

LESSON 3

THE PASTOR AS COUNSELLOR

Introduction

Aims

1. To show that many biblical characters performed pastoral care and counselling within the historical framework of their day.
2. To explain the different roles that the pastor has, and how all these activities can be integrated into his programme of pastoral care and counselling.
3. To point out the main qualities of a competent counsellor.
4. To recognize the levels of pastoral care.
5. To show how the pastor's work as counsellor is unique to that of other professionals.
6. To alert the minister to the pitfalls that are to be avoided in his work.

Traditionally the minister has been the one to whom people turn when they have a critical need. In spite of the trends towards secularism that we experience today in many countries, the minister is still the person to whom people turn when they have difficulties.

From the earliest biblical records there is evidence that a spiritual leader had a significant place of responsibility in the community in helping people to cope with the difficulties that arose. Throughout the Old Testament times and especially through the example of Jesus we can see how a spiritual leader has been the source of significant ministry.

We shall look at some of the qualities that make the minister successful in pastoral care and counselling. These will be mentioned with a goal towards helping each minister to develop these qualities as a part of his personality and ministry. Also, we shall give emphasis to the fact that the minister must recognize the level of ministry that he has with each person and be willing to minister on the level which is appropriate at the specific moment or event in the life of the person.

Biblical Models of Helpers

Old Testament models

The pastor can find many biblical illustrations of helpers which inspire him in his ministry to others. The Bible contains many references to the fact that the spiritual leader of the community had a significant ministry through providing guidance to the people in times of need. Noah sought to show the people the ideals that God had for them in their daily living (Gen. 6:12, 13). Although the people did not heed Noah's message, Noah became, for all history, an illustration of one who worked to avoid the destruction

Restate the aims for this lesson in your own words.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

When people have a critical need, they traditionally turn to the _____

(pastor)

Noah sought to show the people the _____ that God had for them in their _____ living.

(ideals, daily)

of the people of his day through his preaching ministry to them.

Abram, the father of the Jewish nation, grappled with life's issues as he dealt with a variety of people in his pilgrimage from Ur to the Promised Land. He passed through many crises in his life, among which were his trips to Egypt to survive the drought and the perpetual conflict between his wife, Sarah, and her slave, Hagar. He was plagued with doubt before he was able to experience fulfilment of the promise of the heir, Isaac. He struggled with Abimelek because he wanted to take Sarah from him. He went through the great crucible when God told him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, after waiting so long for the fulfilment of the promise. Abraham must have become a gentle and wise pastor to the people around him, because he lived through so many of the critical experiences which occasion the need for help from others.

Jacob's volatile character, illustrated in his struggles within himself, with his twin brother, with his father-in-law, and with the angel, reveal that he was engaged in life's activities both as an actor and catalyst. Perhaps the crisis that arose in his own family while they were living among the Hivites illustrates how Jacob became awakened to the need to fulfil his role as father and spiritual authority (Gen. 34 and 35). Because of a Hivite's having taken advantage of one of his daughters, Dinah, Jacob decided that it was time for a spiritual renewal among the members of his own family. He asserted himself and called his family back to God. His leadership and guidance for his own family because they were drifting away from God and the ideals of his ancestors give us a model today.

The prophet Nathan's confrontation with David because of the king's sin awakens in us many questions related to the technique of confrontation in counselling. Nathan's direct charge to David (2 Sam. 12:7) brought confession and repentance. The pastor today must be sure that he has the relationship with his counsellee and the direction of the Lord if he proceeds to follow Nathan's example.

The writer of Proverbs places great importance upon listening to counsellors (Prov. 11:14; 12:20; 15:22; 24:6). He also helps us to know how to keep in good physical, emotional, and spiritual condition. The preacher can find helpful material in his preaching from this book.

The prophets have been looked upon as models for preachers who need to call out the evils of their day. The priest was seen as the one who promoted the ceremonial aspect of religious expression.

In the Old Testament the priest was the custodian of the nation's religious tradition; to him the people were supposed to be able to turn for understanding and guidance in all problems that involved their relationship with God and with each other. . . . The prophet shared in the pastoral care of the community. We usually think of the prophet as thundering his messages of doom at the nation as a whole rather than as dealing with individuals—a preacher rather than a pastor.¹

Is the following statement true or false?

Abraham never learned to become a gentle and wise pastor due to all the hardships he experienced.

(false)

Is the following statement true or false?

Jacob's character never allowed him to become a good father and wise spiritual counsellor.

(false)

Nathan's direct charge to David brought _____ and _____.

(confession, repentance)

The writer of Proverbs places great importance upon listening to _____.

