

WELS Congregations Counseling Families in Crisis

INTRODUCTION

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to write a paper on this subject. The topic: *HELPING OUR CHURCH FAMILIES DEAL WITH CRISIS SITUATIONS*, which you suggested has been changed by me to read: **WELS CONGREGATIONS COUNSELING FAMILIES IN CRISIS**. I will concentrate upon more formal helping that might be called "counseling" in this paper.

"Helping" and counseling can both be expressions of our sanctified Christian love. I would view counseling as something that is more formal and more organized as an expression of the WELS congregation's love and concern and desire to help the families in crisis than an individual's help offered to the crisis torn family. Although counseling is most often one individual counseling another or a family, counseling to me is more usually connected with an office or a position in the church as a corporate body than is helping which I feel every Christian will do as a fruit of faith regardless of whether he or she has an office or position in the church. (There may be many loopholes in this rather artificial distinction that I am making.)

Here is the outline I wish to follow in this presentation:

- A. Family Systems
 - 1. the system
 - 2. the patterns
- B. Repentance
- C. Forgiveness
- D. Scriptural Principles/limitations Re.:
 - 1. the Call
 - function and roles
 - 2. training
 - 3. inclination
- E. Gender Issues
- F. Confidentiality
 - 1. Eighth Commandment issues
 - 2. legal issues
 - 3. internal reporting
- G. Application to Crises
 - 4. divorce
 - 5. death
 - 6. abusive situation
 - 7. addictive situation
 - 8. job loss/employment move

A. FAMILY SYSTEMS

1. THE SYSTEM

The Bible gives us many examples of families. Jesus and Mary and Joseph is one example. The way they kept the Ceremonial Law on behalf of Mary's child should not go unnoticed by us. Not all of the examples are positive, however. Sin certainly corrupted and impacted negatively upon the family of Adam. Cain caused heartache for Adam and Eve. Ham mocked his father. Sarah thought it wise to find a shortcut to get God's promise of a son for Abraham by suggesting that her husband use her slavegirl as a surrogate mother. She saw her plans disrupt her happy home. Isaac had such great love for Rebekah, but his blindness and each parent's preferential treatment of one of their two sons doomed their family life to strife and jealousy and deception and threats of violence. Jacob's sons were violent boys, filled with jealousy, showing the anger of Leah at Rachel in a second generation. Joseph broke the pattern of jealousy and violence by forgiving his brothers after the death of Jacob in Egypt. Eli was far too permissive a father. When Amnon raped his half sister, Tamar, David, their father, was furious. But Absalom, Tamar's brother, waited two years and then, with careful premeditation, murdered Amnon.

The theory of family systems therapy is prevalent in Armin Schuetze's and Fred Matzke's book, *The Counseling Shepherd*. Our Christian use of Family System's Theory must always be filtered through the filters of Christian love, repentance, forgiveness, and God's creation of and intended purpose for the family as the place for man and woman to live in companionship, to procreate and to provide care for that procreation, and to live in sexual chastity.

Family System Theory is an approach of secular counseling which teaches that each individual lives in a system which is his or her family. The definition of family is quite fluid and for some secular family systems practitioners would include what is often called the nuclear family, a married couple, a couple living together, and heterosexual or homosexual partnerships. The concept of systems might be extended to include the relationship systems at a person's place of employment or a person's circle of friends. True family systems work runs across generations and examines at least three generations of a family's history and relationship patterns.

The importance of the word, "system," must be noted. Family Systems therapists believe that the family is a closed system. What affects one individual in the system will also affect all of the individuals in the system. If the behavior of one individual in the system is changed in some way, this change in behavior will have some impact upon the behavior patterns of all of the other individuals in the system. An example of this would be a child that is acting out in school, but not at home. At home the marriage of the parents is troubled. The child has heard a lot of arguing and has even heard that most fearful word for a child, the word, divorce. A person working with family systems theory will hear from the parents that the child is acting out at school but not at home and will ask about (a.) the parent's reaction to the child's acting out at school, and (b.) the parent's marriage. A family systems theorist would surmise that the child is not acting out at

home because he wants peace in the already troubled home but that he is acting out at school because he has noted that whenever he gets a bad report from school the parents stop arguing and begin to work together with him. The child's badness at school produces a good reaction at home, even though that good reaction may be that the parents are both angry at the child. The child is willing to sacrifice goodness for himself rather than have his parents continue to argue about their marriage. The family system reacts to help the members within the system against something outside the system and there is more peace within the system because of the strife or trouble for one of the system members that comes from outside the system. If the child discovers that acting out at school and at home causes the parents to argue less between themselves, he may act out in both places.

In the situation noted above, the family systems theorist would address the parent's problem and when that gets resolved have the parents assure the child that they will not get a divorce and the reaction of the child should be to stop acting out. He has no need any longer to "save" his parent's marriage by being disruptive. The child should now act in ways that will be good for himself. He no longer needs to be concerned about keeping his parents together.

