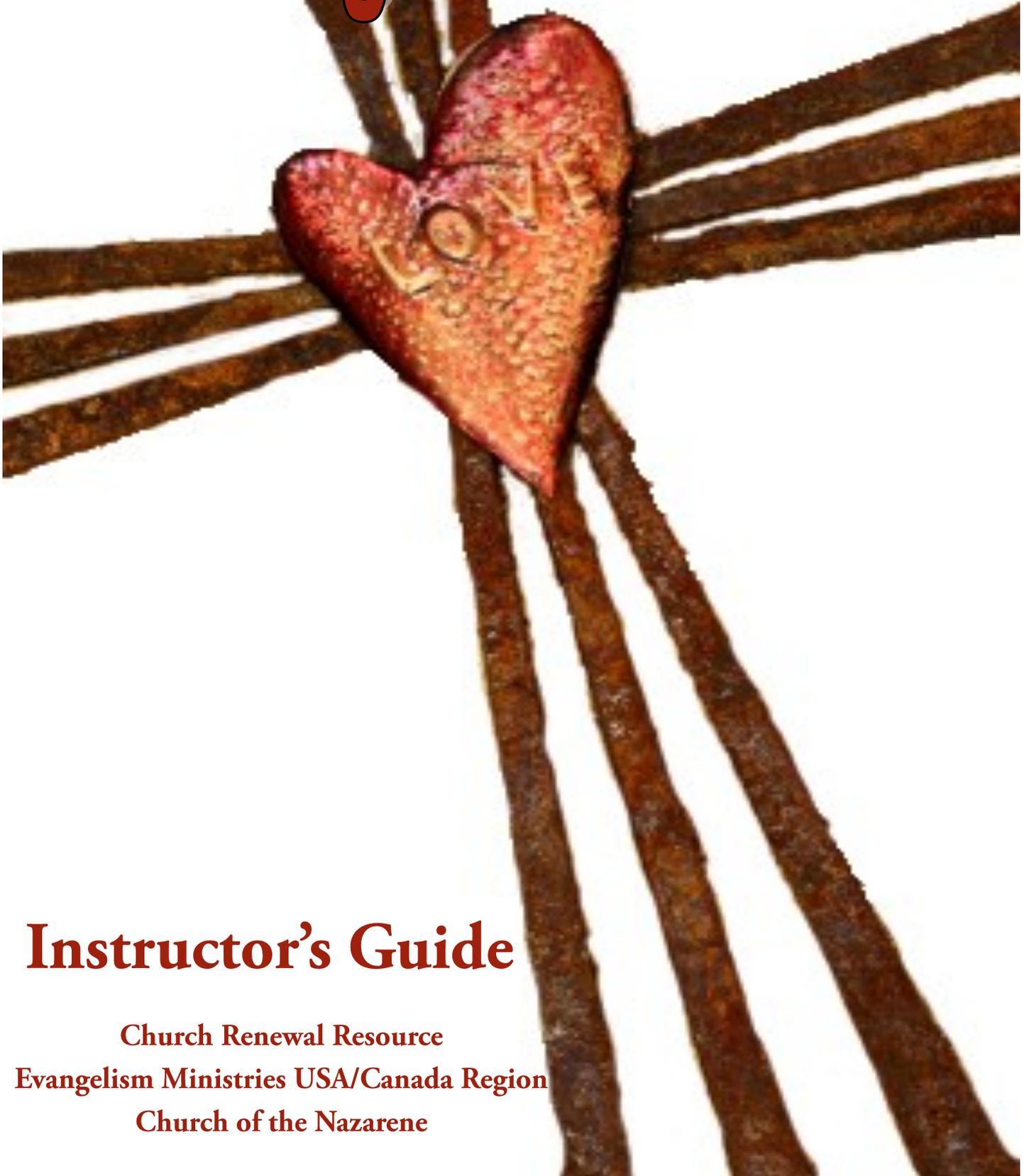


Providing Christian Care



Instructor's Guide

Church Renewal Resource
Evangelism Ministries USA/Canada Region
Church of the Nazarene

Acknowledgments

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Evangelism Ministries

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Preparation Checklist



The following information will help you prepare to instruct this module.