(counsellors)

Isaiah was the spiritual leader for the kings of his day. He gave counsel to the political leaders regarding the dangers of alliances with pagan nations. Although his counsel was not always heeded (Isa. 7:1-10), this did not keep him from continuing to minister. The latter part of the book contains words of comfort to the people who were facing captivity (40:1ff.). We see in him the spiritual leader who was able to help people to see beyond where they were at the moment to better days in the future.

Isaiah was a spiritual _____

(leader)

Jeremiah conceived of the role of the leader as that of the physician whose task is to heal the wounds in the nation's life (Jer. 6:13-14). His hope in the future caused him to buy a plot of land from a relative (32:6ff.). He gave us the inspiring words regarding the New Covenant that God would make with His people (31:31-34). He ministered in the critical moments of the disintegration of the national life of his people, but he was faithful in calling them to hope in God's ultimate purpose for them as a nation.

Jeremiah conceived of the role of the leader as that of the _____

(physician)

Ezekiel performed his ministry in the midst of a people who had been carried as captives to a foreign land. He saw his role as the shepherd and watchman over the community. He emphasized the individual responsibility of each person before God (18:1-20).

Ezekiel saw himself as the _____ and _____ over the community.

(shepherd, watchman)

Jesus as a model

It is interesting to study the ministry and teachings of Jesus from the point of view of principles in counselling. We see that Jesus was able to minister adequately to those who came to Him. We are impressed by His willingness to face up to the various people that opposed Him in many different occasions. He did not shy away from the lame, the blind, the lepers, nor the mentally ill. Jesus' capacity to relate to all these people is a great example for the minister and the counsellor. Smart summarizes Jesus' ministry in the statement:

Jesus ministered _____ to those who came to Him.

(adequately)

In the ministry of Jesus this focus upon individuals comes into much greater prominence, so much so that sometimes his prophetic mission to the nation as a whole is lost from sight. If we examine the material of Jesus' ministry a large part is of conversations with individuals and small groups. . . . Take out of the Gospels all the passages in which Jesus is acting as pastor and there would be a great void.²

Jesus' ability to be confrontive is evidenced in His conversation with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the rich young ruler, and Zacchaeus. He helped each of these people to face up to themselves, their motivation, and their defences in following God's leadership for their lives. He was hard on the Pharisees in the directness with which He condemned their hypocrisy, false pride, and inverted sense of values.

Illustrate Jesus' use of confrontation.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

It is interesting to note in the teachings of Jesus how compassionate He was towards others. He talks about the Good Shepherd as being willing to give His life for His

Jesus was compassionate towards _____

sheep. The prodigal son was loved by his father in spite of his rebellion and waywardness. The Good Samaritan was willing to break with the customs of tradition in order to help someone who was in need. Jesus exemplified through His actions and His teachings that He was interested in helping others to experience maximum health and fullness of purpose.

The Apostle Paul

Paul and his associates showed pastoral concern in dealing with the people who were steeped in paganism in the different cities that they visited. Paul was not hesitant to discuss and persuade because he understood that the truths of the gospel would meet with resistance from Satan (Acts 19:8). Paul was able to have a significant pastoral ministry in relatively short periods of time in cities like Athens, Ephesus, Corinth, and Phillipi. He was able to communicate that which was of significance for man in his messages, and these messages met the spiritual needs of the people who listened. He showed the pastor's heart as he admonished Timothy to be loving towards everyone (2 Tim. 2:24).

Peter and John

The Epistles of Peter and John contain admonitions to pastors to be diligent in their watchcare over the flock of God (1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 John 3:11; 4:7). These men had lived a long period of time and had struggled through many crises when they wrote these words. They had been examples to others in their ministry to others in times of suffering. They give us an ideal that is challenging. We in the evangelical tradition, tend to find inspiration from the lives of the people whose experiences are recorded in the inspired Word of God. These biblical characters give us a perspective and a methodology which, when matched with the contemporary corresponding setting, become alive for us in our ministry.

Pastoral Care Through Variety of Functions

Purposive administration

The pastor is called upon to function in many different capacities.

What does it mean to be a pastor? There is an evangelistic conception that says that the minister must preach the gospel from house to house and attempt the conversion of people as individuals and not just in the mass. There is a less evangelistic but religiously formal conception that merely insists that a minister read and pray, that is, conduct worship, regularly in the homes of his people. . . . Then there is the friendly church visitor conception based on the principle that a home-going minister makes a church-going people. There are men who make ten-minute calls in every home every six months and thereby keep

(others)

Paul and his associates showed pastoral

(concern)

The Epistles of Peter and John contain admonitions to _____ to be diligent in their _____ over the _____ of God.

(pastors, watchcare, flock)

The pastor is called upon to function in many _____ capacities.

