

*Mental Healthcare for
Rural and Small-town Congregations*

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Saturday, March 21, 2026

NOTES AND RESOURCES



CENTER *for*
CONGREGATIONAL
RESOURCES
AT SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Foundations: A Biblical Approach to the Healthcare Crisis

Mental Health: A positive state of mental functioning that includes feeling confident, managing emotions, and maintaining relationships.

Spiritual Health: Moving forward in worship of God, so the Holy Spirit is helping all parts of your soul work together in sharing Christ's love with others and building his kingdom.

- *Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, CSB)
- *Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.* (Romans 12:1, CSB)
- *A good person produces good out of the good stored up in his heart. An evil person produces evil out of the evil stored up in his heart, for his mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.* (Luke 6:45, CSB)

The chief way that Scripture characterizes the activity of the heart is as religious. Whether evaluating the thoughts, desires, fears or intentions of the heart the critical question of Scripture is always, "Whom do you serve?" or "Who is your God?" That is, man is always evaluated and addressed as a creature that worships by nature. Worship, as Scripture uses the term, is not simply the intentional act of bowing down before a chosen deity. Rather, worship describes man's inescapable need to organize his life around the pursuit of something greater than himself. Because the outer man is driven by the activity of the heart, a perversion of worship leads to a perversion of behavior. In this way the Bible teaches that all activity of the heart and its subsequent expression in behavior is spiritual in nature. The way to understand human behavior is to recognize that it proceeds from inner to outer as an expression of worship. ("Dichotomy or Trichotomy? How the Doctrine of Man Shapes the Treatment of Depression" By Winston Smith)

We live in a fallen world where anxiety, depression, loneliness, marital and family breakdown, abuse, suicide and addiction (opioids, alcohol, pornography) are everyday experiences.

- *For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of him who subjected it—in the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.* (Romans 8:20-23, CSB)

Compassion as a Core Response to Life in a Fallen World

Compassion = *not just feeling; it's a form of love demonstrated when confronted with those who suffer or are vulnerable that produces action to alleviate the suffering.*

Our compassion is fostered by receiving Christ's care that energizes us to care.

- *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.*
(2 Cor 1:3-5, CSB)

Jesus' compassion propelled him to provide care for others.

- A. *When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd, had compassion on them, and healed their sick.* (Matt 14:14, CSB) (compassion>healed)
- B. *Jesus called his disciples and said, "I have compassion on the crowd, because they've already stayed with me three days and have nothing to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry, otherwise they might collapse on the way."* (Matt 15:32, CSB) (compassion>fed)
- C. *When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things.* (Mark 6:34, CSB) (compassion>taught)
- D. *When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said, "Don't weep."* (Luke 7:13, CSB) (compassion>comfort)

The Church's Unique Role

Sickness, and the suffering and loss that come with it, can be a conduit toward:

- Healing
- Closeness and conciliation with others
- Community and belonging
- Meaning and hope
- Confession and forgiveness
- Prayer and spiritual formation

Reminder: The church or pastor is not meant to replace all forms of care and can often be a gateway to care as a first responder.

Tending the Hurting Flock

1. Pastors as First Responders

In rural communities, pastors are often counselors, crisis responders, mediators, and spiritual guides.

Congregants and community members often bring the following issues to a pastor:

- marriage conflict
- depression
- addiction
- suicidal thoughts
- grief
- abuse
- parenting struggles

Note: What is often difficult is that many of these situations may come as “crisis” drop-ins, not scheduled pastoral appointments.

What does a first responder look like? It is important to remember that even as a first responder you are a pastor - a shepherd tasked with guiding others toward reconciliation with God. You are not called to make everything better and instead can welcome the congregant or community member with rest in God’s superintendence over every aspect of life. (i.e. Nothing is a crisis to the Lord and that doesn’t mean he isn’t moved by our suffering). Knowing God and knowing God cares more about the person in need than you, provides rest as you move alongside someone in need.

