises**

1. **Developmental**—this is a crisis that comes out of the normal changes or growth in a person's life. Normal life changes include marriage, the birth of a child, adolescence, job changes, a major illness, or aging issues. The example above of the 56-year-old woman facing life after her husband's death is one example.
2. **Situational or Accidental**—this comes from a sudden, unexpected event that has created a situation where the person will find it difficult to adjust or cope. The example of the teens involved in the car accident may create a crisis for the accident victims and their families. Accidental crises generally cannot be predicted in advance, but they usually require an immediate response.

Read Acts 9:1-9.

- *Is this a developmental or situational crisis?*
- *How did this crisis affect Saul/Paul?*
- *What were some things Saul and others did to help him through this crisis?*
- *Can crisis experiences be good as well as bad? In Paul's case, was the crisis bad or good?*
- *Why do you think we refer to religious events such as salvation and entire sanctification as crisis experiences?*

### √ **How Does a Crisis Develop?**

**A Significant Event.** The event itself may be positive, but it creates change that poses a serious threat to the individual. Often the event is a threat because it is unexpected and upsets the person's equilibrium, such as an accident.

**An Upsetting Reaction.** An event that would create a crisis for one person may not be the source of a crisis for another. A fire in a home may create great fear and apprehension for someone living in the house but would not elicit the same response from a firefighter who would be used to dealing with fires every day. In order for a significant event to become a crisis, the person would need to feel vulnerable and unsure and upset.

**An Unsure Response.** A crisis usually is characterized by an inability to respond or cope in ways the person normally would do. It is not unusual for the person to feel anxiety, depression, and even panic in trying to find a way to respond. A person's mind can be filled with thoughts like: life will never be the same; this must all be my fault; I'm going to get even with the one who caused this; or, I don't feel I can deal with this.

How do you think the people involved might react and respond to the following crises:

- *The parents of the teen girl, in the accident in the second story of the opening today, who find out their daughter may never wake up from her coma*
- *A teenager loses two fingers with a machete working in the bush with a neighbor.*
- *A woman has a miscarriage after trying to have a baby with her husband for eight years*
- *A 24-year-old young man learns he has cancer in the brain with little possibility of successful treatment*

√ **Observations about a Crisis**

**Everyone has and will face many crises.** It is impossible for anyone to live to adulthood without having some stressful event that has altered the person's normal coping mechanisms.

**Crises and stresses are cumulative.** Often a person may deal with several crises in a short time. Then a seemingly insignificant event takes place and the person falls apart. It is like the proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back." Thomas Holmes and R. H. Rahe, professors of psychiatry from the University of Washington, have created *The Social Readjustment Rating Scale* in which they assigned a numerical value to various events or crises to determine the stress level in a person's life. They discovered people with high numerical stress levels had a significantly higher potential for illnesses, both physical and psychological.

- *Why would there be a relation between past stress levels and future illnesses?*

**A crisis is not a sign of mental illness.** Stresses and crises are a part of normal existence for all humans. People from the Bible, such as Moses, Job, David, Peter, and even Jesus, faced crisis situations.

**People facing the same crisis situation will respond in very different ways.** Factors may include other stresses, the emotional state of the person, events earlier in a person's life, experience and training in dealing with a specific crisis, even one's faith.

- *What would be some factors that would determine how a person would respond to a significant crisis event?*

**People with strong personal coping skills and a helpful support network will generally do better in handling a crisis.** We need to draw on the encouragement of others because there is a tendency to feel inadequate in ourselves. This is also a time to reflect on successful ways of handling crises in the past.

**Working through a crisis can make a person stronger or it can be a harmful process.** A businessman related how a trusted employee stole and misused company funds and destroyed the business. In the midst of this crisis the business owner at first felt bitterness and anger. These feelings were replaced by other emotions. The man said, "I don't understand why all this happened, but I am anticipating how

God is going to work out my future." This man will be stronger as the result of facing this crisis

- *Why do you think some benefit while others are devastated by facing a crisis?*

**One's spiritual life can be greatly affected by a crisis.** Some people find strength for coping through prayer and Scripture. Other people can become bitter and angry toward God for what they believe is God's inability or unwillingness to intervene in the crisis. People can feel isolated and wonder if God exists, at least for them.

- *What can pastors do to help people who are struggling in their relationships with God in the midst of a crisis situation?*

### √ **What Do I Do in a Crisis?**

- 1. Respond immediately.** The very nature of most crises requires a quick response if you are going to be of help to a person. A person threatening suicide is not going to wait for an appointment a week later. The family of the teenage girl, involved in the accident in the opening story, needs the pastor as soon as possible. There is often only a brief window of opportunity to minister in a crisis. It is difficult to jump in later. People will always remember you were there with them in their hour of need.
- 2. Assess the situation.** You need to evaluate quickly if this really is a real crisis. There are people who love to make anthills into mountains. In Jesus' parables about the lost coin and sheep, the lost items were important but they didn't bring everyone from the community to search. A lost pair of glasses, while important, doesn't require pastoral intervention. However, a four-year-old child missing for several hours is a serious crisis needing your immediate attention. There may be times when you don't know if you should go now or wait until the end of the day. A good adage to operate by is this: If you are in doubt—go now rather than later.
- 3. Establish rapport.** The person in crisis may be well known to you. However, crisis situations often involve several people and some may not know you. When you enter the crisis situation, introduce yourself and talk to all of the people involved. The fact that you are a pastor can be comforting and calming in a hospital emergency waiting room.
- 4. Decide on any immediate actions that must be taken.** Sometimes people in a crisis are stunned and incapable of making immediate decisions that need to be made. Does anyone need medical attention right away? Are there other people who need to be contacted? If someone is threatening suicide, what could be done to protect the person from doing bodily harm? It is better to let the person in crisis do those first steps, but sometimes you need to take those initial actions on behalf of the other person. You need to assess the person's strengths to decide what the person is capable of doing right now.

5. **Work with the person to set future goals.** It is a good idea to review the crisis with the person. Gather as much information as you can about the problem. Then begin to explore with the person some possible goals. Sometimes it is helpful to consider several alternatives so the person feels empowered to make a choice. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the possible alternatives? Don't hesitate to ask questions that will help clarify the goal. When the person has settled on the goal that shows the best promise, move to the next step.
6. **Develop a plan of action.** While it is possible to move toward the goal in one step, often there are transitional steps along the way. Focus on the first action step. This is the time to brainstorm several ways to achieve the goal. From this, help the person decide on the best course of action. If the person is incapable of doing much, you may have to work directly with the person to take an action step. The person may be capable of acting alone and your role, in that case, is to facilitate and encourage the process to move ahead.
7. **Assess the support system and resources.** Who are the people that will give the person the best chance of success in overcoming the crisis? The person's support system may include family, friends, church family, coworkers, and other professionals. A person with ongoing medical problems may need a home care nurse. Some community resources may be used for specific needs. The support a person in crisis receives may be a major factor in reaching the goals set.
8. **Generate a sense of hope and confidence.** Everyone needs to find hope in the goals set. Proverbs 13:12, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life." Obviously, our hope is first in God. But people also need to have the feeling they can have an important role in solving their own problems. Sometimes you have to let people know you believe in them before they are willing to believe in themselves.
9. **Commit to follow-up.** You can be an important part of the person's support system. You might say you will follow up with phone calls or with visits to assess progress and provide accountability. Take time to review the process and refine the action steps as needed. There may be discouraging days ahead. Your willingness to stay in touch may provide the emotional support to keep the person on target toward the goal.

**Group Activity: How would you handle this?**

**Case Study A**

A family has decided to move across the country because of a new job opportunity for the father. Their 16-year-old son, the only child still living at home, does not want to move. He is in the middle of his junior year in high school and is adamant about staying to finish school. He says, "I'm old enough to live on my own. If you make me move, I can just run away." The moving van is coming in just a few days and the intensity of the crisis is increasing. The family

staying in their location is not an option. This family comes to you for help. What will you do?

**Case Study B**

A couple married 12 years has been active in your church. The husband calls to tell you he discovered a love note his wife wrote to a coworker. After confronting his wife with the evidence, she admits she had indeed had a brief affair, but she insists she doesn't love this man. The wronged husband is furious and isn't convinced when his wife says the affair is over. There are no children in this marriage, and the husband is thinking of just leaving the whole thing and starting over alone. The wife is pleading for him to give her another chance. Pastor, they have invited you over to their apartment tonight to see if you can save this marriage in crisis. What will you do?

**Lesson Close**

As Jesus hung on the Cross, certainly a crisis moment in His own life, one of the two men on crosses of their own glanced over to Him. This man recognized Jesus' innocence even as he acknowledged his guilt. In an act of desperation the man called out, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus did not bother with peripheral matters in this man's hour of greatest need. As the Son of God was about to give His own life He expended His weakened breath with a word of encouragement, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:42-43). To the very end, Jesus reached out to people in crisis circumstances with a word of hope. As His servants, we should follow our master's example.

**Journaling or sharing with your discussion partner**

Diploma students: Write in your journal. Reflect on at least one personal crisis in your own life. How did you feel when the crisis came. How did you find help to deal with the crisis? In what ways did the Holy Spirit minister to you directly and through other people? What are some lessons you have learned through this crisis?

Certificate students: Use the same journal prompt (questions above) to begin your three minute oral report to your partner.

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Lesson 6

PASTORAL PRESENCE IN HUMAN SUFFERING

Objectives for this Lesson

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- recognize the problem of suffering in our world
- explain the pastor's challenge of comforting
- understand the pastor's challenge of comforting those who suffer

Introduction

When Jesus came as the Good Shepherd, He made it a point to provide personal comfort to those in distress. When a young couple faced a social disaster at their wedding when their wine ran out, Jesus

provided comfort by turning water into wine (John 2). Jesus comforted an invalid who had waited 38 years to be healed (John 5:1-15). Jesus stepped between an angry mob bent on stoning, and a woman accused of adultery, finally telling her, "Then neither do I condemn you . . . Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11). Nowhere was the extent of Jesus' compassion more evident than when he stood beside Mary and Martha, weeping as he stared at the tomb of his friend Lazarus. Even those nearby who watched could see that Jesus felt for his friends. Jesus even comforted his own mother while he was dying on the Cross by asking John to watch over her.

No book in the New Testament deals with the subject of comfort more thoroughly than 2 Corinthians, especially chapter 1:3-7. Here Paul is saying that God is the source of comfort for all types of distress. Since by his grace we have all received his comfort for our lives, we should be a conduit of God's comfort to those around us. For those in ministry, providing comfort is not so much a duty to perform as it is a privilege to participate as God's representative, dispensing his grace.

√ **The Problem of Suffering**

No one providing pastoral care can really be effective without coming to grips with the presence of evil and suffering in a world created and ruled by a good and loving God. This tension is not usually one that ministers talk about, but it arises out of questions that parishioners ask their pastor in their times of need.

These issues are at the very core of our faith. It is easy to question God and even move to the position of abandoning the faith when pain and suffering get up close and personal. Suffering is a universal concern. People in the Bible struggled with these concerns. And everyday people in our churches and communities wrestle with them as well. Coming to terms with the issue of pain and suffering calls for careful Bible study and theological reflection.

Theodicy: speaking of God's goodness in the midst of evil. Anyone who has attempted to bring comfort to someone facing serious pain has wondered: *What do I say to this person who is suffering?* Thomas Oden writes:

Theodicy means to speak justly of God amid the awesome fact of suffering. Its task is to vindicate the divine attributes, especially justice, mercy, and love, in relation to the continuing existence of evil. It wishes to speak about God (*theos*) with justice (*dike*) precisely at those points at which the divine purpose seems most implausible and questionable, namely, amid suffering."

-- Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 223

Even in the midst of suffering, we are never alone. God walks with us, even though the final ultimate victory over our suffering may be in eternity rather than in our present existence here on earth.

The apostle Paul never bought into the idea that avoiding suffering is the chief goal of one's life. In fact, he says just the opposite. Read again 2 Cor. 1:5-6. In Paul's view, suffering with faithfulness could be a means of encouraging others to live with endurance.

- *Who is someone that you know who demonstrated how God was walking with them through suffering, and their life was an encouragement to others?*

God does not cause suffering. It is important to understand that God does not will or cause suffering even though he may allow it to happen as the result of our fallen world. It is not uncommon to hear some well-meaning person say to a couple who has lost a young child to disease or accident something like: "Well, God must have wanted little Mary to sing in his angel choir in heaven." No! God does not rip a child out of a home to fill a vacant choir slot. He is there weeping with this family, just as Jesus wept with Mary and Martha. God created this world to be a place of goodness. Sin corrupted both humanity and the environment from its original intention. And, although suffering and evil are not the creation of God, He is at work to bring good out of every situation, whether it be immediate good or ultimate good.

In an attempt to try to make sense out of heartbreak or pain, some people want to see the event as a part of a specific purpose God desires to accomplish, and so they look for God's message in it. However, there are things that happen that will never make sense to us because God did not cause them to enter our lives. Rather than listening for God's message, it would be better to look for signs of his presence.

God created humankind with the privilege of free will. That was essential to God's desire for us to be able to enjoy a relationship with him. Yet, with the privilege of choosing this good relationship was the risk that man would choose the wrong. God, with the infinite capacity to love and know us, knew that there was no other way for us to enjoy this relationship with our Creator without granting us the privilege of free will. Because people have this ability to choose, they must take responsibility for the choices they make. A person's choices affect not only themselves, but also have an effect far beyond themselves.

It might seem that evil is winning the war. But God's power is not limited by the sin and suffering of this world.

Suffering as teacher. Is there any reason then for God to allow suffering? There are times when suffering can be a wonderful teacher. A parent can tell a small child not to touch a hot pan, but then the child doesn't believe until he or she touches it and experiences the pain. Suffering, especially the kind that comes about as a result of our bad choices, can be an effective teacher. Read Hebrews 12:6.

Suffering can also make us more compassionate toward others who are facing similar situations. Often, those with the greatest

sensitivity to the needs of others are people who have suffered much themselves.

Suffering also has the capacity to force us to our knees in prayer. When things are going well, there is a real tendency for us to become self-sufficient. But when suffering enters our lives and we can't immediately solve the problem ourselves, we turn to God as our source. When God has our attention, there is no limit to what we can learn from his voice.

√ **Pastoral Care of the Poor**

The Church has always from its beginning considered ministry to the poor as part of its ministry responsibilities. And it has been said that "a pastor may improve society in no better way than by simply becoming a true pastor" (p. 267). So let's look at some ways in which a good pastor might be involved in ministry to the poor.

The poor are considered to be those who do not have the resources that they need to live in this world, and are not able to easily get them, and so they are in immediate need of merciful care.

Jesus' ministry was primarily among the poor.

Ministry to the poor is not only the responsibility of the pastor but also of a congregation as a whole. Traditionally, the church has ministered to the poor through their regular tithes and offerings, through a church-wide invitation to give to special offerings for the poor, and through determining how best to distribute relief fairly to those in need. And there are also many other ways to help those in need as the church provides:

- To the orphans the care of parents
- To the widows the care of husbands
- To those of suitable age, marriage
- To the artisan, work
- To the disabled, sympathetic response
- To the travelers, a house
- To the hungry, food
- To the thirsty, drink
- To the naked, clothing
- To the sick, visitation
- To the prisoner, help
- To young persons, assistance that they may learn a trade (p. 269)

Read 1 Tim. 6:6-9. Pastors and congregations need to be reminded that those who desire riches can fall into a trap. This scripture admonishes both the wealthy and the poor to learn the virtue of contentment. This is foundational for godliness as well as for sincere ministry to the poor.

Degrees of Poverty

1. **Ordinary poverty** is seen in the people who are only able to provide a minimal income. They have very little to call their own, and they live from day to day at a standard of living that most people in their community would consider as very low, barely sustaining life. Help to these people can involve:
 - a. preventive remedies - actions that can help them to not fall more deeply into acute poverty or destitution.
 - b. curative remedies - actions that can help change the economic situation in the community as well as to help change the inward psychological patterns that cause such poverty to continue.
2. Acute poverty refers to a crisis in which the conditions for supporting life are temporarily but immediately threatened. If life is to continue, help from others is needed as emergency relief.
3. Destitution refers to a continuing state of being without the means of bare subsistence or the means of getting them. It is persistent, absolute want of the necessities of life with no possibilities of recovery by its own means. Care for the poor at this level is needed as all three:
 - a. preventive remedies
 - b. curative remedies
 - c. emergency relief

In ministering to the poor in these ways the pastor and congregation have to fight against abusing the system within the church as well as struggling against creating dependency among those to whom they are ministering.

A helpful guideline in each context is that the greater the degree of want, the greater is the urgency for relief. This would mean that the destitute need to be taken care of first according to the resources available, because it is the case that resources are always limited. Even the treasury of Jesus' disciples was never abundant. This means that hard decisions have to continually be made as to who is in greatest need and who is able to use it most meaningfully.

It is always important to remember that providing resources alone is not enough. The church must also always give spiritual encouragement, guidance and training, along with the physical aid.

The end objective of ministry to the poor is to help them improve their condition, their abilities to help themselves, their self-esteem, and their spiritual well-being.

Spiritual counsel for the poor:

1. No condition of life is so lowly or poor but that it may become sanctified and fruitful to us, if we understand it in relationship to God's loving care of his people. All people are of immeasurable worth and are loved by God.
2. Trust providence. Read 1 Cor. 10:13. God's loves us even more than we love ourselves.

3. Keep in mind that riches can be as dangerous to the soul as poverty.
4. There are some sins that tend toward poverty: ill-gotten gain, pride, gluttony, drunkenness, laziness, and idleness.
5. The poor may be tempted to think that worldly riches will bring happiness. They may be tempted to be easily vexed, impatient, and covetous. And they may need to resist more directly the temptation to hate and be jealous of the wealthy.
6. The poor may be tempted to use unlawful means to supply their wants, such as flattery, theft, murder or desperate revolution. They may be tempted to neglect spiritual duties in the interest of material improvement. And they may be tempted to neglect the education of children.
7. Remember that Christ himself chose a life of poverty. He had no place to lay his head. Poverty may actually provide potential for spiritual growth and moral development.
8. The pastor who teaches these things will do well to live in such a way to show willingness to live modestly themselves as a basis for demonstrating that poverty can be a context for spiritual increase.

These aspects of spiritual guidance are not to be taught as a substitute for physical relief, but in addition to it.

Lesson Close

The willingness to give with generosity and cheerfulness puts love to the test. Christ's love for us is demonstrated by his willingness to voluntarily become poor, enter into our human situation with its limits, and allow himself to become defenseless and vulnerable. How can we do any less in demonstrating love to those in need around us.

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**Lesson 7**

**PASTORAL PRESENCE IN SICKNESS AND DEATH**

**Objectives for this Lesson**

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- know the stages of dying
- understand the importance of ministry to the dying
- know the elements of the grieving process
- understand how to help people manage grief
- know how to prepare for a funeral
- know how to minister to the depressed
- know how to deal with those threatening suicide

**Introduction**

You are sitting with a family in a hospital waiting room as the mother and wife is undergoing a routine surgery. The doctor enters the room and speaks very quietly to the family, "She was doing very well as the surgery progressed, and then, without warning, her heart

stopped. We did all we could but we just could not revive her. I'm very sorry."

- *What do you do, pastor, to help this family deal with the shock of this very unexpected death?*

A middle-aged man with a wife and three children has been suffering recurring headaches and dizziness. The doctors go through a battery of tests. The results are not what he expected. There is a large, inoperable brain tumor. At best he has three to six months to live.

- *How can you help this man and his family deal with the reality of illness and with the process of dying?*

### √ **Ministry to the Sick**

The pastor's role in ministry to the sick, in a very special way, represents Christ's own ministry to the sick. It is as though the pastor is ministering in Christ's behalf to those who are suffering with physical illnesses. It is a ministry of "not just conversation, but of teaching, praying, healing, and consoling in Christ's name on behalf of the whole community" (Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, p. 249).

**Healing and the confession of sin.** Confessing one's faults or sins to another person, whether that person is a pastor, a fellow Christian, or to God himself, can be a significant part of spiritual healing.

What ever the nature of the confession, you, as the representative of God, are being asked for the reassurance that prayers for forgiveness are being heard and answered by God.

-- Michael Kirkendoll, *Hospital Visit*, 53.

There can be a connection between guilt, shame, and illnesses that may at first seem unrelated. Such things as bitterness and unresolved anger or hatred can contribute to physical problems. When the guilt and shame of sin is removed by confession and forgiveness, a person may find there is physical healing as a side benefit.

**Prayer and anointing.** It is normally in the context of the faith community that prayers are offered for physical healing by anointing of the sick with oil. Two passages in the New Testament refer to anointing with oil for healing. Read Mark 6:13 and James 5:14-16)

There are two metaphors here.

Oil, with soothing physical properties, has been used from time immemorial as a symbol of healing and consolation.

-- Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 259

And anointing also involves the physical touch of the hand to apply the oil to the head. Jesus often healed by placing his hands on the person that was ill. The passage in James links healing to the confession of sins and forgiveness.

### √ **The Miracle of Healing**

**A purpose behind the miracle.** Perhaps God wants to use the personal in a special way to minister to others. Or perhaps God wants to use the miracle to show to those around who are lost, who God is and what he can do for us so that they will come to faith in Christ.

**No healing is guaranteed to last forever.** Even though Lazarus was raised from the dead by Jesus, he later died a second time.

**God's healing can take many forms.** God can heal with a miracle in a moment of time. Or healing can take place over a period of time. And God can use medical science to bring about healing.

**We should ask and not demand of God.** God's ways are higher than our ways. There may be many times when, if we were God, we would bring healing to someone in response to anointing and prayer. But God chose not to heal. This is frankly a mystery that cannot be explained or understood. The Christian understanding of heaven leads us to believe that it is a place of final healing.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately we must place our trust in God, whose knowledge is far greater than we can understand with our finite minds. And that confidence is sustained and encouraged within the community of faith - the church.

### √ **Ministry to the Dying**

This issue of death and dying is one of the most difficult a pastor must face. We are uncomfortable because we are confronted with our own mortality. Walking along with a dying person toward the grave takes a heavy emotional toll on our lives. This is especially true if we are close to the person who is walking toward the valley of the shadow of death.

#### **Stages of the Dying Process**

Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, in her landmark book *On Death and Dying* (1969), categorized the dying process into five stages:

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<sup>1</sup> *Editor's note:* The Christian doctrine of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15) reminds us that the *spiritual* new creation that we already enjoy as believers here on earth (2 Cor. 5:17) will be supplemented by a *physical* new creation at Christ's return (1 Thes. 4:13-18). What is "mortal" (our present body) will be swallowed up by what is "immortal" (our resurrection body). Our confidence is that - at our death- our spirits go to be with Jesus (2 Cor. 5:8), but at the resurrection, our spirits will be united with a new, undying body made for heaven (John 5:28-29). For more information, see N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (Harper, 2008).

