

PT6365/01 Advanced Pastoral Counseling

James Coffield, Ph.D.

Washington DC

Fall 2025/ 1 hour

PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

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COURSE DATES

COURSE DATES:

October 2,3 & 4, 2025

Thursday 5:30 – 10:00PM

Friday 8-1 PM

Saturday 1:30 – 5:30

COURSE COMPLETION DATE: December 1, 2025

COURSE OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION:

This course offers strategies to deal with difficult people and problems from a pastoral counseling perspective. Students explore practical Biblical categories for understanding, interpreting, and intervening in the lives of parishioners. Skill development and practice are included in the course. A special focus will be on loss, grief, and suffering. This course builds on the foundation of 06PT516 Pastoral Counseling but does not replace it. Also, 06PT516 is not a prerequisite.

GOALS:

At the completion of this class a successful student should be able to:

- To explore Biblical categories of listing and understanding counselees
- Develop an understanding of shame and guilt in a person's life.
- Explore the clinical and Biblical understanding of loss, grief, and suffering.
- Discover the connection between healthy pastors and healthy churches – develop a relational leadership and counseling model.
- Engage in small group discussion about practical counseling problems facing the church.

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading **25%**

Pre-Class Reading (Choose One Book):

- Select **one book** to read or listen to **before the class begins**.

Post-Class Reading (Read the Remaining Two Books):

- Read or listen to the **other two books** after class.
- For each book, submit a **two-page summary** (approx. 600–800 words) that includes:
 - A brief overview of the book's central message
 - Three key takeaways or themes
 - Personal reflection on how the book intersects with your life, ministry, or theology.
 - One quote that stood out to you and why.

Note: AI-generated summaries are not permitted. You must engage with the full content of each book through reading or listening.

Attendance and Participation **30%**

Because of the limited time in the classroom students must be present and need to participate in the activities of the class.

Reflection paper **25%**

Mapping Your Story for Healing and Growth

Objective:

To help students explore their personal narratives through the lens of Adam Young's framework, identifying key moments of harm and healing, and reflecting on how their story shapes their identity, relationships, and spiritual life.

Assignment Instructions:

Part 1: Story Mapping

Using insights from Chapters 1–4, create a **timeline of your life** highlighting:

- **Five noteworthy events** that shaped your emotional world (positive or painful)
- **Two moments of harm** that impacted your sense of self or relationships.
- **Two moments of kindness or healing** that brought restoration or hope.

Include reflections on how these moments affected your view of God, others, and yourself.

Part 2: Themes and Patterns

Based on Chapters 5–7:

- Identify **two core themes** in your story (e.g., abandonment, shame, resilience, longing).

Part 3: Engaging with God in Your Story

Drawing from Chapters 8–10:

- Reflect on how God has been present (or felt absent) in your story.

Part 4: Application to Ministry or Leadership

- How does understanding your story shape the way you lead, counsel, or serve others?

Paper on Suffering and Loss 20%

Bearing Witness to Suffering: A Theological and Personal Exploration

Goal of assignment:

To engage with the realities of trauma and suffering through the lens of Scripture, personal experience, and Diane Langberg’s framework of redemptive presence, cultivating a deeper understanding of how to minister with compassion and integrity.

Part 1: Theological Reflection

- Choose **two biblical passages** that speak to suffering and God’s response (e.g., Psalm 34:18, Isaiah 53, Lamentations 3, John 11).
- Reflect on how these passages inform your understanding of:
 - God’s presence in suffering
 - The role of lament
 - The call to bear witness.

Part 2: Personal Narrative (800–1,000 words)

- Write about a time when you encountered suffering, your own or someone else’s.
- Reflect on:
 - How you responded emotionally and spiritually
 - What helped or hindered healing?
 - How this experience shaped your view of God and ministry

Part 3: Engagement with Langberg’s Themes

- Choose **three key themes** from *Suffering and the Heart of God* (e.g., bearing witness, trauma and silence, redemptive presence, power, and abuse).
- Discuss how these themes:
 - Challenge or affirm your theological assumptions.
 - Inform you about your approach to pastoral care or counseling.
 - Connect with your personal narrative.

GRADING SCALE AND POLICIES

Grading scale

A (100-95)	A- (94-93)	B+ (92-91)	B (90-85)
B- (84-83)	C+(82-81)	C (80-77)	C- (76-75)
D (74-70)	F (Below 70)		

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of more than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e., illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Student Services Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog)

Any incomplete not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog)

Academic policies

Computers are a welcome educational tool and your use of a laptop computer during our class time is encouraged. However, please do not distract yourself or others by using wireless internet to check e-mail or surf the net during our class time. Do not play games on personal computers during class time.

Late papers lose a half letter grade.

Please retain a personal copy of all your work.

TEXTS

Emotionally Healthy Discipleship: Moving from Shallow Christianity to Deep Transformation (2021), by Peter Scazzero

Make Sence of Your Story (2025), by Adam Young

Suffering and the Heart of God (2015) by Diane Langberg

Unwanted by Jay Stringer

Gentle and Lowly (2020), by Dane Ortund

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: PT 727

Professor: James Coffield

Campus: Washington DC

Date: Fall 2025

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		Rubric <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None 	Mini-Justification
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	Lectures on Biblical categories of suffering and loss. Assignment 4
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Moderate	Lectures on Biblical understanding for assessment. Assignment 4
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	Class devotions
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Personal reflection on "story" and assignment 3
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	Reading text 1, Assignment 1
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	None	Assignment 2
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Strong	Class discussion and lectures on Shepherding