

**Counselor of counselor:  
prepared to listen to counselor**

**Conselheiro de conselheiro:  
preparado para ouvir o aconselhador**

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**ABSTRACT**

Pastoral counseling requires from those who practice it a series of care so that the counselor is not affected physically, psychologically and mentally by the different realities heard by him. Generally, people who seek pastoral counseling seek answers to their problems and transfer to the counselor the responsibility to lead them in solving the most varied demands. The counselor, by taking on this service as part of his pastoral ministry, is subject to exhausting conditions, and it is necessary for him or her to psychically protect himself in some way. Thus, being a counselor to another counselor, a pastoral therapist (TP), requires anyone to distinguish what he hears from the person who reports the reason that made him or her seek this kind of help. Pastoral therapists must know how to distinguish the human being who provides counseling services and who is subject to the different types of suffering to which they are exposed, when listening to people. He must be able to trace paths that preserve the counselor's mental health and establish his psychic defenses, an attitude of paramount importance so that his service can be effective throughout his performance. Hopefully, it can be that support that allows the counselor to continue his task of helping so many who are going through difficult times in life and who develop a progressive state of mental distress or discomfort. For this, the TP must be competent to make use of different

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listening techniques so that each case is analyzed in particular. The TP listens and considers the different psychologies used as instruments that help the patient who is being treated with professional psychologists and that can serve as another resource at the TP's service. Therefore, the work of the TP aims to present reinvigorating guidelines in the role of those who act as counselors, providing resources that allow the counselor to protect themselves from possible psychic weaknesses.

### **KEYWORDS**

Counseling; Pastoral Therapy; Counselor; Pastoral Psychology.

### **RESUMO**

O aconselhamento pastoral exige daqueles que o praticam uma série de cuidados para que o conselheiro não seja afetado física, psicologicamente e mentalmente pelas diferentes realidades ouvidas por ele. Geralmente, as pessoas que procuram aconselhamento pastoral buscam respostas para seus problemas e transferem para o conselheiro a responsabilidade de liderá-los na resolução das mais variadas demandas. O conselheiro, por assumir este serviço como parte de seu ministério pastoral, está sujeito a condições exaustivas, e é necessário que ele ou ela se proteja psiquicamente de alguma forma. Assim, ser conselheiro de outro conselheiro, um terapeuta pastoral (TP), exige de qualquer pessoa que o faça distinguir o que ouve da pessoa que relata o motivo que a fez buscar esse tipo de ajuda. O terapeuta pastoral deve saber distinguir o ser humano que presta serviço de aconselhamento e que está sujeito aos diferentes tipos de sofrimento a que se expõe, ao ouvir as pessoas. Ele deve ser capaz de traçar caminhos que preservem a saúde mental do conselheiro e estabeleçam suas defesas psíquicas, uma atitude de suma importância para que seu serviço possa ser eficaz ao longo de sua atuação. Espera-se que ele possa ser esse apoio que permita ao conselheiro continuar sua tarefa de ajudar tantos que estão passando por momentos difíceis na vida e que desenvolvem um estado progressivo de transtorno ou desconforto mental. Para isso, o TP deve ser competente ao fazer uso de diferentes técnicas de escuta para que cada caso seja analisado particularmente. O TP escuta e considera as diferentes psicologias utilizada como instrumentos que ajudam o paciente que está em tratamento com

psicólogos profissionais e que podem servir como mais um recurso a serviço do TP. Portanto, a atuação do TP visa apresentar diretrizes revigorantes no papel daqueles que atuam como conselheiros, fornecendo recursos que permitam ao conselheiro se proteger de possíveis fragilidades psíquicas.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Aconselhamento; Terapia Pastoral; Conselheiro; Psicologia Pastoral.

### **Introduction**

For a long time, the pastoral office was seen as a spiritual office that sometimes took the place of another mental health professional. Few counselors radicalized their care by associating them solely with religious issues, regardless of whether advising him to present an indication that he was beyond religious issues. This brought, aside the normal wear and tear in counseling, another type of behavior and dynamics of counseling. In Jay Adams's line of counseling (1970)<sup>2</sup> and his noutetic method, any problem involving mental disorder was associated with the devil's action, and there was only the correct type of counseling that was the Biblical. Any kind of counseling or therapy that was outside the literal biblical model according to Jay Adams was rejected. In his perspective advising him would have a solution to his problems if he converted to Christianity without any other possible possibility of resolution. This radical way of thinking was present in the formation of not a few pastors in Brazil in the 1970s towards. Therefore, the Pastoral Therapist (if there was at that time as this being treated in this article) would have only

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<sup>2</sup> ADAMS, Jay E. *Capable Counselor*. The reading of the introduction of this work reveals the objective intended by the author, which is to discredit that the different psychology can contribute to the mental health of the individual. Throughout every work, Adams seeks to radically systematize that the only effective therapeutic means is one that finds foundation in the biblical text. With her radicalism, Adams does not value psychiatry as a branch of medicine and fiercely attacks psychoanalytic theory stating that she is responsible for the deviations from each person's responsibility for the choices they make.

this resource when he was sought by another counselor, thus limiting all available therapeutic action. What can be seen these days is that pastoral counseling and mental health must necessarily work side by side. “Pastoral counselors represent a recent rapprochement between science (psychological) and religion”<sup>3</sup>. For this to be useful the systemic theory presented by Ludwing Von Bertalanffy from 1967 to 1968<sup>4</sup>, it is a good tool that can provide the Pastoral Therapist with viable alternatives to the performance of this function. Science should help itself in the best quality of life of the human being, and none of the sciences that deal with people’s mental health can present itself as the only solution, even because there is no absolute knowledge it is a fallacy that should be discarded. This is a hence the important thinking expressed by Ludwing Von Bertalanffy.

