

Proposed Instructions and Sample for Writing a Case Study

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A CASE STUDY

A. DEFINITION

A case study describes a real-life ministry situation in which **you** have played a key role. It focuses on a critical incident posing a dilemma for which there is no easy solution and which requires some action to be taken. Possible case study situations:

- . interpersonal communication
- . administrative issues
- . leadership issues
- . worship concerns
- . counseling issues
- . church discipline problems
- . other situations which constitute a learning situation for you

If you are uncertain about the appropriateness of a topic, feel free to check with the Registrar or Committee Chair (Jeff VanDyke).

B. WRITING THE CASE

You are to write a brief, two-part case report (one single-spaced, typewritten page).

1. Background/History of Critical Incident

Give enough information to set the situation in context including:

- a. Who is involved? (Use pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality)
- b. When and how did you become aware of or involved in the event?
- c. What precipitated and shaped the event?
- d. What was in your mind, and what did you hope/fear would happen?

2. Description/Facts of Critical Incident

Report as much detail as necessary to give the significant facts including:

- a. What happened in the event?
- b. What did you and others say?
- c. What did you do?

C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions will serve as discussion questions. You need not write answers to these, but be prepared to respond to them.

- a. What can we learn from Scripture about this event?
- b. What connections can you make between this critical incident and your study of systematic theology, church history, Bible courses, ministry courses, and counseling?
- c. How would you develop a ministry strategy of your own based upon the connections you have identified in the question above?
- d. What do you learn about God? What image(s) of God come to your mind?
- e. What do you learn about yourself in the context of ministry? What are the key issues raised for you as a person?

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SAMPLE CASE STUDY - THE CASE OF RACHEL

Background/History

Late one afternoon, I was in the church office preparing for a youth leadership meeting, which was to take place in one hour when a woman arrived. She needed assistance in obtaining lodging in a hotel for herself and her three children, all of whom were present with her, ranging in ages from 3 to 7 years old. They appeared tired and hungry. I was the only person present.

The pastor, Rev. Drummond, had left just 10 minutes earlier delegating me to respond to such situations should they arise. Revelation Church had long had a policy for providing assistance to the poor and needy who came to the church seeking help--financial, transportation, food, clothing, etc. Many people regularly made requests for such aid.

Description/Facts

Following instructions Rev. Drummond had discussed with me on other occasions, I began asking her routine questions--her name (Rachel), why she needed the money, what happened to her previous source, how long she would need to be supported. I wanted to be certain that she had a legitimate need. I did not want to be fooled. It was late and I was in a hurry to get to the youth leadership meeting.

Rachel told her story . . . She had recently moved to the area and was having trouble getting her social security payments. She and her children had only the clothing in their car left, no food or housing. They had stayed last night in their car having no money for a room. As it was past 5:00 p.m., I had no way of contacting the Social Security office to check out the delayed payment. The church policy said I could give her up to \$20.00 for immediate relief so I agreed to pay her. She refused, saying I should pay the hotel directly. This encouraged me for it seemed to lend credibility to her story, but it meant I had to act quickly to arrange for a hotel and go there to make payment for a night's lodging. She insisted on giving the church an I.O.U. for the money. I told her to come back the next day if she needed help in getting her check.

I felt I acted correctly. In fact, I felt good about being able to help someone who had such a need. I sat down the next day to tell Pastor Drummond of my decision and to find out what to do should she return to get assistance in getting her S.S. check. This all seemed so new to me, the world of agencies that are available to help people. Pastor Drummond assured me that I had made a good decision and proceeded to call the agency that would be handling this woman's check.

We were informed that no file existed on this woman. He then called a local relief agency that informed us that the woman I had `helped' is among the worst chronic offenders of the `system' in this area. For the past ten or eleven years, she has lived hand to mouth off various churches, even though she is eligible for government-sponsored programs. I had been `taken.' I sagged in my chair, disappointed that despite my caution, this woman had fooled me. Pastor Drummond said to me, "It is better to give and give freely than to doubt." Still, the warm glow I had when I felt able to help seemed to be fading. Was my decision really the right one?

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