(different)

people under a sense of obligation to go to church. . . . More recently there has been the counsellor conception in which often general visitation of a congregation is abandoned and people with problems are encouraged to visit the minister in his study.³

Therapeutic preaching

The pastor who can minister to people in their personal and spiritual difficulties through his preaching will indeed have a significant ministry in this manner. This will not give him an abundance of time for counselling, but it will open a lot of doors for him to counsel. It will be a common experience for people to come seeking counsel because of something that arose as a result of a sermon that he preached. This will enhance the preaching as well as the counselling of the pastor. He should be alert to the life situations which arise and which challenge him to prepare biblical messages that speak to people's needs in all these areas. This does not mean that he will use personal illustrations that may make a lot of people nervous and fearful that he is divulging confidences; rather he will proclaim the deep truths which are relevant to this situation.

Oates refers to the preaching and counselling ministries in the following statement:

The preaching task is primarily that of challenging men with the distant and flickering but unquenchable lights of the city of God; the pastoral task is primarily that of being able to identify with people just as they are, "to sit where they sit," even in their "haunts of wretchedness" in the cities of men "where cross the crowded ways of life." The two functions are coalesced in the worship of God as the minister learns himself to participate with the congregation in the processes of growth in the covenant of the loving ideals of Jesus.⁴

Oates subsequently outlines the objectives of therapeutic preaching as follows:

1. The interpretation of human experience in the light of Biblical truth rather than the exhortation of people to the observance of certain moral precepts, as such;
2. The development of personal insight into the motives of personal and group action rather than the condemnation of this or that kind of behaviour;
3. The encouragement of the congregation toward faith in God, in one another, and in themselves as means of gaining control over behaviour which they themselves discover to be alien to the mind of Christ;
4. The growth of a sense of comradeship with God in Christ and the changing of personality through this "transforming friendship."⁵

Sensitive pastoral care

Another of the responsibilities of the pastor is the spiritual care of the community. The word "pastor" has its roots in the nomadic stage of tribal life among ancient

Is the following statement true or false?

The pastor needs to be alert to the life situations which arise and which challenge him to prepare biblical messages that speak to people's needs in all these areas.

(true)

Give four objectives of therapeutic preaching given by Oates.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Show how the modern day idea of the pastor has been derived.

peoples. The pastor was in constant vigil for the welfare of the sheep. The word "pastor" in Latin means "to pasture or feed." Psalm 23 is one of the most famous passages in the Bible and continuously gives inspiration and spiritual food to people in all the different stages of their lives. Isaiah 40:11 is another verse that depicts this picture: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Jeremiah condemned the evil shepherds that destroyed and scattered the sheep of God's pasture (Jer. 23:1ff.).

Under these same figures we see the work of the pastor among his flock today. Those who feel that the figure is outdated because the nomadic way of life has passed from the scene except in some rare cases do not realize the impact that this figure can have as a source of inspiration. The pastor today is called upon to be aware of the different kinds of spiritual food that his members are receiving. Many churches lose members to Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, and other sects because the pastor is not alert to the threats which come through the visits of members of these congregations and also the undermining literature which they distribute freely and abundantly among the evangelicals of the different churches. The pastor is called upon to be alert to the different sources of danger that come to his congregation. Also, the able pastor will be among the first to arrive when emergencies and other problems come to his membership. The pastor can perform a lot of pastoral care as he responds to special needs that families have in the daily experiences.

Visiting in the homes of the members gives more time to consider specifically the needs of each family member. Some pastors have a goal of visiting in the home of each church family during a certain period of time, depending upon the number of members in his congregation. Some pastors feel that they have to give priority to the unchurched, and if they have time for visitation, they try to do evangelistic visitation. This is a mistake, for as the pastor visits among his members he may be able to equip and inspire them to help in the evangelistic visitation. He will multiply his ministry if he can develop some Christians to help in this important phase of the church programme.

Some pastors resist visitation. Smart calls this evasion. He says:

There are various forms of evasion. One is the finding of good reasons for abandoning all visitation in homes. Another is the shortening of the visit to a period so brief that no significant conversation is possible. Another is the resolute maintenance of a chatty, superficial level in the interview that effectively discourages serious questions. Yet another is the formal religious visit that gives the minister a good conscience that he has done something to make the call religious when in actuality he as a pastor has gone into hiding behind his Bible reading and prayer. There are numerous ways of guarding ourselves against costly exposure to the rude realities of our people's lives.⁶

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Visiting in the homes of the members gives more time to consider _____ the needs of each family

(specifically, member)

What does Smart mean by evasion?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Frequently in pastoral visits people will share intimate problems that they have. The pastor has the opportunity in that situation to counsel in an effective manner. He does not have to structure the situation in such a way that the person has to make a special trip down to the church or his office in order to receive counsel. The pastor can engage in a lot of preventive ministry, and thereby help to avoid more critical problems that shortly would have arisen without adequate pastoral help. The pastor should be able to recognize when people need more extensive help, and structure the situation accordingly. But he may save the need for many hours of counselling in situations when homes have been disrupted and lives have been jeopardized by simply taking some time to listen to people and counsel wisely as he visits from home to home.

