

LESSON 10

COUNSELLING FAMILIES WITH PROBLEMS

Introduction

Many families are experiencing problems which rob their homes of happiness and threaten their stability. The pastor must be equipped to counsel parents or children who are experiencing difficulties. Counselling related to husband-wife problems is referred to as marriage counselling, and that relating to parent-children problems, as well as in-laws, is referred to as family counselling.

The Role of the Pastor

The pastor has been called to help people. He is not expected to help restore those with physical ailments, which a medical doctor can treat, but physical disabilities can cause psychological and spiritual needs to which he should minister. Many people become sick because of anxiety over their own meaning and destiny. All physical illnesses have related psychological or spiritual implications. The pastor is part of a healing team with the responsibility of ministering to the psychological and spiritual needs, while the doctor gives attention to the healing of the body.

Many emotional disturbances and family conflicts are caused by guilt for sins of family members against one another. The disturbed person may be unable to find release from guilt because of an unwillingness to confess sins for fear of losing face. The pastor will need to be a sympathetic listener and a spiritual guide in helping persons find God's forgiveness and acceptance.

The pastor will not be able to solve all problems; in fact, his job is not to solve problems but to guide those whom he counsels in their search for solutions. Jesus was not able to save all who came to Him: preaching of the gospel and healing of the sick were His primary priorities. Both emphases are tremendously important today since more than two-thirds of the world's population has not received the gospel and some twenty per cent of the people in a given country endures sickness, physical handicaps, imprisonment, and emotional disturbance. The vast majority of people in our world today need physical, spiritual, or emotional healing.

Match by drawing lines.

Marriage counselling

1. husband-wife problems

Family counselling

2. parent-children problems

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The minister should minister to the

p \_\_\_\_\_ and s \_\_\_\_\_

needs which are brought on by physical disabilities.

(psychological, spiritual)

To the emotionally disturbed, the pastor

should be a s \_\_\_\_\_ listener and a s \_\_\_\_\_ guide.

(sympathetic, spiritual)

## Types of Counselling

### Variation of needs

Any sizeable group will include numerous persons with varied problems. From twelve to twenty per cent of a population likely will suffer emotional problems serious enough to affect careers. Numerous others will experience physical illnesses which prevent their carrying on normal responsibilities. Many people are addicted to alcohol, while others suffer from severe depression and a sense of failure. Conflicts arise between husbands and wives and parents and children. Important decisions must be made by various family members, and advice and spiritual counsel are desired from the pastor. Personal and family problems vary from the level of needing additional information in making a decision to the level of worry, depression, and physical and mental disability.

*List some needs which require counsel.*

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*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

All of these problems, directly or indirectly, affect the home. Illness of the father or mother may threaten the home with poverty and will require adjustments in responsibilities and support. Sterility, divorce, rejection, and frustrations from poor marital adjustments affect the family and often are subjects of counselling.

Different types of problems require various methods in counselling. Sometimes family members will come to the pastor for advice or information. Others will come with emotional problems that may be so deep and complex that the person will need psychotherapy by a professionally trained specialist. However, many of the problems causing emotional disturbance can be handled by pastoral counselling. Since emotional problems are often a result of guilt and anxiety, which are caused by sin, their solutions are forgiveness and faith, areas within the realm of the pastor's responsibility.

*Different types of problems require various methods of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(counselling)*

### Determination of appropriate help

Since a pastor's knowledge and experience are often broader than those of his members, he may be called upon to share information in various areas. Young people need guidance in planning education. They need information on schools of higher learning and available funds for pursuing additional education. They may be struggling with the will of God and need spiritual guidance in order to interpret God's will. Adults may need information on available facilities for the care of their aging parents. The pastor should be qualified to help in these areas.

