



How to Write a Pastoral Care Case Study

One of the assignments in your Pastoral Care Cert HE module is the writing of a case study. You will be given a hypothetical scenario and asked to comment on how you would address it. In many ways this assignment is similar to the mission paper that you wrote for your Christian Mission and Ministry module but there are a few differences. This student support leaflet contains some hopefully helpful hints on how to tackle it – but please don't feel constrained by the following, these are only hints not the final word on case studies!

1. Outline the scenario

The assignment sheet will give you a very broad outline of a pastoral scenario – something like a man struggling with anger that is fuelled by alcohol abuse, or a woman struggling with an eating disorder following her divorce. It will be a very general outline so it is up to you to fill in the gaps! The first thing you will need to do is set out what assumptions you are going to make about the person. If it is not specified on the assignment sheet, outline what age / socio-economic background / Christian maturity / gender / other background this person has. It is a hypothetical case study so you have the freedom to mould the hypothetical person

within the general guidelines given. It's a good idea to create a character that fits the general profile of people that you tend to work with ... this will help make your assignment as relevant as possible.

2. Reflect on the causes

In this second section, aim to set out the possible reasons behind the behaviour that the person is displaying. There may be a range of possible reasons, if so, give an overview of the range and then develop one option in more detail. Being a hypothetical scenario, you can make some assumptions about what is fuelling the behaviour but it is crucial that what you suggest is realistic. And do remember, that if the question gives you a hint (e.g. the behaviour has started since bullying began or a relationship stopped) it is important to incorporate this into your thinking. It will also be important to engage with the set texts here. Ask questions like 'what idols are likely to be at play in this person's life?'

3. Outline the biblical basis of your approach

Having set out the pastoral situation, the next step is to set out the biblical principles that are going to undergird your

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◀ response. You might like to tackle some of the following questions: What is pastoral care? What are the aims of pastoral work? What biblical truths are foundational to your work? What personal attributes will you expect of yourself (and others) as you pastor this person? What model of pastoral care will you be using (and why)? How do humans change? Set the scene for all you are about to do and show that you have carefully thought through your approach to pastoral care.

4. Detail your actions

Step 4 is the application of step 3. Show how you would put your principles and plans into action. Write about what specific truths you would hope to impart and how you would encourage the person to move forward. Describe how you (and others) might work with the person in the case study to reach the aims that have been set, at all times being mindful of the biblical principles and being sensitive to the reality that human beings struggle and find change hard. This is likely to be the largest section of your case study.

5. Reflect on possible outcomes

There are always pitfalls with pastoral care. Think about what they might be and how you would handle them. It will be important to engage with background reading here. You may also want to draw on personal experience – doing so is fine but do be

careful to ensure that you don't share things that should be confidential.

6. Think through what you have learnt

A good place to end is to think about what you have learnt from this assignment. How has it challenged you? What new things have you learned about pastoral care ... or yourself?

As with all assignments, it is important to be structured, to show clear links between the various sections and to engage with contemporary scholarly debate. If in doubt ... give us a call in the office!