Vital leadership in worship

The Christian religion emphasizes the importance of individual and corporate worship. The pastor traditionally is the one who directs this worship experience. Therefore, the pastor needs to develop the art of conducting public and private worship in such a way that it will be meaningful to the participants. It, too, can be a means of deepening the spiritual lives of the congregation. Worship helps people to gain a sense of value and direction in their lives and will help them to make decisions and thereby avoid pitfalls that might be detrimental to their own sense of fulfilment in the future.

Oates calls attention to the therapeutic value of public worship by stating:

Public worship, as indeed is true of private worship, likewise affords necessary resources for the conservation and multiplication of the pastoral effectiveness of a minister. One of the main distinctives of the role and function of the Christian pastor is that he is related to those whom he helps both individually and socially, both privately and publicly, both on horizontal planes of fellowship between man and man and on a vertical plane of communion between man and God. The place of public worship is where all these lines of influence and relationship meet.⁷

The different aspects of worship have a therapeutic effect upon the worshipper. Participation in praise, confession, contemplation of God, and consecration may be very significant in helping a person to keep his spiritual moorings and continue in his service to the Lord. The minister may use this part of his service in an effective way both to help people to come to realize their need for changes in their lives as well as helping them to assimilate the counselling which they receive.

Competent counselling

The counselling ministry is not an appendage to the pastor's ministry; rather it is a vital part of all that he does. In reality his counselling ministry may dovetail perfectly

The pastor can engage in a lot of _____ ministry.

(preventive)

The pastor needs to develop the art of conducting _____ and _____

(public, private, worship)

Worship has a _____ effect on the _____

(therapeutic, worshipper)

Counselling is a vital part of all that the _____ does.

(pastor)

with his other responsibilities. It may serve to help him to have information and a viewpoint that will be important in the administrative functions of the church programme. At the same time through counselling the minister becomes aware of many of the spiritual needs of his congregation, and can prepare his messages under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, taking into account these multiple needs. He should be cautious not to use personal illustrations involving people in the congregation who have come to him for help, but this does not mean that he cannot speak in such a way as to seek to help those who have the same needs.

Characteristics of the Counsellor

Love for people

Love for people is one of the basic requirements of the successful pastor or lay leader. The truth involved in this statement cannot be emphasized too much. The *agape* quality of love is that which seeks nothing in return. It is not reciprocal love. It is the quality that causes one to give of himself sacrificially in efforts to help others without expecting something in return. It is the ability to relate in Christian warmth to those who are hurting.

At times love has been confused with the winsome personality that goes out to others and seeks to spread happiness among other people. At times it has been confused with an obsessive-compulsive pattern of behaviour which causes the minister to give of himself day and night without regard for his own maintenance needs and those of his family. At times it is confused with the attempt to expiate for past behaviour which has left one guilt-laden and constantly keeps the person seeking to make atonement. At times it is confused with egoism, where the individual really "serves" others as a means of getting his own pathological needs met. The Christian must seek to make sure that his love is genuine without ulterior motives.

It is important for the minister to be able to use reason as he expresses his love. This is the real meaning of *agape* love—the exercise of reason and will. One will discover which expressions of love are helpful and which ones may be debilitating to others. A love which leaves the recipient less motivated and less able to do for himself may be more harmful than helpful. "Love" which permits people to manipulate the pastor is not necessarily a love that will make them stronger in the future.

Genuineness

Genuineness and sincerity are important qualities for the counsellor. This means that the pastor is able to reflect what and who he is as he works with other people. He can be transparent with people. This involves a recognition of who he is and how he functions. He is aware of his own feelings and the source of them. He can be honest with people and does not have to cover up constantly or ask others to do so for him. If he is involved in something which prevents him from being available at the moment to

One of the basic requirements to be a successful pastor is _____.

(love)

The minister needs to use _____ as he expresses _____.

(reason, love)

Other important qualities for the counsellor are _____ and _____.

(genuineness, sincerity)

someone who is in need, this is explained to the people and an alternate time of ministry is offered.