The approach the pastor takes in educational counselling situations will differ from the approach he takes in dealing with emotional disturbances, moral wrongs, and mental problems. Most pastors do not have the time or training to deal with problems which require extensive counselling and probing into past experiences. The pastor should not attempt to deal with problems beyond his skill. He may become a member of a community team composed of doctors, pastors, and psychiatrists. He should refer persons with psychotic tendencies to a Christian psychiatrist whose approach is to probe deeper into the personality of the person and focus on his unconscious mind. After analysing the underlying problems, the

*Some principles of counselling which a pastor should consider are:*

- 1. Each type of need requires a different a \_\_\_\_\_.*
- 2. Pastors do not have the time or t \_\_\_\_\_ for some types of problems.*
- 3. The pastor should not attempt to deal with problems beyond his s \_\_\_\_\_.*
- 4. He should refer persons with psychotic tendencies to a C \_\_\_\_\_ psychiatrist.*

psychiatrist attempts to guide the person in a reconstruction of his personality. The emotionally disturbed may need religious faith and forgiveness in the healing process, and the pastor as part of the team may be called upon by the psychiatrist for assistance in this area.

Client-counsellor relationship

Charles W. Stewart has distinguished between three types of counselling by describing three client-counsellor relationships.<sup>1</sup>

Counsellor-centred counselling.—This type of approach is appropriate when the client needs information and seeks out an expert in the area in which he needs help. He depends on the counsellor to diagnose his case, interpret his needs, and provide a course of action which will solve his problem. Physicians, teachers, lawyers, social workers, and pastors often do this type counselling. The client makes the counsellor an authority and develops dependency on him. Dependency places a certain amount of responsibility for the outcome on the counsellor. Although the counsellor may be willing to accept this responsibility in certain situations, he cannot afford to make decisions that will affect others' lives. Generally counsellors proceed on the premise that the individual should become capable of making his own decisions and assuming responsibility for their results.

Client-centred counselling.—This type counselling situation places the responsibility for the decision upon the client himself. The client seeks out a counsellor and shares his feelings, attitudes, and values with a receptive listener. The counsellor does not attempt to diagnose but rather listens and understands. His understanding is indicated by responding statements which may help the client to understand himself. As the client comes to understand himself, he sees his strengths and weaknesses and is helped to accept himself and to choose his own goals. The counsellor gives indirect guidance to the sessions with the client but avoids the dangerous practice of making a decision for him. The client knows his own feelings, attitudes, and values but may be unable to integrate his emotions with his high ideals and actual behaviour. The presence of an understanding person enables him to talk through and evaluate each area of his experience, thus enabling him to see his priorities more clearly. The client's inner life is the primary focus in this approach which requires the client to find the solutions, source of growth, and self-orientation entirely within himself. Since certain problems require more than human powers for resolution, the client may need to be pointed to the power of God, which resides within the believer. Usually the client who seeks pastoral counselling feels the need of divine power for the resolution of his problems. The pastor represents divine truth and reality.

<sup>1</sup>The Minister as Marriage Counsellor (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), pp. 30ff.

*One type of client-counsellor relationship is c \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Briefly describe this kind of counselling.*

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*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

*Another type of client-counselor relationship is c \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Briefly describe this kind of counselling.*

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*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

Relation-centred counselling.—The counsellor seeks to understand the client's concept, or image, of his role (role-image) and his social system and tries to help him change or adjust to the problems causing conflict. Within the social system of the family, the husband has a role-image of his wife and a role-image of himself as husband. The counsellor helps the client to understand his own role image and the role expectations of others in his social structure. The client is guided to discover the conflict between his role expectations and his actual behaviour, both from his own viewpoint and that of the significant people around him. The counsellor helps the client to adjust his role-image or behaviour, make his own definition of the role, and then evaluate his definition and expectations.

Supportive counselling

Bereaved persons most often are in need of the supportive help of the minister. Those who are facing death look to the pastor as a source of spiritual strength. Those faced with chronic and long-term illnesses need encouragement. Persons with handicaps, such as blindness or missing limbs, need reinforcement concerning purpose and meaning in life. Parents of deformed or mentally-deficient children likewise need encouragement.