- G. Crofford

### **1. Denial—This can't be happening to me.**

This is a very natural reaction to the shock of the news. People say things such as, "Maybe the lab tests got mixed up." "Maybe this doctor doesn't know what he's doing. I think I'll get a second opinion." The family also goes through the denial, trying to come to terms with the news. Usually at this stage no one wants to talk much about death. Don't get discouraged if the person is somewhat unresponsive to your desire to help the situation.

### **2. Anger—Why me?**

This anger is directed at family, doctors, and God. The person and the family are trying to deal with the unfairness of it all. If God is all-powerful, why has He allowed this to happen to me? This is especially true if the person has been a faithful Christian. Such anger is unpredictable but not necessarily sinful. Job expressed his anger this way, "Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 7:11).

- *How should you respond when a dying person expresses such anger to you?*

*Emphasize that the person needs you to be nonjudgmental and accepting as anger is vented.*

### **3. Bargaining—It's me, but if you'll . . . then I'll . . .**

The person may bargain with the doctors, the hospital, and most likely, God. People may pledge to live better, give generous gifts, or see projects through to completion before death. One lady facing death told her doctor she wanted to live until her daughter got married. After the wedding she bargained with her doctor again, "I have another daughter who is not yet married. I'd like to be here for her as well." Sometimes the dying person is moving close to acceptance but family members may be delaying the process by bargaining with God.

- *How would you deal with someone who tries to bargain with you as a representative of God?*

### **4. Depression—I can't deny it, what's the use?**

The bargaining has not worked and probably nothing will work. Depression sets in. The person may worry about the cost of treatment. Who will take care of the spouse or the children? Depression may come because of the loss of physical attractiveness, hair loss, weight gain or loss. There is also the uncertainty of the future with the loss of relationships, or what will happen after death.

- *What would be the best way to minister to a person in this stage of depression?*

*Perhaps the best thing to do at this stage is simply be a good listener. Don't argue.*

### **5. Acceptance—This is really happening.**

This is not necessarily a happy time. The person may have few emotions. This is coming to terms with the idea that death really is near. The person may begin to detach from the outside world. For some it is a time to say last words to family and friends.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross ended her stages here. Someone else has added a sixth stage:

**6. Christian Hope—This is not the end—there's the resurrection.**

At the heart of the Christian faith is the hope of resurrection. The Apostle Paul told the Christians in Corinth that had Jesus not been raised from the grave, our faith would be totally futile (1 Cor 15:12-19). But on Easter, God did indeed raise Jesus from the grave (15:20). All Christian hope resides in the One who was once dead, but who now lives forevermore. The hope Christians have is that death, though a real enemy, will not have the last word. The resurrected Christ has the final word, and it is the word of eternal life. The Christian hope and promise is that this frail, failing, mortal life will, in the resurrection, take on immortality, through Jesus Christ our Lord (15:35-49).

For a Christian pastor truly to minister as a Christian, his or her ministry to the dying must be centered in the hope of the resurrection. To Christians who are dying, the hope of the resurrection is a word of comfort. To those who are not Christians, the hope of the resurrection is a word of invitation to repent of their sins and receive the Redeemer as their own.

For believers, we have the confidence in a future hope. Jesus promised, "I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14: 2-3) This is hope for the person ready to die and for those who are left behind.

Not everyone goes through every stage of dying. The stages are not always in the same order. You may notice a person may regress from time to time to an earlier stage. People must progress through the stages at their own pace. You can't force people to move on. Death may come sooner than expected, and the patient may not have time to come to a place of acceptance.

√ **People Who Are Dying Have Special Needs**

The most important need of a Christian confronting terminal illness is to hear again of the hope of resurrection. The meaning of Easter must be the center of ministry to the dying. A minister should be well versed in the New Testament scriptures that explain the meaning of Easter and address the Christian hope of resurrection. Ministry to the dying should be unmistakably Christian.

**They need someone who will listen.** It is important to help them deal with unresolved issues and feelings that have bothered them. You can help the person try to heal broken relations. Accept their anger. Encourage them to reminisce about their past.

**They need a friend.** It is not uncommon for family and helping professionals to begin to pull away as the person nears death. Sometimes the dying person may have few people nearby to stop in. Loneliness can be a serious problem. In one sense, dying is something we must do by ourselves. Having a friend standing by can

be very comforting. Don't be afraid to show your feelings to the dying person.

**They need to find meaning.** Sometimes you can bring great comfort by showing the dying people the influence of their lives. People who are active can continue to do things that give meaning to the life they have left. Working on a project or helping the family can bring focus to days that could otherwise be meaningless. It's very helpful for a person who can't maintain some sense of decision-making control, even if it is feeding himself or herself.

**They need a spiritual guide.** You are in a unique position, as a pastor, to help people prepare for eternity. Take every opportunity to address the person's spiritual needs. Even if a person appears unconscious, the sense of hearing is the last sense to be lost. Don't hesitate to touch the person's hand and pray aloud with the possibility that the person can hear even if there seems to be no response.

- *What are the greatest concerns you have in working with people who are dying?*

### √ **Ministry to the Grieving**

People go through a profound sense of loss when a loved one dies. The process of grief usually takes at least two years when the person dies naturally. It takes much longer when the person died violently or by suicide. While the death of a spouse or sibling is hard, the loss of a child is devastating. Often parents find the grief of such a loss so long-lasting that the marriage may end in divorce. It will help you to understand the grief process.

1. **Shock.** When we lose a loved one, especially unexpectedly, there is a numbing, surreal denial of the fact. It may seem like a bad dream and we hope to awaken to find it really didn't happen. This may continue as a preoccupation with willing that person back to life.
2. **Emotions.** Tears flow as our mind and emotions attempt to deal with the reality of this loss. When you are with someone confronted by the death of a loved one, don't try to stop the crying. Even Jesus wept at the grave of His friend Lazarus. The greatest comfort is your presence. Encourage the person to cry or talk it out.
3. **Blaming.** People try to put responsibility either on themselves or others. "If I had only . . . encouraged her to go to the doctor earlier . . . It has to be the doctor's fault . . . or the other driver's fault . . . or God's fault for this death." This is a normal reaction and people should not be shocked when they feel that way.
4. **Lack of focus.** Grieving people start projects without completing them. They lose interest in things that used to be important. They feel lonely but don't seem to have the energy to connect with people or activities. It's hard to return to activities you

shared with the other person. There doesn't seem to be any future, no goal that motivates daily life.

5. **Gradual hope.** The dark clouds that obscure the sun begin to lighten. There are glimpses of the sun again. They begin to have periods where they don't think about their loss. The memories of the lost loved one can bring a smile instead of deep pain.
6. **Accepting reality.** The person looks to the future; not the same future as before the loss, but a new future with new goals and friends. Optimism has replaced pessimism. Life is again worth living and the person feels like his or her "old self" again.

Norm Wright speaks to the recovery this way. "The three periods involved in surviving and rebuilding are (1) bridging the past; (2) living with the present; and (3) finding a path to the future."

-- Wright, *Crisis Counseling*, 159.

### √ **Managing Grief**

**Help the person face reality.** This person is really gone and will not return. What are some of the things the person needs to do now? Some issues such as caring for children, planning the funeral, and other decisions must be made now. Others can wait until the person is better able to think clearly about the situation.

**Loosen some of the ties to the deceased.** Many people want to build a shrine of a child's bedroom or a husband's workroom. Five years later things have not changed. It is as though the person should be returning. You can encourage the person to move toward acting more independently.

**Don't make life-changing decisions too quickly.** Often after the death of a spouse, a person will want to sell the house and move to a new location. The home holds many memories and living with constant reminders can be initially painful. When the intense grief is past, the person who moves to a new environment may wish to be back in the old surroundings. It is better to postpone such a decision until the mourning period is past.

**Find new interests for the remainder of life.** Recovery from grief is a process of adjustment and growth. You can help people find ways to refocus and replenish themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

**Help people with special times of remembrance.** The process of grieving becomes a pattern of peaks and valleys. Even though the intensity may be less and less as months go by, as the anniversary of the loss approaches, feelings of grief can return with great force. As a pastor, it can be helpful to make a note to make contact with the grieving person on the first anniversary.

- *How did you feel?*
- *How long did the grief last?*
- *What was most helpful in overcoming the grief?*



## √ **Ministry through the Funeral**

For those who have lost a loved one, the funeral service is an important part of the process of dealing with the reality of death. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the significance of the person for whom we grieve. We who attend are reminded again of our own mortality. We act out our deepest feelings in the supportive context of the family of God.

The funeral is an opportunity to express grief and find comfort as we acknowledge God's involvement in our lives. In this worship service we give testimony to the world that we trust God in the most significant moments of our lives. We confess with the Psalmist, "I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust'" (Ps 91:2). Even as we prepare to say farewell to our loved one, we state, "This is not the end! Life continues eternally with God."

### **Preparing for the Funeral**

**Go to the family as soon as possible.** The family may still be at the hospital or a nursing home. This is one time when it is important to make contact with the family as soon as it is feasible.

**Arrange for an all-family meeting.** Usually it is best to plan this gathering for the next day. You need to begin gathering information for the funeral services, the music, scripture readings, and other material the family would like included in the service. Encourage the family to share their memories of the person who died. Be a good listener and take notes. Some stories may be effective in the funeral sermon. It is an honor to be invited into the family circle as they share their treasured remembrances.

- *Why do you think such a meeting is important in planning the funeral?*

**Work with the funeral director.** The funeral director may be able to give you additional insights into the family's interests and needs in the funeral service. This person often works with the family to arrange for the pallbearers and other participants in the service. If you are unfamiliar with the community, the funeral director can inform you of local customs that may be expected by the family or church.

**Be with the family for the first viewing of the body.** If it is customary to have viewing hours for the body, you need to be with the family when they first see the body. After you allow the family members time to be with the body you can support the family with a time of prayer.

### **Planning the Service**

**1. Plan the service and the sermon with a biblical view of life and death.** There will likely be people attending the funeral with a limited knowledge of the Christian faith. The church can make positive statements of their belief through the words of a hymn

centered on God's greatness or Christ's sacrifice for our sins. Hymns such as "How Great Thou Art" or "And Can It Be?" remind us of the essence of our faith. Scriptures can remind us again of God's faithfulness and grace.

2. **Prepare a sermon that can draw people to Jesus.** There are three approaches you can use. You can create a sermon based on scripture with the illustrations for the sermon coming from the life of the person who has died. Your sermon can be a eulogy of the life of the deceased that reflects the life of Christ. A third approach can be to introduce the sermon with a eulogy on the life of the person, followed by an exposition on scripture. Use the person's name, first name or nickname, in the sermon to make it personal.
3. **For the funeral of an unbeliever, show Jesus as the hope for the living.** You cannot preach one who is not a Christian into heaven. Don't compromise what you believe to be scripturally true when you conduct the funeral. Jesus does promise comfort and hope for those who put their faith in Him. You can invite people to turn to Jesus as the answer to life's needs. It is generally not appropriate to have an altar call or try for direct evangelism in the service. You can invite those who wish to know more to speak with you later.
4. **Assist the family in selecting the best location for the funeral service.** For active members, the church may be the preferred location. The church building reminds us that we worship God even in our moments of grief. For those who were not a part of a church, the family may prefer the chapel of a funeral home.
5. **Plan the order of service to incorporate all the elements you have discussed with the family.**  
Here is a sample order of service.
  - Prelude
  - Scriptural Call to Worship
  - Invocation
  - Hymn
  - Obituary and/or Eulogy
  - Scriptures
  - Prayer
  - Special Music
  - Sermon/Homily
  - Benediction
6. **Plan a committal service at the graveside appropriate for the conclusion of the funeral.** This service in front of the casket and the open grave should be very brief, two to three minutes, especially when the weather conditions are bad. A committal service for a believer can emphasize the hope of the resurrection. When dealing with a committal service of an unbeliever, you can place the deceased in the hands of a good God who does all things well.
7. **Be aware of the local customs connected with funerals.** Some regions have the casket open during the service while other areas

prefer the casket closed. The pastor may stand at the head of the casket at the end of the service while the congregation passes by. At the cemetery the pastor may be expected to lead the funeral procession and stand by the head of the casket at the committal service. In many communities the church provides a funeral dinner for the family at the conclusion of the committal. The funeral is one time you cannot afford to make critical mistakes in the expected procedures of a community. The funeral director knows the customs and can give you good advice.