- ◇ Review the material and make notes of specific areas for special emphasis.
 - ◇ Check to ensure the following materials are available:
 - ◇ PowerPoint presentation
 - ◇ Participant booklet (copy as needed)
 - ◇ Gather the following materials:
 - ◇ Pens and/or pencils
 - ◇ Other material you want to use
 - ◇ Make copies of the following material (one for each participant):
 - ◇ Participant booklet
 - ◇ Handouts (if used with this module)
 - ◇ Check the classroom for:
 - ◇ Projector
 - ◇ Sufficient number of tables and chairs for the participants
- ⇒ Arrange the room so that each church team sits around an individual table and you have ample room to move among the teams.

MODULE AT A GLANCE

Section	Time	Page	Brief Description
I. Module Introduction	5 Minutes	P. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce module, objectives, outline
II. Lecture	25 Minutes	P. 6-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator presents information to encourage pastors and laity to join together in providing Christian care for those both inside and outside their church.
III. Small Group Exercise	20 Minutes	P.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants work in teams to reflect on the information presented in the lecture and begin applying the concepts. Participants evaluate their strengths and their team members' strengths in giving Christian care.
IV. Discussion	5 Minutes	P.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants share thoughts about the information presented and insights about how the information will assist in their leadership. Two possible questions to start the discussion in addition to the questions answered during the exercise are: What new ideas or thoughts did God reveal to you? What new techniques will you begin using as you think about others in your church?
V. Action Planning/ Reporting	15 Minutes	P. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants begin preparing for their homework assignment: Use the five elements of providing Christian care presented in the lecture and the information shared in the small groups to develop specific action items designed to improve and expand your team's actions for providing Christian care. In preparing for these activities, participants discuss how, who, when, and expected results. Participants will report the results of the activities at the next workshop.
VI. Module Wrap-up	5 Minutes	P.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close the module with your final comments regarding the topic.

Total Module Time 75 Minutes

I. Module Introduction

Notes

(5 Minutes)

Let the participants know the material is theirs to keep and encourage them to take notes. The participant material includes:

- Purpose
- Objectives
- “Fill in the blanks” for the lecture
- Application exercises

The purpose of this module is to:

Encourage both pastors and laity to join together in providing Christian care both inside and outside their church.

The objectives for this module are:

- Identify the five elements of Christian care.
- Identify personal strengths in providing Christian care.
- Identify other team members’ strengths in providing Christian care.
- Develop plans for improving and expanding the application of the five elements of Christian care.

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II. Lecture

Begin the lecture with the following introduction:

Notes

For centuries the church has built and strengthened a division between its ordained clergy and men and women who are engaged in earning their own livelihood in secular occupations. A feeling has grown that Christian care is the exclusive responsibility and absolute right of the pastor. But this understanding invalidates the word of God and is opposed to the mind of Christ when he instituted his church. It is also opposed to the concept which the Apostles received from Christ, our Lord and to the practice of St. Paul as he established churches. The burden of this tradition slows down the work of Christ and hinders his power being manifested in our ministry as congregations. There may be some things that work more efficiently by having this arrangement, but the church should not structure itself on the basis of expediency, rather on the truth of Christ. I should add that I can think of nothing which is more effectively done by this method.

What are the Apostolic qualifications for Christian care ministry? We find the answer in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Remember that these who were being ordained to serve the Church in Christian care had not been ordained to any sacred ministry before.