Some have differed in this emphasis by stating that the counsellor should show no emotion as he listens to people talk about their problems. Whatever he hears, he continues to respond to the person in the same manner. Others have the opinion that the best counsellor is one who can "vibrate" with the people according to what he is hearing. He responds in empathy to those who are experiencing sadness in their lives. He celebrates with happiness and laughter with those who come and share their joyous occasions of life. Openness and genuineness on the part of the counsellor will permit him to respond sincerely according to his own feelings, and this attitude will elicit the same qualities from those he counsels.

Awareness of self and others

We have already mentioned briefly the importance of being aware of oneself, one's feeling, weaknesses, and strengths. "This awareness also helps the helper to avoid unwarranted or unethical use of the helpee for his own need satisfaction."⁸ This will help the counsellor not to impose his own system of values upon the helpee in a manner that is offensive. He can realize that he has his own set of convictions, but he can tolerate others who differ from him and can be helpful to them, although they do not subscribe to his set of standards in moral conduct. For instance, the counsellee may be talking about the possibility of divorce. The counsellor may be personally opposed to divorce. He will need to be aware of his own personal viewpoint and at the same time not feel that his conviction has to be communicated in a judgemental way towards the counsellee. He may need to give the person freedom to consider that alternative and hopefully decide that it is not the best solution, without his having to impose his own moral conviction upon the counsellee.

Ways to acquire this awareness are varied. The minister needs to meditate a great deal upon his own religious and moral convictions, and recognize the source of them. He will realize how inner dynamics function in his own person. When he feels himself becoming angry as he listens to someone tell their problem, he will be able to recognize the relationship between what he is hearing and his own visceral reaction. Having a trusted friend with whom he can dialogue regularly will be a very helpful means to keeping himself in good shape mentally and emotionally.

Interest in helping others

The counsellor must be genuinely interested in people, their needs and difficulties, their joys and sorrows, and their ability and readiness to receive help. The counsellor must be able to respond to critical circumstances in an empathetic way which will make him available to people. He must be willing to take initiative in reaching out to people who are hurting. He must be willing to make himself

Is the following statement true or false?

Sincerity on the counsellor's part will help to bring about sincerity from the people he counsels. _____

(true)

By being aware of himself, the pastor-counsellor can help those he counsels even though they do not have his set of _____ in _____ conduct.

(standards, moral)

Ways to acquire this awareness are _____

(varied)

uncomfortable or go out of his way in order to give of himself to others who are in need. The biblical story that most vividly illustrates this fact is that of the Good Samaritan. Jesus showed in a very graphic way how sometimes religious leaders, in spite of seeing dire critical need, are unwilling to inconvenience themselves or are unable to be of help to others. Unwillingness to help others can blossom from a multitude of reasons. This story makes us all ill at ease at times because of our own guilt at not being able, because of economic, emotional or moral reasons, to respond to physical needs every time we see them. In this story, the one from whom the least might be expected was the person who had the most natural gifts and the willing heart to help.

It is best that the pastor not go about his work taking histories the way that a social worker would do. But he can show with a few well chosen questions that he is interested in people, discover what is happening to them in their lives, and make it known that he is available to help them if they so desire. The minister will recognize that his ministry may be decisive in helping some people to turn the corner from hopelessness to charting a course that will lead to meaningfulness in their lives. Many people spend months in emotional depression following an experience of grief, when perhaps a few meaningful hours spent with the pastor in sharing their feelings would help them to move from that valley to a more positive means of coping with their grief.

Healthy motivation

An understanding of one's motivation for wanting to help is important. If the pastor has pathological needs that he is seeking to meet through his attempts to help, then his help may be neutralized or annulled by his own weakness. In a hospital where I worked, there was a volunteer programme. The one in charge of the volunteers had to be very careful in screening those who applied for helping in the programme. Once she found that a woman who had recently lost her husband was working through her own grief by talking about her own loss among the patients in the hospital. Finally, some of the patients began to complain to the administration about the volunteer's spreading her own emotional germs from patient to patient as she shared her grief. She was relieved of this task until she had worked through her own grief in a more satisfactory way. One should not be in the business of helping as a means of coping with one's own problems.

Investment of one's energies in helping others can help one to maintain emotional stability. A sense of self-worth, status, and intimacy are benefits which come to us from helping others. These can be legitimate if they are kept within bounds. Altruism is very evident in healthy helpers. Also, the Christian will have an evangelistic and missionary motive in helping much of the time. While this is understandable, one's obsession to "convert" others should not get out of bounds.⁹

The story of the Good Samaritan illustrates this

(fact)

Is the following statement true or false?

The pastor should take case histories of the people he counsels like a social worker does.