Pastors can:

A. Listen well

The evil one uses difficulties and trials to persecute us with lies about God’s goodness and our humanity. Listening well builds a bridge between that buffeting and God’s goodness. Welcoming the burdens others are carrying helps them calm down and be more open to God’s goodness. Don’t minimize the place of listening well for those undergoing various trials.

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for human anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness. (James 1:19-20, CSB)

B. Assess the situation

Once the congregant or community member has calmed down, ask open-ended questions about safety, support and what they have or have not done in response to their struggles. In general, the difficulties we experience are a combination of areas where we are powerless and areas where our agency makes a difference. As you are assessing the situation, it will be important to be as objective as possible in discerning those factors.

C. Provide pastoral care

- i. Prayer: The place of prayer is central to pastoral care. *Remember that both praying specifically for needs and how you engage with others are forms of prayer.* It is important to be sensitive to both aspects and how the congregant or community member might respond to your prayer and engagement.
 - *Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. (3 John 1:2, ESV)*
 - *Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name. (Malachi 3:16, NLT)*
 - *Again, truly I tell you, if two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them.” (Matt 18:19-20, CSB)*

- ii. Scripture: You want to help those you care for find their place in “God’s story” (i.e. the Biblical narrative).
 - *How sweet your word is to my taste—sweeter than honey in my mouth. I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. (Ps 119: 103-105, CSB)*

- iii. Hope: It is a gift to those you watch over and care for to have hope for them.
 - *Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:24-25, CSB)*
 - *If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone. (1 Cor 15:19, CSB)*

D. Provide ongoing help and/or Connect to further help

Note: In each of the situations noted below, provide pastoral care as noted above. Where your pastoral care is helping, continue to offer it. Where it is not helping after 3-5 sessions connect the congregant to outside help and continue to provide pastoral care on an intermittent basis.

- i. Marriage conflict
 - Assess: Provide space for both spouses to talk and say back to them what you are hearing. It is important for them both to feel heard. Try to discern if this is a “high conflict couple” (they won’t stop disagreeing with one another the whole time they are in front of you) or a couple with more garden variety marital issues (your listening and coaching helps – they relax, their countenance changes, they draw closer to each other). You should refer a high conflict couple out for counseling. There will be couples who will be helped by ongoing pastoral counseling and coaching on communication skills.
 - Where necessary, connect couples to outside marital counselors and/or recommend couples’ weekends or retreats.
- ii. Depression
 - Assess: Discern between sadness due to a recent situation and a more biologically influenced/chronic depression by asking about family history, changes in sleep, appetite, and the length of depression and any other periods of depression through their life span.
 - Provide Care: Affirm their pain without using cliches. Encourage HEPAS (Healthy eating, physical activity, and sleep hygiene).
 - Connect to Resources: Require a visit to a primary care physician (PCP) or a counselor for assessment, especially if symptoms do not improve in 3-5 sessions.
- iii. Addiction
 - Assess: Often those in the throes of addiction have a hard time telling the truth, so it may be difficult to determine the severity of addiction. If they are not helped in 3-4 sessions, refer them to an outside group/counselor.
 - Connect to Resources: Refer to support groups (e.g., Celebrate Recovery, AA) and professional rehabilitation centers.
- iv. Suicidal thoughts
 - Assess: Immediate Danger: Ask directly, "Do you have a plan to hurt yourself?"
 - Err on the side of caution and if you have any concern call 988 (National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) with them present and/or local emergency services (911).