**8. Visit the spouse and family soon after the funeral and then at appropriate intervals.** Your responsibility as pastor does not end with the final amen of the service. The days ahead will be difficult for the family. People experience grief and aloneness for months and years.

**9. Other funeral service issues.** Some people prefer a private funeral for the family and close invited friends only. Some families prefer suffering alone, especially if there are unique circumstances surrounding the death.

- *How would you go about planning for the funeral of a three-year-old child of an unchurched family that accidentally drowned? They have called you because they don't have a church and their neighbor recommended you.*

#### ✓ **Suicidal Crisis and Grief**

Suicidal persons are more likely to turn to a pastor than to any other profession except medical doctors. However, most pastors are not well equipped with understanding about how to recognize suicidal tendencies, nor how to respond in suicidal crises.

#### **The Pastor's Role in Suicidal Crises:**

1. Recognize suicidal persons.
2. Provide emergency help until professional care can be given.
3. Continue pastoral care and counseling of the person and the family to help them deal with the underlying causes of the suicidal behavior within the individual and in the family system.
4. Help the family deal with the destructive consequences of an incomplete or a completed suicide.

#### **Cries for Help**

Suicide is usually not a sudden act that has not been thought about and planned for some time beforehand. Most people send out cries for help before they try to commit suicide. These include:

1. Obvious suicidal threats - all suicidal threats must be taken very seriously! They indicate that they and their relationships are deeply disturbed.
2. Covert (veiled) suicidal threats - Those who talk about life as empty and meaningless, who believe they are not valued or needed by others, who wish they could go to sleep and not wake up, or who feel trapped and powerless in a no-exit situation, often are expressing pre-suicidal feelings.

3. Depression - "All deeply depressed people are potential suicides!" (Psychiatrist Karl A Menninger). Depression shows itself in many ways: severe feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness; chronic insomnia; loss of appetite or interest in other previously enjoyed activities; severe apathy and chronic exhaustion, withdrawal from relationships, etc.
4. Crushing losses and pathological grief - shattering blows to self-esteem and other traumatic losses may produce suicidal behavior during the reactive depression that follows. The greater the anger and frustrated dependency, the more likely is a suicidal response.
5. Psychological disturbances and chronic illnesses - Anyone in a disorganized, chaotic mental state who feels rejected and/or hopeless, should be regarded as a suicidal risk. Those in chronic pain and/or those suffering from incurable illnesses may become suicidal, especially if they have intense fear of dependency, helplessness, or financial disaster.

In counseling with persons who are known or suspected to be suicidal, it is crucial to ask about suicidal impulses, fantasies, or intentions. A suicide prevention center gave these instructions to its counselors:

Your own openness and willingness to confront the patient directly with the problem of suicide is very helpful in reducing the patient's anxiety. Inquire about the suicidal aspects of the behavior matter-of-factly. Ask about prior attempts and when they occurred, whether he is presently planning an attempt, and, if so, specifically what his plans are; and whether he has the means available to carry out his plans.

-- Suicide Prevention Center, *Manual for Handling Phone Calls*, (Los Angeles) p. 4.

One reason for asking such questions is to get information to evaluate the degree of danger involved in suicide threats. The higher the lethal probability, the greater the need for the pastor to use whatever approach is necessary to prevent suicidal action. In a caring and accepting but a very firm manner, the minister should use persuasion, theological arguments, staying with the person, driving her or him to a physician or hospital emergency room, or if nothing else works - phoning the police and using physical restraint. A minister may say something like this: "Killing yourself may seem to you in your present despair, to be the only way out. But I'm sure we can find a better way. If you end your life, you'll deprive yourself of any possibilities of our finding a better solution to your situation. At least wait until we've tried!"

During the first conversation with suicidal persons, obtain the names and phone numbers of close relatives, friends and physician, and explain why it is necessary to let them know that he or she needs extra emotional support during this crisis. The family should be told not to leave persons alone during their acutely suicidal phase. Involving the family physician as soon

as possible is also important, in case antidepressant medication or temporary hospitalization is needed.

Most suicidal persons need three forms of help once they are beyond the acute suicidal crisis:

1. They need ongoing, supportive pastoral care;
2. Psychotherapy and/or family counseling to resolve the underlying intrapsychic problems (e.g. pathological guilt) and the interpersonal pathology that fed the suicidal behavior;
3. Help with the spiritual and value problems at the root of their sense of meaninglessness and despair. **At its deepest level, the suicidal person's problem is a theological problem.** As one with some expertise in spiritual growth, the minister has a unique and indispensable contribution to make to the longer-term healing of suicidal persons and their families.

In working with suicidal persons, it is helpful to remember that only a small portion of those who threaten suicide actually attempt it, and that of those, only a fraction actually kill themselves. It is also important to remember that the ultimate decision and responsibility for suicide remains with the person. If they have decided unequivocally to end their lives, they will probably do so, no matter how competent the persons who attempt to prevent it.

Suicide is often the tip of the iceberg of deep problems to a family system. The whole family needs pastoral care and often conjoint family therapy.

The family of a completed suicide almost always needs extended pastoral care and counseling to deal with the swirling feelings of unhealed shame, guilt, and rage toward the dead person. Their grief wounds are almost always infected. The family's shame, denial, and self-protective hiding often prevent them from being open to help.

Counseling with suicidal persons often is threatening and demanding. It confronts us with the ultimate issues of life and death, and with our own suicidal tendencies (including protracted suicide such as killing ourselves by chronic overwork and self-stressing). Our effectiveness in dealing with the existential issues with which the suicidal person is struggling will depend on how we deal with these issues ourselves and whether we have found meanings in our own lives that enable us to transcend and transform, to some degree, the pain and tragedies of our existence.

*-- this section was taken from:  
Howard Clinebell, Basic Types of  
Pastoral Care & Counseling, (1984  
Abingdon Press) pp. 235-238.*

**Review**

- Which aspect of today’s lesson do you feel will be most difficult for you?
- What can you do to gain more strength in that area?

**Lesson Close**

The family had gathered at the hospital as the word spread that Grandpa’s lung cancer was now draining his life from him. This man had attended church with his Christian wife but had never made a personal commitment. The pastor greeted the man in the bed warmly. After a few minutes of conversation he asked that the rest of the family leave the room so he could have some private moments with the man and his wife. With urgency and sensitivity the pastor spoke to the man about his relationship with God. In just a few minutes this man prayed to receive Christ as his personal Savior while his wife wept for joy. A few days later the pastor was so happy to be able to tell the people at the funeral of this man’s conversion. What a privilege to be able to lead this dying man to a decision that changed his eternal destiny.

**Journaling or sharing with your discussion partner**

Diploma student: Write in your journal. Meditate on 2 Cor 1:3-8. Reflect on the way God brought comfort to you in the past through another person. What is it like to receive comfort? How does it help us to have been recipients of God’s comfort when it becomes our turn to comfort someone else? How do we share in the sufferings of Christ? What is the connection between suffering and comforting?

Certificate students: Use the same journal prompt (questions above) to begin your three minute oral report to your partner.

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Lesson 8

Pastoral Presence in Celebration and Families

Objectives for the lesson

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- understand why premarital counseling is necessary
- understand the goals of premarital counseling
- know how to develop a premarital counseling program
- conduct a wedding rehearsal
- preside over a wedding service

Introduction

A couple approaches you after a service with a glow on their faces. “Pastor, we’ve decided we are going to get married. We would like for you to marry us, if you would be willing. What do we have to do now?” They may be looking at their future with “rose-colored glasses” while you know some of the challenges they will face. What can you and your church do to help them prepare for this very significant change in their lives?

There are many opportunities for celebration in the life of the church. We rejoice together at the birth of a child to a family, with its naming ceremony, dedication or baptism ceremony. The moments when we participate in the church sacraments of baptism and Communion are certainly celebrations. However, because marriage preparation and celebration as well as raising children involve much time commitment in counseling and planning, they will be the focus of this session.

√ Celebrating Marriage

Marriage was ordained in the Garden of Eden when God pronounced Adam and Eve man and wife. It was always in the heart of the Creator that a human have the opportunity to establish a lifelong relationship with someone of the opposite sex. The physical and emotional ties between a married couple are deeper than any other relationship on earth. While you cannot guarantee marital success by doing premarital counseling, you do increase the chances for a quality marriage.

Why Is Premarital Counseling Necessary?

The high rate of divorce

Too many marriages today end in divorce, hurting marriage partners, children, the church, and society. Yet, there is an idea of those who are not experienced that if you find the right partner things will automatically work out OK. And if it doesn't work out, you just find someone else. "The attitude toward marriage today was revealed in the office of a marriage counselor when a young woman said, 'When I got married I was looking for an ideal, but I married an ordeal, and now I want a new deal!'"

-- H. Norman Wright, *The Premarital Counseling Handbook* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 8.

A limited frame of reference

Most people's understanding of marriage is shaped primarily by the marriage they observed most closely—their own parents'. However, fewer people than ever before have a valid model. "Only 25 percent of the households are 'traditional' anymore—two parents with children. There are as many single-person households as there are traditional." People need counseling to be able to understand what a healthy marriage can be.

-- H. Norman Wright, *The Premarital Counseling Handbook* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 8.

- *What are some other ways couples planning to marry can gain understanding about healthy marriages?*

Preparation before can prevent problems later

The old saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," is certainly true when it comes to marriage. Often a couple cannot anticipate the issues of marriage beforehand. As a pastor, you can

guide a couple through some of the major problems married people face.

Pastors have a sacred responsibility before God

For us, a wedding is not simply a legal process that allows two people to live together. The vows two people pledge to each other are also spoken before God. The pastor stands as an agent of God, joining on earth what God has united in heaven. Jesus said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Mt 19:6).

- *Can you think of any other reasons premarital counseling is important?*

The Goals of Premarital Counseling

Plan the wedding. A number of nuts-and-bolts issues should be discussed: checking the church calendar to clear the date, understanding church policies, asking who will participate, how many guests are expected, where the reception will be held, and many others. It is helpful for you to take notes on these details and keep them on file for reference until after the ceremony is over. Your goal here is to understand the expectations of the couple as they approach their wedding.

Assess the chances of success in this marriage. People often approach marriage for the wrong reasons. Some are caught up in the emotions of being married, while not being in love with the person. There are worse things than being lonely; one is being in an unhappy marriage. Physical attraction may not be enough reason. Neither is pregnancy. Two wrong actions do not make a right one. Don't be a party to a wedding that has little chance of survival.

- *What would you do if you felt, after talking with this couple, they were getting married for the wrong reasons and their marriage probably would not survive?*

Help the couple understand themselves and the other person.