(false)

What does the illustration concerning the hospital volunteer in the adjacent paragraph emphasize?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Uniqueness of the Pastor's Opportunity

The pastor can take initiative

There are several unique qualities about the pastor's opportunity to minister. The pastor can take the initiative and go to people in the congregation and to those who are unchurched when he recognizes need. Medical doctors are not free to take this initiative because of the ethical codes under which the medical profession operates. On the other hand, it is expected that the pastor will be responsive to the needs of his congregation, and will be among the first to visit and minister when there is need. Perhaps the most common criticism of ministers today is that they do not do enough pastoral visitation. Most ministers, because of limited time, establish priorities and minister to those with the greatest need. The pastor is wise who trains laymen to help minister and who educates his people to receive this ministry as a pastoral visit. The pastor will establish some criteria for deciding how he invests his time. One possibility would be:

1. Those suffering grief because of recent loss.
2. Those who are critically ill, either in the hospital or at home.
3. The lost who need the Christian witness.
4. Those who have some serious problem, whether it be spiritual, relational, or moral.
5. The senior citizens, shut-ins, and chronically ill.
6. Prospective church members.

The pastor will vary his acts of ministry according to the basic need of the people being visited and the special circumstances that he finds when he arrives. Sometimes the circumstances in the home are not propitious for the minister to talk specifically to those that need it or about the problems which the person faces. Together, family members or visitors may cause the visit to be of the friendly chit-chat type. It may be wise for the minister to call by telephone if possible and structure the situation before going to a home for a pastoral visit.

The pastor has an ongoing relationship with his people

Many professional helpers will not know the person who seeks help prior to the contact which results in a contract for helping over a period of time, nor will they have contact with them after the formal process of helping is terminated. Some professionals prefer not to have any relationship with clients except when they are in the office for the session. This is quite different from the ongoing relationship which the pastor will have with his people.

Another instance of the uniqueness of the minister's role as counsellor is the fact that the minister continues to relate to the people after formal counselling is terminated. This is a very important factor for the minister to keep in mind. He may need to prevent some people from becoming too open and frank in their confessions, because people tend

The pastor can take the _____

(initiative)

Make a priority list as to how a pastor might best use his time.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The pastor will _____ his acts of ministry according to the basic need of the people being _____. He will also take into account the _____ that he finds when he _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Is the following statement true or false?

Pastors should keep their relationship with persons they counsel confined to the formal counselling session.

(false)

to feel uncomfortable around a person to whom they have confessed serious shortcomings. For instance, the book-keeper at the bank has been dishonest through embezzlement. Although he has confessed his sin, has sought forgiveness from God, and made restitution, he may not feel too comfortable sitting in the pew when he hears the pastor preach a sermon on honesty in business dealings. Even though the pastor may be making no application to the specific case, the layman probably will feel that the pastor is referring personally to him. The man who has been unfaithful to his wife may still feel ill at ease when he is in the presence of the pastor, even though he has confessed to the pastor and his wife. For this reason the pastor must reassure his congregation that when God forgives, He forgets and that the minister no longer focuses on the problem that he has heard in the counselling setting. At the same time he can be the incarnation of grace and forgiveness by communicating that having heard the worst in people does not make a difference in his feelings for them. If anything, most pastors will feel more tenderness towards the person who has struggled through a time of confession of sin, and he will go the second mile to minister to them according to their need. He will also reassure them that God has forgiven and this is the most important factor.

The pastor has spiritual resources

The pastor will have spiritual resources that secular counsellors do not have. Switzer emphasizes the fact that many people load the pastor with powers that most professionals wish that they had in seeking to deal with people.¹⁰ In addition to the professional competence that the pastor will have, he is the spokesman and the representative of God to most people. They tend to give him certain virtues of omniscience and omnipotence, and they feel that his prayers can effect more change than their own. Many feel that his spiritual insight represents the expression of the will of God for them. Pruyser states: "The parishioner is likely to bring to the encounter with the pastor many other attitudes and feelings. He may expect magic from 'the man of God.'"¹¹

The minister has at his fingertips a whole reservoir of resources which can make help more available and effective. For instance, he has the community of faith that he can call upon to help. Most churches have deacons, women's organizations, and many other groups that can take on special projects in helping those who are in need. Some churches engage in intercessory prayer on Wednesday or some other night, hear progress reports, and pray specifically for those who are ill and in other difficulties. This has a very positive effect upon the sick when they realize that there is a group praying for their recovery or for the special problem that they face. God responds according to our interest in and prayers on behalf of these people.

The minister should have as his companion the Word of God. He should be adept at opening the Bible to the most appropriate passages according to the needs of the

Many people load the pastor with _____ most _____ wish they had.

