

TIPS FOR

Pastoral Counseling

Presented by Barrington H. Brennen

*Ordained Minister of the Gospel, Nationally Certified Psychologist
Marriage and Family Therapist*



“It is my conviction that pastoral counseling theory and practice are at a crossroads and must turn a corner if they are to respond to the opportunity for a renewal ministry or enlarged dimensions.”

Howard J. Clinebell, Jr

Pastors are by function
and definition
counselors.

Counselor?

A person who gives advice on a specified subject.

A person trained to give guidance
on personal, social, or
psychological problems.

Practical Psychology for Pastors
William R. Miller and Kathleen A. Jackson

Counseling?

Counseling is a special kind of
helping relationship.

Practical Psychology for Pastors
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Counseling?

It follows from an agreement between two people to enter into a relationship whereby one (the counselor) applies special skills to assist the other in the resolution of a personal or interpersonal problem

Barrington H. Brennen

Pastoral Counseling?

“Pastoral counseling is similar to the work done by emergency medical services technicians (EMS). They are first responders on the scene of an accident or trauma event. They save lives.”

Pastoral
Counseling

“Pastoral counseling is best done by a pastor-not a professional counselor or psychotherapist.”

Counseling is a part of every pastor's life. We counsel after a tragedy, at a funeral, during a marriage difficulty, or in a premarriage counseling session. We counsel in the church foyer, during visitation, or before a critical surgery.

The pastor is not a mental health clinician. However, the pastor is a professional. He or she is a trained religious leader with tools and techniques not available to the clinician.

Advantages

- ▶ **"Friendship.** Those who need help are counseling with a friend, not just a professional.
- ▶ **"Prior relationship.** In many cases, there has been an ongoing relationship between the person and the pastor. The pastor often knows the family's history, spiritual maturity, and past crisis experiences.
- ▶ **"Preaching.** Preaching can include biblical counseling from the pulpit.
- ▶ **"Biblical advice.** People want to know what the Bible says about their particular need.
- ▶ **"Availability.** Typically, pastors are much more accessible to their parishioners. It is important for people who have lived in destructive behavioral patterns to become a part of a caring church, pastored by a caring pastor. This kind of community is healthy and is an encouragement to those coming out of spiritually or physically harmful lifestyles.

15 Tips

The Guide To Practical Pastoring by C. Sumner Wemp

Pastoral
Counseling

#1 - Schedule A Time To Meet: It is preferable to delay the meeting at least 24 hours. This gives the person a time to think through and allow passions to subside. The session will be more objective.

#2 - Have A Specific Place To Counsel:

It is wise to have your counseling session in your office and not your home or theirs. This can help the atmosphere, and minimize interruptions.

#3 - Always Begin With Prayer: A counseling session without God's presence is a waste of time!

#4 - Try To Stay Relaxed: If you are uptight, then it causes everyone in the room to be the same way. This makes the session that much harder!

#5 - Never Appear To Be Pressed For Time: Every pastor is short on time. If you appear to be in a hurry, then your visitors will sense that. They will either not share everything they should or they can develop a guilt complex and not confide in you.

#6 - Pay Attention: Look people in the eye and make them feel that you are paying attention. Do not fake this, but be absolutely genuine! No person is beneath you!

#7 - Know When To Keep Your Mouth SHUT: This is hard for pastors and preachers. Sometimes it is best to say nothing at all! Your opinion can be helpful, but you are not infallible.

#8 - There Are Three Sides To Every Story: Their side, the other person's side, and the truth.

#9 - Reverence Confidentiality:

Everything said in a session must stay in the session. Never assume that anything is okay to speak about with someone outside the context. People need to trust you as a counselor.

#10 - Don't Assume Or Jump To Hasty Conclusions: More people are hurt and damaged by these two things than anything else in a counseling session.

#11 - Ask Questions: ALWAYS ask questions! Get to know the person. Make SURE you understand what they are saying!

#12 - Be Careful About Long Sessions: 30 minutes to an hour is ample time for the average counseling session. The amount of time for each session should be conveyed when the meeting is scheduled.

#13 - Study The Word Of God For Solutions To Common Problems:

The book of Psalms and Proverbs are always good sources of wisdom. They are easily understood and digested. Have references written down to various topics in a handy file.

#14 - When Offering Advice, Try To Teach A Scriptural Principle:

Always convey what you are advising with a Scriptural principle.

**#15 - Admit That You Do Not Know
EVERYTHING:** People know that
you do not know everything, so do not
pretend. Admit your lack and offer to
find an answer to share on a later date!

The Brennen Tips

- ▶ Avoid counseling from behind a desk. Seating position is crucial. Do not get close.
- ▶ Avoid counseling a member of the opposite sex alone in the church office. Arrange for someone else to be in the building.
- ▶ Do not touch the counselee for any reason, even if the person is crying. Avoid greeting with a hug. Shake hands only. A hug at the church door can be interpreted differently in the pastor's study.
- ▶ Have a tissue box within reach of the counselee.
- ▶ Ask first "What brought you in to see me today." Do not assume that he or she knows that you know why he or she came to see you.
- ▶ After the person has explained the reason for coming to session, always ask: "As your pastor, how would you like for me to help you." or "What are you expecting of me in this situation." The counselee must articulate the reason for coming, even if it seems obvious outside the counseling session.
- ▶ Avoid "lecturing" or "preaching on a subject you believe is the problem.
- ▶ Avoid sharing with your spouse confidential information shared by the counselee.

“Most counseling can be done through sound, expository preaching. When a session is needed, soak it in prayer and give it all you have. God will honor this!”

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You Cannot Have Peace in Your Marriage June 20, 2013. Do you want a sweet, peaceful marriage? Is your marriage sweet and peaceful? What comes to your mind when I use the words "peace" and "marriage" in one sentence? Is your response "yes, this is natural." Or is your response "not in my lifetime." The truth is the best marriages are not always sweet and peaceful. The best marriages might have a few emotional skirmishes and small battles, but not all out war. The goal of this article is to keep couples from having war or to help stop the war in a couple's marriage. . . Perhaps a main ingredient in "divorce-proofing" your marriage is humility. Humility is the willingness to say "I am sorry," to admit that you are wrong, to listen with an open mind, to be flexible and change, to be able to lead together. [Read more](#)



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- Work more effectively with couples

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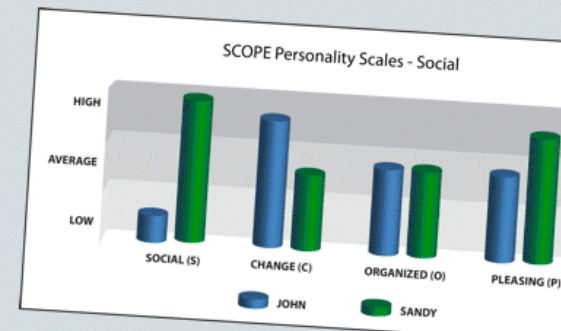
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The End