- In Alabama, voluntary care involves individuals seeking psychiatric help on their own, while involuntary commitment requires a probate court process for those who are mentally ill, refuse care, and pose an immediate, documented danger to themselves or others. For immediate danger, call 911. Law enforcement or professionals can assist in transporting the individual for an emergency assessment.
 - If the person is isolated from others, work to help them build support. You will often know family and friends, and with the person's permission you can help them build a support network.
- v. Grief
- Assess: Is their grief "cascading?" Are they isolating? What has been their process to date? Could they be moving toward a depression?
 - If pastoral visits are not helpful in 3-4 visits, connect them with a counselor.
 - Remember HEPAS
 - Connect to Grief Share
- vi. Abuse
- Assess – Your job is to report the possibility of abuse, not confirmation of abuse. ***Mandatory Requirement: If children, elderly, or vulnerable adults are involved, you are a mandatory reporter.***
 - Provide Care: Ensure the victim's safety first. Prioritize security over reconciliation.
 - Connect to Resources: Connect with local domestic violence shelters, police, and specialized trauma counselors
- vii. Parenting struggles
- Assess: Listen to the parent's fears and exhaustion. Identify if the issue is a developmental phase, behavioral issue, or family system crisis.
 - Provide Care: Offer encouraging, biblically-sound parenting reminders.
 - Connect to Resources: Recommend assessment for early intervention or local parenting workshops, Christian family counselors, or pediatric behavioral specialists.

2. Equipping the Congregation

Often a pastor carries the burden of caring for the whole congregation in small churches and may spend most of their scheduled time dealing with crisis. This hampers their ability to train leaders who can care for others. Healthy churches multiply care.

- *And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. (Ephesians 4: 11-13, CSB)*
- *After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others, and he sent them ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself was about to go. He told them, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest. Now go; I'm sending you out like lambs among wolves. Don't carry a money-bag, traveling bag, or sandals; don't greet anyone along the road." (Luke 10:1-4, CSB)*

A. The Care Team

Creating a church that facilitates pastoral care involves having leaders (elders /overseers) who are engaged in caring for members, lay ministers that are trained, and congregational care ministries such as: small groups, women's and men's ministry, deacons, and Stephen ministry care teams. Depending on the size and involvement of your congregation it may be impossible to facilitate the above ministries but even if you equip a couple of women and men to care for others your load as pastor will be lighter.

B. Encouraging Members toward caring for one another

"Counseling" or encouraging one another ought to be the normal and natural function of Christian community. There are over 59 "one another" verses in the Scriptures (love one another, honor one another, build up one another, serve one another, etc).

But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception. (Hebrews 3:13, CSB)

Church members can be equipped to:

- Bear one another's burdens through listening without fixing
- Watch over one another by noticing signs of distress (change in eating, lack of sleep, isolation, decreased hygiene, increased agitation, persistent sadness or hopelessness, anxiety that has them on the edge)
- Pray for one another
- Encourage others to seek help, including accompanying one to a counseling or doctor's appointment

C. Creating a Culture of Care

Your preaching ministry can help create a community of care by normalizing everyday difficulties and reinforcing everyone's need to seek and receive help from the Lord and others. This includes helping congregants distinguish between burdens and loads and normalizing how everyone needs help in different ways and different seasons.

- In Galatians 6:1-6 Paul distinguishes between burdens and personal loads by describing the former as requiring communal support and latter as something we carry alone. The burdens we try to carry without taking help weigh us down and entice us toward sin whereas the loads we must painfully carry alone connect us to the Lord.
- *Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. (1 Peter 4:12, CSB)*
- *For you say, 'I'm rich; I have become wealthy and need nothing,' and you don't realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold refined in the fire so that you may be rich, white clothes so that you may be dressed and your shameful nakedness not be exposed, and ointment to spread on your eyes so that you may see. (Revelation 3:17-18, CSB)*

Diagnosing the Situation: When and Where to Refer

1. The Limits of Pastoral Counseling

Pastors are trained to primarily offer pastoral care. Many pastors often do not receive adequate training to provide pastoral care and counseling. Many M.Div degrees still require only one class in pastoral care and counseling. Therefore, most pastors are equipped to help a congregant understand their situation from a Gospel perspective and provide hope and guidance on how they can move forward in helpful ways to find more spiritual nourishment. Often pastors do not regularly deal with psychiatric disorders, addictions counseling, sexual abuse, etc. It is important to remember that knowing your limits is wisdom, not failure.