Although this couple may have known each other for a long time, there are things they do not know. One of your tasks is to explore issues that may have a bearing on their future marriage. In this process each person will also need to examine his or her own thoughts, values, attitudes, and adaptability. You can facilitate good discussion by giving the couple assignments between sessions to talk and write about important issues in their lives.

Develop realistic expectations of marital roles. What does this couple expect from daily life together? People are often disappointed when the high emotions of romance before marriage are replaced by tedium when the responsibilities of life become exhausting. People put forth their best self in a dating relationship. She may think he is the strong, silent type when he simply doesn't want to open up. He may feel she will do all the cooking and cleaning, but perhaps she will expect him to also help out in the home.

- *What are some ways you can help a couple understand the other person's expectations in marriage?*

Understand their relationship with parents and family. We do not marry only the other person but also that person's parents, family, and heritage. Where will the couple spend holidays when both families will be expecting them? How will you deal with intrusions from the in-laws? Negotiating around family quirks requires sensitivity and a willingness to compromise. A couple needs to explore these issues before they get married.

Encourage communication. Les and Leslie Parrott cite a poll where 97 percent of those who rated their communication with their spouse as excellent were happily married, and where only 56 percent of those who rated their communication as poor were happy in their marriage. They state, "Communication is the lifeblood of marriage. Having difficulties with communication does not bode well for marital satisfaction."

-- Les Parrott, III and Leslie Parrott, *Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before (and After) You Marry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 73.

- *Think of an assignment that would encourage a couple to communicate better.*

Equip the couple to deal with conflict. Every couple needs to learn how to discuss differences within a marriage. It is not a question of whether conflicts will come, but when they will come. Two people will not always view things the same way. It is possible to discuss differences without attacking the other person.

Foster the spiritual development of both partners. This is a wonderful opportunity to address spiritual issues with the couple together and separately. If one or both people do not have a personal relationship with God, you can take the opportunity to talk about having Christ as the head of the household. People are often open to a gospel presentation when they are moving close to this major change in their lives.

√ **Developing a Premarital Counseling Program**

Establish a church policy for weddings. Work with the church board to develop a policy for all church weddings. Your policy should include the requirement that all couples seeking to be married must have at least four sessions of premarital counseling with the pastor or with someone else approved by the pastor. It is better to include a fee to cover printing expenses and books that will be used rather than expect the couple to purchase these on their own.

The wedding policy covers issues such as: who can use the facilities, terms and fees if applicable, who can officiate at weddings, what rooms and equipment can be used, restrictions on alcohol and tobacco, and the honorarium policy for those who help. Have the policy printed so you can go over the policy with anyone inquiring about a church wedding. An established wedding policy will help you when you are dealing with unreasonable requests.

Understand the governmental and legal requirements for conducting weddings. You are responsible for making sure all the procedures are followed properly so the wedding is recognized by legal authorities. Since laws vary by local region or country, you need to know what is required. In many cases, the pastor fills out papers following the ceremony and returns them to a government office. If you fail to carry out your responsibility, the couple may not be legally married.

Develop a plan for a premarital counseling program of four to six sessions. There are several excellent resources to guide you. Two of the best sources are:

Les Parrott III and Leslie Parrott, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before (and After) You Marry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995). There are also workbooks available for both men and women to be used in conjunction with reading the book. The authors are members of the Church of the Nazarene. These resources provide a ready-made, effective, premarital counseling program any pastor could adapt.

H. Norman Wright, *The Premarital Counseling Handbook* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992). Wright's approach is much more comprehensive, providing an outline for six sessions. He also has material on intercultural marriages and preparing couples for remarriage. This book also comes from an evangelical perspective.

Reserve the right to refuse to marry those who do not cooperate in counseling or show little potential for success in marriage. You are not required by law to marry anyone. It is a ministry you provide to a couple on behalf of the church. This is something you should include in the church policy so a couple will know up front a pastor's prerogative to follow his or her principles.

Plan to have a follow-up session after the wedding. Invite the couple to come back for a visit approximately six months after the ceremony. This can be an additional bonding time with the couple as they discuss their experiences of adjustment. Celebrate their progress as a married couple and deal with any issues that may have developed in the marriage. Most couples will appreciate the fact you are concerned enough to meet with them again. Because people get busy, you may want to make this appointment at the last premarital counseling session.

Group Activity: Premarital counseling

In your group discuss the following questions.

- *What are the questions you have in offering to give premarital counseling to couples?*
- *What are the advantages of offering premarital counseling over ignoring this need?*

√ The Wedding Service

The Service. The wedding marks one of the major events in a person's life. Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding in the small village of Cana in Galilee (Jn 2). While He was not ready to begin His public ministry, Jesus responded to a wedding crisis that could have spoiled the celebration for this couple on the most important day of their lives. You need to do all you can as the officiant to see that the wedding is a memorable occasion for everyone, especially the married couple.

Start on time. You are the one with overall responsibility for making sure the service begins when it is announced.

Photography. It will be helpful for you to have some understanding from the wedding couple about if and when photographs will be taken. Some prefer that most photographs should be taken long before the service begins. Others will take most pictures after the completion of the ceremony. You should make it clear to the photographer that photos taken during the ceremony should not be intrusive or turn the attention from the service.

The homily. You can make the ceremony personal by a brief sermon or homily during the service. The homily should not be longer than five to seven minutes, focusing on the relationship of the text to the couple and all married people in the congregation.

The order of service. While each wedding service in each national context is unique, there is a basic structure that is often followed. The components and order of the specific elements may vary at each wedding.

- Music prelude
- Candle lighting
- Seating of grandparents and parents
- The processional
- Greeting and betrothal (giving of bride, questions to bride and groom, etc.)
- Music
- Homily
- Vows and exchange of rings.
- Prayer (followed by music and Communion, if used)
- Unity candle
- Pronouncement of husband and wife
- Benediction
- Bridal kiss
- Presentation of couple
- Recessional
- Escorting parents and grandparents
- Dismissal of the congregation

Service Issues

Wedding Service Ritual. The *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* contains the ritual for a wedding service. You can find other service ideas in wedding manuals and in other resources. Many

couples like to have options in planning their wedding. Some like to write and memorize their vows to each other. While there are essential elements in the service, it is possible to combine the wording of sections of several services into a ceremony that is unique. Most engaged couples appreciate receiving a copy of your wedding ceremony at the first premarital counseling session.

Communion. While some serve Communion only to the wedding couple, the wedding is a service of the Church and Communion may also be properly served to the entire congregation if desired.

- *How would you handle the situation of a couple who are not believers but want Communion at the service?*

Music. Since the wedding is a church service, you need to make sure the music is appropriate. Ask that the couple provide a copy of the lyrics to the music before the wedding to avoid the embarrassment of music unsuitable to be used in church.

- *Who would decide what music is inappropriate for a wedding?*

Unity Candle. Some couples are choosing to have three candles at the front, the two outer candles representing the two people entering the marriage with the center candle symbolizing the blending of two lives into one. Sometimes the two mothers light the outer candles, indicating that life has come through them. After the couple lights the unity candle with the individual candles, they may choose to blow out their individual candles or leave them lit.

Record keeping. In some localities the pastor must fill out and mail back a portion of the wedding license to the local or state government indicating that the wedding has been performed and documented. You should also keep a record of all weddings for the local church. These records can be used in a court of law to document the legality of a wedding. It is up to you to keep a personal record as you document your ministry career.

Review

- *In what part of the wedding rehearsal or ceremony do you anticipate having problems?*
- *How can those problems be avoided?*

✓ Pastoral Care in relation to Raising Children

Becoming parents in a Christian home is a special celebration! And then come the responsibilities of raising children, which are clearly spoken to many times in the scriptures, and therefore involve the pastor in this crucial aspect of care of families.

The family is the basic unit of society, both in communities as well as in the church. God created the family as the context for human living. And God designed the role of parents not only for conception, but also for relationship, provision and development of the children born in the family.

Number five of the Ten Commandments, "Honor your father and your mother" teaches us that parenthood was set up by God, and God

requires children to respect the position of their parents as those placed over them by God himself. The Bible also has much to say about the parents' responsibilities to their children. Thus the pastor has great responsibility to show as well as to teach and counsel families about God's designs for raising children in the home.

Children's Basic Needs

1. The need for order and authority. Children need for their lives to function in an orderly way. And they need to know who is the authority that God has placed over them. This authority should neither be too rigid nor too lax - a biblical balance is vital for their well-being.
2. Affection - and much of it. Children need to experience the physical, regular, and authentic love of their parents.
3. The sense of belonging. Children need to know that they are wanted and that they are a significant part of the family unit.
4. Capability of achievement. Children need to grow at each stage of their development in maturity and in their ability to take care of themselves.
5. Acceptance and understanding. Children need to sense in their spirits that their parents understand them, and that any conflict can be resolved by the wise efforts of their parents on their behalf. They need to feel that they are loved unconditionally.
6. A sense of purpose. All people need to know that they will have the opportunity to contribute themselves to something of lasting worth. This need is most fully met as a child of God in His kingdom.

√ God's Pattern for Parenting

Unconditional love is the basis for family security, and is the only real love. And unconditional love is also the basis for our security with our heavenly Father. The child cannot yet distinguish between the parents and God. The parents teach by example who God is. Human beings learn through human relationships. And children learn about God through their relationships with their parents. If their parents are good, they learn that God is good. If their parents are bad, they learn that God is bad. This is one of the reasons that God came to us in human flesh as the God-man, Jesus Christ. He was the perfect example of who God is.

The attitudes of parents are shown in their children. Children are like sponges, and they adopt the beliefs, values and attitudes of their parents. And children of Christian families need to be taught to express Christlike attitudes. And certainly attitudes of respect towards their parents and other adults in the family, church and community.

Obedience is not optional. Children need to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and the consequences if they don't fulfill those expectations. They need to know that parents have the God-given authority to make sure that they learn to obey them. If children do not learn to obey their parents, they

will find it very difficult to obey God and submit their lives to His authority. An obedient child is a happy child.

Appropriate discipline demonstrates love to children.

Even children know they need limits. They need the assurance that someone is in charge. Often they will see how far they can go just to assure themselves that someone **is** in charge.

-- William E. Hulme, *The Pastoral Care of Families: Its Theology and Practice*, p. 97-98.

It is important for parents to find a good balance in the discipline of their children. Sometimes parents tend to do the opposite of how they were disciplined by their own parents. If their parents were strict and hard with discipline, then they will tend to swing to the opposite extreme and be too lax and easy regarding discipline with their own children. They may even feel that they should not spank their children. And they may not discipline bad attitudes, stubbornness or disobedience. They may think that if they really love their children they will not do anything that will hurt them in any way. The problem with such a lax and soft approach to discipline means that children will grow up to think that they can do whatever they want to do and get away with it. However, as adults they will find that life and relationships will not let them get away with such behavior, and they will end up being hurt in far more painful ways than the lax parents could ever have imagined. So the lax parent is actually showing the opposite of love to the children by not disciplining them appropriately. Read Heb. 12:5-11.

On the other hand, parents should not go to the other extreme and beat their children severely and place unreasonable expectation on them, so that the children feel like they can never please their parents. And they live in fear of the next outburst from their parents. Read Eph. 6:4 and Col.3:21. A balanced approach is God's way.

The Need to Teach about Original Sin

The Christian doctrine of original sin helps parents to understand why their children behave as they do, and to know how they can help their children to deal with the issue of evil as they struggle to learn to obey with appropriate attitudes and motives.