First we see in these passages that there is a great emphasis on moral qualities:

1 Timothy 3:2-7

Personal Virtues:	Temperate, Not given to drunkenness, Orderly, Gentle, Not a lover of money
Social Virtues:	Husband of one wife, Managing his family well, Having children who both respect and obey him/her, Hospitable (abroad as well as at home), Not violent, Not quarrelsome, Self-controlled.
Reputation:	Above reproach in the eyes of non-Christians as well as Christians
Intellectual:	Teachable
Experience:	Not a recent convert

II. Lecture Cont.

Titus 1:6-9

Notes

Personal Virtues:	Self-controlled, Not quick tempered, Not pursuing dishonest gain, One who loves what is good, Not given to drunkenness, Upright, Holy, Disciplined,
Social Virtues:	Husband of one wife, Hospitable, Not Violent, Not Overbearing
Home Conditions:	Having believing children who are not accused of being wild nor disobedient
Reputation:	Blameless
Intellectual:	Holding firmly to the trustworthy message, Power to encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it

These requirements are set forth for all who are in leadership and ministry and qualify each of us to administer Christian care. Unfortunately, we overlook or omit some of these. Each of us recognize the places where we need improvement and the church profits when all who are Christians — especially the leaders— are filled with these qualities. A great deal of the suspicion of the church has arisen because of our failure to live by biblical guidelines.

The Bible does not show us ministers offering themselves for spiritual leadership. They are called, yes, but the call was first given by the church which recognized their Christlikeness! I would hasten to add that a call to ministry is two-sided. A person must be convinced that he or she is called by God to serve, but the church must also be convinced that the individual is spiritually, morally, intellectually the best person to serve it — he or she must be called by the church as well as by God. Some will serve as volunteers and others will receive a stipend for their services, but all Christians are called to some kind of ministry. And a good motto for every church would be: **Every member a minister — equipped and serving!**

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II. Lecture Cont.

Notes

I would also add, that in many small churches, the level of spiritual experience in Christian care is often greater for the lay person who is mature in his faith than it is for a new pastor. I personally wish we could find some way to recognize that fact and give recognition to the caregivers in some kind of public prayer of consecration! Let us not forget that the apostles established churches that were fully quipped for growth and expansion — for reaching a lost world for Christ. In the early church, Christian care was almost exclusively given by the members of the local congregation.

So how do we go about it?

Dr. Eugene Peterson has written a masterpiece on Christian care titled *Five Smooth Stones For Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, William B., 1992). He sets out five elements of Christian care which each of you can do. Your spiritual giftedness will make it more natural for you to work in one or the other, but in an emergency, each of you, as a leader in your congregation, can pick up the responsibility for any of these and, until someone who is gifted is found, fill the gap efficiently and effectively. What are the elements?

According to Peterson, Christian care is taking our **FAITH** in God and introducing it to our friends, neighbors and business associates.

Left to itself, our faith is shy, retiring, and private or else it is like a prima donna: proud and on display. But our faith in God is not personal and it is not ordinary. When Christian care is neglected, our faith will appear to others as either showy and ceremonial, or some kind of private emotion.

Christian care is the **WORKING** application of our faith to the present conditions of life. Through Christian care, lives that are filled with the horror of isolation and pain are brought to redemption. The eternal Word of God and his will are brought to bear on human conditions and needs.

Christian care is a vast mixture of things in which the revelation of Christ is put to work in the ordinary universe. And often, the very foundations of faith are shaken by the tragedy which strikes individuals, communities, and churches. As Psalm 74 says, “The enemy had destroyed everything in the sanctuary.”

II. Lecture Cont.

The Jewish people blessed our Christian tradition with an outline for Christian care in the readings which they used in the four feasts and one fast of the religious year. It was called the Megilloth. These readings were always done in the context of worshiping God and it seems that all Christian care originates in an act of worship. The union of believers in crisis and in tragedy is extremely helpful. And while worship together is essential, it is only the origination point. Christian care continues in the hospital room, the family room, the counseling room, the committee room, and in the countless other places as Christian care givers are companions to those same people who were led in worship by their shepherd and servant. And without the worship, the giving of Christian care is only an isolated act of comfort, healing, and guiding. It is a “cut-flower ministry.”