(powers, professionals)

The pastor has the _____ of _____

(community, faith)

The pastor has the _____ of _____

people. He can make the message of the Bible relevant to the person through a few appropriate comments. He should not be perfunctory in his use of the Bible; rather he should give specific thought to the needs of the person. He can ask the member if there is any special part of the Bible that he would like to have read, or if there is any special portion that has captured his thinking due to his own problem. Many times the minister can help people by making some personal references to the similarity of the experience one is having with some biblical character.

The pastor should feel free to use biblical and theological truth in helping people as they struggle to solve their problems. Recently a father told me that he had spent a great deal of time meditating and reading the passages in the Bible that have to do with death as a result of the recent accidental death of one of his sons. These passages had taken on a new interest and meaning for him because of the tragedy in his own family. This will be true of most people. The pastor who can take time to sit and talk quietly with people, using biblical truths as a basis of conversation, will be utilizing a very effective resource in his ministry to others.

People are hungry to hear the "Thus saith the Lord." Once I was talking with a woman about her expectations when she went to church. She said: "I want to hear the Bible explained. If I want a lecture on psychology, current events, or some other topic, I think I could find that outside the church." This perspective from a laywoman should sound a warning alarm for us ministers. Let's use the special powers that God has given us, that are inherent in our calling, in order that we may be more helpful to those who are in need.

Pitfalls for the Pastor as Counsellor

Overinvolvement with the people he seeks to help

One of the pitfalls that the minister must learn to avoid is that of becoming too involved with the people he seeks to help. I experienced this as I participated in clinical training in a general hospital. Early in the training programme I found myself getting emotionally involved with the patients, and carrying their problems home with me. I would think about the things that they had told me, and try to work out their solutions when I should have been relaxing and enjoying my family at home. For a period of time I found myself waking up in the early hours of the morning and beginning to work mentally as I thought about the different patients. Through conversations with my supervisor I finally learned that I needed to be able to "shut the door" when I left the hospital, and resume my work there the following day. As I was able to achieve this goal, I felt that I was more effective during the time that I had with the patients.

The pastor will find this happening many times in his ministry. His own love for people and desire for the best for them will cause him to get too emotionally involved at

(Word, God)

The pastor should feel _____ to use biblical truth in _____ people.

(free, helping)

People are hungry to hear " _____ "

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Is the following statement true or false?

The pastor need not be concerned about his involvement with the people he is trying to help. _____

(false)

times. He may so want to help a family in a specific problem that he pushes too much in insisting upon his solution. Usually people who are in crisis are dependent, at least at the moment, and will be happy for others to take responsibility for them. If the pastor falls into this pitfall, he will find himself becoming the errand boy for families in his church.

Being manipulated by people he seeks to help

Another pitfall that the pastor must seek to avoid is that of being manipulated by people. Sometimes people set the minister up by appealing to his love for people and desire to help as a basis for doing things for them which they or family members should do. As a young student pastor of an open country church I found myself taking sick people to the doctor, running to town to buy things which neighbours needed, and endless other errands. Their way of reasoning was that the other men were at work in the fields and the pastor really had plenty of time to do those good deeds for all the folks in the community. As a seminary professor I find that at times students would like me to be their moving van and taxi driver, as well as secretary and messenger boy. When one resists this role, at times he is accused of not having enough love for the people with whom he works.

Another way that people manipulate the pastor is by expecting him to solve their problems in a specific way. I have had people come and tell me of their problems with their children. Upon sharing with me their difficulties, somehow they feel that I should be able to solve the difficulty. Others come and tell you that they are without work, and as a result expect that you be an employment agency and undertake the responsibility of placing them in a good job. Others even expect hand-outs because they are having economic difficulties. While I believe that the pastor will be sensitive to people in their needs, and surely will be willing to help people, sometimes he gets conned into going beyond that which is best for him and the people.¹²

Indiscretion with those he seeks to help

Now and then a pastor has experienced his downfall in the ministry either due to his own indiscretion or that of the people whom he seeks to help. Pruyser states: "If the parishioner is a woman, she may have a crush on the pastor, childishly hoping that some of her erotic wishes will be fulfilled."¹³ The pastor may begin his ministry with the very best of intentions and never dream that he will have a problem, only to find one day after a series of conferences that he has been caught in the tentacles of his own sexual impulses which have been awakened through some gesture or explanation that his counsellor has given him.

Bennett gives four principles which are helpful in dealing with people who seem to relate on an erotic level: (1) recognition of the overt and/or covert sexual character of their relating, (2) comprehending the variety of reasons people may adopt eroticism and sexual seductiveness as a

The pastor must avoid being _____

(manipulated)

Now and then a pastor has experienced his
_____ in ministry either due to his own
_____ or that of the people whom he seeks to

(downfall, indiscretion, help)

List four principles helpful in dealing with people.

prime mode of relating, (3) an awareness of one's own sexuality, and (4) knowing and implementing procedures in consultation that are helpful rather than harmful.¹⁴

Basic negatives for the pastor as he ministers involve not going alone to the home of women when they are alone, not seeking to counsel in questionable places, and not accepting invitations to get involved erotically with anyone other than one's spouse.

