

LESSON 9

COUNSELLING YOUTH

Introduction

Aims

1. To equip pastors to be capable of counselling young people in the various problems which they face.
2. To show how pastoral care can be extended to young people in an environment of trust and confidence and thereby avoid the condemnatory judgemental approach.
3. To inform pastors of the factors that are usually seen as "acting out" mechanisms which young people use because the basic relationship of love and acceptance is lacking from their parents.
4. To help pastors to be able to help parents when they discover that their young are involved in problems such as pre-marital pregnancy and drugs.

Problems in School

Presenting symptoms

Recently one of the pastors in our community came to talk with me about a young man in his church that was having difficulties with some of his courses in school. He asked me if I would be willing to have some counselling sessions with the young man. We arranged for a time when we could meet together. On the designated day the young pastor came with the young man to introduce him to me. We sat down to begin our relationship as counsellor and counsellee.

In this moment there begins a relationship with a great deal of potential. It can make a tremendous difference in the future of the young man, and my contact with him can have a decided affect upon my own life. The key to progress is relationship. In the course of telling me his difficulties, I get an idea of who this young man is. And as he talks, he forms opinions about me, who I am, and whether or not he can really open up with me about what his basic problems are.

Low performance in school. – In the course of the hour we talk about his school, getting some facts about what year he is studying, which of the courses he does well in and which ones are giving him the greatest amount of trouble. He talks about his classmates, and the fact that he seems to have few close friends among his peers. He mentions one or two with whom he can be intimate in sharing his innermost thoughts. He also talks about his brothers and sisters at home, and the conflict which he experiences frequently with his sister who is just one year older than he. He also talks about the warm relationship and support which he has

The key to progress is _____

(relationship)

with his mother and the rather cool and distant relationship with his father. In the course of the first hour we touch upon a number of areas that probably contribute to his difficulties in school. It is apparent that the young man has an average amount of intelligence. His difficulty in courses at school is not due to a lack of intelligence, but rather to emotional factors which drain off a great deal of his attention and energy. This leaves very little energy for concentration upon his basic tasks in his studies.

Uncertainty of goals for the future. – The young man is uncertain about his goals for the future. When asked what he hoped to do in life, his answers were vague and showed a lack of thought in that direction. At the same time he talked of becoming a medical doctor. This ultimate goal seems quite unrealistic to me in the light of his limited resources, the present difficulty that he has with his courses, and the relatively few people who are admitted into medical schools in this country because of limited facilities.

As I look at the overall picture presented by this young man and his present difficulties, I find that it is impossible to pin-point one specific problem that is causing his poor performance in school. My attention is called to his flat emotional response and his general lack of enthusiasm for anything that is happening in his world at the present time. He has few friends, and rarely takes risks in the classroom. He said that he was embarrassed to invite his friends to visit him in his home because of the unfinished house in which they live.

Weak relationships with father. – Perhaps the basic key to his present difficulty is the weak relationship which he has with his father. He mentioned how his father drinks alcoholic beverages, comes home drunk, and brings his drinking friends to the house, humiliates the other members of the family, and creates frequent tension between his father and his mother.

He also shared the fact that his father constantly insists that the children be occupied every moment that he is at home. If he comes home and finds one of them taking a nap on the bed, then he wakes them up and finds something for them to do around the house. The father makes his living by giving presentations as a clown and magician in childrens' birthday parties, first communions, and programmes in primary schools. This means that his schedule is irregular and the family income uncertain. At times he requires that this son accompany him and help him. The son paints his face and also plays the part of a clown. He states that he seems happy when he is acting, and that he can act more freely in that role than when he is having to perform as a normal person. In spite of his pleasure in working as a clown with his father, apparently he does not enjoy his companionship, and they do not have a close relationship.

Planning a programme of help

Help for this young man has come as I have taken time weekly to let him explore some of his feelings about the

This young man's poor performance in school is due mostly to _____.

factors.
(emotional)

The young man is _____ about his _____ for the _____.

(uncertain, goals, future)

Perhaps the basic key to his present difficulty is the _____ relationship that he has with his _____.

(weak, father)

Is the following statement true or false?