The pastor's supportive counselling is not as dependent on his words as on the symbolism of his presence. By the pastor's presence, even those who reject his way of life are reminded of the power of God and their responsibility to Him. The pastor can use silence as a means of spiritual communication and is not required to "say something" on every occasion. Job said to his comforters: "Ye are all physicians of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom" (Job 13:4-5). Frequently the pastor needs simply to "hold his peace," for his presence is more meaningful than advice or counsel when he has no solution to the problem. The minister's capacity to listen is a spiritual consolation.

Supportive counselling often requires the pastor to give reassurance to members who lack self-confidence. Many persons have an intolerable sense of inferiority and need reassurance when facing difficult tasks. Pastors should be careful, however, not to give idle words of encouragement but should impart realistic hope.

Prayer is important in supportive counselling. The pastor would do well to memorize certain prayers in the Bible, such as Psalm 1, 15, 23, 37, 46, 51, 90, 91, and 103. Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 13 offer strength to those in need. In addition to prayers, other Scriptures give comfort and support.

Educational counselling

Persons frequently come to pastors for various kinds of advice. Pre-marital counselling is primarily

Another type of client-counselor relationship in counselling is r \_\_\_\_\_.

Briefly describe this kind of counselling.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

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List some circumstances in which supportive counselling is needed.

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

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In supportive counselling, the symbolism of the pastor's p \_\_\_\_\_ is more important than his w \_\_\_\_\_.

(presence, words)

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Supportive counselling often requires the giving of r \_\_\_\_\_ to those who lack s \_\_\_\_\_.

(reassurance, self-confidence)

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In supportive counselling, p \_\_\_\_\_ is very important.

(prayer)

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\_\_\_\_\_

in the area of teaching concerning the purpose of the home and adjustments between companions. People turn to the pastor with personal as well as family problems. They want to know what the Bible teaches about divorce, remarriage, adultery, and many other subjects. Engaged couples of different religious persuasions need to know the differences between their beliefs and those of their partner's. This information is especially crucial if one is a practising Catholic and the other a Protestant. The minister becomes an educational counsellor as he imparts knowledge. Sometimes his contribution is guiding persons to resource materials that will enable them to find answers to their questions.

### Basic Principles in Counselling

#### The counsellor's task

The pastor is concerned with motives, symptoms, causes, and purposes of people's actions. As counsellor, he does not moralize or reprimand. These methods are appropriate to his preaching ministry in which he attempts to prevent emotional disturbances by warning against them. The purpose of his counselling ministry is to heal those who have problems that they have been unable to solve themselves through repentance and faith. His primary interests as counsellor are to find out what has brought about alienation between the person seeking counsel and God or between him and his family and how to mend the broken relationships. The pastor must be a person of compassion with a strong desire to help the individual. He must be willing to leave the ninety-nine in the fold while he focuses on the needs of one who is in trouble.

As previously stated, the purpose of the counsellor is not to make decisions for the one being counselled but to help him become free from the hindrances which prevent his making a reasonable decision. A pastoral counsellor may have opportunity to reconstruct lives by pointing those who come to him to the grace of God as the integrating force of life.

#### Acceptance of the person

In pastoral counselling, success is based primarily upon the relationship established between the counsellor and the one who needs counsel. Many persons are distressed because they feel that they are not understood and loved. Their feelings of rejection may be the result of wrongs which they have committed or of attitudes which result in shutting others out of their lives. Some fear that they will not be accepted if others find out about their wrongs, and guilt will not allow them to forget their wrongs, even if there is no danger of others finding out about them. Their fear of judgement and rejection by others causes them to live in anxiety, and their sense of having failed God and having destroyed their high ideals causes guilt feelings.