Notes

Element #1: Praying

Following the Megilloth, Peterson suggests that all Christian care must issue from intimacy with God and building that intimacy flows from guiding individuals in need in the language and practice of prayer. The difficulties of human relationships are usually difficulties of intimacy. If we knew each other better — if we understood more fully the life of the “other” — we would be better equipped to feel with them as they oppose us. We cannot love someone we do not know and we cannot really know them without regular dialogue and open communication that flows two ways. **So how can we really know God unless we learn again to pray in openness and in dialogue — where we speak and we listen—AND WHERE WE REALLY HEAR GOD SPEAKING TO US?**

The goal of Christian care is that of helping persons develop their everyday relationships in such a way that they **DISCOVER** God’s will and his love at the center of every encounter.

That is training in mature discipleship. Salvation is an act of God in which we are rescued from the consequences of our sin and put in a position to live in free, open, loving relationships with God and with others. Without God’s act of salvation we are powerless to build lasting, loving, empowering relationships. With God’s act of salvation we are made whole again and prayer helps us “stay awake” to the magnificence of God’s saving love. The language of prayer is a language of intimacy and love. **MAKE DIRECTING IN PRAYER ONE OF THE FOUNDATION STONES OF YOUR CARE-GIVING!** (cf: Song of Solomon for the language of intimacy. It is an allegorical presentation of the language of intimacy in our relationship with God.)

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II. Lecture Cont.

Notes

Element #2: Making History

C.S. Lewis says, "It is not an abstraction called humanity that is to be saved. It is YOU...your soul, and in some sense yet to be understood, even your body, that was made for the high and holy place. All that you are...every fold and crease of your individuality was devised from all eternity to fit God as a glove fits a hand. All the intimate particularity which you can hardly grasp yourself, much less communicate to your fellow creatures, is no mystery to Him. He made those ins and outs so that he might fill them. Then he gave your soul so curious a life because it is the key designed to unlock that door, of all the myriad doors in him."

Every individual to whom you give Christian care has a **UNIQUE** story and giving attention to that person and that story is often the most helpful part of Christian care giving.

Those who need Christ most often disqualify themselves from receiving His grace, supposing that their individual experiences or unique circumstance exempt them from the truth. Guilt or willfulness of accident has created a loophole and they "are not worth" or "do not fit" into God's plan for redemption. They are left out and they form negative or neurotic identities as they relate to God's Will and God's Word. They feel alone in their pain and telling the story will help them hear again that God loves them.

But you must **LISTEN** intently to recognize the pain and the places of receptivity. If you have instant answers they will disqualify you from giving care.

Ruth lived in a time when everyone did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25). It was a time much like our own. People did not pay much attention to the Word of God. And Ruth was an outsider — a foreign woman and widow.

But every detail of her life was a part of a larger story. And every detail of the life of one whom God entrusts to you for giving his care, is a part of the larger story of his gracious redemption. Answers that come too easily or too quickly will not allow you to understand the suffering. Responses that come too quickly will send your "patient" flying and you may never have another opportunity to hear the story.

II. Lecture Cont.

Naomi listened and felt the story of Ruth, and because of her graciousness and compassion, Ruth recovered from her loss and began to minister to Naomi.

Notes

In identifying the suffering in others, be very **PATIENT**

Illustration: In his doctoral thesis to Phillips University, my brother, Dr. Charles Crow, suggests that the single most effective tool for geriatric care is allowing the person who is suffering the effects of aging to retrace the story of their lives and of how God has brought them victoriously through very difficult times. The remembrance has a calming and healing effect as they face the future that would be very grim and brings renewed meaning to their lives and significance to their struggles.

The Christian act of listening requires a certain degree of leisure and **PRIVACY** — time to pay attention and a place free from interruption. It will not happen in a hurry and it will not happen unless care is taken to make the necessary arrangements.

And the story is always **CONFIDENTIAL!** It can only be told by the original teller!

Remember, the listener is a friend. Whether professional pastor, counselor, or concerned friend, the listener is never to replace God in this act of giving Christian care. One of the things Paul did was to repeat parts of his own story as he listened. II Corinthians is filled with evidence of his painful pilgrimage. But we also must remember that we are the listeners. Often just talking things out will be sufficient for the person to solve the problem. And the listener is imparting God's redemptive grace as he/she listens.