Help for this young man came as the counsellor took time weekly to let him explore some of his feelings about the many facets of his life which had not brought happiness to him. _____

many facets of his life which are not bringing happiness to him. He needs to set some definite and realistic goals for the future, and then make concrete plans as to how he can achieve them. He also needs to come to grips with his day-dreaming, which occupies a great deal of his time and makes his study time fruitless. When he has assignments or examinations in his courses, he is unable to respond satisfactorily, though he insists that he has spent time studying. Time has been invested, but it has not been used to the maximum because other events happening in his life are keeping him from being able to concentrate on his studies.

The previous rather lengthy case study points up one of the common problems among teenagers, and will be the occasion for young people seeking out a counsellor. Many times they come because their parents are insisting that they perform better in school. Sometimes they will come against their own will, which presents an added dimension to the counselling process.

The role of the pastor

Empathize with student. – As we have mentioned previously, the pastor will be careful to recognize that the presenting problem is not always the basic problem in anyone's life. Without minimizing the problem which people talk about at first, the pastor should seek to discover if there are other difficulties and how they contribute to the basic difficulty. Many times the person will not be ready, willing, or able to talk about the other problems. In this case the pastor should be considerate and deal with the problems which the young person is ready to discuss at the moment. As he shows empathy in these areas, probably the youth will be willing to look at other facets of his life which contribute to the difficulty, and see that the solution of some of these other problems will help to bring the solution in the immediate area of his concern.

Use indirect approach. – At times problems are more easily solved without a direct focus upon them. For instance, when a young person has a problem of being overweight or some apparent physical defect, it is not good to constantly bring to his or her attention this difficulty. Talking about one's relationship with his peers, and those of the opposite sex and how he or she can improve relations in these areas may bring spontaneous expressions of the person as to how he or she could lose weight. When the person openly admits his need in this area, it is much easier to help than if he is criticized or ridiculed.

Enlist parents' co-operation. – There are some children who have learning difficulties. Frequently parents will be anxious when they discover that their child is having difficulty in school. It is wise for the pastor to encourage the parents to look to the school officials for recommendations about persons and agencies in the community who give special help to those having difficulty in learning. It will be beyond the scope of most pastors' competence to be specialists in learning difficulties for children. The pastor can encourage parents of children with learning difficulties

(true)

The pastor should be _____. He should deal with those questions which the young person is ready to _____.

(considerate, discuss)

Sometimes problems are more easily solved by using an _____ approach.

(indirect)

Enlist the _____ co-operation.

(parents')

to have them evaluated, including intelligence tests, perception tests, and verbal skills. This will give them and the school officials the basis for determining the exact nature of the difficulty and thereby plan a course of action. There have been cases where children were hyperkinetic, dyslexic, and with other maladies, but the parents and teachers for years treated the children as if they were mischievous and indifferent to studies. Early diagnosis can make a tremendous difference in the future development of these children.

Again, let me emphasize that the pastor's role in helping in most cases will be that of encouraging the parents to take the measures that are necessary to get their children the medical attention that is available and needed. Sometimes parents who have limited economic resources will resist spending their money to get medical help for their children. The pastor can be instrumental in helping these people to get in touch with the charity agencies in the community in order to make the professional help available.

Acquiring Confidence in Dating

Getting the first date

One of the most common problems that teenagers face is the internal turmoil that is involved in their getting the first date. They will want to know how to get started dating. The young men will be shy and hesitant, and cultural mores may dictate that the young ladies be reserved and wait for the young men to take the initiative. Depending upon the norms that prevail in the country where one is serving, the pastor and the church will serve as counsellor and institution in order to point out Christian ideals for the young people.

The youth organizations in the church can offer conferences from time to time for this age group and deal with issues that are current in their thinking. Among them will be the standard of conduct for young people on dates, and how to go about getting acquainted and establishing friendships which lead to dating.

Conquering the fear of rejection

The fear of being rejected keeps the young man from asking a young lady to go out with him. He needs to realize that most young ladies are anxious to have opportunities to date and it is unlikely that he would be rejected. More self-confidence on the part of the young men can be developed through affirmation that is given by parents, the pastor, and other leaders among the youth organizations. Also, the young ladies can be encouraged to respond positively to the expressions of interest on the part of the young men. Young people can be helped to see that being turned down on an invitation to go out does not mean rejection of them as persons. There may be legitimate reasons why the young lady cannot accept the invitation.