List some types of information sought in educational counselling.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

As counsellor, the pastor's primary concern should be to find out what has brought about alienation between the person and \_\_\_\_\_ or between him and his \_\_\_\_\_ and how to mend the broken \_\_\_\_\_.

(God, family, relationship)

Why is successful counselling dependent on the establishment of a relationship of acceptance between the counsellor and the one seeking counsel?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The pastor must understand that he can accept and love the one who needs counsel as a person without condoning his wrongs. When the woman taken in adultery was brought to Jesus, He rebuked those who judged and condemned her and accepted her without condoning her sin. A difficulty for most pastors is learning how to accept the person without approving of his sins. As preacher, the pastor is God's spokesman who is responsible to communicate God's wrath against unrighteousness. But his message should include also God's willingness to forgive those who repent.

Since many emotional problems are caused by fear of being discovered and losing face, the greatest need of those who seek counsel is to be able to share and to communicate with one who accepts them. The pastor must be able to empathize with his members who have hurting hearts.

#### Giving spiritual guidance

Repentance is a prerequisite to restoration of relationship for a person who has done wrong. The pastor as counsellor should not reprimand the one seeking counsel with the view of forcing repentance but must allow the person to work through his situation and come to his own confession. Genuine confession and repentance prepare one to experience genuine forgiveness. Often the one needing counsel is aware of his guilt but may be defensive in order to protect his image.

#### The Process of Counselling

The focus of the process of counselling must always be on understanding and accepting the person rather than judging, moralizing, enforcing or changing values, or restructuring the personality.

The first step in counselling is to listen. A counsellor needs to hear accurately what the person is saying rather than allowing his own emotional response to determine what he hears. In any dialogue, a person expresses his feelings through words, and the other person responds emotionally to them according to his own background experiences and perspective. It is difficult for the listener to enter into the experience of the speaker and to have similar feelings towards the problem being described. Since the counsellor grows up learning to respond negatively to wrong and positively to good, it is not easy for him to listen to another relate wrong actions or attitudes without a negative response. In essence, to respond negatively is to reject the feeling of the one speaking. Negative responses are judgemental and hinder the one seeking counsel from feeling free to share the conflicts within.

Since a person in need of counselling has hidden and camouflaged some of his actions and attitudes, the counsellor does not know the total situation of the client until he has listened carefully. He may ask an occasional question in order to draw out missing facts.

The pastor-counsellor must learn to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the one needing counselling even though he does not \_\_\_\_\_ the wrongs committed.

(accept, love, condone)

As you read The Process of Counselling, note the steps in counselling. Compare your answers with the text.

First step: \_\_\_\_\_

He should lead the person to discuss problems without pushing him for information that he is not ready to give.

The second step is to give a summary or brief recapitulation of what the person has said. This summary helps bring the total situation into focus, relates that the pastor has understood what the person has been attempting to say, and gives opportunity to determine if anything significant has been omitted. Additional questions may be used cautiously to focus on conflict areas.

The third step is to help the person outline the alternative paths of action and to explore the end results. The counsellor must not suggest in this procedure which course the client should take. The purpose is to help the client to see clearly possible courses of action.

The fourth step is to lead the person to decide on a course of action. With the alternatives before him, the pastor may ask, "Now, which of these alternatives do you really want to follow?" Often the response will be that a decision has already been made and the underlying desire for the counselling session was to gain support and understanding from the pastor. Some who seek counsel will be confused by the alternatives because they would like the results of one course of action without willingness to deny hindering actions. Since anxiety results from the divergence between standards and actual performance, healing is dependent on deciding and carrying out a course of action that is in line with one's values.

The fifth step is to give the person emotional support and inspiration. Often the person already knows what he ought to do but lacks the strength and motivation for doing it. The pastor should instruct the person how to pray and to live by faith. The pastor must be careful not to give fixed advice or make decisions for the person. He can walk with the one he counsels, but he cannot make decisions and assume responsibility for him. Decision-making is a maturing process.