Family systems theory is behavioral, cognitive, and often solution-focused rather than problem-focused in the way that it addresses problems and conflicts in relationships. In a marriage the spouse who will talk to the pastor is told to repent of his or her part of the strife in the marriage and, as a fruit of repentance, he/she is encouraged to react in totally different ways than his or her normal reactions to the pressure points that caused the arguments in the past. Do something different! The theory surmises that the spouse who will not come to the session must react in a different way to what the spouse who will come to the sessions is doing that is now different. The key is to plan what to do differently and then to do it as a surprise and wait for the reaction. When both spouses are present, they both are led to repentance and to fruits of repentance which are practiced. These fruits are hopeful solutions to the problem that can be found by examining the times in the past when the problem did not occur. For example, a couple that complains about constant arguing in their relationship is asked when there is an exception to the pattern of arguing. (Repentance and forgiveness must be dealt with first. This question occurs in the area of discussion dealing with the fruits of repentance.) They say that they do not argue when they buy groceries. The pastor asks them what is different about buying groceries from every other thing that they do which always involves an argument? After exploring what is different in behavior or cognition or attitude about the joint activity of grocery shopping from everything else, the couple is told to begin practicing the difference. Do what makes grocery shopping different from everything else. For the Christian couple the time without arguing may be attending worship, or even only the time when they are together in church. What is different about that time? What is special about church that is not there everywhere else? These examples are a mixture of family systems work, solution-focused therapy, and what Fred Matzke and I have begun calling, hopeful solutions. If this process is followed without repentance occurring first, changes will only be behavioral for the individuals involved. When this is done as a fruit of repentance, the power of God's love is working in the heart of the person who has just heard God's

absolution and the changes that occur will be a part of the fruits of repentance. The former is empty. The latter is filled with grace.

2. THE PATTERNS

The sins of the fathers impact upon the lives of the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate God. This is somewhat the idea of patterns in family systems. An eldest son may flunk out of Martin Luther College. He may sink into a deep depression. The family systems theorist (pastor who uses some of the family systems concepts) may learn that the boy's father and grandfather were also eldest sons and were both pastors. The family tradition was that the eldest son in this family becomes a pastor. The young man needs to be assured that it is all right and acceptable to break the family pattern. God forgives him for whatever lack of faithfulness to his studies he may have shown. God also forgives him for breaking the family pattern.

The grandfather was an alcoholic so the father was an alcoholic so the son became an alcoholic. This is the family pattern. The grandfather abused his wife so the father abused his wife so the grandson abused his wife. This is the family pattern every male in the family has learned. The grandmother married an alcoholic, so did the mother, and now the daughter is dating an alcoholic. This is the life these women in this family learn and know. People need to see the negative patterns their families have lived and be taught how to break them. Every pastor or teacher who is observant and who serves in the same congregation for a number of years soon learns about these patterns in families. We have tremendous opportunities to counsel our people to break the sinful patterns of their families and of their individual lives.

Patterns are also shown in relationships. In one generation grandmother and mother did not get along. Now, in the next generation mother and daughter don't get along, but grandmother and grand-daughter do get along. People live out these patterns because they grew into them. Mothers and daughters don't get along in these families. This is the pattern, generation after generation.

Patterns are also behavioral in families. It is the family history in some families that children do not get launched from the nest without a lot of fighting and strife. There has always been sin involved with this process and generally the children leave cut off from their family of origin. These patterns need to be identified and broken. Why should the sin continue through the generations? Why should children not speak to their parents during the twenty-something years? The implications for the church are many in the nest-launching process. When children cut off ties with their families in their twenties they generally also cut off ties with their church. How much of our problems in retaining twenty-somethings in the church may not be attributable, at least partially, to problems within the families of our church?

Patterns aren't perfect. They are simply tools to show people that what they see as "just the way their family is" may be habitual sins of long-held anger, sinful habits, and grudges. How does the counselor go about showing these sinful patterns that

Christians will want to break? Just ask simple questions about how the mother got along with her mother and how her mother got along with her grandmother. Then make the verbal observation about how remarkable it is that mothers don't get along with their daughters in their family. Note the sin and speak about repentance – contrition and absolution. When you are talking about fruits of repentance, ask about when they do the exception to the pattern – when do they get along? Then ask what is different about those times. Encourage and work with the person to find ways to do the different.

I have thought about Scriptural examples of patterns. I do not find them, except, of course, the pattern of idolatry into which the Israelites fell so often and how that passed from one family generation to the next. The book of Judges is a good example of this.

B. REPENTANCE

I John 1:8 If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

This is true not because of our confession but because of God's grace to us in Christ Jesus.

I John 2:1-2 I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

The fact of objective justification – Jesus Christ has atoned for the sins of the whole world on the cross – is the key message of our counseling to families in crisis. You and I may take this for granted. We may think that everyone knows and applies the Second Article to themselves. If Jesus has done it for the whole world, then he has done it also for me. The Third Article assurance flows from the Second Article objective fact. Don't take this for granted. People will refuse to tell you their sins because they cannot imagine that God could ever forgive them. People will refuse to be comforted, they will sink deeper and deeper into depression, they will be filled with tons of anxiety because they cannot imagine God forgiving them nor they forgiving themselves. Speak to them about Jesus for all.

II Corinthians 5:19 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

This is why I have begun the presentation on the next page of the **REPENTANCE MODEL** and **Psalm 32** with a statement of Objective Justification.

THE REPENTANCE MODEL

A. OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION

B. SPECIFIC LAW IS SPOKEN

C. SIN IS ACKNOWLEDGE – CONTRITION IS EXPRESSED

D. SPECIFIC GOSPEL IS SPOKEN

1. OBJECTIVE

2. SUBJECTIVE

E. FAITH IN CHRIST IS CONFESSED AND ABSOLUTION IS ANNOUNCED

F. SANCTIFIED CHRISTIAN LIVING IS DISCUSSED. FRUITS OF REPENTANCE ARE ENCOURAGED.

1. NOT LAW MOTIVATED

2. GOSPEL

G. THE JOY OF CHRISTIAN LIVING IS EXPERIENCED – WE ARE BACK TO OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION HERE.

PSALM 32

1. Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
2. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.
3. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
4. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the day of summer.
5. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord" — and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
6. Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.
7. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.
8. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.
9. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.
10. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.
11. Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

THE REPENTANCE MODEL

- A. (1-2) Confidence is given that God does forgive sins because of Christ. Objective Justification.
- B. (3-4) Specific Law is spoken and heard.
- C. (5a) Sin is acknowledged. The sin is against God. True contrition.
- D. (5c) Specific Gospel is spoken and heard.
- E. (6-7) Faith in God's forgiveness in Christ is confessed. Absolution is proclaimed.
- F. (8-10) Sanctified Christian living is discussed. The fruits of Repentance.