The young man who develops confidence in himself, his own worth, and his abilities, will already have more than half the battle won as he begins to build relationships with

Is the following statement true or false?

The pastor should tell parents who have children with learning difficulties that there is no way he can be of help.

(false)

Name one way that churches can help young people learn about dating.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

young ladies, to look for his first job, and to launch out into the world of adults in other ways. On the other hand, the person who lacks this confidence in himself tends to let the "self-fulfilling prophecy" principle take effect. This means that the one who fears failure and rejection acts in such a way as to guarantee that they take place. The pastor can have a significant ministry in helping these young people to establish relationships which will help them to move into the adult world with confidence.

Maintaining Christian ideals

Young people are anxious to have limits set and to know what those limits are. At first, they respond favourably to the limits which are from outside themselves, because it places less responsibility upon them to make decisions. As time goes along, they will develop an inner sense of conscience about the rightness and wrongness and will want to exercise their own will in matters. For this reason it is important for parents, pastors, and other church leaders to set reasonable limits early in the experience of young people. The Christian ideals can be communicated with reasons for these ideals. Rap sessions or group discussions can be planned in which these standards are communicated. This will help young people to establish high moral standards and encourage them to maintain these standards while dating. The pastor will identify with young people and their problems and will show sympathy towards them as they face difficult circumstances because of their own emotional needs, conflicts with unchristian norms of conduct, and the pressure that results from both these sources.

The pastor will have opportunity to talk personally, usually in an informal setting, with young people about their struggles with peer pressure and their own personal pilgrimage in maintaining Christian standards of conduct as they go on dates and participate in other youth activities. They will respond favourably to the active interest which the pastor expresses in their welfare and their future. They will be hesitant to take initiative to seek counsel, but they will accept it with satisfaction.

Struggles with Sexual Impulses

The development of sexual impulses

Most young people are confused and guilt-ridden because of their own sexual feelings and their attempts to deal with them. If they are active Christians, they have probably been told that they should refrain from sexual experiences until marriage. This represents an ideal that is certainly desirable, but it does not tell the eighteen year old man or woman what to do with those intense feelings which swell up in them at various times during the day and night. Some people feel quite guilty about petting, masturbation, and other types of experimentation with those of the opposite sex as well as those of their own sex. Some may have deep fears of being homosexual, based upon the

Christian ideals can be communicated through _____ discussions.

(group)

The pastor can talk _____ with young people about their _____.

(personally, struggles)

feelings which they have and are unable to understand or control. Others have a great deal of anxiety because they fear that they are not completely normal, or that their sexual organs are not adequate for satisfactory sex.

The temptation to experiment

The pastor will realize that most young people are filled with fears and doubts during this stage. Some may resort to sexual experiences simply as a means of relieving their anxiety. Others may be withdrawn and spend a lot of time day-dreaming. The compassionate pastor will structure meetings and activities with young people which will give them opportunity to express verbally these feelings. He should have a corps of adults who are well informed and adept at relating to young people and in helping them to understand themselves and come to grips with these feelings. An attitude of permissiveness is not the solution, but these workers should be open-minded, objective, and understanding of youth. They should be able to create an atmosphere which will inspire and permit young people to open up and express their fears and doubts about themselves and others. Group discussions will frequently be the means whereby these doubts and fears can be shared and alleviated. To know that others struggle with the same doubts and temptations is to be helped. This may create the opportunity for young people to seek out the pastor or youth minister and ask for help in a specific way. Or it may alert the pastor and other leaders to some of the ideas and problems that specific young people have. This will give the pastor the chance to get closer to the person involved and exert a more specific effort to help.

The pastor and other church leaders can alleviate a lot of guilt by communicating that they accept young people who have temptations and are struggling with these emotions. They may also communicate that one is not condemned if he masturbates.¹ They should communicate that people are O.K. even though they may have been involved in some type of sexual experimentation which was based on curiosity and peer pressure. These attitudes will open doors which will give opportunity for more extensive and more successful ministry rather than to communicate an attitude of judgement and condemnation. These latter attitudes will only serve to isolate the pastor and his adult leaders.