### Marriage Counselling

#### Distinctive characteristics

Since marriage counselling involves the relationship of two persons, it differs from personal counselling. Two people are generally seen instead of one, and the client is the "relationship" between husband and wife, that is, the marriage.<sup>2</sup> The involvement of two persons in the social-legal-spiritual relationship creates certain attitudes, values, role-images, and role-behaviours. Often only one of the partners approaches

*As you read, continue noting the steps in counselling.*

*Second step:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Third step:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Fourth step:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Fifth step:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*The client in marriage counselling is the " \_\_\_\_\_ " or marriage.*

*(relationship)*

<sup>2</sup>Clark E. Vincent, Readings in Marriage Counselling (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1957), pp. 1ff.

the counsellor, but both are involved in the problem. Sometimes the problem exists primarily within the neurotic disposition of one of the partners, but usually conflicts are the results of divergent role-images by partners.

Marriage counselling focuses on the current problems which hinder the relationship of marriage partners. It does not attempt to do a depth analysis of personality by probing into the past. The counsellor seeks to learn how the partners understand their relationship to each other. Progress is made when communication is restored between partners. A couple will grow apart if each feels that he is not being understood or loved. Understanding and love cannot be indicated or expressed if there is no communication.

#### Problems which require counselling

Marriage is a risk for any couple regardless of how long they have known one another. Each person is made up of needs on several levels: the biological need for sexual union, the psychological need for intimacy, and the spiritual need to care about another person's welfare. The needs of two persons are interrelated; some will be attractive and others repulsive. Frustration is experienced when love for one's mate is hindered by the unmet needs for intimacy, companionship, and sexual union.

An emotional divorce usually precedes a legal divorce. A couple may cease communicating except on a superficial level. When they talk, the conversation may take the nature of destructive criticism which does not solve problems but is aimed at the weaknesses of the other's personality and character. Hostility and resentment are expressed by actions as well as words. Adultery, drunkenness, irresponsibility, and abuse of children and companion may be expressions of hostility. The guilty party may be unaware of what is driving him to the behaviour which is destroying his marriage.

As the one who seeks counsel shares his problem and describes his partner's behaviour, the counsellor may perceive that the basic problem is the hostile attitude that has developed. If the counsellor shares his conclusions prematurely, he may be wrong or he may cut short the person's ability to share freely and work through his own problem.

The relationship of husband and wife is one of interdependence. Lack of communication indicates that there is a breakdown in this relationship, and the partners are not meeting one another's needs.

#### The intentions of marriage counselling

The goal of marriage counselling is to help the partners work out solutions to their problems for the mutual benefit and happiness of each. Counsellors who emphasize individualism may conclude that their task is to help individuals to "wholeness" and may be more

Since the client in marriage counselling is the relationship, counselling focuses on the current problems which hinder the \_\_\_\_\_, and the goal is to restore \_\_\_\_\_.

(relationship, communication)

List the three levels of need of each person in a marriage.

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(Compare your answers with the text.)

What is the goal of marriage counselling?

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(Compare your answer with the text.)

inclined to suggest divorce as a solution. Those who emphasize interpersonal relationships will conclude that wholeness comes through unity of husband and wife and fragmentation rather than wholeness will be the result of divorce. The individual finds personal meaning and fulfilment only in relationship; the dissolution of a marital relationship brings pain and defeat. One or more of the following methods of adjustment may be needed to enable couples to find a degree of peace and happiness in their marriage.

Some situations in marriage cannot be changed; therefore, the counsellor seeks to help each partner adjust to them. For example, characteristic traits of each likely will not be changed nor the personality patterns restructured. Partners must learn to adjust to these traits and to accept each other with his limitations.

Conflicts often arise because each partner has different personal goals. It is important that couples lay aside personal goals and work towards mutual goals. Marriage as companionship demands that the couple share mutual goals. The counsellor must help each to define his own and understand his partner's goals and both to be willing to communicate freely and cooperate with each other in setting new mutual goals that will enable each to achieve fulfilment.

