Easy Effective Counseling: A Strategy for Busy Pastors

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**Date**
4-2013

**Department**
Rawlings School of Divinity

**Degree**
Doctor of Ministry (DMin)

**Chair**
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**Primary Subject Area**
Theology; Social Work; Psychology, General; Religion, General; Religion, Clergy

**Keywords**
Counseling, Decision, Decision Management Counseling, Effective Counseling, Pastoral, Philosophy of Counseling

**Disciplines**
Christianity | Comparative Methodologies and Theories | Counseling Psychology | Practical Theology | Psychology | Religion | Social Work | Sociology

**Recommended Citation**

**Abstract**
Pastors are expected to counsel various people with various problems. However, in most circumstances, pastors have little time to prepare for counseling sessions and cannot be long-term therapists. Therefore, it is critical for the pastor to be able to quickly and effectively give substantial guidance to counselees. The purpose of this project is to develop and implement a pastoral counseling program with a decision management focus. A survey will be conducted with at least one hundred (100) pastors who engage in counseling as part of their regular ministry duties. This project will develop and communicate a practical counseling approach for implementation by busy pastors and will be undergirded by case studies. Special attention will be given to developing an electronic tool for pastoral counseling.

Beginning Counseling Groups A crucial element in starting counseling groups is making decisions beforehand. Pregroup planning is the first step in the process. Leaders design groups so that they will yield productive and pragmatic results for participants. Among the most important considerations are those associated with objectives, membership, rules, time, place, and dynamics. Objectives of Group Counseling Group counseling involves individuals who are hav Group Stages In addition to preplanning, effective group counseling leaders recognize that groups go through five stages: dependency, conflict, cohesion, interdependence, and termination. The stages are often called “forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning” (Tuckman &. Clearly, the counselor's pastoral identity is important. In effective pastoral counseling it still seems that ordination or being identified as a religious professional is essential. There is something about pastoral authority and leadership within the religious community that provides an indispensable element in such a relationship. A trained clinician who also is a member of the worshiping community cannot provide counseling that would be recognized as pastoral in the fullest sense of the word. Admittedly, the role of pastor-
counselor introduces some difficulties. Pastors, or most leaders for that matter, are busy people. Succumbing to the pressure of a heavy counseling schedule can leave the unable to fulfill his other pastoral responsibilities. The pastor should see to it that others within the church—deacons, elders, and other godly people—can help to fill the role of counselor. Delegating this task to other individuals within the church will give the pastor the freedom to fulfill his responsibilities. There is also room for the practice of committed Christian counselors—people