The need to give information wisely

The pastor will need to be able to hear the meaning beyond and behind the words that young people verbalize in the open. He should not be too aggressive in trying to give an extended lecture on sex, but he should communicate that he is willing to talk further should the young person desire to do so. He should not be caught like the mother whose six-year-old child asked her where she came from. Her mother took a deep breath, feeling that the decisive moment had arrived, and launched into a lengthy story about intercourse, pregnancy, and childbirth. Towards the end of the lecture the child said "Well, I just wondered,

List things a pastor can do to help young people understand their sexual feelings and to deal with them constructively.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The pastor and other church leaders can alleviate a lot of

(guilt)

because Cynthia said that she was from New York." Young people will flee from adults who act too aggressive and too anxious to give out helpful information.

Neither does the pastor or counsellor have to be so specific as to get or give all the minute details regarding any issue. He can do a lot of effective counselling in the subjunctive mood: "Even if a young person had tried pot, this would not mean that he was condemned by God for-ever to perdition. He simply needs to ask for God's forgiveness and strength to move in a new direction." These simple words can be very reassuring to the young person who may have been involved in this problem. He does not need to confess more openly; he has already received the support which he was seeking. His sense of guilt can be removed by his own prayer of confession in the privacy of his own bedroom. He will probably feel much more at ease in the presence of the pastor in future contacts if he has not confessed openly his behaviour, and the pastor can function happily, knowing that he has been the means whereby guilt has been removed and tranquility restored to the life of a young person.

The issue of pre-marital sex

Young people will frequently be concerned about the issue of pre-marital sex. They are being pressured more and more by contemporary society to yield to the tidal wave of the secular and humanistic world, and to become liberated and updated in their attitudes and practices regarding sex. Many will have contact with singles at work and in other activities who practise free love or who share an apartment and sex with partners with no concrete plans for marriage. They will be looked upon as being "old fogy" and antiquated after refusing this type of proposal on the grounds of their Christian faith.²

How can the caring pastor minister to young people who are questioning the moral values of the Christian faith? He can assure them that he understands the struggles which they face. He can recognize the social pressure and temptations that come to young people concerning sex. Some young men make clear their expectations of their date, and those who do not participate in sex are not invited out. This makes those who have Christian convictions feel unpopular or abnormal because they do not "go all the way." The Christian Church has the obligation to counteract the worldly values that are being imposed by many young people with a hedonistic style of life. This contradicts the Christian standards. We need to be more aggressive in presenting the advantages of waiting until marriage for sex and in providing wholesome activities which give young people acceptable ways to sublimate their sexual desires until time for marriage. This will make it acceptable for the Christian not to engage in sex before marriage.

In what ways can counselling in the subjunctive mood help young people?

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Young people are being pressured more and more by contemporary _____ to _____ to the tidal wave of the secular and _____ world, and to become liberated and updated in their attitudes and practices regarding _____.

(society, yield, humanistic, sex)

Show ways the pastor may minister to young people who are questioning the moral values of the Christian faith.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Pre-marital Pregnancy

A complex situation in which to minister

The pastor will be called upon from time to time to counsel young people who have already passed beyond the stage of deciding whether or not to engage in sex. Some will come for pre-marital counselling and will openly confess that they have been having intercourse on a regular basis for some time. Others will come with the problem of pre-marital pregnancy and will want to know whether to abort if it is legal in their country, to marry, or to have the baby and let it out for adoption in countries where these options are a possibility. Others may come with the problem of guilt because they have already resorted to an illegal and clandestine abortion in the past. In some cases the parents will not yet know about the problem, and in other cases the parents will accompany the young lady who is seeking counsel. What can the minister say and how can he be helpful in these situations?

Help for the couple

First, the minister must be an agent for the communication of the forgiveness and grace of God to those who are repentant. He should not be condemnatory, because in most cases the person has already condemned herself and may have experienced condemnation and rejection from parents and friends. She needs to be assured that God can forgive this sin and restore her to a meaningful relationship with Him and with others in society. The church can be a community of forgiveness and restoration. The Christian family can surround this person with love.

In case the parents do not yet know about the problem, the minister can encourage the young lady to realize that the best procedure is to let them know immediately. The minister may need to offer to go to the home of the parents with their daughter and be present when the news is shared. He can pray silently that the parents may be able to cope with the news and work through their own anger and grief over the situation. He can open doors for the venting of feelings on the part of all who are present and involved in the problem. And most of all, he can be the agent of reconciliation between parents and daughter and between them and God. He can encourage a time of confession one to the other, and promote a time of unity in the family, and a time of renewal of vows to God. It can be a very beautiful moment even in the midst of tribulation for all the people involved. Sometimes tragic experiences like these offer the basis for a new beginning in relationships within a family.