Tension arises when partners have divergent role-images. The client needs to be led to define what he expects of himself and his partner and what he thinks his partner expects of him. Conflicts grow out of the failure of one or both to behave according to the other's concepts. Greater harmony can be accomplished when role-images and patterns of responsible behaviour are brought closer together. Lack of understanding of each other's situation, role-concepts, and values hinders satisfactory adjustments.

Persons with unique personality needs are attracted to each other because each senses that the relationship will be a means of satisfying his particular needs. The marriage is happy when a relatively high degree of mutual needs are satisfied. It becomes unhappy when needs are unmet. Dissatisfaction leads to complaint and criticism which diminish self-esteem. Emotional disturbances cause feelings of rejection, anger, and aggression. Unmet needs must be recognized along with the reasons they are unmet before a course of action for making adjustments can be designed. The counsellor cannot determine the course of action because he has no authority for requiring each to carry out his assignment. He can help each to define his view of the problem and to agree to a mutual plan for solving it.

Needs are reflected in role-images, and unmet needs are expressed in terms of the failure of the partner to fulfil his role. "The needs whose satisfaction determines the relative strength of a marriage are of two kinds—personality needs and sexual

*When the situations in a marriage cannot be changed, what does the goal of counselling become? \_\_\_\_\_*

*(Compare your answer with the text.)*

*When conflict arises because of different personal goals, the goal of counselling becomes \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(to guide towards mutual goals)*

*When tension arises because partners have divergent role-images, the goal of counselling is \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(to bring role-images and patterns of behaviour closer together)*

needs."<sup>3</sup> Personality needs are essentially two: to love and be loved and to feel that one is worthwhile to himself and others. Each of these needs can be met only in a dependable relationship. The major goal of pastoral counselling is to help each partner experience his greatest need of giving and receiving love.

To give love is to live responsibly. A person who loves does not diminish the personhood of others nor block the fulfilment of their needs. Genuine love is the basis of inner freedom to be oneself. A person who is accepted during childhood usually possesses inner freedom and is able to develop self-respect which is essential for autonomous self-hood. A person who has self-respect and feels secure is able to express love, but one who feels inferior and unworthy tends to withdraw from healthy relationships and focus his attention on himself. The counsellor may need to help the one being counselled to accept himself as a worthy person so that he can move beyond himself to establish healthy relationships.

Self-respect is based on a person's being created in the image of God. Those who experience acceptance by a forgiving and loving God recognize that they are created for a significant purpose and are important. Sin leads to shame, guilt, and a sense of failure, but redemption enables one to recognize his true nature as a son of God and joint-heir with Christ. An experience of salvation in Christ is often the key to solving conflicts between partners.

### Counselling Families With Conflicts

#### The complex nature of family problems

Often conflicts between husband and wife expand to include other members of the family. Discontented parents often neglect children and allow them to drift into situations of bad influence. The problems of children in these circumstances cannot be solved until there is improvement in the relations of parents.

Families interact as organism; therefore, therapy of one member may in fact focus on the total family interaction rather than simply on an individual. Since numerous persons are involved, the relationships and responses of one to the other are more complex. The family unit involves an interdependent web of need-satisfying relations. For example, the actions of the child who gets into trouble cannot be understood apart from the child's relationships within the home. The goal of family counselling is to reduce the negative reactions and frustrations of various members and to enhance the positive feelings and harmonious family interaction.

<sup>3</sup>Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral Counselling (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 99.