We are a part of God's story and redemption occurs as we listen. **WHEN ORDINARY PEOPLE CAN LEARN TO TELL THEIR OWN STORIES OF LOVE AND SALVATION, OF PROVIDENCE AND BLESSING, WE HAVE PROVIDED THEM WITH THE SECOND ELEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CARE.**

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II. Lecture Cont.

ELEMENT #3 Sharing Pain and Identifying with the Suffering

Christian care is, among other things, a decision to **DEAL** with suffering on the most personal and intimate terms. True Christian care does not:

- Seek ways to minimize suffering or ways to **AVOID** it.
- **FOCUS** on finding explanations for suffering.
- **SEARCH** for a cure for suffering.

True Christian care **ENGAGES** suffering.

It is a conscious and deliberate plunge into the experience of suffering. The Book of Lamentations was the biblical background for the Hebrew people.

The task of giving Christian care finds its definitions and gets its guidelines from an understanding of the ways God responds to suffering. An understanding of how God works provides our orientation and perspective for Christian responses to suffering and guides us to see that Christian care giving is an assignment to share in the experience of suffering.

It is impossible for us to overstate the intensity or the complexity of the suffering that resulted from the fall of Jerusalem. The loss was total. Carnage was rampant. No family was exempt from death. Cannibalism and sacrilege were twin horrors stalking the streets of the destroyed city. Innocent children were being killed and the sense of hope in the value of human life was lost. The angry murder of priests showed a total disrespect for divine will. The very worst that can happen to humanity happened in that event.

The book of Lamentations addresses the human tendency to turn away from God in suffering. It deals with our proneness to blame ourselves when we are suffering. The false guilt is dealt with for God knew in inspiring this book that suffering, in itself, does not lead a person into a deeper relationship with God. Often the result is dehumanizing and embittering. It feels like God has rejected us and we conclude that since God hates sin, he also hates the sinner.

The task of Christian care is to comfort without in any way avoiding the human realities of guilt or denying the divine realities of judgment. Lamentations is the best place to learn how to do that. In all the suffering, Jeremiah

II. Lecture Cont.

Notes

keeps the attention focused on God, who loves his people. He takes seriously the suffering of the people, even though they have been justly judged and punished for their disobedience. He shapes their suffering and feelings into a response to God. Pain is made accessible to compassion and a saving relationship with God is nurtured as God binds up their wounds. No other book in the word of God is more filled with feeling, for suffering is always from real events in our lives. The feelings are intense but the facts are firm.

One commentator lists 11 historical events which are found in II Kings and are also found in Lamentations. These events were stark realities in the lives of those Hebrew people who first heard the words of this book.

Whenever a Christian finds a person in trouble, his first responsibility is to enter into the pain and share the suffering. Later he will help clear away the emotional rubble and expose the historical foundations. All suffering is caused by something. There is a debatable event behind the fact of our suffering — a remembered word of scorn that wounded, a describable injustice causing injury, a death with a date on it pinpointing the hour of loss, a divorce decree giving legal definition to a rejection. And from that event, suffering explodes into our lives and pain overwhelms us. For a time the loss seems total, but gradually it is possible to recognize and touch many things which remain intact and people who remain stable and caring. From that point we can discover weakness in ourselves, admit guilt, accept responsibility for our part, and be grateful for survival.

The third task of Christian care is sharing the pain of those who suffer. After sharing the pain, the Christian care-giver will help to restore a sense of dignity, an awareness of belonging to a community and in time, comfort (which must never be extended prematurely!).

ELEMENT #4: Guiding the Spiritual Expectations of People

People who come under our care as “pastors” expect to receive something that they could not otherwise get on their own and to learn something they could not discover by themselves.

From their relationship to God they expect to get in on something that transcends the natural and exceeds the ordinary. They expect the “pastor” to give them **GOD**.