We are all born with original sin (or the inborn nature of sin) since our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. Because of their sin, every baby born into the world since then is born with a nature that is "bent" toward sin, disobedience and self-will. This inborn nature of sin, or original sin, causes people to commit actions and behaviors that are socially unacceptable and that are not pleasing to God. Even very young children may show bad behavior and willful attitudes that reveal self-centeredness controlling their actions.

Sometimes parents tell their children that they are good or bad depending on their behavior. If a child is told they are bad, they can feel worthless with low self-esteem. If a child is told they

are good, they can think too highly of themselves with pride. We are all born with an inner "bend" toward sin because of original sin in our hearts, which causes us all to become sinners. It would be better to tell children that their actions and behavior are good or bad, rather than to say that the child is good or bad.

None of us are responsible for original sin deep within our character. Children can't help but express bad behavior and actions because of original sin within. However, parental discipline can help children understand that bad behavior is not acceptable. And good Christian teachings can help children to learn at a young age that Jesus will forgive the bad things they have done. And also, that God can cleanse original sin from their hearts in order to empower them to live with Christlike behavior with good and loving attitudes and motives. Children who come to faith in Christ as their Savior find it much easier to develop Christlike character in their lives, because the grace and power of God is at work in their hearts and lives.

Sanctification and Family Relationships

In his book, *The Pastoral Care of Families: Its Theology and Practice*, William E. Hulme states:

Sanctification relates to family living. As somebody has said, when a person is a Christian, even his dog should be the better for it. It is in the family relationships that growth in Christian living should take place since the way in which we relate to people is indicative of the way we are relating to God. As 1 John puts it, "He who loves God should love his brother also" (1 John 4:21).

Our reaction patterns have developed out of family situations and are most likely to show themselves in recurrence of these family situations or situations reminiscent (that remind us) of them. The very familiarity we experience in our homes that makes it possible for us to "let down our hair" also makes it possible to let out our worst. It is significant that the word familiar is derived from the word family.

In addition to the handicap that these assimilations from the past may present, there is the continuum of crisis and clash that characterizes family living, testing not only the Christianity of father and mother but also their supply of nervous energy.

In spite of the handicaps, the goal in family relationships and in particular, the parent-child relationship, is the establishment of a relationship of love as we understand it in its *agape* meaning. Love is also the goal of the sanctification experience and process. It is the result of receiving the gospel. God's love comes to us through Christ and creates a response love within us toward God. The Church is the company of the redeemed called out by this love of Christ. As the fellowship of those who have received Christ's love, the Church gives this love to those within and without its fellowship, and stimulates in turn the response love to the fellowship and to all mankind. So it is that the Church is the body

of Christ - making tangible his love. It is also a family - a fellowship united by agape.

The implications for family living in the sanctified life are spelled out for us by Paul in 1 Cor. 13.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

William Hulme continues:

I now realize that (this passage) has a direct application to marital life and that marital and family living present not only what is perhaps the area most in need of 1 Cor 13, but also the are in which 1 Cor. 13 is most difficult to fulfill. In fact, on hearing this description of agape (love) as it would apply to family relationships, many are overcome by a sense of frustration. The contrast between what goes on between the family members and this description of what should go on may be enough to send us into despair.

However,

When our faith can see in addition to failure the potential of Christ to redeem in the midst of failure, we are moved to the wholesome experience of repentance - a sorrow with hope - in contrast to despair - a sorrow without hope.

And working with relationships in the home moves us toward the experience of entire sanctification when God cleanses original sin and fills with his perfect (agape) love. And it also moves us along the journey of life as we continue to grow in grace through the process of progressive sanctification.

And as the parents grow in grace as they relate to Christ and his Church, they also grow in their ability to reflect God's love - to give of themselves - to their children.

Lesson Close

Bruce Petersen tells of participating in a special wedding on the campus of Mount Vernon Nazarene University. The bride was the daughter of the very first couple he married in his first pastorate. What a privilege to be able to share in the high moment of two generations of a family. As a pastor there are few moments more joyful than when you unite two people to form the beginning of a marriage, family, and home.

Journaling or sharing with your discussion partner

Diploma student: Write in your journal. If you are married, reflect on the responsibilities and privileges you enjoy in the relationship with your spouse. Ask God to speak to you about ways you can make your marriage stronger. If you are not married, reflect on ways you as a pastor can minister to couples planning to be married.

Certificate students: Use the same journal prompt (questions above) to begin your three minute oral report to your partner.

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**Lesson 9**

**THE PASTOR AS A PERSON**

**Objectives for this Lesson**

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- understand the proper use of time
- understand the importance of confidentiality
- understand the need to be able to speak the truth with people who are dying
- know the importance of setting boundaries for counseling with people
- know how to deal with people of the opposite gender
- understand how to be accountable to others
- know how to help people facing ethical dilemmas in medicine

**Introduction**

The Roman Catholic Church was rocked in the beginning days of the new millennium by an avalanche of accusations of clergy misconduct. Many of the charges have involved sexual misconduct with minors, some going back 20 to 30 years and more. As disturbing as anything to the Catholic faithful, has been the failure of the church hierarchy to address and deal with the problem. Priests with known problems were simply shuffled off to other assignments rather than being held accountable for their actions. Now, clergy from parish priests to bishops and cardinals have been forced to resign.

The general public has not confined suspicions to the Roman Catholic Church alone. The image of clergy in general is at an all-time low in the United States. Suspicion ignited by the failures of the televangelists of the 1980s has spread to all pastors of local churches. People watch our every action and motive with increasing scrutiny. Joe E. Trull says in an article "Up to Code," "Pastors are finding it's time to dust off the code of ethics, and in light of recent social and technological developments, it's time to rewrite . . . A code of ethics by itself will not keep anybody from sinning. Nevertheless, a good code of ethics, rightly used, is an encourager to do the right thing."

√ **The Pastor's Conduct**

**Group Activity: Ethical dilemmas**

**Scenario 1**

Hannah, a 15-year-old from a prominent church family, comes into the youth pastor's office in tears. She finally comes to the point of her visit. She has been seeing a 17-year-old boy, Jason, from another active family in the church. Through her sobs she reveals

that she and her boyfriend have been having sex for about five months. Then the girl takes a deep breath and reveals, "I found out today from the clinic that I'm two months pregnant. Jason and I have not decided what we're going to do yet. We love each other, but we're not ready to be married. We're considering an abortion. I understand that if you tell a minister something it has to be kept a secret. I want you to swear you will not tell either of our families about this, OK?" What does the youth pastor do?

### **Scenario 2**

Bill, a single man of 45, has been seeing several doctors because of severe bouts of depression. He has been unsatisfied with their help and has been coming to you, the pastor, for counsel. Bill has faced several serious emotional and physical problems lately. His elderly mother died and left him alone in the house. He has been diagnosed with the beginning stages of diabetes, and with his depression, it has beaten him down. Now, in the study he confides he has been having somewhat regular thoughts of ending his life. He could be with his mother in heaven and all the physical problems and depression would be a thing of the past. When you question him, he says he probably won't kill himself because he is too much of a coward. Still, you have grave concerns about him. What do you do, as a pastor?

### **Scenario 3**

George, an 83-year-old grandfather, is in the final stages of stomach cancer. The family and the doctor have decided it would be too hard on the man to know he may have only two months to live, so they are not telling him the truth. The family has specifically asked you, the pastor, not to say anything to the man either. You go to visit George in the hospital and he asks you the question straight out, "Pastor, my family and my doctor will not answer my question, but I need to know—am I going to die real soon?" What would you do, and how do you answer George?

## **√ Ethical Issues in Pastoral Care**

### **1. The Pastor's Time**

Most pastors will admit they have more things to do in a given week than they have time to do them. A pastor must commit large blocks of time to properly study the Bible, pray, and prepare to preach up to two or more times a week. The church expects the pastor to be a good leader, administrator, and the list goes on. But, does the church also have the right to expect the pastor to be a shepherd to the sheep?

In developing a CEO mentality of ministry, have we sacrificed the principle of caring for the flock? This can create real tension for the pastor. How do you define the flock under the pastor's watchful care? It is possible for a minister to believe "the world is my parish" and feel responsible for everyone everywhere. Perhaps part of the answer is that the pastor is responsible to see that everyone in the church receives the care they need.

Obviously the pastor will provide some of the care, but the laity needs to become involved. The pastor should also refer those in the congregation who need advanced help to others with greater capabilities. There is an ethical responsibility, as a part of the pastoral role, to make good use of time to care so the flock is healthy and well fed. The church should be the one place where it is never said, "No one is concerned for me . . . no one cares for my life" (Ps 142:4).

- *How much of a pastor's weekly schedule should be devoted to caring for the flock?*
- *What types of work fall under the heading of care?*

## **2. The Pastor's Confidentiality**

Throughout its history the church has placed great value on the secrecy of the confessional. Gaylord Noyce says, "Few strengths for ministry are more important than the ability to keep confidences. Parishioners deeply need the freedom to trust this ability in their clergy if they are constructively to probe with pastoral help their moral and spiritual doubts, to confess their sins, and to grow."

-- *Gaylord B. Noyce, Pastoral Ethics: Professional Responsibilities of the Clergy (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 89.*

It is important to understand that casual conversations in the church parking lot or in a committee meeting are not covered under legal confidentiality restrictions even though it may be prudent to keep such conversations private.

Confidentiality can become an ethical dilemma for a pastor when people need to be protected for safety reasons. When a person threatens to kill himself or someone else, the pastor needs to take some action to protect the one who is in danger. The minister must intervene on behalf of those who are particularly vulnerable: the aged, the incompetent, and young children.

- *Would you try to get the counselee's permission to contact authorities or do it behind the person's back?*
- *Would you feel obligated to reveal to authorities the confession of a person who committed a murder many years before but poses no threat to anyone today?*
- *Would you reveal the facts if it could bring closure to a family's grief?*
- *Can you think of any other reason for a pastor to break a confidence?*

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| <p><i>Confidentiality should be broken only for safety concerns. A confession of an old murder or even the peace of mind of the family are not themselves reason to break confidentiality.</i></p> |
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## **3. The Pastor's Truth-telling**

In the third case study the family and the doctor tried to pull the pastor into a conspiracy of silence. A terminal hospital patient, who asks the direct question, "Pastor, am I going to die soon?" is looking for a straight answer. On one hand, it would be simple to let the person know the family and doctors are hiding the truth and

you disagree with their deception. However, in doing so you could undermine the patient's confidence in the doctor and jeopardize the professional working relationship you may enjoy. The family may feel betrayed.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that the doctor may not know with exactness how long a person has to live. Cancer patients sometimes go into remission for an indefinite period of time. New medicines and treatments may come along to give new optimism for the patient. It is dangerous for the pastor to play medical doctor, a realm in which he or she may have little knowledge. Often the best answer the pastor can give is to refer the medical issues back to the doctor in charge. The patient may have spiritual concerns that do relate to your professional arena.

As pastor, if you feel a person is nearing death, it is good to talk to the family about the issue first. It may be that family members are having a difficult time dealing with death themselves. The doctor may feel that if the patient knows, he or she will simply give up rather than maintain a sense of hope. Most of the time the patient knows deep down that death is near. Confirming the patient's sense of coming death may provide the time needed to tie up some of the loose ends before the end comes. The family is able to talk more freely. Knowing may also help the patient make better choices for medication and treatment. Your focus may be to help the family and the patient come to terms with the reality of death.

- *What would you do if, after talking to the family about revealing the truth, they still do not want the patient to be told?*
- *Where do the rights of the patient to be informed fit with the family's desire to keep the person from knowing his or her own prognosis?*

#### **4. The Pastor's Boundary-setting**

Because you are the professional it is your responsibility to set the parameters or limits for care and counseling. It is good to decide on these boundaries before you begin counseling.