Allied to the thought of Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, to some extent with sharp similarities, says Carol Wise when dealing with the multidisciplinary of psychological sciences and its results: “The general field of psychotherapy as it is emerging today must be seen as multidisciplinary. In our complex society, there are many influences on the human mind and its development, so that no one discipline can have a monopoly of understanding or cure”<sup>5</sup>. What can also be read in Ruth Scheffer’s book,

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<sup>3</sup> GREER, Joanne Marie G. Research in Pastoral Counseling, New Year: Definitions, Methods, and Research Training. In: WICKS, Robert J.; Richard D. Parsons; Donald Capps. *Clinical handbook of pastoral counseling*. Volume 1, Expanded Edition, Paulist Press/New York and Mahwah: New Jersey, 1992, p. 632-646.

<sup>4</sup> BERTALANFFY, Ludwig Von. *General System Theory*. George Braziller, Braziller, BrazillerInc. New York, 1973. Chapter 9 – General System is suggested Theory, New Theory in Psychology, New Which and Psychiatry, New Which – p.205-221, in which the author addresses the growing influence of the concept of system on Psychology, New Which, Psychiatry, New Which And Psychopathology, New Which. Citing names of famous psychologists like F. Allport, 1955; G.W. Allport, 1960; Anderson, 1957; Arieti, Pennsylvania, 1962; Brunswick, New District, 1956; Buhlwer, New District, 1959; Krech, New District, 1950; Lennard & Bernstein, 1960; Menninger, New, 1957; Rappaport, Pennsylvania, 1960 and others, it is possible to perceive how general systems theory can be important in the treatment of pastors and religious leaders, provided that the proper boundaries between TP and other forms of psychological therapies are stored.

<sup>5</sup> WISE, Carroll A. *Pastoral Psychotherapy: Theory and Practice*. New York. Jason Aronson. London, 1980, p. 15.

Psychological Counseling: Theory and Practice. In which the author points out different technical types of possible psychological counseling<sup>6</sup>.

No less important is what can be read on the subject in Strunk's words, quoted by Robert J Wicks, Robert J.; Richard D. Parsons; Donald Capps: "According to Strunk (1985), modern pastoral counseling is tied both to theology and to a group of human sciences which were non-existent during much of the history of pastoral counseling"<sup>7</sup>.

That's why Pastoral Therapists (TP) and good counselors are of extreme need these days remembering that: "Since he works with people, the pastor also needs a psychological orientation"<sup>8</sup>, which tends to contribute to prepare function of both the TP and the pastor himself.

### **The pastoral therapist – TP**

The TP can be considered metaphorically as an archaeologist in the mind of the pastor advisor. He seeks, by excavating the overlapping mental rubble over the time of the pastor's ministry that requests him, to find evidence and sound memories lived by the pastor when he perceived himself dedicated to pastoral ministry. Just like the archaeologist who in an archaeological site carefully removes the superficial layers of a possible profound discovery of the origins of a given object that can unravel the mysteries of life and evolution of the human being, the TP he will seek, together with the pastor, to recognize paths, rebuild structures, restore connections that make sense for the pastor to continue his ministry.

In this careful walk, in possession of the necessary tools, the TP will remove or allow the resignification of previously harmful thoughts to the pastor, in order that he does not fixate on possible trauma during the exercise of his ministry, but seek to bring to mind the good memories that

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<sup>6</sup> SCHEEFFER, Ruth. *Aconselhamento Psicológico: Teoria e Prática*. São Paulo: Atlas, 1975.

<sup>7</sup> WICKS, Robert J.; Richard D. Parsons; Donald Capps. *Clinical handbook of pastoral counseling*. Volume 1, Expanded Edition, Paulist Press/New York and Mahwah: New Jersey, 1992. GREER, Joanne Marie G. *Research in Pastoral Counseling, New Year: Definitions, Methods, and Research Training* p. 632.

<sup>8</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 25.

bring health to the mind and body. This thought is not strange, especially for Christian religions, because it reads in Lamentations 3,21: “This I keep in mind, and because of this I have hope”<sup>9</sup>.

The TP, because he is also a religious minister, has the possibility of understanding the meaning of some sacred symbols that are part of the universe of religions. Religion understood in the simplest sense that is the attempt to contact the transcendent, with the sacred, the desired unknown, finally, with which allows the human being to understand who he is, in an endless universe of symbols created in an attempt to signify this self-understanding.

As the main objective of the TP is to take care of the mental health of the pastor, the use of these symbols contributes to pastoral therapy itself. This expresses Carol Wise about the importance of the very expression of this symbolic, concerning the psychic health of the pastor:

The symbolic process leading to health is the same in psychotherapy as in life. It involves, for one thing, the constant attempt to expand the meaning of one’s symbols in a manner which is accompanied by the growth of the self. The growth of the self and the expansion of the meaning of symbols are two sides of one process, which take place simultaneously. This is the reason why it is they involve the whole person, thinking, feeling, and striving<sup>10</sup>.

Without delving into the theme of what symbolic value represents for humans, Bertalanffy states that “[...] mental disturbances in man, as a rule, involve disturbances of symbolic functions”<sup>11</sup>. This is a very important aspect that should be considered by the TP.

The TP then turns to the use of this form of communication so that the pastor feels heard fully and thus can perceive himself during what he has of knowledge, experience, and experience. Corroborating the previously cited text of hope that it is possible to reach via memories recorded in healthy memories. This may imply the change of meaning of some

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<sup>9</sup> Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 160.

<sup>11</sup> BERTALANFFY, Ludwig Von. *General System Theory*. George Braziller, Braziller, BrazillerInc. New York, 1973, p. 217.

symbol that, instead of contributing to the maturing of the pastor, infantilizes it, making it limited to pastoral ministry. As for that Carol Wise warns that “The meaning of the symbol must be changed when it is discovered to be inadequate or when it is wrong”<sup>12</sup>. This change is meant is a challenge for the TP and pastor he meets.

