

TYPES OF CHRISTIAN SOUL CARE POSSIBLE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

By Eric L. Johnson

I. *Public Soul Care in Services*

A. *Preaching*

1. Purpose of Preaching

Why engage in preaching?

- a. Protect flock from error/teach Christian truth w/ passion
- b. Promote faithfulness and moral purity
- c. Provide soul-encouraging truth

This is arguably the most important task of pastoral ministry.

2. Soul-Care Dynamics of Preaching

- a. Time-effective
 - Deals with all members of congregation at once
 - Quasi-group counseling
- b. Can address specific issues without direct confrontation
- c. The Word of God spoken *from outside* the hearer (unlike devotions)
- d. Weekly presentation of soul-care teaching/doctrine presented w/ urgency and love
 - “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”
 - Sermons on grace, God’s holiness and love, Christ’s care and concern, Christ’s healing (of the soul), what happened at the cross, justification by faith, the nature of sanctification, union with Christ, Christ’s love for sinners, our love relationship with Christ, self-deception and the strategies of our flesh/old self, the law of God to convict and to point to mature human nature.

3. Preaching and counseling complement each other

- a. Preaching is general—Counseling can be very specific
- b. Preaching is preventative soul care—Counseling operates after problems have developed
- c. Preaching should challenge people to accomplish more in grace (e.g., missions)—Counseling more focuses on helping people right where they are at
- d. Preaching is every week—Counseling is as needed
- e. Preaching aims at the average Christian—Counseling works with individuals
- f. In Preaching preacher is active—In Counseling both are active

B. *Singing*

1. Creates opportunity to put (poetic) truth into mouths of God’s people

Psalms are Old Covenant, but provide wondrous guidelines

Theocentric

Movement towards celebration, from death to resurrection!

Personal authenticity before God

What should New Covenant members sing that’s different from Psalms?

Songs of the gospel; teachings about Christ’s person and work

Blessings of the gospel

2. Music has a way of connecting with the human brain/heart

Should promote our religious affections

Worship, fear, love, joy, contrition, honesty

3. Creates opportunity for self-examination before God

Am I able to sing this with my whole heart?

Where am I at with the Lord today?

Oh God, forgive my hardheartedness!

Please pull me into your presence! I need you!

4. Overview of Christian hymnody

- a. Classic Christian hymns
- b. Perfectionistic hymns
- c. Contemporary worship songs
- d. Finding the balance between theocentric and personal (experiential and honest)

5. Pragmatics

- a. Singing for healing—the nature of charismatic worship
- b. Enlisting/summoning worship
- c. No need for “directing”
- d. Are choirs outdated?

Focus on worship or entertainment? They appear to have choirs in OT temple worship.

C. *Public Prayer*

1. It exemplifies a theocentric orientation; should concentrate on praise and thanksgiving.
2. It is necessarily corporate, not individual. "We come to you..." rather than "I come to you..."
3. Praying the agenda of NT Psalms (contrast typical prayer meetings with the psalms).
4. Can involve laypeople and women

D. *Public Reading of Scripture*

1. Can be done by one (skilled, practiced) reader, or through responsive readings of Scripture.
2. One passage can be read or different short Scripture passages can be compiled in a particular order for a special purpose.
3. Can involve laypeople and women

E. *Confession*

Some churches have a place in their liturgy in which the entire congregation confesses their sinfulness and/or generic sins of the previous week. Or leader prays on behalf of the congregation, confessing sinfulness and the generic sins of the past week. Usually concludes with some assurance of the forgiveness available in Christ.

F. *Ordinances*

1. The Nature of the New Covenant Ordinances
Concrete symbols of spiritual realities
2. The Psychospiritual Blessings of Baptism
Symbol of conversion/new creation and esp. the new covenant
Serves as a marker of the new life and incorporation into the body
I am/we are the "baptized ones"
3. The Psychospiritual Blessings of the Lord's Supper
 - a. Reminder of the centrality of the cross
 - b. Reminder of Christ, his beauty, and his love for us
 - c. Ongoing reminder that we are sinners
 - d. Reception of Christ's cross into our innermost being (consider Jn 6)
4. Pragmatics
How often?
The quality of the elements themselves
Taking enough time to experience it
5. Differences between them
 - a. Baptism initiates the Christian life/LS celebrates it throughout
 - b. Why did God have us remember Christ's death more frequently than his resurrection?