2. Red Flags That Require Referral

In each of the situations below you can continue to provide pastoral care which consists of occasional meetings to check in and pray for and encourage them and/or texts, phone calls to check in and pray for them.

- You have met with them 3-5 times and still have not defined a pathway forward they can picture/understand. Refer them and shepherd from a distance
- You have not been helpful, and/or someone else's care emerges as more helpful.
- Grief (that is not significantly helped in 5 sessions over time)
- History of mental health issues personally or in their family history
- Past sexual abuse (no counseling received)
- Active Addiction/substance abuse (or increased/excessive drinking)
- Infidelity
- Persistent Depression (look for loss of appetite, sleep problems, job performance)
- Marked changes in personal appearance (Any bizarre behavior or speech)
- Extreme dependency on pastoral staff member
- Gender Identity
- Brain injury
- Legal Issues/ Recent criminal conduct
- Suicidal Ideation/suicide attempt
- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Addiction
- Eating Disorder
- Suicidal intent
- Threats of violence
- Child abuse
- High conflict couple

3. Types of Helpers

- Christian counselors: Trained counselors who can put the congregant's situation in a Gospel context and understands and has practiced in the landscapes of abuse, addiction, high conflict couples, etc. The mental health field has exploded with helpers of all kinds, and many Christian/Pastoral/Biblical/ counselors are not trained nor do adequate ongoing training. When building referral be sure to check out a counselor's credentials and interview them to see if they are adequately trained to provide quality counseling.
- Licensed counselors integrating faith: To be licensed, counselors are required to perform counseling under supervision both in their master's degree (two semesters) and post master's degree (usually about 3-5 years) and complete counseling related CEU's every year. Their training may be similar to Christian counselors if they went to a seminary. They may not be as skilled at putting a congregant's situation in a Gospel context but more familiar with and trained in the landscape of issues like eating disorders, trauma, addiction, etc.
- Psychologists - Ph.D. trained therapists who also do testing and assessment, and are skilled in behavioral related issues such as OCD
- Psychiatrists - M.D.'s who provide medication management
- Social Workers – Master's level counselors often connected to community resources who might specialize in both the family and social dynamics of a situation.
- Support groups - for a variety of issues but especially in substance abuse and sexual addiction

4. How to Make a Good Referral

The first thing to do is to normalize how all Christians need help. You can say, "Like many others I think you would benefit from additional help," or "Many faithful Christians have found this helpful."

Before offering the referral provide the congregant with a summary of what you have heard and look at their countenance to see if they feel heard. If not, ask them if they would summarize it differently. Then help them understand why you are making a referral. Provide them with the contact information for the referral, check back within 48 hours if you haven't heard from them to make sure they have made contact (you can tell them to call, text, email you when they have done it) and scheduled an appointment. (If this is a time sensitive issue such as suicidal ideation or domestic violence, you want to connect them with help and not leave them alone to do it). Get the date of the appointment and encourage them to contact you after their first appointment to let you know how it went. Make a note to follow up with them after their scheduled appointment in case they don't contact you.

Many congregants have a hard time being referred to someone other than the pastor. Even after you explain it, they may struggle with it. Do the best you can to help them accept seeking help is biblical – looking outside yourself for ministry is the opposite of self-reliance – but some still will not be excited about it. Give them permission to feel disappointed. Many congregants will feel closer to you than you do to them, especially if you are preaching with regularity and see them outside of Sundays. Let them know you will follow up with them and that you are still their pastor. You can check in at intervals (pastoral appointments, phone calls, texts, emails, touch base before or after church, etc.) and continue to shepherd them.

4. Build a referral network

Try to maintain a list of mental health providers noted in #3 above. In addition, be aware of crisis hotlines, local treatment centers, and online resources as you may not have face-to-face options at a reasonable driving distance.

Self-Care for the Shepherds

Pastoring often involves significant periods of loneliness, overwhelm, and exhaustion as you carry confidential burdens, expectations, and must be constantly available often amid ongoing criticism. Living and serving among those you provide counsel and care to is difficult.