### **Difference between listening and listening in pastoral counseling service**

Although listening and hearing has the same goal, listening presents different elements concerning hearing simply. Not everyone you are listening, but everyone you hear listen. Knowing listening requires those who practice pastoral listening, knowledge of different types of communication, of languages, which are not just about verbal expression. The counselor must know how to listen to what the advising man tries to say through his body expression, gestures, looks, breathing, dilating of the pupils, blinking eyes<sup>13</sup>, finally an extensive range of attempts to make communicate are used by the counseling, seeking to be understood. This is because some feelings cannot be expressed via spoken or written word. It requires another form of communication that goes beyond the four senses<sup>14</sup>.

The basic difference between listening and hearing is that the one who hears does not always know how to identify where the sound comes from, and because he does not know how to decode it precisely, also can not present any idea of why that noise, or how that noise could make sense for and or someone else. Listening doesn't guarantee the certainty that what you've heard is something relevant or that might be important to someone. “Effective listening and responding entail absorbing what the speaker says and then offering it back to bring the dialogue to a deeper level”<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 160.

<sup>13</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 156

<sup>14</sup> ROBERTS, Rabbi Stephen B. MBA, MHL, BCJC. *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care – A Practical Clergy and Chaplain's Handbook*. Hardcover Edition, Fourth Printing: United States of America, 2014, p. 92-93.

<sup>15</sup> ROBERTS, 2014, p. 92.

To hear not always the physical presence is necessary, but in the case of therapeutic listening, the physical presence of those who listen is shown to be another important element in the therapeutic process. The physical presence, visual contact, and hearing present are ideas, but other forms of communication developed in modern times cannot be devalued. (Skype, WhatsApp, Messenger, email, etc.). However, having a posture that evidences that the conversation with TP is different from another type of dialogue, it must be part of both parties that are for this given purpose<sup>16</sup>.

The pastoral counseling service works with listening and this accurate, and before saying anything the TP should know how to listen. “You can’t be expected to speak before being able to hear. You cannot offer commentary until you have understood what contribution will truly benefit the client”<sup>17</sup>. For the one who will hear counseling pastors, in the case here called Pastoral Therapist (TP) this service is of greater importance given the complexity that is to listen to others who also listen to other people and needs to be heard from the different way from the people he listens to. “Skill, courage, and especially desire to plumb the depths behind the words and emotions being shared are required”<sup>18</sup>. Some aspects should be taken into account when wanting to work with advisors (counselor), especially since “the manner in which the pastor listens is in itself a form of process communication, therapeutic or antitherapeutic”<sup>19</sup>, in this case, it should be understood for TP. There is no magic solution to emotional problems. And some people think that the pastor or therapist have an immediate solution to a problem that has existed since childhood, often<sup>20</sup>. Thus, these aspects involving listening should consider at least three of them.

The first is to dissociate the advisor (counselor) from his role as a counselor. At that moment he finds himself in a position similar to that of the people he listens to at his place of care. However, given his theoretical

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<sup>16</sup> AHLKOG, Gary & Harry Sands. *The guide to pastoral counseling and care*. Psychosocial Press, Madison, Connecticut, 2000, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> AHLKOG & HARRY, 2000, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> ROBERTS, 2014, p. 93.

<sup>19</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 157.

<sup>20</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 37.



knowledge of how to listen and advise others, the TP can easily feel shy in front of the counselor who seeks in him, TP, a new perspective for what he, pastoral counselor, living in practice. Thus, one should not delegate to people with little experience of listening therapy service of such great relevance, because the psychic health of the pastor counselor is that it will allow him to continue to exercise his role as counselor in his daily life.

The second aspect no less important for accurate listening is to be trying and prepared to listen to stories that come against the role of the pastor counselor. Episodes that may affect the dynamics of impartial listening and that would not lead to a successful conclusion the intended work. Good TP should be eclectic in your listening realizing that similar issues or confessions in its essence present themselves differently from pastor to pastor counseling. The TP function, in this case, is more complex since some issues addressed may be like those advised by TP themselves present in their enclosures. The TP will know how to distinguish this form of listening and possible intervention so that the pastor's counselor also notices it. According to Erick Erickson the TP "... should be able to distinguish the healthy strivings in the religious life of a person, and also the unhealthy defenses and patterns"<sup>21</sup>.

The third aspect privileges the confidentiality of those who listen to the history of those who seek to. Knowing how to listen to "stories" is an interesting contribution to the work of TP, because through these history symbols and metaphors can clarify aspects hitherto hidden for the pastor counselor. This technique of listening to history as a principle for deeper interpretations, had been used by John Savage (1969)<sup>22</sup>, and also contribute to better listening to the pastor's counselor. At all times the TP must be discreet and entirely reliable, demonstrating to the pastor counselor that he is before someone who understands him, or wishes to understand his story and that together they will seek the best way to overcome conflicts, overcome barriers and thus do not avoid efforts in

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<sup>21</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup> SAVAGE, John S. *Listening and Caring Skills in Ministry: A guide for Pastors, Counselors, and Small Groups*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969). It is suggested that you read chapter eight (p. 77-100) to better understand the technique of listening to stories as a starting point for deeper analysis.

the reconstruction of a strengthened and safe psychic environment for the pastor counselor. In the face of this, the pastor counselor can also contribute to the resolution of his problems and feel invigorated to continue performing the function of the pastoral counselor. The TP should remember that “Every pastor, even for the general work of the ministry, needs a deep understanding of himself”<sup>23</sup>.

This is also an important function of the TP and that will allow the pastor counselor to understand that the special moment he is going through is part of the pastoral ministry of any person who has a responsibility to deal with members of his ecclesial community. They are simple thoughts like these that reestablish hope, perhaps forgotten, to the pastor of the counselor in the face of his pastoral vocation.

### **Separate the counselor from his advisory job**

According to the article entitled Using Effort-Reward Imbalance Theory to Understand High Rates of Depression and Anxiety Among Clergy, published in *The Journal of Primary Prevention* there are few researchers interested in studying the physical and mental health of clerics. In a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2012, the estimate was that the number of clerics of different religions was around 230,800 and with a growth rate of 18% by 2020. The interesting thing is to note that in this study the authors draw attention to the different functions to which the clergyman should be provided. Six different types of activities of the clergyman were identified, including rituals (sacraments), pastoral (social relations), preaching, teaching, organization, and administration<sup>24</sup>. It is not working to understand that pastoral function requires the minister postures that go beyond the capacity of any human being. Therefore, that is why the care that the TP must take in knowing how to separate pastoral work from the human being who performs pastoral activity.