The pastor must be careful not to make the decision about whether to encourage the couple to marry or adopt the child. He can be facilitative in helping the people to consider all the options in an objective way, and give them encouragement when they choose the option that seems best for them in their particular situation. In counselling people about the wisdom of abortion, the personal conviction of the minister will enter into play. His own conviction

The minister should not be _____. The person may already have experienced _____. This person needs to know that God will _____ their sin.

(condemnatory, rejection, forgive)

List ways the pastor can help the family that has a pre-marital pregnancy.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

about when human life begins will influence his counsel with others. He needs to be able to give other people the option of having a point of view that differs from his own. He can assure them that God understands their situation and will accept them even though their final decision in the matter might differ from the one that he would personally make. He should be able to be the agent for mediating the divine grace to the people in their time of anguish.

The role of the pastor in this case is to hold out the various options, and to help the young lady to consider all the facets of the results of the various decisions. He can help the young lady to consider how she will feel five or ten years from now when doubtless the child will become the victim of devastating remarks from peers in school if they know that he was conceived out of wedlock. Again, the prevailing attitudes of the community towards this circumstance will be influential in making a decision. Whether or not the young lady is capable of assuming the responsibility of making a living for herself and her child will be another factor to consider. Is the grandmother available to help in the care of the child? In some cases the child is given to the grandparents for rearing. How do they feel about this? Frequently this will be the desire of the grandparents, and in some cultures this will not be anything extraordinary to have the child of one of their children reared in their home. All these factors make it difficult to establish standard procedures and declare what is the right decision to make. It may be said that the minister will help to point people to divine guidance and direction in seeking the solution to the problem. He can be the mediator of this divine forgiveness, and then help people to feel good about God's blessing them in their decision.

Help for the parents

When families have the problem of a pre-marital pregnancy, usually the parents of the young lady and the young man will need a great deal of help. Depending upon the circumstances and their reaction, they may try to take over and make the decision for their daughter about what course to follow. Parents need to be encouraged to give more freedom to the daughter for her to consider alternatives and come to a decision about what to do. This may be very difficult for the father or mother, especially since they feel that their own reputation and in some cases their position of work may be at stake. Also, usually they are the ones who will be paying the medical expenses that are involved in the problem. For this reason many will want to make the decision. One father commented to me as he dealt painfully with this problem in his own home: "It has been very difficult for me to let my daughter make all the decisions about whether or not she would keep the baby, get married to the young man, and their future plans especially since I am the one who is paying all the bills."

Parents will need to have a chance to ventilate their anger and the pastor can be an understanding neutral person who can facilitate this catharsis. He can encourage

Draw a circle around the true statement.

The pastor can be the mediator of divine forgiveness to those caught in the maze of a pre-marital pregnancy.

The pastor should take a stand on the Bible, condemn this sin, and offer no help to people involved in a pre-marital pregnancy.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

List the ways the pastor can help parents whose child has a pre-marital pregnancy.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

the father and mother to let out all their anger and resentment in an atmosphere of freedom and acceptance. This will be the first step towards their reaching the point of being able to forgive and restore their daughter or son to a relationship of confidence with them.

In other cases the young daughter may need to let out her feelings. She may do a lot of scapegoating (placing the blame on others), and her parents may be the object of much of this hostility. It may be because of too much or too little freedom, the feeling of a lack of love from her parents, a lack of discipline, or the preoccupation of the parents with their business, work, or other interests which have resulted in seeming neglect of the needs of the youth in the home. Whatever the situation is and is perceived to be, the daughter as well as the parents will need to level with each other, forgive each other, and look for a new basis of relating as they face the altered circumstances in the future. Pastoral care in this situation will take the form of a mediator and reconciler. The pastor can be helpful by not preaching messages to the members about how they are to forgive and love; rather he can be the "midwife" to help these elements to be born.