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II. Lecture Cont.

Notes

But they will not be exclusive in their hope. The world is filled with others who offer their version of God. Television offers non-stop religion twenty-four hours a day. So your Christian care will be given in a context in which every kind of spiritual expectation is directed at you. But it will exist in a context in which other answers are being offered by people who have larger budgets and greater skills in communication. You will have a privileged relationship with those to whom you give Christian care because you have entered into their suffering. You will have a stronger voice because you have listened to their story and understand them personally. You will be closer to them because you have mentored them in the school of intimacy with God in prayer.

The religious expectations are like the crossfire of a battle and the Megilloth uses the book of Ecclesiastes as an ally in sorting out the reality from the false expectations. It does not direct you in what you should do to walk with God, but it is immensely helpful in showing what we must not do.

“Vanity of vanities” is the phrase which we remember from the book. The author, Solomon, tried everything and found it disappointing. He refers to himself as a preacher, or the one who gathers people together to worship God. He apparently was faced with what St. Paul and St. John encountered in the early church which has been described as “a riot of disordered religious romanticism...confidently declared to be the essence of the Christian Faith.” This Old Testament book is a “John the Baptist” kind of book.

It functions not as a meal, but as a bath. It is not nourishment; it is cleansing.

It is repentance. It is purging. The Christian care giver reads Ecclesiastes to get scrubbed clean from illusion and sentiment; from ideas that are idolatrous and feelings that cling to us because they have been so skillfully presented by those who would like to “tickle, men’s ears and please their stomachs” as Paul says. This book is an expose and a rejection of every pretention and presumptuous expectation of God. And I might add that many of the demands that will be made on you if you become a Christian care-giver will be just as false because you will be the representative of Christ in the world in a very direct and personal way.

One final word, before I move to the last element of Christian care. Ecclesiastes is sometimes dismissed with labels like “cynical” or “pessimistic.” But the labels won’t stick.

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II. Lecture Cont.

There is too much evidence of real cheerfulness.

Notes

Ecclesiastes 8:15 is a recurring theme: “I commend enjoyment.” In the Jerusalem Talmud there is a saying, “Every man must render an account before God on the day of Judgment, of all the good things he observed in life and did not enjoy.” This is the spirit of the one who gathers together. Giving Christian care will guide those whom God entrusts to us to reject false expectations, honor God and enjoy fully the provision of God!

ELEMENT #5: Building Community

All Christian care takes place in the setting of a community of faith: **THE CHURCH**.

The care giver is never a private and impersonal voice — a chaplain to the individual. Our task is set in the community and our responsibility is to build that community. Building community is greatly appreciated in our world and community development teams are going around the world to help in the process, but the applause ceases when it becomes apparent that we are to help in the process and we are to build a community of faith. Then we are offered suggestions on how to do something else.

People recognize that they are not sufficient in themselves. We need humanity to complete our humanity. And yet all secular attempts at community soon grow void of meaning. In America the primary need is loneliness, but the attempts at community fall so far short that there is special urgency to nurture communities where the Gospel is shared. The Promise Keepers phenomena and the women’s bible study groups are offering a kind of community of faith that is larger than the local church. Membership in garden clubs and civic clubs has helped our loneliness, but only the love of a Christian community is able to give meaning to life.

There are many things which distract from this part of Christian care. There are constant pressures to do other work which is more visible. A community of faith does not perform any specific utilitarian task that is apparent. Its essential nature is less self-evident than any other category of persons. It is even difficult for the church to show convincing evidence of its reason for being, which is to advance religious belief among those who do not know Christ. For when we begin to measure statistics, the church advances no faster than a club for bird watchers, and in some cases its advance is even slower.

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II. Lecture Cont.

Part of the problem is the American tradition of **INDIVIDUALISM**.

The myth of the self-sufficient individual permeates the American culture. When these individuals get together in crowds, the myth is simply accentuated. The crowd is not a community, but a multiplication of individuals rather than an organic body.