G. *Testimonies*

Sometimes appropriate in services
Gives glory to God and demonstrates honesty

II. *Providing Soul-Care Leadership*

- A. Laying out a soul-care vision
- B. Establishing a spiritual formation agenda/orientation in the church
- C. Establishing a people-helping agenda/orientation in the church
- D. Developing programing and building on the work of others, where possible (books, other churches)

III. *Marriage Soul Care*

A. *Seminars*

1. Annual marriage conference
2. Special seminars once in a while
3. Weekend retreats for couples to be focused
 - a. Local church-based (perhaps with visiting speaker)
 - b. Regional with special speaker

B. *One-on-one counseling*

1. Premarital counseling
2. Postmarital counseling (one-year into marriage)
3. Considerations re: ongoing marriage counseling
Most common counseling challenge in the U.S.
4. Marriage mentoring
 - a. Volunteering program working with younger couples

- b. Program for troubled marriages
(See handout)
- C. ***Dealing with divorce***
 - 1. Biblical principles about divorce
 - a. Why God is against divorce, generally
The glory of God
Sanctification furnace
 - b. Why he allows for it in certain cases
 - c. Church's stance
Need to find out the details
Loving sinners, hating sin
 - 2. Counseling for divorce
 - a. Support groups
 - b. Aiding the victims of divorce
 - i. Helping single moms
 - ii. Helping the children

IV. *Family Soul Care*

- A. ***Family-Oriented Church Structure***
Promoting family-based activities throughout the church year
Dad and Son camping trips; Mom and Daughter outings
- B. ***Youth Ministry***
 - 1. Working with adolescents in groups
 - 2. Year-round special activities
 - 3. Big brothers/big sisters (European model)
- C. ***Seminars***
Bringing in special speakers for day-long or weekend seminars to help parents
Topics: Child development, Emotional Atmosphere in the Family, Discipline, Individual Differences among Children, How parents can treat their children like enemies, Child-rearing and Sanctification.
- D. ***Parent Mentoring***
Requires some training for mentors
Where more skilled and experienced parents lovingly help less skilled and less experienced parents become more effective, loving, and strong.
- E. ***Spiritual Adoption***
Requires some training for adoptive parents
Value: Tries to create a family/parent-child experience that a younger person never had. Brings younger person (adolescent to twenty-something adult) into a family context, treating them like a member of the family, either inviting them over frequently for dinner and family activities (e.g., vacations), or having them live with the family. Creates an opportunity for young person to bond with family members, give and receive love, and learn different ways of relating to others and resolving problems.
Responsibility: High degree of psychospiritual maturity of parents. Ideally, some training in soul care (e.g., lay-counseling or professional training) and great self-awareness.
Time Commitment: Minimum of 1 year, ideally longer.
- F. ***Parent Coaching***
Requires hiring specially trained individuals
Working with parents with below average parenting; mentoring and training them to become more loving and firm. Videotaping *in vivo*, and discussing it afterwards. Concrete, problem-solving about how to manage children more effectively.

V. *Singles Soul Care*

- Often a neglected focus in churches
- A. Sunday morning special group
- B. Special ongoing activities
- C. Raising awareness in the church of marriage-bias

VI. *Gender-Based Soul Care*

- Avoiding the extremes: egalitarianism and patriarchialism
- A. ***Men's Activities***
 - 1. Retreats

Men at the Cross, Wild at Heart

2. Seminars

Promise Keepers, Wild at Heart

3. Monthly Saturday breakfasts

3. Weekly studies

4. Accountability groups

Limitations?

5. Promoting *true* masculinity

B. *Women's Activities*

1. Retreats

2. Seminars

3. Women-mentoring-women

4. Weekly meetings

5. Promoting *true* femininity

D. *Promoting the contributions of women in the local church*

Seminar for men and women on engaging women in church life

Hiring priorities

Soliciting female input

VII. *Church-Wide Lay Soul Care*

A. *In Groups*

There are different purposes for different types of groups

1. *Small Group Leader*

Soul care value:

People need biblical instruction and social support. S.G.'s provide context for low investment love, Bible study, prayer and sharing together of real-life struggles.