*Two basic personality needs are:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

*One who has self-respect and feels secure is able to express \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Love)*

*Self-respect is based on one's being created in the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(image, God)*

*Family problems are usually complex because there are several \_\_\_\_\_ involved.*

*(people)*

*What should be the goal of family counselling? \_\_\_\_\_*

*(Compare your answer with the text.)*

Family problems, like marital problems, usually involve breakdowns in communication: feelings, wishes, goals, and values cannot be discussed. When this happens, the mutual needs of family members are unmet and hostilities result. The emotions bred by hostilities may become uncontrollable and lead to destructive attacks on the personalities of other family members. Successful counselling requires reopening lines of communication, providing a catharsis for hostilities and anger, and guiding disrupted relationships to a reconciliation. Each member must be permitted to work through his emotions to the point of recognizing his own irrational actions and the other members' responses to them.

A primary goal is to establish a family system which functions for the mutual benefit of all concerned. There is no stereotype pattern to which every family must conform, but a variety of possible patterns.

Each member of the family should be aware of his role and the other members' complementary roles. Just as in marriage relations, each member must be willing to adjust the role-image of himself and other members of the family in order to achieve a compatible and working relationship. Children need to know what parents expect of them, and children need to know what they can expect of one another and can depend on from their parents. Defined and accepted roles of husband, father, wife, mother, son, daughter, brother, and sister are essential if the needs of each family member are to be met.

Common basic needs of each family member include food, clothing, shelter, security, acceptance, love, and respect. Actions, attitudes, and words can hinder the satisfying of the needs of interdependent family members. For example, a father who is an alcoholic may leave unmet the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, security, love, and respect of other family members. A child cannot face his peers with dignity and respect if the actions of his father have brought shame on the entire family. Children of divorced parents are robbed of security, love, acceptance, and self-respect. The wrong actions of one family member affect severely the satisfaction of needs of all other members.

Some interpret the Christian way of solving family problems to be that of surrendering natural rights and foregoing satisfaction of needs. But if one member experiences numerous unmet needs, that member will be unable to maintain a wholesome relationship with other family members; therefore, each will be robbed. Family problems require all members to make accommodations in the establishing of relationships which can satisfy spiritual and personal needs for the greatest happiness possible.

*List three responsibilities of the pastor in family counselling.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

*The satisfying of the needs of interdependent family members can be hindered by one member's a \_\_\_\_\_, a \_\_\_\_\_, or w \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(actions, attitudes, words)*

## Procedure in family counselling

The first step involves discovery and appraisal of the problem which has brought conflict to the family. The counsellor may see both husband and wife, either one of them separately, the entire family group, or a teen-age child alone during the initial encounter. His task is to determine if the difficulty comes from outside or inside the family. Problems may arise from loss of job, illness, absence of one or both parents from the home, parents' taking their own emotional disturbances and frustrations out on a child, the failure of a mother to perceive of bad influences for the child, the father's neglect of the children, and other causes.

After the problem is defined, the counsellor needs to evaluate whether he is qualified and has the necessary time to deal with it or should refer it to a psychiatrist or social agency. Some social agencies are better qualified to deal with certain types of problems.

Problems within the family may be emotional, intellectual, financial, and spiritual. The difficulty may centre in a personality problem of one or more of the family members. If the difficulty has reached the crisis stage, the counsellor needs to determine whether the children will be damaged severely by being in the home. In many situations, there will be no alternative.

After the minister has decided that the problem is within his ability to handle, he begins the actual counselling process by allowing each involved party to tell his side of the story. The counsellor becomes a listener as in other counselling situations. He may see individuals first to allow each to express his hostilities and to reveal his view of the problem. Again, he must be careful not to draw premature conclusions or make decisions for the persons being counselled. In discovering the underlying problems, the counsellor needs to observe how the father and mother react to one another, how parents and children get along, and how brothers and sisters relate. When problems arise with children, mothers especially experience a sense of failure because they have been more closely related to them and more responsible for them.

