

What Cannot Be Forgotten: Moral Injury and Pastoral Practice

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Losing Faith During War

What constitutes effective pastoral care for moral injury?

Moral Injury: New Term, Long History

Moral Injury: a violation of one's own conscience or moral code. Military moral injury results from a betrayal often by trusted authority figures, or from direct action, inaction, or even witnessing someone else's action, according to Brett Litz and other VA psychologists.

Pastoral Care: the ministry of the cure of souls, *cura animarum*, which "consists of helping acts done by representative Christian persons, directed toward the *healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling* of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns." (William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle)

Hampton Roads, VA Clergy Respond

Qualitative Study, involving a survey and semi-structured follow-up interviews.

Over 60 invitations 32 responses.

10 Interviews (1 retired chaplain now pastoring, 8 pastors, 3 first responder chaplains).

Survey responses interpreted through the four functions of pastoral care: *guiding, sustaining, reconciling, healing*; and through Rita Brock and Gabriella Lettini's Soul Repair.

Listening was the key strategy emerging from survey results.

Why is that so important? Who wants to hear true war stories? Who can tell those stories?

Local Wisdom: Practices Worth Emulating

Four Practices of Pastoral Care Effective For Moral Injury

1. Listening
2. Building Trust
3. Staying the Course
4. Creativity

Underlying these practices is the necessity of pastors to approach their moral injury, and the ways they may have been the cause of moral injury, and to discover a deep enough well of grace for themselves. Otherwise, effective care is impossible; grace not experienced cannot be shared.

Moral Injury and Triumph of Grace

Beyond talking about grace, pastoral care of moral injury reorients toward grace, responding to moral injury as a theological issue.

Significance and Looking Forward

Moral injury is a pervasive problem transcending military. Pastors uniquely able to respond to it. Clergy groups for exploration of moral injury become laboratories for hands-on training.