

Pastoral care at Immanuel

Discuss this question with your neighbour while waiting to begin:

What *is* pastoral care?

An imaginary case study to think about: meet Bill...

He's a 34 year old married man at church. He has two children under 5. He's over-stretched at work and has tensions in his marriage. He's a fellowship group leader, but is spiritually in bad shape. Recently, he found himself attracted to a woman in his workplace: he opened to her and found her a great and sympathetic listener. He came close to a terrible fall. He decided to seek help.

He spoke to Fred at church, who was sympathetic about his work-life balance, but had nothing else to say. Then he met Brian, an elder, who referred him to the pastor.

He talked with the pastor, who listened carefully. He told him that he needs to love his wife (Eph. 5), be a good father (Eph. 6) and flee temptation (1 Cor. 6). He told him to read his Bible regularly and make fellowship group a priority. He urged Bill to see this as a crisis point – if he doesn't act now it will be too late.

Bill is chastened and glad for some serious direction. He determines to change. Things improve slightly, but the pressure then increases. His wife becomes depressed and needs psychiatric help. The church family provides meals and lifts for her to hospital appointments.

Bill is still struggling, and a much more serious "incident" occurs with his co-worker. He is devastated, but can't tell anyone at church what has happened. So he begins to lead a double life.

- Questions to have in the back of our minds:
What has the church done well? Where are the gaps? Has Bill received pastoral care?

"Pastoral" / "Pastor" = shepherds & sheep e.g. Psalm 95, Psalm 100, Ezekiel 34, John 10, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 5

Its aim = sanctification

NOT mainly feeling better... or fixing problems ...

But the HOLINESS of every church member (e.g. Col. 1:28)

Who does it?

Sometimes, needs help from outside the church...

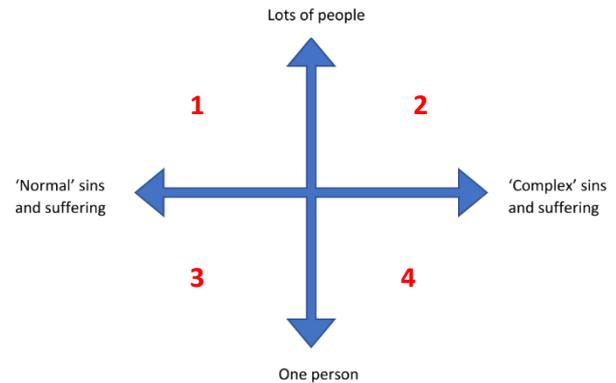
But normally pastors...

... and church Members!... "one another..." →

- be devoted to one another
- honour one another
- love one another
- accept one another
- instruct one another
- greet one another
- agree with one another
- encourage one another
- speak to one another with psalms hymns and songs
- submit to one another
- bear with one another
- serve one another
- forgive one another
- teach one another
- admonish one another
- spur one another on
- offer hospitality to one another
- clothe yourselves with humility toward one another

Pastoral care in practice: Bible plus practical care

God's Word / good theology / speaking the truth to one another (e.g. Ephesians 4:11-16)



Practical care for one another (e.g. James 1:27, 2:15-16)

In practice at Immanuel

Historically:

- small size meant informal Pastoral Care: easier for everyone to know each other.

Currently:

- Pastoral care led by Elders, key role for small groups
- Fellowship groups primary place for pastoral care: seeking to grow to be like Christ and help each other to do this. Sharing lives, practical care.
- Sorry...

Future?

- Training for leaders: growing in holiness... helping others to grow in holiness...
- Communication with church family
- All willing to be part of 'growing up' together / honest prayer/ Christian conversation

Confidentiality: a challenge / puzzle...

1) How do I use what I have been told to best love this person as part of the church family?

2) How can we shift our expectations of what it means to trust someone with information from 'I trust you not to tell anyone this,' to 'I trust you to discern with me how to share this information in the best way for me and my church family'?

Discussion & feedback

- Feedback and reflections?
- How can we care for one another more naturally and effectively?
- How can we help one another grow?
- What about Bill? What was good? Where are the gaps?