

Why is this **ABUSE**?

Due to the nature of the relationship (most often a counseling setting), and the fact that you are a representative of Christ, this can be nothing short of abuse.

She came to you because she needed help and thought she could trust you. She did not come to you for a “relationship.” If you break this trust and betray her confidence, she can never trust you, nor should she.

Not only does she have her own problems to fix, but she now feels the weight and responsibility of your problems, too. This is part of what makes pastoral abuse so damaging.

Because of this imbalance of power, and your position as a man of God, there can NEVER be mutual consent of any kind.

To bring this into perspective, let's look at this example: a medical doctor decides it is in his best financial interest to prescribe medicine to a sick patient to keep the patient sick, rather than heal the patient. You can clearly see how wrong this is.

A pastor/congregant situation, however, becomes more difficult to see because it involves feelings and emotions. When a woman seeks spiritual advice from you, and you distort the truth in order to emotionally and physically take advantage of her instead, how can this be anything but abuse?

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” —Hosea 4:6

THE Hope of Survivors

A ministry of compassion providing support, hope and encouragement for victims of clergy sexual abuse and misconduct.

Are **YOU** at risk? Do you know the warning signs?

1. Do you, as a pastor, look forward to a session with a particular counselee more than others? Why?
2. Do you fantasize about a given counselee asking “what if” questions about her availability?
3. Do you meet with a certain counselee at other than regularly scheduled times? In unusual places?
4. Do you end your sessions on time or do you give some counselees more time? Or do you make your appointments “open-ended”? Beginning and ending times, scrupulously adhered to, are highly recommended.
5. Do you share your counseling or visitation schedule with your wife and/or secretary (of course not breaking appropriate confidences)? If others know where you are and when, and why, they can more easily hold you accountable. Accountability is ALWAYS a good thing.

For more information, please contact us:

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She **NEEDS** me.
There's **SOMETHING**
SPECIAL about her!



Is this **WRONG**?
Can it be **RIGHT**?

I understand her and I'm sure I can **HELP** her.

As her pastor, you have her respect and confidence. This is why she initially came to counsel with you. She respects you and considers you to be a kind, godly man; one who cares, and one who can help her.

Because she trusts you, she is able to open up and share her deepest thoughts and feelings with you.

It is your responsibility to never abuse that trust. If you do, once she sees through the mask, you will never have her respect or trust again.



She's so special and beautiful. Doesn't God want me to be with someone I truly **LOVE**?

No matter how much you may admire or desire her, she is not your wife and is not meant to be with you. Never share your feelings for her or try to convince her that it is somehow God's will for you to be together. If you do this, you are willfully sinning, under the guise of being a man of God, and that is a perversion of the truth.

The seeds of sin, once sown, will produce a bitter harvest. When someone turns from God in this way, he/she seldom returns. Do you really want to take this step? Do you want to cause another to fall?

"I've never felt loved like this before." "I can't live without her." "I **NEED** her."

Don't say these words to her even if you think you feel this way. In this situation, it is a form of emotional manipulation and control. By saying this, you will only confuse her. She needs help, don't betray her trust.

No matter how you may feel, speaking these words to her can **NEVER** be right!

But I'm so **HAPPY**. This must be God's will.

While God wants you to be happy, this is not according to His Word, or His will. By sinning in this manner, you will destroy a lifetime of respect and the sacred ministry God has called you to uphold. You are the shepherd of His flock and, as the shepherd, you are to guard all of His sheep. Don't be a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Her husband doesn't treat her like she **DESERVES**. I can.

Even if this is true, this does not make it right. You can never have a true love relationship with her founded on lies, deceit and adultery.

Don't try to encourage division in her marriage in the place of healing and harmony. Her marriage is bound by a sacred vow that you, as a minister,

have promised God to uphold. Your job is to help heal and protect their marriage vows.

God holds you to a greater level of accountability because you represent Him to His church. He does not lightly regard this type of sin and neither should you.

Even if she were to leave her husband for you, how could she ever really trust you, knowing your deceptive ways?

Steps to avoid falling into **SIN**:

1. Have an accountability partner or group and meet with them regularly and honestly.
2. Leave the office door open and the window in it uncovered.
3. Keep your desk between you and your counselee at all times as a physical barrier.
4. Avoid even casual physical contacts.
5. Counsel only with couples or with members of the same sex (men counsel with men, women counsel with women).
6. Never assume that you are invincible. Given the wrong circumstances, every pastor is vulnerable to temptation, sin and the abuse of power.

"If you draw close to Jesus and seek to adorn your profession by a well-ordered life and godly conversation, your feet will be kept from straying into forbidden paths. If you will only watch, continually watch unto prayer, if you will do everything as if you were in the immediate presence of God, you will be saved from yielding to temptation, and may hope to be kept pure, spotless, and undefiled till the last."

—Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5