The New Testament energies flow out to bring churches into being — not simply a crowd of individual Christians. Instead of a mass of individuals, pebbles in a box, there grows a consciousness of being one body — an individual in Christ, yes, but also and equally important, **MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER IN THE BODY OF CHRIST!**

So the final, and perhaps the most difficult task of Christian care is to edge men and women out of their rugged, so-called individualism in order that they may experience the wholeness of the Gospel that redeems whole persons in community of faith!

The story of Esther, which is celebrated in the Feast of Purim, is a story which presents the issue of the nature and function of God's people in terms of survival versus annihilation.

Is it possible for a community of faith to exist at all in a world that is alternatively indifferent and hostile? Can a community of faith prevail on the simple grounds of being God's people — without demonstrating usefulness to the society in general, and without access to power in that society?

The answer is drastically revealed in the story and celebrated by Jewish people to this very day! The people of God were threatened with destruction. They were not destroyed.

Similar events occur from time to time in history and where the community of faith remains community, it **SURVIVES**. Where it reverts to individuality, the faithful are **DESTROYED**.

History is filled with examples.

For the Jews, Purim is the happiest of all Jewish holidays. There is

II. Lecture Cont.

merrymaking, feasting and drinking. The rabbis had a saying that while moderation is required throughout the year, on Purim it was permitted to drink wine until you don't know the difference between the "blessed be Mordecai" and the "cursed be Haman." The feast was a time of parades and dancing, of parties and feasting. It celebrates the survival of the community of faith.

Conclusion

Our task in Christian care is to teach the language and practice of prayer without which there can be no intimacy with God. It is to make the history of each person important as we listen and understand. It is to enter into the suffering and pain of every individual who God entrusts to our care. It is to say no to the false ideas about God so that realistic expectations are formed. It is to build a community of faith against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

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III. Small Group

(20 Minutes)

Notes

The small group exercise portion of the module provides an opportunity for the teams to discuss the information presented and how it applies to their church.

Turn to the Small Group Exercise portion of your participant booklet. Work with the team members from your church to complete the questions. You will have 20 minutes to complete the questions.

Use the chart in your material to first rank your top three elements for providing Christian care and then rank your team members' elements. Use the "action" column to note specific actions that you do or your team members do which show an ability to provide the elements of Christian care. When all team members have completed the chart, take turns sharing how you see yourself and how you see your team members providing Christian care. This is a great time to give each other (and yourself) a pat-on-the-back for the good things you are already doing.

Remain available during the exercise time to answer questions. Announce to the group when five minutes remain. Again announce to the group when two minutes remain.

IV. Discussion

(5 Minutes)

The discussion portion of the module provides an opportunity for people to share their thoughts about the purpose and importance of providing Christian care.

If you are ahead of schedule, the discussion can go a few extra minutes. However, it's easy to lose track of time, so watch the clock.

Call the group back together and open the floor for discussion. If the group is hesitant to discuss, start with one of the questions they discussed during the exercise.

V. Discussion

(15 Minutes)

Notes

This section gives the participants an opportunity to discuss their plans for using this information when they return to their churches, as well as how they will share the information with others

The homework assignment for this module is:

Use the five elements of providing Christian care presented in the lecture and the information shared in the small group exercise to develop specific action items designed to improve and expand your team's actions of providing Christian care.

Let's take about 15 minutes to discuss how you will begin to use impacting the concept of Christian care. In your material you have an Action Planning/Reporting page with your homework assignment. In your teams discuss and document how you will complete this assignment before we meet again. You will probably need to continue this discussion when you return home.

Move among the groups to answer specific questions. Listen for discussions that are not focused on developing a plan and guide them into developing a plan. Let the groups know when there are five minutes remaining and ask them to begin to conclude their discussions.

VI. Wrap-Up

(5 Minutes)

This section provides an opportunity to close the module.

- Ask participants to share their thoughts about the module.
- Remind the participants to record their results and be prepared to share the progress at the next session.
- Answer any questions and provide encouragement.

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