Many times church members are anxious to communicate that they do not condemn the person and therefore shower them with attention, affection, and material gifts. It sometimes leaves the impression that young people get more attention by doing wrong than by doing right. The young ladies in the church who resist pressure from young people to permit inappropriate conduct can feel that they are choosing the less desirable course of action when they see church members, sometimes leaders running to the rescue of the person who has done wrong.

The minister will need the wisdom of Solomon in order to communicate forgiveness but not place upon a pedestal the person who has committed an act that has resulted in bringing disgrace upon the family and Christian community. One young woman who kept her Christian ideals and eventually did not marry was complaining about one of her classmates, who, during college days was a real "swinger" with the young men. Almost all the other girls saw her as one whose conduct was questionable, but she eventually married well, had a family, and was well respected in her community. The single matron wondered if she had chosen the best course of action when she compared her situation as an adult with that of her former classmate.

How can the minister affirm the keeping of high moral standards among the young people in the church and community and at the same time be the agent for the communication of love, acceptance, and forgiveness for those who fall into sin? This situation will demand the very best in the minister's dedication, intelligence, objectivity, and competence as a minister and a counsellor. He should be able to preach the Christian ideals without compromise; he should also be able to appropriate God's pardoning grace without hesitation. He will have a real challenge to lead his congregation to be Christian in every respect in dealing

What does the author mean when he states that the pastor can be a midwife in a situation of a pre-marital pregnancy?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The minister will need the wisdom of Solomon in order to communicate forgiveness but not place upon a _____ the person who has committed an act that has brought disgrace upon the _____ and the Christian _____

(pedestal, family, community)

with these issues.

Another task that will occupy the best abilities of the minister is being able to minister to parents and their youth when some crisis arises. Many times the parents will be so full of hurt, anger, and resentment that they will react with extreme bitterness and with decisions that will be radical. The minister may be the one to help them to vent their feelings in ways that are not as harmful as they will be if they deal directly with their youth at the moment. Perhaps he can defuse or drain off this anger before harmful things are said that will make forgiveness and restitution more difficult. The young person can do the same. Perhaps the minister can fulfil the function of the scapegoat in the Old Testament by letting people load upon him their sins, anger, and hurt, and then move out into the wilderness with these emotions, thus alleviating the situation for the family. He can receive all the negative feelings of both parties, and still not feel directly attacked. His own distance and neutrality will be good forces to help him at this time.

The Use of Drugs

Alarming news

Recently friends called to say that they would like to come over for a brief visit and to talk about something important. A schedule was arranged, and they arrived, obviously showing some anxiety about the meeting. Finally, the mother explained the motive. They had discovered through a business acquaintance that the names of some fifteen boys from the same school were in the hands of the local police, and they were about to be arrested for smoking marijuana. What should be done? The news was startling for all the families involved. The head of the police department had advised this couple and asked them to advise others that he would like to meet with them in order to try to avoid mass arrests in school and thereby upset a number of families. The meeting was held, and the parents made some plans to try to cope with the problem.

Some parents went home in anger and faced their sons with the news. This created a conflictual scene in which deep resentments came forth. Others passed the matter off as relatively unimportant, feeling that this was a normal part of growing up. Others went home to have a close personal talk with their sons, and avenues of communication were opened which had not previously existed.

The above is an illustration of how involvement in drugs can take place in almost any community. Most families have been touched either directly or indirectly with drugs of some kind or another. There are many factors that influence the procedure that should be followed. The kind of drugs and the amounts are of primary importance. The age of the children and the length of time that they have been involved with drugs is another important factor. The reasons that they give for having been involved are significant. The laws which are in existence and those being enforced in any given country are also relevant to the issue.

What does the author mean when he suggests that the minister may be able to serve as a scapegoat when dealing with families who are going through a serious crisis?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Involvement with _____ can take place in almost any _____

(drugs, community)

Most countries are moving from a more rigid enforcement of laws prohibiting the possession of and use of marijuana to a more lenient stance. This proves that what might have been illegal a few years ago and the basis for imprisonment or some other punishment may no longer be a problem in some countries. At any rate most parents will be considerably alarmed when they learn that their child has been involved in the use of any kind of drugs.