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<sup>23</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 158.

<sup>24</sup> MILES, Andrew; TOTH, Matthew; ADAMS, Christopher; SMITH, Bruce W.; TOOLE, David. *Using Effort-Reward Imbalance Theory to Understand High Rates of Depression and Anxiety Among Clergy* In: *The Journal of Primary Prevention*. Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell. December 2013. Volume 34, Issue 6, p. 440.

The wisdom of distinguishing between the mission of counselor and the person of the counselor is of fundamental importance for TP to be able to develop his work well. At first, this different form of therapeutic listening may seem easy. However, what is observed is that few TP are enabled for this type of activity. Especially, if the two performs similar work, TP and pastor counselor, in case they are Christians, experience similarities in the demands presented. This is due to vocation and pastoral work to constitute different types of stress (relational, personal, family, work) and that church members cannot perceive the scale of this stress. Some churches expect more than the pastor can offer, not because he does not want to, but because he does not have enough time to take care of himself. Four stressors are easily observed: personal criticism of the pastor, ambiguity between pastoral function, pastoral and pastor person, high expectations about him and his work and ultimately criticism of the relatives of pastors (wife, children, relatives)<sup>25</sup>. Hence the importance of the TP maintaining clear the separation between the pastoral function and the person of the pastor, both for him, TP and for the pastor counselor who seeks it to be in the attempt that these stressors elements and common anxiety in these cases are minimized or even eliminated<sup>26</sup>.

How much of the separation between pastoral function, pastoral counselor and the person of the pastor, mentioned earlier, seeks to prevent to autonomy that the TP will have in, if necessary, forward the advising to another mental health professional, without this necessarily causing embarrassment neither for one nor the other. This type of attitude should also be seen as a form of care that in no way decreases the service and therapeutic action – professional of the TP. Contrary to what may seem, the competent TP knows the limits of its performance and due to the value of human life, will not feel constrained to suggest another

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<sup>25</sup> MILES et al., 2013, p. 440.

<sup>26</sup> GILL, James J.S.J., M.D. *Anxiety and Stress*. In: WICKS, Robert J. Richard D. Parsons, Donald Capps. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling*. Volume 1. Expanded Edition. Mahwah, NJ, Paulis Press, 1992, p. 452-465. James J. Gill show up important aspects of the issue. It points out the relationships and signs that can be observed between anxiety and stress and suggests six possibilities to be used by counselors to solve these problems.

therapeutic form. “Encourage them to consult a physician for evaluation of their medical condition, which may be related to their symptoms”<sup>27</sup>.

The pastor or priest (or TP) should recognize that he is not a psychiatrist and should not try to make diagnoses that he does not know what it is, but he should be able to recognize the difference between depression, anxiety and the separation between faith in God and mental problems. He must know the basic difference between disappointment, hallucination, and obsession<sup>28</sup>.

However, it should not be established the limits between pastoral counseling and psychological therapies, concluding that the PT or pastoral counselor does not carry out in any way a therapeutic “technique”, although different, that it does not should be recognized by the sciences that work with the mental health of the individual. Carrol Wise notes that:

There is another fallacy in this business of definition by setting up fences. it is that the nonpastoral psychotherapist, be he psychiatrist, psychologist or social worker, must not deal with the religion of a patient. This is a false assumption. Any therapist should deal with a patient’s religion to the extent that religion is part of the patient’s illness<sup>29</sup>.

It is worth remembering that TP is a specific therapeutic form for religious leaders, especially pastors who are subjected to a certain type of social isolation that is directly related to unconscious content not elaborated by them. This is the limit to which the TP should stick. These are unconscious issues accumulated during the exercise of the function of counseling who sometimes become imperceptive for pastoral counsel, but which manifest themselves through the different symptoms of mental discomfort revealed in attitudes and conducts, both physical and mental of the pastor counselor and that he does not realize the cause of such problems, developing so certain type of psychic isolation.

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<sup>27</sup> GILL, 1992, p. 457.

<sup>28</sup> According AUTTON, Norman. *The pastoral care of the mentally ill*. London S.P.C.K, 1963, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 7.

Because they have no one to share their frustrations with, failures and problems, pastors and religious leaders are likely to develop this kind of psychic isolation. What is meant by psychic isolation is the impossibility that the religious leader imposes himself, or tends, not to feel comfortable to share with others, especially his faith community, his most intimate problems emotional. It could be understood as psychological social isolation, due to the position in which he is placed in front of the community to which he serves as a pastor. This state of loneliness, coupled with the symptoms of anxiety and stress, contribute to the pastor seeking to distance himself from other people, even if this is not so clear to him. "Loneliness is usually defined as a condition in which something is missing. We are aware of absence as a much powerful presence. My lack of something can influence me more than anything I possess"<sup>30</sup>. In this case, the loneliness of the pastor is the lack of himself as a human person. It's the longing he feels about himself. This kind of feeling is not always perceived by members of the community of which he is part.

In the collective imaginary of many members of certain religious groups, the pastor or community leader must, among so many other tasks imposed on him, be competent to listen and advise any kind of demand that comes forward and the resistance itself hear from the counselor that some matters do not compete to him to conduct, usually sound like the advisor leader's incapacity. This image of super-leader is also due to the stance that some leaders assuming not showing themselves fragile and limited, like any other human being.

In turn, the expectations of the members of the congregation or community that the pastor must have high holiness and therefore is not prone to the same weaknesses as others, causes him to isolate himself with some members become one-way expression, since the pastor does not need emotional, physical, economic support to continue his ministry. This is another aspect that contributes to the pastor feeling alone and lonely<sup>31</sup>. The work of the TP should take into account this type of

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<sup>30</sup> NEALE, Robert E. Loneliness: Depression, Grief, and Alienation In: WICKS, Robert J. Richard D. Parsons, Donald Capps. *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling*, New Year Volume 1. Expanded Edition. Paulis, New Press/Mahwah, New Jersey, 1992, p. 466.

