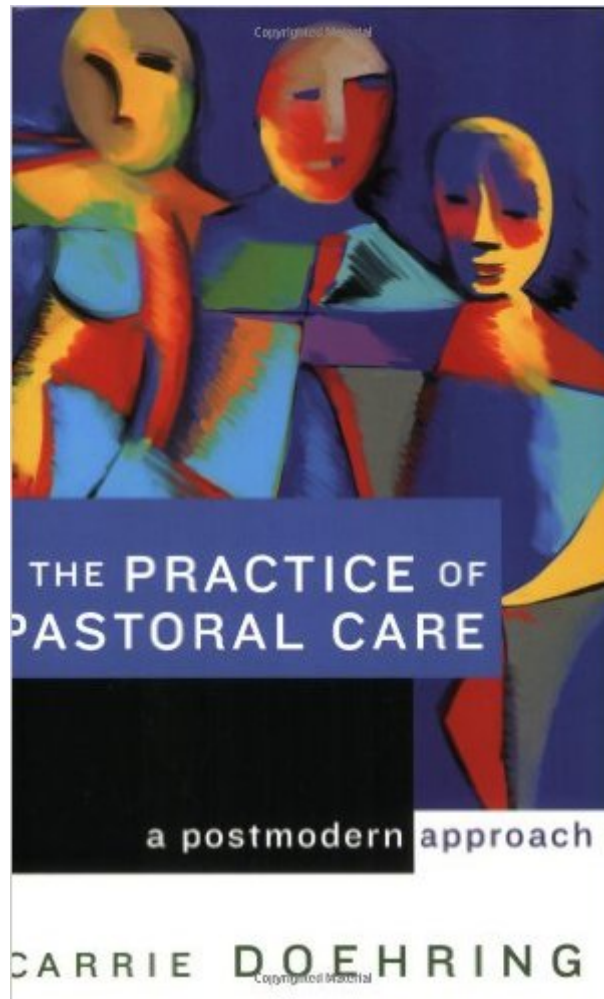


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# The Practice Of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach



## Synopsis

Drawing on psychological, theological, and cultural studies on suffering, Carrie Doehring encourages counselors to view their ministry through trifocal lenses and include approaches that are premodern (apprehending God through religious rituals), modern (consulting rational and empirical sources), and postmodern (acknowledging the contextual nature of knowledge). Utilizing strategies from all three perspectives, Doehring describes the basic ingredients of a caregiving relationship, shows how to use the caregiver's life experience as a source of authority, and demonstrates how to develop the skill of listening and establish the actual relationship. She then explains the steps of psychological assessment, systemic assessment, and theological reflection, and finally she delineates the basic steps for plans of care: attending to the careseeker's safety, building trust, mourning losses, and reconnecting with the ordinariness of life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was quite disappointed as I read this book. Doehring does offer some good solid insights into pastoral care, but these are the same old tired concepts. Doehring has a mechanistic worldview, uses tired psychological concepts, fails to stress the importance of pastoral presence, and perhaps worst of all suggests the ineffective method of treating compulsions symptomatically by isolating the behavior deemed compulsive (say overeating) rather than holistically from the root of compulsion. Effectively putting a band aid on a gaping wound. Doehring treads dangerously close to encouraging pastoral care providers to exploit the pastoral relationship. She says, "Having access to family in

ways that mental health professionals don't, Pastors can identify the role of addiction in a family and break the silence" (92). What, now pastors are detectives? What happened to the understanding that until a person/family wants help, they cannot receive it? In this paragraph she is speaking particularly of drug addiction/alcoholism. Doebling lacks insight into social oppression, into how by noting that suicidality is higher among certain minorities and in so doing she perpetuates the status quo of oppression, rather than suggesting it is worthwhile to assess for suicidality in any person suffering a crisis (84-5). There is little evidence of a postmodern approach, here. Doebling advocates the linear, isolative (as in isolate the symptom and fix it), mechanistic approach. And as Diarmuid O'Murchu points out anyone who has had a car break down, fixed the supposed problem only to have it break down again knows such approach only works for sometimes. Thus illustrating she buys into much of psychology's misappropriation of systems theory, in which the linear mechanistic approach is anathema.

Pastoral care is a critical part of any Church ministry. The word "pastor" is synonymous with "shepherd." Unlike some places that sees the pastor as the leader-CEO, the true biblical basis of a pastor is to shepherd the flock. How we practice pastoral care however have changed, partly because of changing needs. In this book, the way is to adopt a "postmodern approach" toward the practice of pastoral care. Calling it an "intercultural approach," pastoral care in this book means not just listening to the stories of the people but also to create meaning of them. It means learning to piece together the broken pieces of life. It means learning to help people tell their stories. It means cultivating trust. For Carrie Doebling, it is the heart of pastoral care where people are willing to open up their lives to caregivers. It is about creating opportunities for "care conversations" and relating real-life to theological truths and biblical principles. Doebling goes a step further to advocate for a care that brings back individuals from a de-centered sacred bearings due to suffering and painful circumstances. How can one show compassion and understanding toward those questioning their faith and religious values? This calls for a "theological, cultural, and psychological expertise" that can help care for parishioners and people in such need, what Doebling refers to as "the compassionate art of intercultural care." Carers essentially enter into the lives of others, sharing in their pain, walking with them in the valley of questions and celebrating with them in the answers of joy. It is about intermingling one's lives with another so as to build a bridge that aids integrative moments and shared stories.

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