Improving relations with parents

Most young people who use drugs heavily have little contact with and relationship to their parents. This is unfortunate, and may be the chief reason that young people turn to drugs. It may be to punish the parents, it may be to fill the vacancy that they experience because of their parents' lack of interest in them. The pastor who is interested in helping young people and parents as they face the drug problem should be aware that prevention is by far the best procedure. In order to prevent involvement in drugs, the parents should be encouraged to develop and maintain a warm relationship with their children, and to show interest in those activities which will maintain the interest of the young people and thus keep a close relationship intact. This may mean that the parent will not spend as much time in his work or be as involved in other activities in order to give time to his children. Most people can do the necessary part of their work and still have ample time to dedicate to their children, but it will mean that fathers plan their leisure time around activities involving the children and not those activities from which the children will be excluded. This fact should be pointed out to the parents when their children are still young.

Preventing drug use

Be objective in attempt to help. – Frequently parents are so ashamed when they discover that their children are involved with drugs that they do not know where to turn. Some parents think that to be good citizens they should turn their children over to the law enforcement authorities. This may complicate the problem, and will make it more difficult if not impossible for the parents to take initiative in helping their children. For this reason, authorities like William Glasser recommend that the parents not notify the law enforcement authorities.³ It is usually fruitless to argue with the youth that marijuana is harmful, although recent studies are pointing out that those who use marijuana may be damaging themselves and their children.⁴ It is rather more fruitful to seek to increase the involvement in the relationship with the child and thereby encourage him to leave marijuana alone.

Encourage parents to set a good example. – At times young people have access to other drugs which may be more harmful. Sometimes they acquire them through raiding the medicine cabinet for prescribed drugs which their parents take for sleeping and other purposes. It is recommended that parents not use “uppers” (amphetamines) or “downers”

Is the following statement true or false?

A young person's relationship to his parents has no bearing on his use of drugs. _____

(false)

Prevention is the best _____

(procedure)

In attempting to help one's child who is using drugs, one should be _____

(objective)

Parents should set a good _____

(example)

(barbiturates) except when there is extreme need. If they are necessary, these drugs should not be accessible to their sons and daughters. Sometimes young people will begin to use drugs out of curiosity. They hear and read about the exciting sensations that come from the use of these different drugs. They think they can be transported for a while into the world of fantasy and thereby escape the boredom of daily routines at home and at school. Social pressure is another inducement to taking drugs. To be "in" with some peers at school young people need to be participating in the drug scene. If they do not, they are teased and rejected. Social pressure can be a very strong force, for young people are at a critical age.

Seek adequate professional help. – There may arise cases in which involvement with drugs on the part of the young person has been so extensive that the person is addicted. In this case he or she may resort to stealing in order to finance this addiction. At times they may let themselves get caught by their parents in order to persuade them that they need their financial assistance to be able to continue their addiction. In these cases the parents will wisely seek out professional help. They may need to hospitalize the young person for a time in a medical institution or some other place which specializes in the rehabilitation of drug victims. The pastor should be aware of the services that are available in the community where he serves and thereby will be ready to refer his people to those who can most readily help. He may even need to take the initiative in getting parents in contact with the responsible persons in the different institutions.

Cultivate warm relationship with children. – Some parents try to cope with the drug problem in their young people by threatening rejection and throwing them out of home. This is a mistake. Whatever the child has done, he should be able to feel that he can come home and there find sympathetic parents who are interested in his well-being. Rejection from parents will only serve to drive the young person farther away from the ideals that they would like for him or her to follow. If the youth voluntarily leaves home, the parents should assure him or her that there is a place there when he or she desires to return. If and when he does return, the parents should seek to create an atmosphere of acceptance and warmth. They can insist that the young person not use drugs in their home and that the young person fit into the regular routine of home activities. Usually the young person will be happy to comply because the contrast in the haphazard way of living that has been a part of his drug world will be something that he is glad to leave behind.

Most parents will need the help of physicians, social workers, and other professionals in order to know how to rehabilitate one who has been extensively involved with drugs. The pastor can give encouragement to the parents as well as the young people as they seek to follow the best counsel that is available to them. The church can plan and promote activities that keep young people involved in

When drug use is abusive, parents should seek adequate _____ help.