<sup>31</sup> According to *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, p. 441.

behavior on the part of the different congregations and pastors and that negatively interferes with the ministry of pastoral counseling.

Another important reason for understanding well the value of the distinction between pastoral function and the person of the pastor, is that the work of the TP allows him, TP, to be that not the place of receiver of the different demands brought by the advising, but observing particularities important and specific that contribute to your good listening. Just as the different psychotherapist professionals are in a different listening position in relation to the people who seek them, in the case of the TP this should realize that the listening exercise used by it involves issues directly related to the function that the pastor counselor exercises and that resembles those he TP is also involved in a certain way. Having this listening ability requires TP to sharpen in knowing the limits of its function while observing it's its potential to help the pastor advisor in conflict with himself. The listening place occupied by the TP must be well delimited, both for the TP itself, and for the pastor counselor requesting his intervention.

Last and not without a relevant degree of importance, the TP must combine theoretical knowledge with practical life, since sometimes it TP, can also be in the position of religious leader of some community and be subject to the same problems brought to him by the counselor pastors. Both knowledge and practice, when well-founded, will contribute to TP knowing what its function is in this process of therapeutic service, which will allow its psychological defenses not to be affected by the similar demands brought to it by the pastors and will also contribute to the pastor counselor feeling encouraged to continue his ministry.

### **Strengthening psychic defenses to preserve mental health**

Anyone's mental health is decisive so that they can overcome the different situations that life exposes them. Therefore, when thinking about mental health, physical and emotional mechanisms should be considered that<sup>32</sup>. Can strengthen the psychic defenses of each one. For this

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<sup>32</sup> To deepen the theme – strengthening the psychic defenses – the reading of FREUD, S. *The ego and the id*. Brazilian Standard Edition of the Complete Works by Sigmund

sound shielding to be done, some care must be strictly observed, especially for the counselor shepherd, who works with significant sacred symbols sometimes rooted and fossilized in the memory of the faithful. And not only in the mental framework of the faithful, but also in the hidden interior archives of the pastor or religious leader. “Unfortunately, the conventional social standard implicitly demanded by many Church fellowships has taken the place of a living spirit of Christian love, and such an atmosphere only tends to increase the conflict of the emotionally sick person”<sup>33</sup>. The TP should not be oblivious to how important the relationship of the pastor counselor with the congregation, so that his mental health does not collapse. Different aspects of this relationship should be brought to light in search of viable alternatives both defense and health preservation of the counselor pastor.

In the effort to preserve the mental health of pastors at least three aspects should be contemplated. They are healthy relationships, valued self-esteem, respect for the body. Different aspects can indeed be observed so that psychic defenses are strengthened, but the choice of at least three of them who are interconnected will enable the understanding of the universe that involves the mental health of the pastor counselor.

### **Healthy Relationship**

Anyone needs healthy relationships that can contribute to their psychic health. It is not uncommon to observe how harmful some relationships become harmful to the pastor. They can be your community or even family members. It is understood by a healthy relationship the one that allows the pastor to show himself who he is, not the function he performs. Sometimes church members merge the figure of the pastor’s person to pastoral ministry, without distinction being made. To be a pastor

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Freud, vol. XIX Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 1996. For a quick understanding of the defense mechanisms of the ego. NATHAN, Peter and Sandra L. Harris. *Psychopathology and Society*. McGraw-Hill Book Company – USA – 1980, p.94-96.

<sup>33</sup> AUTTON, 1963, p. 17.

is to performance the pastoral function necessary for a community, circumstance, place, etc. During grazing, the shepherd recognizes himself in sheep and sheep in the shepherd, without, however, there is a loss of identity from either party. When the intimacy of the pastor is not preserved or understood, an imminent risk of psychic trip is configured. Relationships that tend to require the religious leader more than he is conspiring for his bankruptcy. The pastor must seek without humming relationships that can distinguish his function from who he is.

As well as “The ancient and medieval Church was firmly convinced of the therapeutic value of personal benediction, in both physical and a mental cases”<sup>34</sup>, it is inferred that the personal blessing that involves the personal relationship between the pastor counselor and church ready in which he exercises his ministry, promotes his mental and physical well-being. This relationship was observed since medieval times and that therapeutic action contributed to the maintenance of the health of the pastor counselor. Hence, the importance of the pastor counselor his need for reliable relationships, who know how to see him as a human being above all else.

For this to be feasible, the pastor must at least seek people who understand this difference and who will contribute to their well-being, thus reducing the stress experienced during the exercise of his pastoral function. Unfortunately, in not a few churches, especially Christians, pastors are struggling to achieve relationships that help them preserve their mental health. The demands required of pastors can contribute to their emotional weakening and thereby damage their psychic defense.

The benefits of healthy relationships for the pastor range from small informal meetings to meetings that have as their main objective to share with participating people successes and failures in pastoral life, without this promoting malaise. The degree of communication between the pastor counselor and the surrounding people around him, especially communication with the TP, in this universe of healthy relationships, will allow the pastor counselor to build a positive self-image of himself. As for that Carol Wise warns:

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<sup>34</sup> AUTTON, 1963, p. 18-19.



Genuine communication about the inner self and its struggles takes on a mood of reflection and meditation. It expresses the sense of increasing contact with oneself, especially with parts of the self which have been alienated. It is a search for truth about the self, truth here being a dynamic life process rather than a proposition. Unacceptable aspects of the self-struggle to emerge into consciousness, albeit often in disguised and distorted forms<sup>35</sup>.

In this way, the pastor will not feel so different from others for exercising his ministry. This also contributes to the pastor continuing to work humanly and thus can reach others who are experiencing difficult times in life. It is in the meeting with each other and with himself through frank and open dialogue that the pastor counselor will build healthy relationships.