(vs. 9-10 are a warning not to produce fruits that are driven by Law, but by the Gospel.)
- G. (vs. 11) The joy of Christian living is experienced.

Each case is different. Each person will be at a different place in the model. Listen to them. Find out where the person is. If he is overwhelmed by contrition, the presentation of the law will be quite brief. If, as you listen to him, you hear him hardened in impenitence, the law will be spoken hard and long. If there is no contrition, there will be no absolution. It may take five minutes or two years to work through the model with an individual. Know where you are with him on it.

Be a Lutheran as you work through the Repentance Model. Use the Means of Grace in your counseling. It is God's gift to do his work in your counseling. Remind your member of his or her Baptism. Lead him or her to remember that God made him or her his child through his Sacrament. Remind your member of the special love of our Heavenly Father for all of his children, including him or her. Stress the joy of forgiveness received and experienced personally in the Lord's Supper.

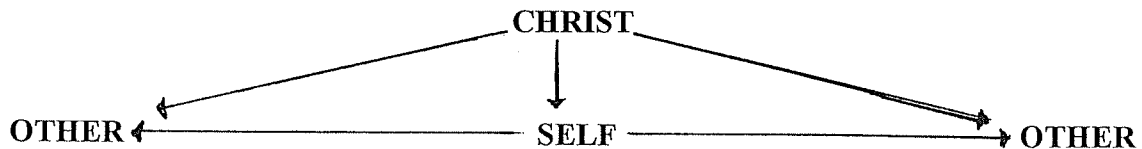
C. FORGIVENESS

We paraphrase an old Chinese proverb: "the one who seeks vengeance should dig two graves." Refusing to forgive someone else is like voluntarily staying in the role of slave to the individual we refuse to forgive. Refusing to forgive is like willingly letting the person we refuse to forgive continue to control us through our obsession with our refusal to forgive. But even more important, a lack of forgiveness is the opposite of God's will, desire, and work. Jesus died for all. Forgiveness is for all.

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his name.

Acts 10:43 Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Colossians 3:12-14 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.



In many ways forgiveness can be thought of as a process for human beings. As our life of sanctification is a process, so is our forgiveness of the other a process at times. It takes continuing Gospel encouragement to keep the process moving along. The charts on the next two pages try to demonstrate this process. God's forgiveness of us is not a process – it is forensic and instantaneous. We thank him for his grace!

(adapted from Veenstra, 1992, pp. 160-169)

DEFINITIONS OF FORGIVENESS IN TERMS OF RELATIONSHIP PROCESSES

"Encouraging the forgiveness process will enable the vicious cycle of abused and abusing (emotional, physical, sexual) to come to be resolved. Without forgiveness the sins of the parents will continue to be visited on the children (Exodus 34:7)" (Rosenak, C., & Harnden, G. M., 1992, p. 196).

The Offended

<u>Luke 17:3-4</u>	<u>Stages of forgiveness in process</u>	<u>Dangers to avoid at each stage</u>
'If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.	A. Presented with the wrong	A. Overlooking the wrong, ignoring
	B. Determining the wrong; convict	B. Excusing the wrong
	C. Hearing the wrong admitted	C. Condoning the wrong
	D. Recognizing contrition and faith spoken by the offender	D. Pardoning the wrong. Ignoring the need on the part of the offender for contrition and faith
If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."	E. Release the wrong. Forgiveness as releasing.	E.1 Confusing forgiving with restoring. E.2 Confusing recovering first love (the way the relationship was before the offense) with creating reborn love (realistic, non-idealistic, and not-so-naive, mature love).
	F. Rebuilding right relationships through a trust-building process. Forgiveness as trusting	F.1 Confusing cautiousness with doubting. F.2 Thinking that the fruits of repentance that are seen automatically mean the extinction of the old sinful behaviors. F.3 Not giving trust time to be rebuilt.

"Forgiveness in this final stage means a discerning trusting that knows where to build in the relationship to create experiences that will bond the couple's connection" (Veenstra, 1992, p. 166). This sounds similar to Solution - Focused Therapy.

As believers in Jesus Christ, Christians strive for perfection. They know that they will never attain perfection here on this earth because of the sinful part of them that will never completely leave them. Therefore, they look for forgiveness to Jesus, God's Son, who became incarnate, lived a perfect life for all people, died as the substitute for all, and arose to assure all who believe in him of heaven. Jesus is the hope of those who believe in him.