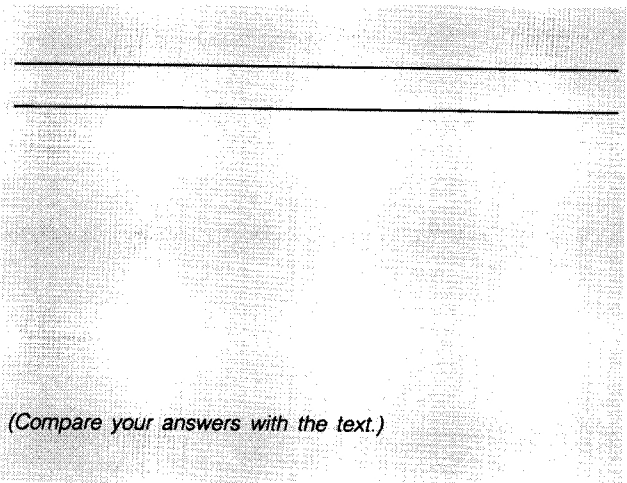
(professional)

When dealing with a child taking drugs, parents should cultivate a _____ relationship with their children.

(warm)

How may the pastor help those involved with drugs as well as their families?

wholesome projects so they will not be attracted to drugs. The pastor can show his warmth towards the youth and evidence his compassion by presenting messages and conferences which offer them positive alternatives to drug involvement. Parents can solicit the help of other friends and parents as well as young people to form alliances with their youth to keep them from being attracted to the drug world. Many times people other than the parents can have a significant influence in the life of these youth. Having someone with whom they can share their innermost concerns will make a world of difference. The pastor, in addition to doing personal counselling, can participate in youth meetings, panels, and discussion groups in order to keep young people informed of the dangers of drugs and also show his interest in the youth of his community.



Footnotes

- ¹Evelyn Duvall, *Love and the Facts of Life* (New York: Association Press, 1963), pp. 164-66.
- ²Evelyn Duvall, *Why Wait Till Marriage?* (New York: Association Press, 1965), pp. 15-23.
- ³William Glasser, *The Identity Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 153-54.
- ⁴"Marijuana: Now the Fears Are Facts," *Good Housekeeping*. (May, 1980), pp. 269-70.

Recommended Reading

- Evelyn Duvall, *Why Wait Till Marriage?* New York: Association Press, 1965.
- William Glasser, *The Identity Society*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.
- William Self, *The Generation Gap*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970.

Home Study Exercise

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

1. Give reasons that may cause a student to do poorly in school. _____

2. In what ways did the author attempt to help the young student in the case study at the beginning of this lesson? _____

3. What should be the role of the pastor in counselling young people with their problems? _____

4. How should a pastor deal with a person when he is not yet willing to discuss what is really troubling him? _____

5. How may the church help young people learn about dating?_____

6. How may young people conquer the fear of rejection?_____

7. How can the pastor help young people maintain Christian ideals?_____

8. How can the pastor help young people to understand their sexual feelings and to deal with them constructively?_____

9. How can the pastor minister to young people who are questioning the moral values of the Christian faith?_____

10. Why does the pastor not condemn a person who has a pre-marital pregnancy?_____

11. How can the pastor help the family that has a pre-marital pregnancy?_____
- _____
- _____
- _____
12. What is one important reason that young people turn to drugs?_____
- _____
- _____
- _____
13. What is the best procedure to follow in dealing with the drug problem?_____
- _____
- _____
14. List steps that can be taken to help prevent the use of drugs by young people._____
- _____
- _____
- _____
15. Give the aims for this lesson._____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Supplementary activity(Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 187-99 in *Pastoral Care in the Church* and answer the following questions.

1. How may the minister encourage his people to come to him with their concerns?
2. List the type of pastor people will not turn to.
3. List stages in the counselling relationship given by Dr. Brister.
4. When can people best benefit from counselling?
5. List purposes behind the comments a counsellor makes in a counselling situation.

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

1. Discuss factors that influence the effectiveness of pastoral counselling.
2. Explain the role of listening in pastoral counselling.

3. Define acceptance.
4. What can be achieved in counselling that cannot be achieved elsewhere in church life?

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss the pastor's role in counselling young people.
2. How can we help a person who is not yet willing to discuss what is really troubling him?
3. Discuss how pastors and churches can help young people maintain Christian ideals.
4. Is pre-marital pregnancy a problem in your country? Discuss ways to deal with such a problem.
5. Discuss ways to help prevent young people becoming involved in drugs.
6. As a group, construct a plan for helping young people deal with their problems.