### *Valuing self-esteem*

Knowing how to work with people's esteem is not something for inexperienced people to take risks. Perhaps this is one of the most laborious tasks to be developed by TP. Promote the self-esteem of the counselor pastor, or at least unveil to the pastor counselor its importance and meaning because they are relevant religious meanings. Carol Wise's warning is of great importance in bringing to the TP's memory the following statement:

The pastoral therapist should be aware that when he is dealing with the depths of a person he is participating in an experience of profound religious significance, and at appropriate moments communicate this to the person. The secular therapist may or may not share this responsibility, depending on his faith and convictions<sup>36</sup>.

When the religious leader meets people who know how to value his esteem, he will certainly be able to keep his image clear and strengthened. Pastors and leaders who cannot be valued in the exercise of their

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<sup>35</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 161.

<sup>36</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 163.

duties are likely to develop negative image regarding themselves. When the community of which the pastor is part understands that the appreciation of his self-esteem contributes to remain psychically healthy, possibly the positive results of his work will be easily observed. And so, everyone will benefit; community, pastor and mystery in general.

From a Freudian perspective, self-esteem would be directly linked to the development of the Ego. The pastor who knows whether to self-examine himself may not suffer many concussions when his self-esteem is in check. With each lost mishap, the pastor will find himself to continue his ministry. So, having good self-esteem helps that he not let himself wear out beyond what is necessary during his ministerial work. Positive self-esteem allows the pastor to remake plans, set new goals, without making it perfectionist, on the contrary, when realizing who he is, the pastor will be able to help the other effectively. The pastoral ministry will no longer be regarded as a burden, but as a chosen and pleasurable vocation.

The pastor who continually develops his self-esteem, without letting selfishness or selfishness deceive him, establishes a certain level of trust in himself and consequently will be noticed by the faithful who is are part of his community. This degree of trust is salutary and functions as another useful device in your ministry, also contributing to strengthen your psychic defenses, thus avoiding feeling fragile in the face of the common discrepancies of life. By about people who can strengthen their esteem, the pastor will be contributing directly to his psychic health to reinvigorate, even in difficult times that will arise in the exercise of his ministry. The appreciation of pastoral ministry is decisive for it to maintain its positive self-esteem.

### ***Respect for the body***

The human body, when considered to be a whole, made it an excellent educational field. It is important to remember that respect for the body includes the mental health of each human being and through the body the communication of constitutive elements of thoughts become clear. Put another way, the body is the nonverbal expression of what we feel, we live and think. Through the body and its different forms of

language, because the body speaks, the pastor counselor will learn to respect its limits. In the book, *The body speaks the silent language of non-verbal communication*, by Pierre Well and Roland Tompakow, among other contributions to understand the language of the body, draw attention to two techniques interests with this purpose of communication and perception of the limits of the body.

The first technique is from the Israeli Moshe Feldenkrais, in which sensations and emotions are affected by movements. Moshe Feldenkrais' words:

The correction of movement is, according to him, the best way because the nervous system deals mainly with the movement and that the movement is at the basis a good deal of awareness. Through special exercises, it manages to directly change brain programming, because movement can only change when producing, first, a modification in the brain. Your exercises, of which there are hundreds, aim to modify the balance of the body standing or sitting, in avoiding useless trip of muscle energy diverted from its reaction<sup>37</sup>.

The relevant in what describes Moshe Feldenkrais, who must be a cause of interest of the TP, is to achieve along with the pastor counselor, to understand which movement, or which exercises indicate the maximum flexible capacity attainable of the body of the counselor pastor. At first, this may seem uninteresting, but body balance is directly linked to intrapsychic issues. Few counselor pastors are unaware of this simple technique of balance and ignorance, they print a Herculean effort to remain healthy. However, what is observed is that the attempt to remain physically and emotionally balanced disrespects the capacity or recognition of bodily physical limits itself.

The second technique presented is that of Australian F.M. Alexander, who by losing his voice and failing in any medical therapy, "suspected that some vocal mechanism was at stake. Observing himself daily in front of a mirror, he gradually verified that his entire body was involved, related to inappropriate postures"<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> WELL, Pierre and Roland Tompakow District. *The body speaks the silent language of communication non-Verbal*. Are Paul: Voices, 2019, p. 149. (E-book).

<sup>38</sup> WELL, p. 154.

The interesting thing for TP, in this case, is to work with therapy what F. M. Alexander thus describes when observing those who made the use of his technique (dancers, actors, musicians, athletes, in others): “[...] patients with psychosomatic problems in general. It is not about ‘exercises’, but a learning of the proper use of the body”<sup>39</sup>. It is the recognition of this proper use of the body that had allowed the pastor counselor to understand its limits.

Nowadays, the human being, every passing day, continues to try to overcome his obstacles, not always respecting the limits of his body. Similarly, the pastor or religious leader who does not respect the limit of his body will face serious problems in his ministry. Setting limits are not a deprivation of liberty, on the contrary, is to be free within your capacity.

The limits of every human being must be respected, and the pastor is not excluded from this universe. By transgressing their limits, not a few pastors have a diminished ministerial career. We come across all moments with people who, because they don’t respect their limits, end up compromising the rest of their lives. This easily observed in the most varied sports. Especially in international competitions. Because they disrespect their bodies, some athletes submit to various types of aggression themselves. The use of chemicals that deteriorate the body over time has become a common practice in the lives of some athletes in various types of sports. They are super vitamins, medications and a huge range of products that sometimes cause irreversible physical and mental injuries.

The pastor who knows his physical limits will better perform his pastoral function. He will realize that at times that what should be done is to completely stop his activity, so that his forces can be reestablished. As much as machines try to replace human function, and many believe that this is already happening, no human being will be able to turn into a machine. The most that the human being will achieve in his fragile existence is to become human. When the human being disrespects his humanity the marks of this disobedience appear in the body.

