

Lesson 10 – Case Study – Ethics

Objectives:

Identify the practices that constitute ethical pastoral counseling.

- Define ethics.
- Identify potential areas of ethical difficulty in pastoral counseling.

C – Chaplain

M – Male

F – Female

Situation 1: A chaplain (MAJ), who is having severe marital difficulties, is counseling with a couple who are struggling with issues of mistrust and lack of commitment. The chaplain feels guilty about his desire to leave his spouse and angry that she is mean to him. The male is an NCO and the female is a civilian.

C – (*To M*) Don't you know that when you pull away from F that it's painful to her?

M – Well, she's always bitching about something.

F – I am not, but you could help around the house more. Every time I go to look for you or ask for help you're nowhere to be found. I can't do it physically anymore. (*To the Chaplain*) You know they diagnosed me with fibromyalgia and I can hardly get out of bed in the mornings much less take care of him. I am tired. I have given him 18 years— stood by him, ironed and starched his old BDUs. I even used to polish his boots.

C – (*To F*): You have really given a lot to this marriage. (*To M*) How does it make you feel to hear F say this?

M – I've heard it all before.

C – What is keeping you on the fence?

M – I just need more space.

C – M, I think you need to make a decision and get off the fence.

M – S**t or get off the pot.

C – Exactly. Let me know what you decide next time we meet.

Situation 2: A Chaplain (MAJ) counseling with the female spouse of a senior officer. Couple is going through a divorce. Chaplain is offering support and guidance to the spouse during this time of crisis. Spouse is lonely and vulnerable. Chaplain is participating in civilian clothes day. He is wearing boots, slacks, and unit shirt. Chaplain greets her in the lobby.

C – Hey, how are you today?

F – Good. How tall are you?

C – (*Startled*) 6-ft 3 in.

F – Wow, you should wear civilian clothes more often. You're hot in cowboy boots.

Case Study Discussion Questions:

Situation 1:

- 1) In the first session, on a scale of 1-10, how balanced do you feel the Chaplain is being in his care for this couple?
- 2) Knowing he is vulnerable to becoming unbalanced, what kind of steps might the Chaplain take to ensure he doesn't do any harm or cross any boundaries?
- 3) What might a Chaplain in this situation see in himself that would tell him that he is in danger of doing harm or crossing a boundary? What steps would be appropriate if he saw this sign?

Situation 2:

- 1) How might a Chaplain respond to this situation in a way that sets a boundary while still retaining a pastoral position?

