

Interview Assessment #1

Name of Professional: Adam Stockton

Profession: Associate Pastor

Company: Rejoice Lutheran Church

Date of Interview: 14 October, 2020

Speaking to Adam Stockton allowed me to get a clearer understanding of how a counselor would handle certain situations. As a pastor, Mr. Stockton encounters many people seeking advice, even though the purpose of his job is not solely counseling. I began asking him what counseling looked like for him as a pastor and what issues he commonly sees. He replied to me explaining that he typically counsels people having issues within their relationship or dealing with grief. His number one strategy when dealing with these issues is listening attentively. Going off the topic of marriage, I asked him if he had ever recommended that someone should leave their marriage. The bible states that divorce is wrong, however Mr. Stockton told me that he believed it can be situational. Taking a look at one specific verse from the bible and overly interpreting its meaning can be harmful and ultimately make people miserable. He explained that if a person were dealing with an abusive relationship or if adultery was committed, in other words broken trust, then these situations would be

understandable for a divorce. Marriage is different for all people so there isn't a blanket statement of what is or is not acceptable for a divorce, however he claims that if a person ever feels unsafe or trust was broken, this is clearly an okay scenario.

Next I asked him about the difficulty of setting boundaries between yourself as a counselor and the counselee. He explained that there can be a relationship, but it must have limits. Obviously anything romantic between a counselor and counselee is prohibited, but also remembering that you shouldn't go hangout with your counselees on Friday nights. This helps the counselor to draw a line between being professional and unprofessional. Anything that becomes too comfortable or friendly will cross the line into the unprofessional region. He as well explained that it is okay to grieve alongside a person, but you yourself cannot be grieving their issues; this ultimately crosses the boundary. Along with setting professional boundaries, Mr. Stockton explained the importance of knowing the counselee's intentions. Sometimes people look for something in a counselor that the counselor cannot be. This could mean that a person is seeking for a friendship with a counselor because they are lonely. He said how it can be fairly common that a person is lonely so they seek for a counselor to help the situation, when in reality that is not what a counselor is meant for. People oftentimes want counselors to be something to them that they cannot be. This is why Mr. Stockton explained the importance of setting boundaries from the beginning, that

way if a situation occurs where the counselee is not utilizing the counselor for the right reasons, the counselor can get out of the situation so no boundaries are crossed.

I understand that sometimes people are not willing to open up to a counselor, so I asked Mr. Stockton his take on this scenario. He responded by telling me a story about a sick boy who was in the hospital. He said the boy did not want to talk to him, he just wanted the company of Mr. Stockton without anything being said. Mr. Stockton sat with the ill boy in silence for an hour, and the boy later reached out to him saying that his hour with him was the most helpful and comforting moment he had experienced with a pastor. Mr. Stockton explained to me that sometimes opening up can do more harm than good. Sometimes just being there for a person can help impact them. Not everyone is wired the same to want to discuss their issues openly, especially not with a stranger. He explained to me the importance of a perception and expectation check. Just because we want someone to open up and talk to us does not mean that is really what's best for them. This gave me a completely different outlook on people and counseling as a whole. Rather than getting frustrated at a person who doesn't open up or tricking them into doing so, it's best to just be present with them, and even sit in silence need be.

Finally, I asked Mr. Stockton to tell me something he learned in his years of counseling that he wished he knew when he started. He explained to me his perfectionistic tendencies. Especially beginning counseling, he wanted to have the best

answers to every question a counselee had. However he soon realized how unrealistic that was. For starters people are not perfect and are full of sin, so striving to be perfect is a goal that we will never achieve. He then said how having a good professional relationship with the counselee is important because it gives you more room for error and makes it easier for them to forgive you. This is important because as a counselor you are going to mess up, no matter how hard you try to be perfect. Lastly, he ended the session telling me that one of his biggest takeaways from counseling all these years is that it does not matter how educated you are, most things are situational that counselors learn as they go.