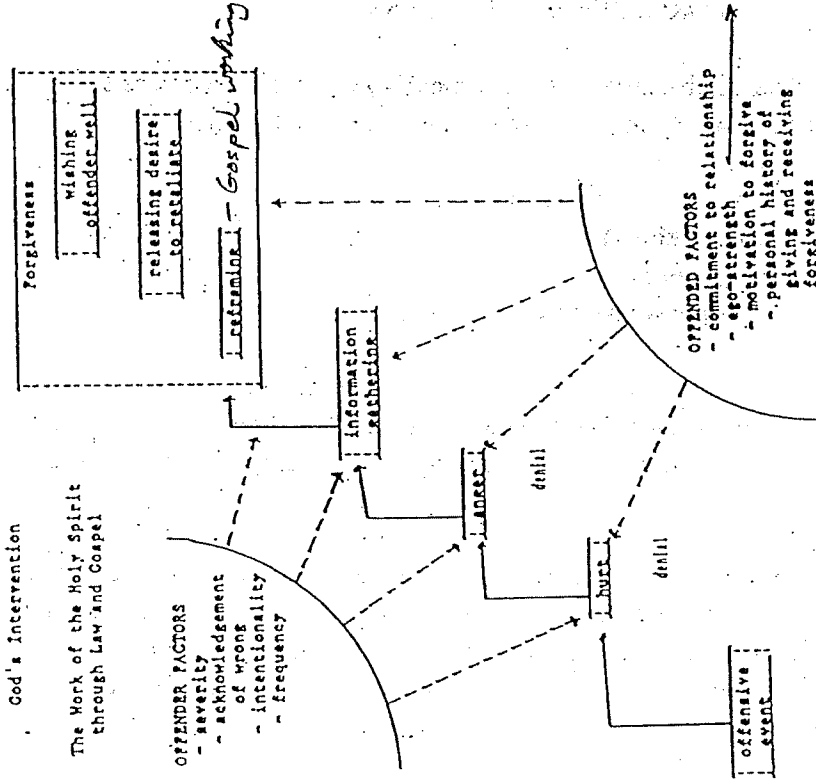
II Corinthians 5:18-19 "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

I John 1:7 "...the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

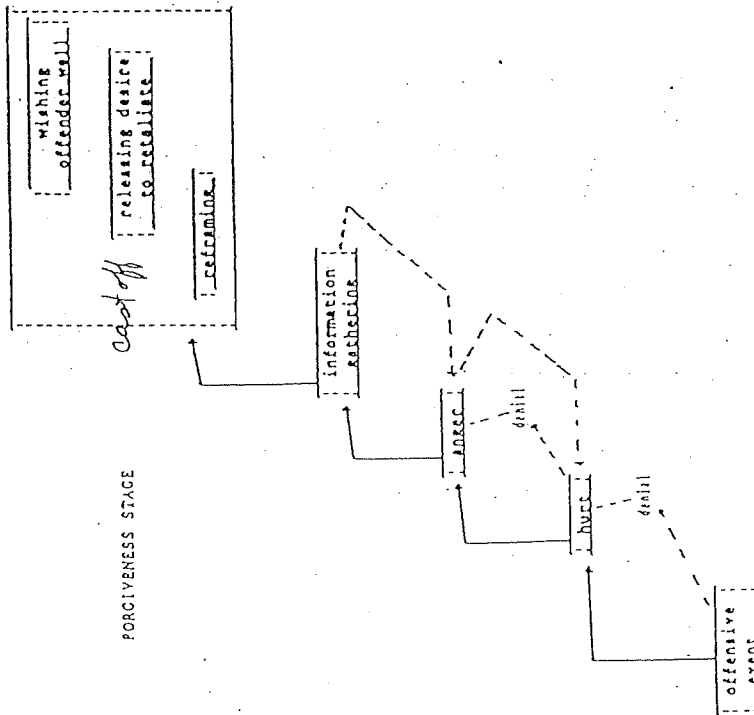
I John 2:1-2 "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

Colossians 3:12-14 "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

FORGIVENESS PROCESS



STAGES OF FORGIVENESS



THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON --- THE REPENTANCE MODEL --- THE FORGIVENESS PROCESS.

Six things need to be emphasized when counseling people in time of crisis:

1. **View the crisis as an opportunity to present law and gospel**
2. **Exercise patience**
3. **Strive for repentance and forgiveness**
4. **Trust in the power of the Word.**
5. **Practice what you preach**
6. **The issue is always personal and emotional**

In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) we see neither son acting out of mature faith. One tests the father's love by squandering wealth and by licentious living. For a long time there is impenitence for his sinful living. The other son tests the father's love with his unforgiving attitude.

The contrition part of repentance is always the recognition that our greatest fear is true. We have not been able to do it on our own. We have not been able to live without our Heavenly Father. We have tried and we have failed – repeatedly --- damnably. We are no longer worthy to be called the sons of God. We have no pride left. We are miserable sinners. Contrition brings us face-to-face with the reality of our own sinful mortality.

Romans 6:23 *The wages of sin is death.*

This is what the specific proclamation of the Law does. *Thou art the man!* This is something that is personal and emotional. It is something that is best done personally. It certainly often best received when it is done personally.

Luke 15:18-19 *Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.*

The prodigal son rejected the morality of his father. He squandered his father's inheritance. He had the live-forever syndrome of the young. He had the know-it-all attitude of the protected child. He would be used, abused, and tossed aside in a sinful world, but he did not know that when he left home so confident and proud of himself. He would learn it. Sometimes that has to happen. When it does happen, we pastors and teachers need to be there in the time of crisis. The crisis becomes our opportunity.

It is my experience that there is a remembrance of grace on the part of many of our people in their times of crisis. They remember the lessons of their youth in Sunday School and in Lutheran Elementary School. We need to brain-wash them while we have them, before the time of crisis. The well needs to be as full as possible with the Word so that when the crisis comes the water of life may be dipped from it so that the person in crisis is strengthened to cope. When the crisis comes, the Word is there – Law and Gospel – to correct and admonish and guide and comfort. Some of it is remembered. Use this remembrance. Build on it. Nourish it and make it grow in your crisis counseling. It is a

remembrance of precious grace we need to strengthen. It is a remembrance of the grace won for us by the holy, precious blood of the Son of God shed for us and for all.

What made the prodigal son come to his senses? The harsh law of God was preached to him by the terrible mess that he had made of his life. The situation of his life that he had put himself into was the crisis. The harsh Law of God was preached to him by the terrible mess that he had made of his life. But in his despair, he trusted his father enough to rely on his father's mercy and compassion. He knew the record of his father in dealing with his hired men. Objective justification needs to be at the heart and soul of all of our preaching and teaching. The cross of Christ for all sinners is God's theme for our ministries.

