

The 10 Most Challenging Counseling Issues Pastors Face

Among the many responsibilities of pastors is counseling church members. Some pastors spend a lot of time counseling members. Others do limited counseling before referring the member to someone they view to be more qualified.

But all pastors are counselors.

We took the opportunity to ask pastors on social media about the most challenging issues they face when they do counseling. While there were some definite outliers, these 10 were among the most frequent responses.

1. **Marital infidelity.** Many pastors lamented the horrendous damage done to marriages and families when one or more of the spouses is not faithful.
2. **Divorce.** Obviously, the first two are related. A number of pastors said those who come to them with divorce on their minds usually have their minds made up. Counseling is either a formality or an appeasement toward a favorable divorce settlement.
3. **Sexual and physical abuse.** Some pastors said this issue was the fastest-growing topic in counseling. They don't think sexual and physical abuse is new; more victims are now willing to come forward.
4. **Mental health issues.** Depression and anxiety were mentioned frequently, but others were noted such as schizophrenia and borderline personality disorder.
5. **Teen sexual issues.** More teens are seeking help with issues of sexual identity, sexual pressure, and sexually transmitted diseases.
6. **Addiction.** Though alcoholism is still very much an

issue, a number of pastors spoke of other addictions such as heroin and other opioids.

7. **Church conflict.** Church fights lead many members to counseling. Lack of church unity has far-reaching consequences.
8. **Loss of a child.** This issue is a nightmare for the parents and often requires long-term counseling. A number of pastors expressed willingness to do this counseling for the longer-term than many of the other issues.
9. **Death of a loved one.** This category would include the loss of all other loved ones beyond the death of a child.
10. **Lack of forgiveness, bitterness.** I had my expectations of what issues would arise before I put the question before pastors. This one surprised me, though it probably should have been expected. I guess I didn't expect those who were bitter to seek counseling. Apparently, I was wrong.

There were a few head-turners. For example, one man sought counseling because his wife was not happy with his girlfriend moving into the house with them. And he brought both women to the counseling session. This one fits the truth-is-stranger-than-fiction category.

Among the lighter ones was the pastor who does counseling with Alabama and Auburn fans who despise each other.

I understand that one.

This list is by no means exhaustive. I received a lot of great input. I would love to hear from you as well. {eo}

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