Oates summarizes some of the pitfalls of the minister in four basic areas: (1) they do not have time to study, (2) they do not have time for their own families, (3) they do not have time for a face-to-face ministry to their people, and (4) they do not have time for the cultivation of their inner spirits before God. "The pastor becomes an isolated, lonely, tired individual who is cut off from the fulfillment of the four basic functions in society that offer him personal satisfaction in fulfilling his call to service."¹⁵

Much could be said about the need for fortifying oneself to prevent these pitfalls. Most ministers know that they need to discipline themselves in order to save time for the important relationships in life as well as maintain their own emotional and spiritual well-being. But the truth is that most of us fall into patterns of behaviour and schedules which make this difficult. At some time or another almost every minister feels that he has got himself in a situation in which he needs to be the recipient of ministry instead of having to minister to others.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Name four areas into which the pitfalls of the minister fall.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Much could be said about the need for _____ oneself to prevent these _____

(fortifying, pitfalls)

Footnotes

¹James D. Smart, *The Rebirth of Ministry* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 112.

²*Ibid.*, p. 113.

³*Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁴Wayne E. Oates, *The Christian Pastor* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 66.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶Smart, *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁷Oates, *Op. cit.*, p. 70, quoting O. J. Hodges, "The Distinctive Role of the Minister in Psychotherapy," unpublished thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1948.

⁸Lawrence M. Brammer, *The Helping Relationship* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 21.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁰David Switzer, *The Minister as Crisis Counselor* (Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1974), pp. 20-28.

¹¹Paul W. Pruyser, *The Minister As Diagnostician* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 85.

¹²George Bennett, *When They Ask for Bread* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1978), pp. 88-95.

¹³Pruyser, *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹⁴Bennett, *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁵Oates, *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

Recommended Reading

Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1972.

Daniel Day Williams, *The Minister and the Care of Souls*. New York: Harper & Row, 1961.

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. List Old Testament examples of spiritual guides. _____

2. Show how Jesus performed pastoral care. _____

Paul _____

Peter and John _____

3. What does Dr. Giles mean by therapeutic preaching? _____

4. Give the background for the word pastor as it is connected with the spiritual ministry to the needs of people. _____

5. State the value of pastoral visitation as presented by Dr. Giles. _____

6. Why does the pastor need to develop the art of conducting public and private worship? _____

7. What role does counselling have in the pastor's ministry? _____

8. How may the minister use reason in his expression of love? _____

9. Why should the counsellor be open and genuine? _____

10. Why is it important for the counsellor to be aware of himself? _____

11. What does the story of the Good Samaritan teach the Christian counsellor? _____

12. Why is a healthy motivation needed by the Christian pastor or counsellor? _____

13. Explain how the pastor can take the initiative in his ministry to people. _____

14. In what way does the pastor have an ongoing relationship with his people? _____

15. What are the spiritual resources available to the pastor as he ministers to people? _____

16. List three pitfalls for the pastor as counsellor mentioned by the author. _____

17. Give four principles to deal with people who relate on an erotic level. _____

18. What are four basic areas that the pitfalls of the minister fall into? _____

19. State the aims for this lesson. _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 56-80 in *Pastoral Care in the Church* by C. W. Brister and answer the following questions.

1. List five contemporary threats faced by the modern minister.
2. Give a brief explanation of what Dr. Brister means by the following: ambiguous identity; lost authority; professional competence; human existence; lost heritage.
3. Where does the minister get his authority?
4. What elements should characterize education for the demanding tasks of ministry in our dynamic world?

Advanced activity(Level 3). These activities are based on the Supplementary reading assignment.

1. How is a minister to resolve the tension between the pull of his own humanity and his pastoral calling?
2. Is there any resolution of role conflict (pulled-apartness) among Protestant clergymen?
3. With what resources may ministers face the emotional, ecclesiastical, and ethical hazards of their high calling?
4. What preparation is essential for a pastoral ministry in our “brave new world”?

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss the development of the concept and role of the Christian pastor.
2. Discuss Jesus’ pastoral ministry.
3. Take time to review students in the art of conducting public and private worship. Discuss the role of worship in pastoral care.
4. Discuss the counselling ministry of the pastor.
5. Discuss pitfalls pastors face in carrying out their ministry. How can the pastor deal with these pitfalls?
6. What should an education for pastoral ministry include? (Ask students on Levels 2 and 3 to share information from *Pastoral Care in the Church* by C.W. Brister here.)