Be close enough to the family so that they will call you in the time of crisis. In your crisis counseling:

listen in love

proclaim objective justification

apply specific Law upon contrition

apply specific Gospel

Talk about the fruits of repentance

It is true what they said about Jesus:

Luke 15:2 *This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.*

It is true also of the undershepherds of the Good Shepherd.

We need to train ourselves and our church council members and our people to be joyful about the return of the lost. We need to show the joy of the father, sometimes more quietly, but still communicated carefully to the returnee. As we welcome them back into the fold, we need to live objective justification as individuals and as a congregation.

This brings us to the reaction of the stay-at-home brother in the parable. The brother *refused to go in* to the feast the father was holding for the returned brother. He seemed to be jealous. He seemed to hold the father's mercy and compassion and forgiveness against him. He could not forget the anger that had grown inside of him when he saw how his brother had hurt his father. He did not understand grace. Perhaps he did not understand his own imperfection – sin. "How can my brother be treated this way by my father when my brother has hurt him so? How can my brother get what I don't get – what I deserve because of my faithfulness to my father?" Work-righteousness and self-righteousness are obvious here. Anger is in opposition to love and concern for souls. Works are in opposition to grace.

The father has it right. There is joy and love for both sons. Gently the father chides his unforgiving son:

Luke 15:31-32 *My son...you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But I had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is*

alive again; he was lost and is found.

We are a church that lives *God so loved the world!* We are a church that lives *God was reconciling the world unto himself in Christ!* The world includes the fallen away, the lost, the rebellious, the gross and open sinner. These are not our shame. These are our **opportunities.**

We need to communicate to each other that we have a responsibility of love to express the Law in love and the Gospel in love to all people, even those living in crisis because of their own stupid sins.

We need to be much less concerned about numbers and more concerned about individual souls. We need to devise ways and methods to be more personal and better communicators of the love of the Good Shepherd which is expressed in both his Law and His Gospel. In our eagerness to work with those in crisis we need to view them not as our problem, but as the opportunity to serve our Savior as his undershepherd. We need to patiently return again and again, repeating Law and Gospel over and over again. We need to seize the opportunity which the time of crisis presents to show our Heavenly Father's love and concern for souls in our actions and our words.

D. SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES – LIMITATIONS -- CONCERNS

1. THE CALL

The assignment you gave to me in connection with this paper asked for “suggestions as to what should be done, who is more likely to handle the situation or parts of it, how to deal with each family member, follow-up, and when to suggest further counseling.” In order to discuss divorce, death, abusive situation, addictive situation, job loss/employment move according to your request it would be helpful to look at the Divine Call and the role and function relationships within a congregation between teachers and pastors, the limitations regarding training, and the whole concept of inclination or willing attitude of service to do this often time consuming work of providing counseling. We also want to look at confidentiality which will include Eighth Commandment issues, legal issues, internal reporting, and gender issues.

In discussing the call, we refer you for further study to the *Doctrinal Statements of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1970*. The one office in Christ's Church is the ministry of the Gospel. The public ministry, while not generically different from the common priesthood of all believers is “a special God-ordained way of practicing the one ministry of the Gospel” (p. 10). Congregations and other calling bodies have a “derived right” to call since the authority to call is implied in the authority to administer the Gospel, which authority is given to the church. God is a God of order (I Corinthians 14:33, 40). God has set down the qualifications of those who are to perform publicly the functions of the ministry. (I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11). God gives people who are qualified to do the forms of the work required (Ephesians 4:7-16; Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31).

“There is, however, no direct word of institution for any particular form of the public ministry” (p. 11). While there are various forms and functions of the public ministry, “the ministry is essentially one” (p. 11). New offices may be developed within the church. As a part of the public ministry of the Gospel, we view these new offices or forms as gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ may be preached to all people. We think of Acts 6:1-6 here.

Ephesians 4:11-12 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

The above passage is used by Professor Irwin Habeck to show that the pastor who feels that his call demands a solo performance and that he cannot delegate any of the functions of his ministry to any other member of the congregation has no Scriptural foundation upon which to rest his case. The public servant of the word is to equip the saints for works of service.

Habeck writes: “In the foregoing the pastor appears as the one who has the original responsibility, which he then delegates and shares with the members of his flock. Although we dare not press the terminology in the life of the church, there is the relation of a superior to subordinates. Sometimes, however, there are situations where two or more have the same scope of responsibility. The plural was used in the familiar passage Ac. 20:28: *take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers*” (heautois, hymas, episkopous). We have a similar situation when a congregation has associate pastors or co-pastors” (Habeck, I., *A Pastor's Call: Its Scope and its Limitations*, p. 3).

The scope of a person's call has implications for who will be the primary spiritual counselor in a congregation and who will serve in counseling under him. Teachers and principals are certainly called to serve as educators and counselors of children. They will be involved in a counseling ministry to families. Yet, the work of marriage counseling is usually done by pastors in congregations. Christian, Gospel-driven, common sense demands that pastors and teachers do some talking about who does what in what situations. The instantaneous, spur-of-the-moment type of counseling is different from the long-range, scheduled meeting type of counseling. The latter demands the recognition and respect for the scope of the calls the congregation has extended. Good communication is necessary between the called staff in the congregation.

The emphasis in the term, “pastoral counselor,” should be on the word, “pastor.” We think of the role of the pastor as a counselor as an extension of the pastor's office. He is the shepherd of the congregation to which he has been called. He exercises the Keys to the members of the congregation as a part of his counseling. In a counseling session he may loose a person or bind a person in his or her sins, depending upon penitence or a lack of penitence, pronouncing absolution and inviting the repentant individual back to the Lord's Table or refusing to absolve and asking the impenitent not to present themselves at

the Lord's Table because he plans to bring the matter of the individual's impenitence before the Board of Elders for action. I cannot imagine that function of a pastor's call being delegated to a teacher or anyone else in the congregation.