Soul care responsibility:

- a. Keep things moving
- b. Can't let one person dominate the group's time
- c. Avoid disputations/Diffuse difficulties
- d. Find the good in someone's comments
- e. Create conditions for sharing
 - i. Be encouraging
 - ii. Empathic listening
 - iii. Engage in appropriate (limited) self-disclosure (group disclosure has limits)

Time Commitment: Minimum of 9 months

2. *Special Issue Small Group Member*

Can establish a group for special need in the church; each group meets independently

Can establish a special evening meeting for all such groups

Celebrate Recovery

Redemption Groups brings people together with different problems

Value: Allows people to support each other in reference to a specific issue: grief, substance abuse, sexual addiction, men's issues, women's issues, mothers of little children, homosexuality, depression, adults abused as children, divorce.

Responsibility: Giving and receiving from the other group members

Time Commitment: Depends on the group and personal needs. Must assume some time just to feel a part of the group. 3 months to a year is common. Could be longer for more difficult issues.

3. *Accountability Group*

Value: Holding each other accountable regarding devotions, family responsibilities, sexual acting out, substance abuse, and so forth. Helpful to provide a social barrier to self-harm or neglect of responsibilities.

Responsibility: Being transparent about whatever is relevant. Being willing to confront a group member who's slacking off.

4. *Evangelism Bible study groups*

Creates a context outside of a church setting, usually in a home, to draw people into a relationship with Christ through studying the Bible.

B. *One-on-One*

1. *One-time or Irregular Informal Get-Togethers*

Soul care Value: Such support can be very timely if someone is going through a difficulty and needs a listening ear.

Soul care responsibilities: Being available and empathic.

Time Commitment: Once

2. ***Personal evangelism***

Talking over coffee

One-on-one Bible studies

3. ***Discipling***

Value: Building up a relatively new believer in the faith. Very helpful to fortify the believer, help them get on the right track, help them avoid typical problems of new converts.

Responsibility: Commitment, support and encouragement, godly example.

Time Commitment: 3-6 months

4. ***Accountability Partner***

Same as an accountability group member, just two persons get together.

5. ***Mentoring***

Value: Provides Christian social support to a younger, less mature believer.

Responsibility: Older believer is a supportive, listening ear. Helps to provide opportunities for fellowship in real-life contexts: going to a movie, hiking, a museum, concert, out for coffee, over to one's house. Provide time for talking and sharing. Should have some minimal training and oversight.

Time Commitment: 9 months to a few years.

6. ***Lay Counseling***

Value: Provides lay help to people struggling with mild to moderate mental health issues, like grief, substance abuse, loneliness, mild to moderate depression and anxiety, social awkwardness, and marriage problems.

Responsibility: Short-term intervention by a lay person who has had some modest training (e.g., 36 hours by someone involved in soul-care professionally) and ongoing oversight. Involves a degree of giftedness, empathic listening and ability to probe that goes somewhat beyond the skill level of the average believer.

Time Commitment: 3 months. Could be extended to 6 months.

VIII. ***Crisis ministry***

Crisis is a unique kind of problem: Focus is on stabilization, not counseling

A. Pastors are often first ones called upon to respond

B. A Crisis Ministry Team

(see handout)

IX. ***Peacemaking/Reconciliation***

A. Peacemaking seminar

B. Peacemaking mediation for members/church staff

X. ***Mercy Ministries*** (often overseen by deacons)

A. Inreach

1. Meeting emergency physical needs of members

2. Financial Counseling

B. Outreach

1. Meeting emergency physical needs of those in the community

a. Ordinary: Need to coordinate with other area churches

b. Extraordinary: Disaster relief

2. Offering concrete services for the community

E.g., automotive maintenance, lawn care

3. Offering counseling/seminars to the community (tailoring them for non-Christians)

XI. ***Church Discipline***

A. When to do it

Key passages: Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5, Galatians 6

Only for repeated, unrepentant, life-dominating sin (e.g., sexual immorality) or apostasy

B. Church discipline that destroys a church

When heart motives can be a ground for church disciplines

C. A law-dominant orientation contributes to an excessive focus on church discipline

9 Marks?

- D. How to do it
 1. Reluctantly, with tears
 2. With great grace and compassion
 3. Making clear that the person is welcome just as soon as they repent

XII. *Promoting an atmosphere of authenticity*

- A. Exemplary pastoral leadership
Pastoral catch-22: supposed to be holy, can't be too honest!
- B. Promoting transparency throughout church life
- C. Effects of grace-dominance vs. law-dominance

