

Pastoral it sometimes  
can play a larger



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Pastoral counseling is different from other types of counseling.

To start, counseling is part of a pastor's job description and it sometimes can play a larger role than others. As a pastor, duties include loving, protecting, and caring for those in the congregation. Pastors are like shepherds who take care of the sheep that are sick or hurt, so the pastor helps with the emotional wounds suffered by those in the congregation. Pastoral counseling must be counseling that is rooted in the Bible. Pastoral counseling uses Scripture, explaining and applying them to the individual's life.

Sometimes this comes in the form of rebuking, correcting, and training of the people that need counseling. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3: 16-17). It makes for practical help that is gained through the understanding and application of His word. The Word of God has a power that doesn't come from psychology, but it is the power to "penetrate even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4: 12). The Word is the pastor's primary tool in counseling, and, because of his years of study, he is in a position that can be beneficial to the person being counseled.

Another great aspect of pastoral counseling is that the pastor has a relationship with his counselee that continues outside the counseling sessions. The pastor can observe and follow the progress of the church members that he/she counsels. The pastor can also solicit the prayers and advice of others in the church such as elders, always keeping in mind

whatever confidentiality agreement the pastor has with the counselee. There can be negative aspects of pastoral counseling as well. Sometimes the pastor is overwhelmed with many tasks and should be mindful not to take on more than they can handle.

Many churches spread counseling among associate pastors who are comfortable with counseling. Second, care must be given to avoid counseling situations that possibly lead to sin. Pastors should not counsel the opposite sex alone and need to put in place safeguards for those situations. Judgement should also be used to be certain that a dependent relationship doesn't occur between the pastor and their counsees. The counselor should always guide the counselee to be dependent on God and His word.

Personal Counseling Standards<sup>1</sup>. I will not go beyond my competence level in counseling situations and refer clients to other professionals when appropriate. 2. Sessions should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times. • I will maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled.

• I will not conduct sessions at any private living quarters. 3. I will not audiotape or videotape sessions, I will only make handwritten notes for future reference. 4. I will not enter a counseling relationship with someone with whom I have a pre-existing relationship that would cause a conflict of interest. • I will never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons I counsel. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, and inappropriate sexual comments.

• I will not engage in sexual intimacies with individuals who are relatives or friends of the client. 5. I will establish and maintain defined and clear boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships. 6.

I will avoid any personal contact of any kind between myself and the person I counsel to avoid any false interpretations. 7. Any information disclosed to me during the counseling session shall be held in the strictest confidence possible. 8. Any information obtained during sessions shall be confidential, except as required by law. • If there is evidence of clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, I shall disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm. • Before any disclosure, if feasible, I should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.