Where teachers are called to do more than teach in a classroom (youth ministry, family ministry, principal, minister of education, etc.) there will be situations in which counseling is appropriate and necessary. Proactive discussion and post session communication are important in such situations. Each – the teacher and the pastor – need to understand the roles and expectations and the relationships that exists between them because of the individual call that each holds. The members are also in the picture. What is best for them?

2. TRAINING

“For effective work the counseling pastor needs to be equipped with faith in Christ and the power of his Word, with a good working knowledge of Scripture, with an understanding of human nature, and with knowledge of counseling methods. His attitude will be one that is evangelical, that shows a love and concern for people, that displays acceptance of the sinners. He will be genuine, tactful, empathic, and humbly confident” (Schuetze, A., & Habeck, I., p. 188). Since all of the counseling done by teachers or pastors in a congregation will be pastoral counseling and not therapeutic counseling, which requires licensing by most states, the above quotation describes the training that is necessary quite well.

The following is also helpful: “Pastoral counseling is that pastoral care (*Seelsorge*) of individuals as they face their problems, troubles, griefs, burdens, fears and illnesses, which involves not simply giving advice, but assisting them to find help and healing from the word of God” (Schuetze, A., & Matzke, F., p. XII).

Pastors and teachers ought to do some counseling together, jointly, as the opportunities arise. This will permit mutual learning, understanding, and trust to develop.

Continuing education training is offered through WLS or MLC. NPH has recently published many helpful books in the area of pastoral counseling. Other books are in the planning stage.

3. INCLINATION AND WILLINGNESS TO SERVE (SERVICE ATTITUDE)

Inclination is perhaps not the best word. Willingness to serve may be a better phrase. I mean the desire or willing attitude of service of the individual to do the work given to them. Willingness to serve does not over-ride a call. If a person is called to do the work, the work is done by them, no matter how distasteful. “I don't like calling on discipline cases so I choose not to do them,” is not the proper application of inclination or willingness on the part of the pastor. “I don't feel inclined to do any correcting this month,” is not the proper use of inclination or willingness on the part of the teacher. Inclination applies to those areas of ministry that are an extension of our call and

are beyond our training. Technically, one might say that the pastor of the congregation has a call that encompasses teaching in the pre-school. I know that I am not trained for that demanding work. Nor do I have the inclination to do it. The work gets quickly delegated. But marriage counseling is something I am called to do, I have been trained to do, and even though I may not like the cycle of sin that I see, I know that marriage counseling is something that I will do counting on God's blessings.

Inclination and willingness to serve also enter the picture in the sense of the mutually agreed upon changes that come into the ministry of any and every congregation as the congregation and school and their united ministry grow. People will be asked to do more and/or different things. Changing neighborhoods, staff seniority changes, growing confidence levels, further education, filling in for others who have retired or who are sick, and other emergencies demand changes. We pray for a willing attitude. We pray for God's promised blessings upon our work. We pray that God will strengthen us to overcome our perceived inadequacies.

Where the call is there, the training is adequate, and the willingness is present, the work of the ministry in our congregations, including the ministry of counseling can take many forms.

E. GENDER ROLES

In a 1990 paper delivered to the Minnesota District, entitled, *Scriptural Principles: Application of the Scriptural Principles Concerning the Service of Women in the Church*, Dr. John Brug writes: "Women can certainly function as evangelists, teachers, counselors, and visitors of the sick if their service in these areas is in harmony with the scriptural principles of headship and submission as discussed above" (p. 11). I would recommend a review of the important Scriptural principles regarding the role of men and women. I believe that Dr. Brug recently presented his paper in this conference.

"Biblical teaching is not just leading a discussion in which all the participants throw in their own opinions, and the teacher moderates and throws in an opinion once in awhile. Biblical teaching is authoritative proclamation of truths from God's Word. This fact would also raise questions about women counseling men in many areas of scriptural pastoral counseling, which by definition is not simply a matter of non-directive listening or advising, but which is authoritative teaching which may ultimately result in church discipline" (Brug, p. 10). Pastoral counseling often merges with church discipline. This is not the type of counseling our women teachers will want to do. But there is the counseling that is in the helping role. "This is the witnessing and/or providing comfort and encouragement" (Terrell, B., p. 12) for the member or couple or child with whom the woman teacher is counseling. When it appears that counseling must become more directive and authoritative over a male, it is important that the woman teacher refer to the principal or the pastor.

F. CONFIDENTIALITY

1. EIGHTH COMMANDMENT ISSUES

There are two levels to confidentiality. The Eighth Commandment over-rides the legal rights or restrictions which federal and state governments place upon us. Our people must know up front about all of our counseling that federal law and state law require us to report to government authorities any suspicion of any type of current child abuse. We also have "a duty to warn" obligation if someone threatens harm or death to another person. My principal and I had an understanding that if and when child abuse was suspected and I was the first to notice it, I would immediately bring him into the picture and he would be the one to notify the proper authorities. That enabled me to continue to be the pastoral counselor to both the victim and the perpetrator. He had the training to recognize child abuse. I did not.

Federal and state laws may permit us to share confidential issues among the called workers because we are a church and school and a single counseling organization with the pastor as the head counselor and the principal and teachers as sub-counselors. It may not be morally right to share all that we know. There can be a fine line between gossip and the need to pass on information to the pastor or the principal or the rest of the staff.