Problems with an early teen-age son often stem from the father's neglect of him. Sometimes rebellion results if parents' love is conditioned on how well the children do. "If the best is demanded and the worst is expected, the child will fulfil the worst expectations."<sup>4</sup> Parent-children problems are sometimes the result of a child's not being wanted in the first place. Conception may have preceded marriage, it may have been by accident, or even if planned it may have disrupted the

As you read Procedure in family counselling, list the steps that should be taken.

Step 1: \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Step 2: \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Step 3: \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

<sup>4</sup>Stewart, The Minister as Marriage Counselor, p. 152.

mother's career or social plans. An unwanted child senses the lack of love and feels rejected and lonely. Many of his errant activities may be to gain attention. Parents blame the child and reject him, and this leads to further frustration. Sometimes trouble arises when emotionally unstable parents fluctuate in their dealings with their children. In these situations, children do not know where they stand and are confused by what they are to do. The pastor will need to be a careful listener and an alert observer to come to a full understanding of the total problem.

After discovering the problem and enabling each family member to come to a recognition of it, the final phase of family counselling is to help the group find and operate within the framework of faith and adopted values. Parents as well as children may need to confess their injustices and ask for forgiveness. Relationships within families are stronger when each member focuses his life on the will of God and attempts to live according to the teachings of the New Testament. The pastor cannot force his own religious experience on the family, but he can give indirect guidance to them as members work through their problems towards a solution.

Step 4 in family counselling: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answer with the text.)*

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). Do the following exercise.

1. Distinguish between marriage counselling and family counselling. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the pastor's ministry to those with spiritual ailments and emotional disturbances? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Name four types of needs which require different types of counselling. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Give two reasons why pastors may choose to refer persons with emotional disturbances which require extensive counselling to Christian psychiatrists. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Name three possible client-counsellor relationships and explain their differences. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. When is supportive counselling appropriate? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. List some kinds of information that may be imparted in educational counselling. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Give the primary task of the pastoral counsellor. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Why is it important for the pastor to accept persons with problems even though he disagrees with their wrongs? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Give the steps in the process of counselling. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
11. Name three distinctive characteristics of marriage counselling. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Name three levels of need for each marriage partner. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Give the goal of marriage counselling and three approaches to achieving the goal. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Why are family problems often complex, and what is the goal of family counselling? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What task does the counsellor face in dealing with family problems? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. Briefly explain how wrong actions of one family member may deny the satisfaction of needs of all others. \_\_\_\_\_

17. List the steps in family counselling. \_\_\_\_\_

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3).

Read pages 260-266, 267-274, and 331-335 in The Marriage Affair, edited by J. Allan Petersen, and answer the following questions.

1. According to Jim Smith and the editors of Campus Life magazine, what are eight reasons for student drug involvement?
2. Why does Gordon McLean conclude that the so-called generation gap and the problem of drug abuse begin at home?
3. List the five steps parents need to follow in dealing with children on drugs according to a teenager (see pp. 264-265).
4. According to the article by Jerry Dunn, why is social drinking so dangerous?
5. According to Dunn, what are seven steps towards alcoholism?
6. List five ways for helping an alcoholic.
7. List ten ways of non-verbal communication suggested by Howard and Charlotte Clinebell.
8. List the steps in the communication process for resolving conflicts in marriage.

Advanced activity (Level 3).

Read pages 281-285, 306-308, and 321-326 in The Marriage Affair, and answer the following questions.

1. What are four requirements for profiting from mistakes?
2. List seven suggestions for maintaining harmonious relationships with each other's families.
3. According to James H. Jauncey, what are two major reasons why it is difficult to talk to a loved one?

Seminar Discussion

1. In what areas do families experience problems and need help from the pastor?
2. What is the pastor's role in helping those who experience problems?
3. What basic principles should the pastor remember in counselling families with problems?
4. Why is listening so important in the counselling process?
5. Why do couples cease communicating, and what can be done about it?
6. How do role-images cause tension?
7. Why are problems with children sometimes the result of conflict between husband and wife?
8. What is a proper procedure for a pastor to follow in family counselling?