**Boundaries of Location.** Except for emergencies you should do counseling at the study of the church. The pastor's office is a safe setting where people can feel free to share openly. When you are counseling a person of the opposite sex, you should be sure someone else is in the church building. Don't go to the person's home to counsel unless your spouse or someone else from the church can go along, waiting in another room if necessary. Restaurants can create a feeling of personal intimacy rather than a place to focus on issues. This can send the wrong message of warmth to someone of the other gender.

**Boundaries of Touch.** A hug, a kiss on the cheek, or a touch of the hand can be interpreted in many different ways. In a time of deep emotional sharing what may be intended as an encouraging touch can quickly be interpreted as a passionate invitation. It is important to be careful about whom we touch and how or where we touch them. A pat on the hand may be preferable to a hug until we know the person

better. Remember that interpretations of touch vary not only with personal preference but with cultural norms as well.

-- William V. Arnold, *Pastoral Responses to Sexual Issues* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 51-52.

**Boundaries of Emotion.** Sometimes a counselee of the opposite sex may begin to have romantic feelings for the counselor. This is called transference; the counselee is transferring feelings toward the counselor as a substitute. You may need to confront this emotion directly with the counselee at a later time. Always maintain a proper professional distance.

More serious is the issue of counter transference, where the counselor feels sexually attracted to the counselee. The pastor may look forward to sessions, extend the time together, fantasize between sessions, or find excuses to make extra contacts with the person. Gary Collins writes, "At times, all counselors see such tendencies in themselves. To recognize the dangers is a first step for avoiding entanglement and vulnerability." This is a good reason to do a referral.

-- Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 30

- *How do you set and control the boundaries?*
- *Should you write them down?*
- *Do you let the counselee know?*

##### **5. The Pastor's Respect for the Other Gender**

A pastor is either naive or foolish not to recognize the problems that can erupt in counseling a person of the opposite sex. Noyce goes as far as to say, "There is a sexual dimension to all cross-gender relationships. We cannot chop up the human person by categories; there is no absolute line of demarcation between spiritual, intellectual and physical attraction in human relationships."

-- Noyce, *Pastoral Ethics*, 100, 101.

Counseling often involves sharing very personal and emotional details of life. Out of that comes a feeling of closeness and intimacy between people in the counseling setting. Gary Collins says the possibility of immoral behavior is much greater if "the counselee is attractive . . . is not having emotional and sexual needs met elsewhere . . . [and] the counseling involves detailed discussions of sexually arousing material."

-- Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 31.

Infidelity is damaging to you, your family, the counselee, the congregation, and the cause of Jesus Christ. Immoral sexual behavior is the leading reason for pastors being removed from a pastoral role and losing credentials. There are also legal ramifications. In many states a pastor can be liable for criminal prosecution if illicit sexual activities grow out of a counseling relationship. The government's position is that the pastor holds the position of power as a counselor and should not use this position to manipulate the

counselee. Clergy have been convicted as felons for taking sexual advantage of parishioners.

We must learn to respect the counselee of opposite gender with proper dignity. Sometimes it helps to remember that this person is someone's child or spouse. Ask yourself, how would I want my child or spouse to be treated in a counseling situation? This person is also someone for whom Christ died and is my responsibility to help and not hinder personal spiritual development.

- *What is the solution to this problem?*
- *Do we simply not do counseling with anyone of the opposite sex?*
- *Do we take a standoffish position that makes it appear we have no concern?*
- *Is it possible to be compassionate in helping people of the opposite gender without yielding to temptation?*

*In the module Introduction to the Christian Ministry, William McCumber states, "The church suffers terribly when a counselor becomes romantically or sexually involved with a parishioner. The privacy and intimacy of counseling sessions lend force to that temptation, and the ruined lives of too many pastors attest the force such temptation develops. What began as a slight breeze may become a killer hurricane. One-on-one counseling with members of the opposite sex should be avoided. Have a trusted third party (another counselor or your spouse) involved in the counseling sessions."*

## **6. The Pastor's Accountability**

How do we resist temptation and maintain a proper relationship?

**Strengthen your own marriage.** Infidelity often begins with difficulties in the pastor's own marriage relationship. If there are problems at home, work to mend the personal issues before trying to help someone else.

**Maintain your spiritual life with God.** A spiritual coldness is part of a slide to moral disaster. If you maintain your practice of Scripture reading, prayer, and spiritual disciplines, you will find the spiritual resources to overcome temptation.

**Be honest with your feelings.** We can become expert at deceiving ourselves to justify wrong actions. If you admit your feelings to yourself, you are more likely to do something constructive to stop the process from doing damage.

**Consider the consequences.** What would your spouse or children say if they were to find out about this? Are you willing to throw away your ministry career for a few moments of pleasure? Imagine the disappointment of some church members you respect when they hear about this. Putting the situation in a longer-term perspective helps one to see this indiscretion will cost far more than it's worth.

**Develop a support system.** Find a group of people to whom you can be accountable. You need people who will not be afraid to ask you the hard questions about your activities. A group of clergy from different denominations can become a very effective accountability group where all the members work to support one another.

- *Can you think of any other suggestions to maintain high standards of personal conduct in counseling with those of the opposite sex?*
- *What would be the advantages and disadvantages of developing an accountability group for the pastor within the local church?*

### **7. The Pastor and Medical Ethical Issues**

The January 2003 issue of *Reader's Digest* contains an article by Geoffrey Douglas titled "Should This Baby Be Saved?" A premature baby weighing 12 ounces was born on Christmas Day with a multitude of medical problems. The medical personnel performed initial surgery so the tiny boy could live. As the next days went by the infant would need at least six additional surgeries with little chance of success. The parents talked with the Office of Ethics to help them make the decision to "distinguish between sustaining life and prolonging death."

Against the advice of the surgeon, the parents allowed their little son to die because there was no hope for his survival. Christine Mitchell, director of the Office of Ethics at Children's Hospital in Boston, says, "Medical ethics isn't a hard science . . . You can read all the books in the world, you can look at a case from every angle there is—you're going to make the wrong judgment sometimes. This wasn't one of those times."

-- Geoffrey Douglas, "Should This Baby Be Saved?" *Reader's Digest* (Jan 2003), 116 & 118.

The advancement of medical technology has created some difficult moral dilemmas. A family facing hard medical choices may call on the pastor to help them through the ethical issues. Pastors should avoid giving medical advice, but they can help with the ethical issues. Here are some questions to help people make tough medical decisions.

**Will this enhance the patient's quality of life?** Sometimes the side effects of a medicine or procedure may be worse than the benefits it will bring.

**Will this improve the mental, emotional, physical, or spiritual dimensions of this person's life?** In trying to deal with pain, overmedication may inhibit the person's ability to relate to family in the last days of life.

**Is this an issue of life at any cost?** Medical science can, in some cases, keep a body alive almost indefinitely. However, brain functions may be so diminished that the person is unconscious. Were it not for the machines, the patient would be able to die naturally.

**Is this decision for the family's benefit?** A patient may continue to suffer because the family simply can't let go. You may need to help the family face the fact that death is here and must be addressed.

**What are the patient's desires?** It is helpful for adults to put in writing beforehand what they desire in certain medical situations. This does help the medical personnel know how to proceed in many

circumstances. If the patient is competent, he or she should be consulted regarding their preference for certain treatments.

**Is this good stewardship of resources?** How will this decision affect the resources of the family? Will these procedures give lasting improvement to the patient?

Most hospitals have some type of ethics committee to help patients, families, and the medical community to make wise decisions. There are medical dilemmas that seem to have no clear answers. Your role may be to help the family wrestle with all sides of the issue and come to a course of action. The Holy Spirit will be there bringing wisdom and courage to make the best decision.

- *How should the pastor interact with medical personnel to help people deal with difficult medical decisions?*

### **Review**

The pastor's personal conduct should be above question to the congregation and the community. One pastor in a community borrowed money for himself and the church without bothering to pay it all back. A local banker commented he would never loan any more money to this pastor or church because they were too great a risk. The way you conduct yourself as a representative of your local church will be remembered long after you move away to a new assignment. What a wonderful legacy to hear your name associated with honesty and integrity.

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Lesson 10

THE PASTOR'S PERSONAL LIFE

Objectives for this Lesson

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- understand how a pastor relates to the church he or she pastors
- understand how to deal with personal issues in ministry
- understand the pastor's responsibility to keep marriage and family healthy
- understand how to maintain a passion for the ministry

Introduction

When the subject of the pastor as a person comes up, there are often two extreme opinions. Some dehumanize the pastor by erecting a 10-foot pedestal and planting the minister firmly atop. For them, the pastor has no personal feelings, interests, or desires, other than to be the slave or hireling of the local church. The pastor is "a holy person" who does not live on the same plane as the rest of the folk.

At the other end of the scale are the people who see pastors as scheming, greedy, manipulative controllers of their flocks. "The general public expects the pastor to be different, to be special, to have overcome the obstacles that trip up ordinary people. When pastors lapse, especially pastors who pretend to live up to the

superhuman standard, the tendency is for skeptics to say, 'See, I told you so,' and for naïve believers to feel betrayed, deceived, or even to give up their commitment to Christ since their cherished models have crumbled to dust."

-- Jay Kesler, *Being Holy, Being Human: Dealing with the Expectations of Ministry* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1994), 18, 19.

However the confusion is not limited to the laity. Pastors can become disillusioned as well. One man told of being in his first church in a small community after four years of college and three years of seminary. People didn't understand him, and he didn't understand them or himself. Pressure started to build because the congregation was dissatisfied. He didn't feel like he could measure up to their expectations. The whole thing was so different from what he expected that one day he just quit—his pastorate, his denomination, and even God, for a while.

In this last class session we will look at the humanness of the ministry by examining the four relationships that most profoundly affect the pastor: the church, the self, his or her family, and God.

√ **The Pastor's Relationship to the Church**

Most ministers find much of their personal identity in their role as pastor. It is a calling from God and they have responded with obedience. There is great fulfillment in becoming personally involved in people's lives, and seeing them grow and mature in Christ. Pastoral work can have eternal consequence for the flock. You become close to people as you walk with them through crises and times of rejoicing. Life as a pastor is anything but dull. Yet the pastor must also deal with congregational pressures. Here are some:

1. **Unrealistic expectations.** People can feel their problem or interest or project should be the pastor's primary focus. A pastor can sometimes feel they have 50 or 100 bosses, depending on how many people are in the church, with each one trying to tell you what you ought to be doing. If all these expectations were listed, there would not be enough hours in the week for one person to do them all.
2. **Needing to be good at everything.** Although everyone, pastors included, have been given at least one spiritual gift, nobody has received all of them. The gifts we have been given allow us to feel very comfortable working in those areas related to our strengths. But what do we do about those tasks for which we are not gifted and have little interest? One pastor said he felt gifted to preach and teach. Administration, however, was his challenge. He often thought if he just got more organized and read a few more books, he would grow to like it. He finally came to the conclusion that he could be adequate, but never a great administrator.