- *The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest for a while." For many people were coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they went away in the boat by themselves to a remote place, but many saw them leaving and recognized them, and they ran on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. (Mark 6:30-33, CSB)*
- *We don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of our affliction that took place in Asia. We were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:8-9, CSB)*

1. Self-care involves responding to God's caring involvement. Because he cares for you, he will often help you to say no and have limits, so you have space to be with him, or invite you beyond your limitations and fears to remind you how big he is.

All four Gospels portray Jesus as needing space to be with his Father. A prayerful, reflective life that builds communion with the father where you come to know his voice will help you step over natural obstacles whether that is having limits and disappointing others or showing up and trusting God to work on behalf of others. The key is building a life that is responsive to God as he guides you into nourishing life with him and not one where you determine what you need. It is helpful to have 2-3 people in your life (with at least 1 being outside your congregation) who help you discern and follow the Lord's caring direction.

2. Responding to God means stepping over fear into more of his strengthening grace.

- *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10, CSB)*
- *In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind. We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defense. We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed. **Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything. Oh, dear Corinthian friends! We have spoken honestly***

with you, and our hearts are open to you. There is no lack of love on our part, but you have withheld your love from us. I am asking you to respond as if you were my own children. Open your hearts to us! (2 Corinthians 6:3-13, NLT)

3. Sorrowing is a primary way we respond to God's Grace

Growing intimacy and responsiveness to the Lord means being able to sorrow what is painful and celebrate what is beautiful. Sorrow is a primary means of surrendering to the Lord and increases our dependence on him.

- *Sorrow is better than laughter, for sadness has a refining influence on us.* (Ecclesiastes 7:3, NLT)
- *For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret that kind of sorrow. But sorrow without repentance is the kind that results in death.* (2 Corinthians 7:10, NLT)
- *God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.* (Matthew 5:4, NLT)

Instead of sorrowing well, we often manufacture joy which is a mockery of how God works through difficulty.

- One of the most interesting and remarkable things Christians learn is that laughter does not exclude weeping. Christian joy is not an escape from sorrow. Pain and hardship still come, but they are unable to drive out the happiness of the redeemed. A common but futile strategy for achieving joy is trying to eliminate things that hurt: get rid of pain by numbing the nerve ends, get rid of insecurity by eliminating risks, get rid of disappointment by depersonalizing your relationships. And then try to lighten the boredom of such a life by buying joy in the form of vacations and entertainment. The enormous entertainment industry in America is a sign of the depletion of joy in our culture. But that kind of joy never penetrates our lives, never changes our basic constitution. (Eugene Peterson)

4. Genuine joy is a harder emotion to cultivate than sadness, and sorrow strengthens and expands our insides to welcome joy.

- *Weeping may go on all night, but joy comes in the morning* (Psalm 30:5)
- *Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy* (Psalm 126:5).
- *Our hearts ache, but we always have joy* (2 Corinthians 6:10).

Forgetful joy

Forgetful joy is an experience of delight that comes from partaking in God's creation. This helps us to disregard our present reality as aliens and foreigners living in a strange land ruled by the 'accuser of the brethren' (Rev 12:10). Forgetful joy evolves from the simple pleasures God provides to help push away the weight of this fallen world. Forgetful joy can happen to us each day. It can be a vacation, a good night's sleep, a cup of coffee in the morning, a relaxing lunch, a good book or a humorous exchange with a friend. Forgetful joy is attached to the sensuous pleasures God gives us each day. The prophet Nehemiah said to his people, "Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share

gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!" (Nehemiah 8:10). The simple gifts of this life connect us with the Lord's kindness and help us to forget the weight of this world. "Naming" this type of joy means we accept that it comes from the Lord's hand, and we turn away from our tendency to make it an idol. Every good thing comes to us as a gift from God (James 1:17) and the more we grow in 'God-consciousness' the more we name every gift as a kindness from God that leads us into joy.

What brings you refreshment and joy that helps you forget this is a fallen world?