2. LEGAL ISSUES

In the state of Wisconsin teachers in public schools cannot disclose information regarding drug or alcohol use. That must remain confidential unless the student is in any danger of causing harm to himself or others. The privilege of the pastor to keep confidences by Wisconsin statute is limited only to communication of a professional character as a spiritual advisor. Since our male teachers are now ordained, all ordained male teachers hold this privilege. Female teachers who are not ordained do not have this privilege under Wisconsin Law. As of this writing I am still waiting to hear from our WELS legal consultants about Michigan Law.

The way our WELS lawyer interpreted Wisconsin law one might think of the pastor as head of a counseling service who has the responsibility and right to read all of the counseling reports of his therapists for all of their clients. The called staff of the congregation have the right to discuss cases amongst themselves. Confidentiality is kept within the boundaries of the called workers. However, our lawyer added, having that right did not make it ethically proper or correct to reveal all.

When a member approaches a teacher and says, "I want you to promise that what I am about to tell you, you will never tell pastor (or principal, another teacher, or anybody else)." The teacher's response is, "I can't make that promise, so please don't tell me." In this way the teacher will never be "in the middle."

It seems to me that communication and sharing amongst the called staff regarding counseling cases should be on a need to know basis. Our lawyer suggested that a policy be written for the congregation which stated that the pastor is overseer of all counseling in

the congregation and pertinent information will be shared with him from all the counseling work of other called workers. He suggested a simple report form – handwritten – for this purpose. It should include the date of the counseling session, the names of those present, several sentences about what was disclosed by the member and what was said by the teacher or principal.

Psychological language should not be used – ever! Even a common word like depression should not be used. You can describe all the symptoms of depression but should not use the word. No pastor or teacher is trained to diagnose in the eyes of the law unless he or she is licensed by the state upon the completion of a course of training. The report should be signed and dated. The report should be given to the pastor and he should file it in a confidential, locked file. It is the property of the congregation and stays with the congregation even if the called worker leaves. No copies of the report should be made, not even for the called worker to take with him or her should he or she leave the congregation. Only the pastor should have access to the reports. A called worker can keep any counseling notes that he or she wants. They are unofficial and should be kept confidential. In a malpractice lawsuit they can be subpoenaed as evidence, however. Be careful about what you keep.

3. INTERNAL REPORTING

The sample report forms in the appendix to this paper are WELS Synod lawyer approved and can be copied by you for your use. The initial interview sheets are first shown with some hints of what to report. The second copy of the initial interview sheets do not contain these hints and may serve as a template for your report form.

Again, these reports should be kept confidential, be dated and signed. They stay with the congregation. (I really argued against this part of the lawyer's advice, because I don't trust the ability of congregations to keep confidential files confidential over vacancies. I lost.) Laws vary from state to state over how long records should be kept. Seven years seems to be something of a maximum. Check out the law for your state. Once each year plow through the records and shred or burn everything that is over your state's limitation, unless it is an ongoing case.

It is especially important that no psychological language be used in the report. Report what is going on spiritually. Describe symptoms in common layman's terms. You can report that your member disclosed that her doctor diagnosed her with depression. But you cannot diagnose it yourself. That is not your training.

G. APPLICATION TO CRISES

In all of the situations which follow, the person identified as a person to do something is my subjective suggestion. The delegation of some of this ministry is sometimes not even noted for fear that some will think of it as a necessity. The primary work to be done will always be that of Repentance and Forgiveness as noted in sections

“B” and “C” of this paper. The Scriptural Principles and Limitations discussed in sections “D” and “E” must be applied.

1. DIVORCE

- Pastor: Law/Gospel repentance counseling
the goal is not to save the marriage, but to save the souls
forgiveness counseling
communication skill counseling
counseling with parents and grandparents of the couple
counseling with the children
church discipline counseling
loss/grief counseling
guilt counseling
refer for financial and legal
you may be called in to be a witness in a custody battle
serve as a reference in job searches
- Teacher: patience with the children
counseling with the children
something like big brother/big sister/mentoring for the children – arrange
single parent classes
- Congr.: when divorce becomes public, prayer chain
food pantry
help with school costs
a female friend for the wife who has been divorced and who has lived as a
single parent and who has forgiven her ex-husband
a male friend for the husband who has been divorced and who has lived as
a single parent and who has forgiven his ex-wife
have clergy and staff malpractice insurance
- Read: WLCFS – *The effects of divorce on children.*
- *Living in Grace*
Gene Gronholz and Mark Zarling: *Growing Together in Christ*
Michele Weiner-Davis: *Divorce Busting*
Allen Ivey: *Intentional Interviewing and Counseling*
Schuetze - Matzke: *The Counseling Shepherd*
Sherod Miller: *Couple Communication and Conflict Resolution*

2. DEATH

- Pastor: loss and grief counseling
guilt counseling
Law/Gospel repentance counseling
forgiveness counseling
loneliness counseling

be aware of something like Kuebler-Ross' work – Cf. Prof. John Schuetze's work
repeated and regular visits with the surviving spouse and children
counseling with extended family
be especially aware of problems that teen-age children face
refer financial and legal counseling
help with food pantry
serve as a reference in a job search

Teacher: patience with children
counseling with children -- be aware of feelings of guilt and anger
something like big brother/big sister/ mentoring – arrange
single parent classes

Congr.: prayer chain
food pantry
a friend for the surviving spouse of the same gender who has
recovered from the loss of a spouse in a Christian way
help with children's tuition or school costs
have clergy and staff malpractice insurance

Read: John Schuetze: *On Death and Dying*
Brian Terrell and Ron Koehler III: *Survival Guide for Being Alone*
Gregory Schulz: *The Problem of Suffering*
Schuetze and Habeck: *The Shepherd Under Christ*