3. **Wearing a target on your back.** When something goes wrong in the church, the pastor is usually the first to blame. Most pastors can own up to the problems they may have caused. It is difficult to feel the stinging arrows of criticism when pastors know they are not responsible or have little control over the situation. You will be misquoted, misinterpreted, and misunderstood by the members of the congregation. Sometimes the attacks are direct and frontal. Other times they are indirect, subtle attacks of rumor and innuendo. All unjust attacks are painful.
4. **Job insecurity.** Pastors serve at the pleasure of those who are being served. Those who are your strongest supporters can turn against you over a hurt or difference of opinion. When conflicts develop in a local church it is usually easier for leadership to suggest getting a new pastor than to ask unhappy church members to leave. Being forced out of a church leaves a blemish on your record that is difficult to live down. Even the threat of difficulty in a local church can create a sense of insecurity and anxiety in the pastor and family.
5. **Defection.** Few of us deal well with rejection. When a person or family leaves the church for a less than good reason, pastors tend to take it personally. Was it our failure to give them enough attention? Perhaps they didn't like the preaching. Maybe our programs just didn't meet their family's needs. It is hard to be objective when you have given your time and energy to minister to them. The truth is, people change churches for many reasons that have nothing to do with the pastor. You may have been the reason they stayed with your church as long as they did. Nevertheless, it can leave a pastor hurt and confused, especially if the family doesn't give a reason for the change.

Group Activity

In your small groups, discuss these questions:

- *What can a pastor do to address each of these church pressures?*
- *How would you deal personally with pressures that seem to be unjust or unfair?*

√ The Pastor's Relationship to Self

The old saying is true—if you don't take care of yourself, no one else will do it for you. There are things you can do to prepare yourself for the long haul in ministry.

Let yourself be human.

The church's expectations may not be nearly as high as your own expectations of yourself. "Common expectations we see in Christian workers are: 1. to be tireless; 2. to be above being hurt; 3. to be excellent at every task; 4. to be emotionally self-sufficient; 5. to be free from material needs; 6. to be spiritually perfect."

-- Louis McBurney, Counseling
Christian Workers (Dallas: Word
Publishing, 1986), 43.

God sent one Messiah to earth, and you are not Him. Paul gives sound advice in Romans 12:3, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you." In the words of singer/songwriter Billy Joel, "You're only human."

Guard against burnout.

Burnout comes by working too many hours, dealing with too many stresses, trying to meet too many expectations, resulting in physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion. If burnout is not addressed, a pastor can develop serious physical problems and finally leave the ministry.

The prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 19 had defeated a total of 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel. He then prayed until God broke a nationwide drought before running down the mountain ahead of the coming storm. Queen Jezebel put out a contract on his life for the defeat of her false prophets. Elijah fled into the desert until he could run no farther, then asked God to take his life. God restored him by putting him to sleep, waking him for food, and then more sleep.

While the issues are more complex than we have time to address here, there are some things you can do to guard against burnout.

- **Pace yourself.** In Genesis God created a Sabbath every seven days so humans could rejuvenate. Since Sundays are generally a pastor's most demanding day, it is important to find a Sabbath time on another day of the week. This is a day off, when you unload the burdens and do things that will refresh—exercise, laughter, rest, whatever re-creates you for the coming seven days.

Use all the vacation time allotted to you. You and your family need to be away from the pressures of the church. When you don't take vacations you cheat not only yourself from getting relaxation, but also your family from a change of pace, and your church who needs a rejuvenated pastor.

- **Learn to delegate.** Moses had to learn from his father-in-law Jethro the importance of letting other people take on some of the responsibilities. Sometimes our own false personal expectations keep us from releasing others to minister.
- **Retreat with God.** When Jesus had invested much energy in helping people He would often retreat away from even His disciples to spend time with the Father in prayer. Jesus returned to ministry refreshed. Many pastors are now taking a day every month to be away and pray. In addition, some churches have recognized the importance of granting a sabbatical to their pastor as a way to refresh spiritually, physically, and emotionally.
- **Find support.** A group of fellow pastors can help you deal with the stresses and frustrations of ministry before they become overwhelming. An excellent resource for addressing burnout is

Daniel Spaite and Debbie Salter Goodwin, *Time Bomb in the Church: Defusing Pastoral Burnout* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1999).

Group Activity

In your small groups, discuss these questions:

- *How can we identify some of the unrealistic expectations we place on ourselves?*
- *What things are you doing, or do you plan to do, to protect yourself from ministry burnout?*

√ The Pastor's Relationship to Family and Spouse

Few people in the church will regularly check with you to see if you are spending time with your family. Unless you schedule your family into your weekly calendar, there are enough demands from the church to eat up all the time you have available. It is possible to find time for both family and ministry.

Schedule significant blocks of time for the family. This becomes a challenge when the children are involved in school activities and the spouse has a job. Scheduling family and couple times has to be a high priority. Write those family times in your calendar before those times fill up with other demands. Then if someone wants an appointment at that time, you can simply say it has already been scheduled.

Work on your marriage. A ministry couple can become so involved in making the church grow that their own marriage relationship can suffer. The vows of marriage can sometimes be in conflict with the vows of ordination, so the spouse can get the feeling you are married to the church. Ministry is ideally a team effort. There are opportunities to build your relationship by being together and working together. But marriage should be more than a ministerial tag team. Try to find some time when you can be with your spouse away from the children and the church, even if it means getting a baby-sitter.

The Pastor's Children

The pastor who is blessed with a family of well-trained children who have been raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, finds that they are a help rather than a hindrance to his or her ministry. They demonstrate his or her faithfulness as a good father or mother and bring praise to his or her position as role model to the congregation. And the children also become a help to in the ministry activities of the church.

Thus, pastors who are parents should see the great importance of their responsibilities to their children. The pastor's first responsibility is to his or her own family. Read 1 Tim. 5:8.

Every pastor, therefore, should devote some time to family life. Regularity at mealtime, faithfulness to a family altar, fairness in all decisions, firmness always with love, and with discipline when needed, are parental duties not to be

superseded by any routine demands of a day. Some time for fun and frolic with the young will make the sacrifices and disciplines of life as a pastor's child more bearable, if not actually enjoyable. . . . Next to his wife, his children will be his most effective helpers.

-- G. B. Williamson, *Overseerers of the Flock*, p. 32-33.

Make the children feel important. One of the advantages of the pastor's schedule is its flexibility. Because you are really in charge of putting together your own schedule you can plan ahead to attend those soccer games and piano recitals. Don't fall into the trap of claiming you give quality time even if it isn't much. Kids need quantity time as well. One way to do that is to leave your work in your office and don't take it home with you. Make sure meal times can really focus on the family without interruptions from the phone. You will look back later and realize your children were in your home such a short time. Don't be so caught up in the work of the church that you miss the opportunity to enjoy every part of your children's lives.

Show the advantages of being a pastor's family. It's easy to dwell on the drawbacks of the pastorate and have your family develop a negative attitude toward the church. Why not accentuate the positive aspects of living in a pastor's home. Bruce Petersen tells of his daughter, as she was ready to leave for college, reflecting on living in a parsonage. She said, "We had a chance to eat with general superintendents, district superintendents, evangelists, missionaries, special speakers, and musicians. None of the other kids in the church ever had that opportunity."

The family is usually included when the church recognizes the pastor with Christmas gifts and on other occasions. They may have the opportunity to travel to meetings, camps, and speaking engagements with their parents. Whenever you take advantage of some perk of ministry, let your kids know this is another advantage of being part of the pastor's family. Let them see it as a privilege and not a penalty.

Keep your children out of the criticism loop. Be careful how you and your spouse talk about church people and problems in front of the children. They have a way of picking up on your attitudes and repeating your words at the wrong time. The way you deal with criticism can become a model for them to handle conflict. Kent Hughes says, "When children realize something is wrong (when people leave the church unhappily, for example), talk about it on a level they can understand and without rancor or bitterness. As our children matured, they were able to keep things in perspective."

- Kent Hughes, "Helping Your Family Enjoy Ministry," in *Mastering the Pastoral Role* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1991), 114.

Group Activity

In your small groups, discuss these questions:

- *What do you see as the leading causes of family stress in the ministry?*

- *What roles do you think your family should take in the church? What do you envision your spouse doing with you in ministry? Should your spouse have to be an unpaid assistant? What if your spouse does not want to do anything in the church except attend?*
- *What can you do to see that your children have a positive feeling toward the church?*

√ **The Pastor's Relationship to the Call**

Every pastor begins ministry with a high set of ideals. We picture in our minds a group of people who dearly love us and want to follow us as we lead them to be a holy people. We see people listen intently to our every word, and heed all of our advice. Our ideal congregation is united, motivated, and willing to work together to build the Kingdom. The job of pastor is filled with joy and fulfillment every day.

After being in pastoral ministry for a while, it is easy to become cynical and disillusioned. We have fallen short of our own personal standards for ministry. The church doesn't measure up either. Rather than being united they seem fragmented. Many are too busy with other things and the work of the church is left undone. Most disheartening, there are people who don't like us and are unwilling to follow our leadership. In this process, the pastor's heart can become calloused and insensitive. We can find ourselves like the character in the *Wizard of Oz*, a tin man without a heart. How do we keep from becoming simply hirelings who carry out responsibilities without caring or compassion?

Being in the ministry is a matter of heart, a deep compassion for people inside and outside the church. If you don't like people, don't become a pastor. This business of having a pastor's heart is a costly one. Sometimes people will not respond to your overtures of concern. In opening your arms to others you become vulnerable to hurt yourself. Jesus knew that pain of rejection. From the Cross He prayed that those who crucified Him would be forgiven because they didn't know what they were doing.

Paul gives us a beautiful picture of his own pastor's heart in his words to the church in Thessalonica.

Have the students turn to 1 Thess 2:7-12. Ask one student to read it aloud while the others follow in their Bibles.

Paul lets us know the heart of a pastor must have both feminine and masculine qualities.

The pastor's heart is like a mother. Paul shows the feminine quality in verses 7-9: a nursing mother who gives personally of herself for her child. Paul reminds the church that he and his colleagues gave of themselves selflessly for the good of the church body. Pastors need to be nurturing dispensers of God's grace. Preaching and teaching are just some of the ways a pastor feeds and nurtures the flock.

The pastor's heart is like a father. In verses 10-12 he shows the masculine side referring to his ministry dealing with the church, "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children" (v. 11). Paul sees this aspect of ministry as dispensing mercy through encouragement, affirmation, and instruction. Even though it's not always easy, a father works to help his children to grow up and mature into responsible adults. The heart of a pastor is always focused on the task, "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:12-13).

The pastor's heart is filled with compassion. Like the shepherd in Luke 15, the pastor goes out searching out of a deep concern for the lost sheep. Compassion will allow us to be inconvenienced. It will sometimes force us to change our schedule to help someone who needs help now. We will weep when we see the havoc sin can bring to a person's life.

The pastor's heart is filled with empathy. Empathy is trying to feel the pain or hurt of another. It's not pity. Rather, it means coming alongside another person, much as the Paraclete comes alongside us, to give help, support, and understanding. It is incarnational ministry, becoming Jesus to the person who needs Him.

Keep your pastor's heart expanding and growing. Don't let it shrivel up or become calloused. We maintain our heart for ministry as we spend time with God before we spend time with people.

Discussion Activity

In your small groups, discuss these questions:

- *Why do you think it is so difficult at times to maintain a pastor's heart?*
- *How do you keep a balance in ministry between the need for the solitude of personal devotions and sermon preparation on the one hand and the need to be with people and their needs on the other side?*

Lesson Close

We come to the end of this discussion of Shepherding God's People. You should be aware of the fact that we barely scratched the surface of many issues in our classroom sessions. For you to be effective as a pastor you need to be committed to a lifetime of learning and sharpening your pastoral tools. You are not going to be fully aware of some of your needs until you begin to face them in the pastorate. Take classes, read books, talk to other pastors, do everything you can to be the effective pastor God wants you to be.

And now, let me pray for you as you continue your preparation for ministry.