XIII. *Public Soul Care in Other Contexts*

- A. Welcome ministry
- B. Guiding people into membership and service
- C. Adult Bible Classes/Special teaching
- D. Semi-structured fellowship opportunities
- E. Visitation
 - a. Hospital
 - b. Follow-up with visitors to church
 - c. Parents' Night Out

XIV. *Expert Soul Care*

A. *General Pastoral Ministry*

Pastor/elder is the primary shepherd of the flock; oversees the soul-care agenda of the entire church
 Some churches have plurality of elders
 Special tasks of pastor/pastoral staff

1. Crisis ministry
2. Hospital visitation
3. Weekly Counseling (3-5 people a week)
4. Regular pastoral oversight (see Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*; must adapt to the 21st century)

B. *In Groups*

Where a trained group leader facilitates the psychospiritual growth of the others in the group.
 A group counseling facilitator skillfully leads a small group for the purpose of helping the group members learn to share, listen, contribute to others, grow in self-awareness, and recover from their presenting problems.

1. *Specialty groups*

Groups focusing on specific issues: addiction, pornography, abortion, sexual abuse, wayward youth, depression, eating disorders, overweight, family member with a mental illness.

2. *General soul-care groups*

Groups composed of people that have different kinds of challenges.

3. *Therapy group*

Group tailored to go into significant psychosocial issues.

C. *Specialized One-on-One*

1. *Pastor for Soul Care/Biblical Counseling*

Soul-care Value: The Bible is the most important soul-care book in the world. It is often necessary to go beyond the general Scripture-application of preaching to help people understand how to apply Scripture to their particular needs and situations.

Soul-care responsibilities: Applying Scripture to human needs and problems; assigning homework in Scripture to human needs.

Time Commitment: Usually short-term (1 to 5, but maybe more). Pastors, because of their many soul-care responsibilities, cannot spend too much time with one sheep, so they typically do not go more than 3-5 times with counselees.

2. *Christian Counseling/Advanced Biblical Counseling*

Value: Dealing with people with mild to moderate mental health issues and life style and relational

issues: mild to moderate depression and anxiety, phobias, learning disabilities, vocational counseling, marriage and family problems, weight control, self-concept issues, social skill improvement. May or may not involve exploring developmental history.

Responsibility: Providing high quality soul-care. Usually requires a Masters degree. Easier than psychotherapy because clients tend to be middle-class or above who want the help and whose problems are fairly limited in scope. Should be Christ-centered.
Time Commitment: Short-term to long-term. 10 or 12 weeks to 2-3 years. Often based on insurance limits.

3. ***Christian Psychotherapy*** (Probably Ph.D. level practitioner)

Soul care value: Dealing with people who have the most severe mental health issues: severe depression, anxiety, hypochondria, dissociative identity disorder, schizophrenia, severe addiction, personality disorder, homosexuality. Often involves exploring issues derived from developmental history
Responsibility: Providing highest quality of soul-care. Usually requires a Doctorate and two years of *psychotherapy oneself*. *Requires ability to tolerate negative feelings and projections of others and not get locked into their issues, while helping them make sense of their struggles and using relevant soul-care techniques. Should be Christ-centered.*

Time Commitment: Minimum of 3-6 months. Could last for 2-3 years. In unusual cases (e.g., Dissociative Identity Disorder) as long as 10 yrs.

4. ***Spiritual Direction***

Value: Helping relatively psychospiritually mature people enter more deeply into an experiential relationship with God. Helps the individual become more spiritually-minded, wiser, more loving, and better able to endure suffering for God's kingdom and the welfare of others.

Responsibility: Spiritual Director has to be fairly far along in the spiritual journey; should have had spiritual direction him or herself for at least 2 years. Provides guidance in interpreting directee's life, the directee's resistance of God, and how God is communicating, what the journey is like, and how to get there (through spiritual disciplines).

Time Commitment: Minimum of 1 year.

5. ***Exorcism and Deliverance Ministry***

XV. ***Expert Soul Care Outside the Church***

A. Types

1. Christian Counseling Clinics
2. Secular Therapy
3. Medical Doctors/Psychiatrists
4. Public mental health facilities

B. Worldview Conflict

C. Knowing when to refer

(see handout)

XVI. ***Soul Care for Ministers***

A. Retreats/conferences

Including addressing issues of burnout, perfectionism

B. Pastor accountability groups

C. Monthly meetings

C. Mentoring

D. Counseling for pastors (and their wives)

E. When pastors fall