That’s why the pastor should value his body and take the necessary care so that he is always well. Regular physical activities should be part of the pastoral agenda, without him feeling guilty about it. Some religious

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<sup>39</sup> WELL, p. 154.

ministers understand that physical exercises should not be part of their work. On the contrary, to preserve your mental health, in addition to healthy relationships, valued esteem, body care should occupy an important place in the pastor's life. Some reading Paul's text on "exercise for little is profitable" (II Tm 3:16)<sup>40</sup> absolutize him and understand that "for nothing is profitable". This is another mistake that can be repaired and that will preserve the pastor's health.

### **Fair listening and its therapeutic outcome**

The art of knowing how to listen is one of the most important functions of any therapist, whether he is a religious minister or not. Therefore, the TP must be prepared to perform this function that can determine the continuity of the ministry of several pastors. The degree of importance of PD in the life of the pastor-in-office must be the subject of interest to the different religious institutions. The investment in this type of professional (TP), will result in religious ministers better prepared for the ministerial career. Hence, the importance to understand what a sound listening is and the therapeutic result it achieves.

### **Listening to hearing**

Listening is different from hearing, as previously discussed, in the first part of this article. When talking about sound listening what is intended is for the TP to be able to listen to the pastor soundly. Listening soundly is to have precise conditions and instrumentality to return to the person who is listening, alternatives, resources, ideas that are dynamic enough for them to strengthen itself in the face of various matters dealt with in a pastoral office.

For TP to succeed in its therapeutic work its listening must be influence-free or external noises because "an effective listener stays attuned

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<sup>40</sup> *Holy Bible*, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblical.

to the present”<sup>41</sup>. The focus should be part of the gift in which both are, TP and pastoral counselor. What is inferred is that the TP should be aware of its auditory form, without allowing it to interfere with the way it listens to other people. His assumptions cannot compromise what he hears from the pastors and religious leaders who seek him. This impartiality in listening to the other requires TP experience and willingness to give up some intuitions that tend to interfere with sound listening.

For Gary Ahlskog and Harry Sands a healing listening could be summed up in the following sentence: “What makes counseling different from ordinary conversation or exchanging personal opinions? The fundamental counseling stance consists of undivided attention to the client’s concerns within an atmosphere of benign benevolence”<sup>42</sup>.

Sound listening service is an activity that should not be confused with listening and opine on some aspect. Listening to someone’s sound is trying to put themselves in place of the one who is saying how he feels, for different reasons and reasons. It is no easy task and will require TP certain design of different aspects than it usually feels inclined to give vent to his feelings. By placing itself in this position of “scout”, the TP gives up its different position from the person who is listening and puts himself at the same level as the one who is verbalizing his feelings, desires, frustrations and success. The TP can be compared to the stethoscope that the doctor uses to hear his patients’ heartbeat. This small device guarantees the doctor the precise evaluation of diastole and systole movements of the heart. Whether the blood flow is normal or not, it is listening, in the first instance, that will give a precise diagnosis of this move from the heart.

Listening to TP is how it evaluates the flow and reflux of what he hears, without directly interfering with the way the person expresses himself. The pastor should feel free to make use of any form of communication that can truly verbalize and communicate his discomfort or weakness in the face of the problems he heard. Thus, when the TP is

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<sup>41</sup> ROBERTS, Rabbi Stephen B. MBA, MHL, BCJC. *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care – A Practical Clergy and Chaplain’s Handbook*. Hardcover Edition, Fourth Printing: United States of America, 2014, p. 93.

<sup>42</sup> AHLKOG, Gary & Harry Sands. *The Guide to Pastoral Counseling and Care*. Psychosocial Press, Madison, Connecticut.2000, p. 13.

good “listening”, the difference will be sensitive and therapeutic for the one who seeks it. The pastor will feel safe to know that he found in the figure of the TP, someone who understands him and does not consider him endowed with superpowers. On the contrary, the figure of the TP, in a way, allows the pastor to feel less distant from the possible alternatives for him to achieve his goals. Communication needs some concrete element to settle completely. TP is the palpable materialization of this communication state.

Another important aspect of sound listening is that it conveys to what is being listened to security that will allow him to make decisions more quietly. Put another way “the listener’s remarks are inviting, open-ended, and broad”<sup>43</sup>. Sometimes the pastor feels insecure as to what way to go, what is the best strategy to be taken for a matter or action. The follow-up of TP, especially in these cases, will enable more confidence on the part of the pastor or religious leader at the time he makes his choice. Sometimes the process of choosing an alternative is more painful than the alternative itself. As a facilitator in this process, the TP decreases, with its precise listening, this important moment for the pastor. This, at no time, raises the TP to the position that may show superiority or control over the person he hears, on the contrary, is his approach to the one he listens to that will allow less stressful environment to make any decision. THE TP is not above, but on the pastor’s side, encouraging him to continue his ministry and fulfill his pastoral mission with determination, courage, and love.

### **Therapeutic result**

When thinking about therapeutic results there is the possibility of imagining that the TP will be successful in all its care. As if he, TP, was the only solution to the most varied problems that reach your desktop. As previously addressed, the TP is one of many other possibles forms

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<sup>43</sup> ROBERTS, Rabbi Stephen B. MBA, MHL, BCJC. *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care – A Practical Clergy and Chaplain’s Handbook*. Hardcover Edition, Fourth Printing: United States of America, 2014, p. 93.

of therapy. Psychological ecumenism, addressed by..., demonstrates the need to seek the best treatment for each case. Both Bartalanffy's systemic theory and Ruth Scheefffer the different psychological counseling models, especially the eclectic method suggested by her<sup>44</sup> and the knowledge of the three fundamental forms for the development of psychology (Behaviorism – Psychoanalysis – Gestalt), should be considered when one thinks of therapeutic results. What is the best method to be employed that will result in a good therapeutic outcome?