Communion with God through both special and general revelation brings fearless rest from the tyranny of insecurity

- *The fear of mankind is a snare, but the one who trusts in the LORD is protected.* (Proverbs 29:25 CSB)
- *Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's consent. But even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.* (Matthew 10:28-31,CSB)

Practical Reminders

- HEPAS (Healthy eating, physical activity, and sleep hygiene).
- Family time: In general, work requires sacrifice and brings blessings and honor. As you navigate and accept both pastoring can help you grow into loving others well that greatly benefits your family relationships. *Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself."* (James 2:8, NLT)

Faithful Shepherding Matures You into Reciprocal Relationships and Gratitude

- *Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.* (1 Peter 5:2–4, NLT)

Quick Guide for Pastoral Resources

Mental Health Resources

- Crisis Text Line – Text HOME to 741741.
- Alabama State Website to Report Child Abuse: <https://dhr.alabama.gov/child-protective-services/child-abuse-neglect-reporting/> (On that page is a link for County Contact Information)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 988 (now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673
- National Adult Abuse Hotline: 1-800-458-7214
- Matthew Stanford has produced a wide variety of resources to train pastors in mental health care. He has also written several books (*Madness and Grace: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Care and Serious Mental Illness*, *Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness*, *The Biology of Sin: Grace, Hope and Healing for Those Who Feel Trapped*). Here is a link to his website: <https://hopeandhealingcenter.org/team/matthew-stanford/>
- This website provides helpful mental health resources: <https://churchandmentalhealth.com/>
- This website provides a mental health guide for faith leaders. It was produced through the American Psychiatric Association: <https://www.apaf.org/getmedia/d5cdf69e-e9bb-4090-9b75-1b409c3e2369/APAF-Mental-Health-A-Guide-for-Faith-Leaders.pdf>

Counseling

- Pathways Professional Counseling (part of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministry) provides counseling throughout the state of Alabama from licensed faith-based counselors: <https://www.pathwaysprofessional.org/>
- Online Counseling – Global Counseling Network: <https://www.globalcounselingnetwork.com/>

Family Resources

- Focus on the Family Pastoral Care Line – 1-844-PASTOR1 (1-844-727-8671).
- Various Ministries including marriage weekends: <https://www.familylife.com/>

Addiction Resources:

- Find a Celebrate Recovery Group near you: <https://crlocator.com/>
- Find an AA group near you: <https://www.aa.org/find-aa>
- Online treatment finder: <https://findtreatment.gov/>
- SAMHSA's (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) National Helpline, [1-800-662-HELP \(4357\)](tel:1-800-662-HELP) (also known as the Treatment Referral Routing Service), or TTY: [1-800-487-4889](tel:1-800-487-4889) is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations.

Abuse Resources:

- Where to report child abuse in Alabama: <https://dhr.alabama.gov/child-protective-services/>
- Where to report Elder Abuse in Alabama: Contact Adult Protective Services at DHR. Hotline: 1-800-458-7214.
- Abuse Training: Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (G.R.A.C.E) www.netgrace.org & Ministry Safe www.ministrysafe.com

Grief Resources

- Find a Grief Share Group Near You: <https://www.griefshare.org/>

Training for Lay Ministry

- Stephen Ministries Provides Resources and Training for lay ministry: <https://www.stephenministries.org/stephenministry/default.cfm/1520>
- Brad Hambrick and his team at Summit Church have developed an extensive list of resources. They provide training on how to build care teams and small groups that facilitate pastoral care (and support the pastor), how to help the abused, how to do pre-marital counseling, how to assess local counselors, etc. There is a wide range of resources at: <https://bradhambrick.com/>

Trauma Resources:

- Trauma is the "word" of the decade for the 2020's. Curt Thompson is an excellent resource if you want to learn more about becoming trauma-informed from a Gospel perspective. He has written several books, does a podcast and offers various trainings. Here is a link to his website that lists his resources: <https://curthompsonmd.com/>