

Pastoral Care Interview #1

**PM 514 Pastoral Care
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Spring 2005**

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April 24, 2005

My first conversation on pastoral care was with Pastor Wayne Booth, who is on staff at Genoa Baptist Church in Westerville, Ohio. His staff position oversees pastoral care for our church and he has been involved in pastoral care ministry for more than twenty-five years. During our conversation, my goal was to ask open ended questions regarding his work in pastoral care and to see if the topics covered in class discussions would emerge. Following are some of the topics that Pastor Wayne and I covered in our conversation.

As we began, I asked Pastor Wayne if the needs of people had changed in the last twenty-five years and he said that basically needs have not changed; as human beings our needs don't really change. He believes he sees more cancer patients now than ever before and is also saddened by those that have contracted HIV and AIDS which were not on the radar years ago. He is often faced with time constraints and in these times the needs of church members are placed ahead of those in the community. However, there is a new team-based ministry at our church that he has been helping to assemble called the 'Sonshine Ministry Team.'

The Sonshine Ministry Team is simply an extension of his pastoral care ministry. So far there are fifty of our church members who have joined this team. There are three arms of this ministry: hospital visits, nursing home visits and home visits. Pastor Wayne will be working directly with a couple that will be developing team leaders from each of the three arms of this ministry and will be meeting with them once a month to coordinate this ministry. I commented that this seemed to be a ministry in which the pastor was organizing and training the congregation to provide pastoral care. Pastor Wayne affirmed this as the approach and said there is not enough time for a pastor to meet all needs, nor could he fully meet all needs. He continued by telling me of some Sonshine team members who liked to make phone calls and even some that enjoy arranging and delivering flowers. Most notably I was impressed when he mentioned

that there are ladies in the hospital or at home with shoulder injuries or illness that has prevented them from doing their hair and that several church members have gone to offer their services in washing, cutting or styling hair as a ministry to them. This type of gift based ministry only happens when we give whatever we have to God's service; much like offering our fish and loaves.

Pastor Wayne then shared with me regarding Genoa's annual Senior Fest. Last year was the fifth annual such event at our church. This event brings various agencies and services together for the benefit of seniors in our community. Last year we had the Delaware County Senior services present along with area nursing homes, Golden Buckeye representatives, local police and fire departments each providing helpful demonstrations and services to seniors. We also had a senior health fair that included pneumonia shots, flu shots, blood pressure testing, mammograms, blood sugar testing and other needed services for seniors at no cost. Our next senior fest will include presentations and support for the creation of living wills. Several Christian attorneys have already been invited to attend. With the growing needs of seniors in our community, Pastor Wayne sees this ministry as a great tool for showing our love as a church to our community.

Next I asked what the majority of his pastoral counseling time is spent focusing on. I was not surprised when he said "relationships," but I was somewhat surprised when he said "marital relationships." His next comment caused me to feel quite saddened when he told me there is only a 1% higher rate of success in the Christian marriage and roughly half of all marriages fail. Sadly he finds that people simply do not know how to find contentment in life. There is no longer commitment in families, in the workplace and even in the church. We are a society that always wants something better and does not know how to be content.

I asked Pastor Wayne for any thoughts that he had on Pastoral Care that would be helpful to a student like me. He shared that you need to be called to do pastoral care properly; people know when you really love them and you cannot fake that. He also shared with me that this is a ministry that brings you close to people; you cannot be at arms length to love them as Jesus taught us to love. He encouraged me that even when you go to see someone with AIDS you must draw close to them and be willing to touch them. This was all the more meaningful to me as a word from the Holy Spirit as I had not shared any of our class lecture experience with him prior to this conversation.

I asked pastor to respond to the allegation that if we move to close to people they will see our sin and it will repel them. He suggested that the power of God's love through us should always be greater than our faults and failures. While we continue to grow to what God has called us to be, people are looking for authentic lovers of God and fellow humans who love them.

Finally, Pastor Wayne shared how important it is to slow down to appropriately provide pastoral care. When providing communion for a shut in or in a nursing home, don't just hand them the bread and wine and get going; slow down. Share a word from the Lord find out how they are doing. These are times when it is important to use pastoral care as a means to help people feel reconnected to the body of Christ. This was an important message to me as I was reminded of my mother telling me repeatedly as a child to slow down; now in God's family I will need to hear that message again. Pastor Wayne said it is vital to know that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

I wish to thank Pastor Wayne and my church family at Genoa for assisting me with this endeavor. I am proud of my family at Genoa.