

Lesson 11: Pastoral Counseling Methods

TLO: Describe the model of pastoral care and counseling.

ELOs: None

C – Chaplain

S – Supervisee

S – I am stuck with this client.

C – Stuck?

S – Yeah. She'll be doing okay and then she'll say, "I just wait and see what he does."

C – What is your goal with her?

S – Well, to be more assertive. Differentiation. She does alright and then she waffles. She is waiting on him to make a decision.

C – She is stuck and you are stuck. Who is your client: the relationship or the woman you are seeing?

S – Good question.

(Watch Video tape of counseling session)

C – What do you see as you watch this tape?

S – Well, I listen to her. I like her.

C – It appears that she is easy for you to work with.

S – Yeah, I just reflect back to her what she is saying. I didn't like it when I asked her why I she didn't go out to the bar with her husband.

C – Oh?

S – I felt like I was telling her what to do.

C – And that is bad?

S – Well, yeah. That's not counseling, its advice giving.

C – So if you give advice, what does that mean about you?

S – I am incompetent. I'm mean.

C – That’s a familiar hook. I am wondering how you could get unhooked from that old voice. Could you ask her about the ambivalence in a way that is not mean? Seems to be where she is. One foot in the marriage and one foot out. Ask her about the part that wants to go and the part that wants to stay.

S – I can’t.

C – You can’t.

S – I don’t know how she would answer. She might say I don’t know or go back to saying, “I’ll just wait and see what he (the husband) does. Then I wouldn’t know what to do.

C – What a painful spot. You’re stuck. Damned if you do and damned if you don’t. If you question her and don’t know how to respond to her, you are incompetent and if you give her advice you are mean. These are old demons that keep pounding you and paralyze you.

(Silence)

C – Are you continuing to work on this stuff in therapy?

S – Yeah.

C – It’s tough work.

S – I don’t want to cry. My therapist said, “You don’t believe anything good could come from you”.

Pastoral methodology is akin more to the Emmaus road encounter than learned technique. The more the chaplain is able to be real and not be hindered by old demons, the more the client is able to move away from their own demons and be real. God is in the midst of the real encounter. Remember the model is controlled by the user. So, the person of the pastor is very important. Some have said that lack of self-awareness is the greatest sin. The more we know ourselves in relation to God and the other, the more we are able to facilitate growth in those we help. Our own growth facilitates growth in the other. St. Seraphim – Acquire inward peace, and a multitude around you will find their salvation.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What do think is the supervisor’s model for change? In a word, how do you think he would say he will help this pastor become a better counselor?
- 2) If you were this counselor, what about the supervisor’s questions might you have found helpful?
- 3) In this example, the chaplain (who is the supervisor) refrains from giving much direct feedback (e.g., no encouragement, no advice, and no criticism). What are the strengths and limitations of this kind of counseling?