The TP has a responsibility a responsibility to find out what may or may not be treated by it therapeutically. In a way, what can be inferred is that allied with the TP, another form of psychotherapy could be used together with that of the TP. It would be considered listening with positive therapeutic outcome, provided that the TP makes clear to the pastor the limits of its action, which is still an effective form of therapeutic care and professional care. However, this type of joint action should be exercised, if applicable, with the utmost caution, and should be observed if the pastor understands the process through which he goes without TP and psychotherapy becoming another problem for him.

Not always pastors' counselors or religious leaders, when they seek the TP, can have the exact dimension of their problems. Some have already sought another form of psychotherapy, by medical indication, or from specialists such as psychiatrists who may prescribe drug treatment for the patient, in this case, the religious leader, so that he has a minimum of brain stability to treat your problems. Deficiency of some chemicals produced by the brain and that act as neurotransmitters (endorphin, dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin) that are important for you to have stability to overcome the natural stress of life, will be replaced synthetic medicines prescribed by psychiatrists, neurologists and other health professionals. Currently, what is perceived is that the prescription of psychoactive drugs does not rule out the need to follow up one of the various forms of psychological care.

The TP falls into one of these possibilities, with specific ability to know the religious symbolic universe in which the pastor is inserted.

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<sup>44</sup> SCHEEFFFER, Ruth. *Aconselhamento Psicológico: Teoria e Prática*. 5d. São Paulo: Atlas, 1975, p. 21-27.



Working with these elements is not always possible for those who do not have the slightest knowledge of the potential that belief, faith, and religious symbols can interfere in the dynamics of the life of the pastor or religious leader. What does not discredit other therapeutic forms, but in a way presents another degree of difficulty for the mental health professional who is limited to a single form of listening. Especially for those who use the psychoanalytic method developed by Freud, who show contrary to several perspectives that religion presents, still influences the conduct of some therapists who may not be familiar with some religious symbols during analysis sessions. Although the controversy between Freud and religion remains an endless field of discussion, it cannot be denied that psychoanalysis contributed to the understanding of the symbolic as an element that can bring to light of understanding her to obscure.

The positive therapeutic result is one in which the Pastoral Therapist somehow manages to lead the pastor through the narrow labyrinths of subjective representations, providing the pastor with enough comfort and safety to decide not only the best way forward, but especially the best decision for your quality of life and physical, mental and spiritual health. It should not cause strangeness if after a certain time of follow-up, the pastor decides to leave the ministry, to live another possible dimension even in the religious universe.

The recovery of a human being's life must be above the function that he may mistakenly be living, and the TP, interpreted in the shepherd's figure, in Carol Wises quote, maybe the one that will make him realize this misconception and therefore the thought of it continues to contribute to the valorization of the human being by saying that:

It is the task of the pastor to help the person pierce through the disguises and discover what is behind them. There will be a struggle here, as defenses are also operating to prevent the living process from emerging. The person should be instructed to reflect on himself and his experiences and report what comes to his mind. The pastor's interpretation of the communication should aim at penetrating beneath the symbols to their underlying, meaning thus assisting both in the growth of meaning and the expansion of the self<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 161.

And also, on the perspective of valuing the human being as a being, Carol Wise continues to draw attention to the possible meaning of good positive therapeutic listening result, and in the words of Carol Wise herself:

This means taking back into the self what has previously been rejected or repossessing what has previously been dispossessed. The result in the person is a deeper sense of his humanity, a new ability to be close to others in inappropriate ways, and a broader sympathy with all men which is the basis for a sense of community. Being at one with himself, he can be at one with others<sup>46</sup>.

This should not be configured like TP failure, on the contrary, this smoothness and competence in conducting treatment is that allows TP to reap from its work the best results, since its work it made it possible for the pastoral counselor to perceive himself in the most varied aspects and thus feel better prepared to continue his journey, even if he is no longer as a pastor.

Finally, listening sound and satisfactory therapeutic result are part of the same universe that encompasses the person of the pastor, pastoral function, the different demands arising from pastoral function and most importantly, continues to value the life of the human being who is represented in the figure of the shepherd, but who does not cease to be human and who in search of his humanity sometimes affected by work seeks better quality of life for himself and his fellow. As for this, there is no disagreement with the importance of TP in the religious universe nowadays.

## **Conclusion**

How can one perceive the function of TP goes through an extensive path that goes from the fundamentals of psychology (Behaviorism, Psychoanalysis and Gestalt), which currently presents itself with other

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<sup>46</sup> WISE, 1980, p. 161-162.

varied aspects, (do not only to a psychology), but the “psychology”, which is also valid for the different theologies that have presented itself today. The willingness to recognize the importance of certain religious symbols, which sometimes replace words, with their communication impotence. The suggestion presented by Ludwig von Bertalanffy’s systemic theory of a wiretap that should consider the other sciences. The difference between listening and listening, so fundamental in the work of the TP, that because he knows how to listen can identify the boundaries between the pastor counselor, the pastoral mystery and the person of the pastor, accompanying and suggesting that the pastor counselor has healthy habits and relationships that may do so plays with inner happiness his ministry, already legitimizes the importance of this therapeutic form that is necessary in the scenario of modern Christianity.

Among the possible therapies offered for the treatment of discomforts and mental disorders of the counselor pastor, it is evident that the TP, nowadays, is an important figure in the tenderness that the number of pastors and especially pastors who need to be counselors and at the same time be advised, may find in the TP more than a pastoral counseling supervisor, but a friend who understands him, who walks together valuing his self-esteem, alerting him for the attention due to its bodily limits not always perceptible or even neglected, the necessary secrecy that the security that the personal discoveries of the pastor counselor belong to him and only he must make the decision he judges best inside or outside the pastoral ministry. And above all the appreciation of the pastoral vocation must be recognized and encouraged as a different form of psychological therapy within or outside the church. Thus, it is concluded that the well-prepared TP, which seeks to become familiar with other listening techniques, that is willing to encourage the pastor counselor to continue his ministry without losing pleasure for life, but who discovers in the pastoral ministry his vocation first that is to be more the arduous struggle to try to promote better days to so many that, even in silence, keep screaming for help.

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