3. ABUSIVE SITUATION (spousal or child)

Pastor: be aware of the hot lines and safe houses in your area – check them out
be alert to signs of abuse
ask the questions to identify when abuse is going on
warn against abuse
control your anger to minister to the soul of the perpetrator
control your anger to minister to the soul of the victim
counsel with the children
refer to safe house
strengthen the victim to get help – to leave for a time, if necessary
be firm about demanding that the abuser get professional help
know where to refer the abuser – the women's shelters will have this info.
don't be afraid to call the police
check out the family patterns
Law/Gospel repentance counseling
church discipline
counseling regarding the confidence and trust of the Child of God
job search help and references
forgiveness counseling

trust-building counseling
refer for therapeutic help
refer for medical help

Teacher: consideration regarding missed school time
counsel with the children
patience
check children for abuse
know the laws of your area regarding reporting abuse
refer for therapeutic help
refer for medical help

Congr: help with children's tuition or school costs
food pantry
a friend who has gone through the problem and is forgiving
help with jobs and day care and housing
have clergy and staff malpractice insurance

4. ADDICTIVE SITUATION

Pastor: know that every alcoholic/addicted person is a con artist – liar
stop your excessive drinking
stop your public drinking or any drinking that will give the person an
excuse
forget all the funny drunk jokes you every heard – there is no funny drunk
don't ever excuse the person's drinking
don't counsel them while sharing a beer with them
be patient and wait for the crises
check out the help programs in your area
get the spouse into an AA program which you have approved, same for
children
read about alcohol abuse and addictions
Law/Gospel repentance counseling
know the signs
counseling with the spouse, children
continue the counseling/contact while they are in recovery
learn about interventions
refer for therapeutic help

Teacher: read about children of alcoholics and drug abusers
be alert for signs of abuse
be patient
provide a stable and structured environment for them
be honest and strive to gain their trust
build children up as children of God who have God-given abilities
be encouraging and supportive more than critical
refer for therapeutic help

Congr.: food pantry
work with other congregations to sponsor a WELS AA group
tuition and school fee support
have clergy and staff malpractice insurance

5. JOB LOSS/EMPLOYMENT MOVE

Pastor: contact prior to leaving
express concern about spiritual life
refer to nearest church of new location
prayer

welcome to your area
explanation of new church and surrounding and school
be prepared for loss counseling for spouse/children
train congregation Re.: welcoming new members

job loss counseling – fear, trust in God
be ready to make a job reference
marriage problems often accompany job loss – be aware
child abuse often accompanies job loss – be aware
watch for signs of depression – counsel, and refer
alcohol abuse can become more common – be aware
know the welfare laws
know where the places for helping the poor are located

Teacher: know how to say goodbye and hello with a smile
provide assurance
arrange for pen pals
talk to parents about continuing Christian education in nearest WELS
school
talk to parents about things they can do to make the move less traumatic

work hard at making the new children welcome and a part of the classroom
talk to the new parents immediately about special needs of the children
talk to parents about things they can do to make the move less traumatic
organize a parent welcoming system

check for signs of abuse
check for signs of anxiety and worry and depression

Congr.: food pantry
help with job search – networking
tuition and school costs assistance
baby sitting for job searchers
prayer chain

use WELS Soul Conservation
have clergy and staff malpractice insurance

RULES FOR REFERRAL

Refer when you feel you are over your head
Refer to those you can trust
Continue to provide spiritual counseling to those you have referred

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RECORDS - CONFIDENTIAL

PASTOR _____
CONGREGATION _____

INITIAL INTERVIEW NOTES

NAME _____ SPOUSE _____ DATE _____
ADDRESS _____ MEMBER STATUS _____
_____ PHONE _____

PRESENT _____

I. Spiritual Problem

- A. Current manifestation of spiritual problem

- B. Past pastoral care given and member's response

- C. Onset and course of spiritual problem (Historical)

II. Background information pertinent to the spiritual problem

If an adult: May include: family, social, recreational, age
developmental history, educational history
economic factors, environmental factors,
employment, marital factors, medical, AODA

If a child: May include: age, developmental history, educational
history, family, social, recreational
economic factors, environmental factors,
medical, AODA

III. Observation and Description

Appearance

Speech pattern

Memory (recent and past)

Thought pattern

Member seemed sad, happy, giddy, tearing, etc.

Insight/judgment

IV. Initial Assessment of Spiritual Condition

(In your own words, what do you think? sin, grace, Law, Gospel?)

V. Referrals for problems beyond the scope of pastoral counseling.

To medical, mental health, or legal professionals

To police

Others

VI. Counseling Goals

What do you and member hope to see as the result of counseling. Work this out with member. These may change over the course of your meetings.

VII. Counseling Plan

meeting for x number of weeks

length of each meeting

Who will be present? family, parent/child, individual, co-pastor
(work this out with parishoner) These may change over the course of your meetings.

Pastor's Signature _____

Date _____

III. Observation and Description

IV. Initial Assessment of Spiritual Condition

V. Referrals for problems beyond the scope of pastoral counseling

To medical, mental health, or legal professional
To police
Others

VI. Counseling Goals

VIII. Counseling Plan

Pastor's Signature _____ Date _____

PROGRESS NOTES

CONFIDENTIAL

PASTOR _____
CHURCH _____

NAMES OF PEOPLE PRESENT _____

DATE _____

I. Member presented

II. Pastor presented - Scripture used

III. Member's Response

IV. Homework

IV. Next Session _____

_____ End Sessions

Pastor's Signature _____ Date _____

CLOSING SUMMARY

CONFIDENTIAL

PASTOR _____

CHURCH _____

DATE _____

MEMBER _____

Follow-up _____

I. Specific reason for ending this series of sessions

II. Dates of Interviews and who was present

III. Summary of activity

IV. Continuing Problems

Recommendations

Referrals

V. General Observations and Thoughts About Future Action

Pastor's Signature _____

Date _____