

Introduction

THE PASTOR STRUGGLES for the health of the person and the life of the soul through major life crises. Six principal arenas of crisis ministries are discussed in this volume. Our purpose is to show that soul care occurs not merely in theory but in the life and death situations in which the soul's growth and happiness are risked; not merely in words but in faith that becomes active in love; not merely in the church but where life is being lived out physically, sexually, habitually, interpersonally, vocationally, economically, and relationally; and finally where life is relinquished in death.

The six *key questions* of this volume are:

- How shall the pastor best function in interpersonal conflict mediation, and in such critical moments as *vocation* decision, *addictive and compulsive behaviors*, and thoughts of *suicide*?
- How shall the pastor most effectively visit and care for the *physically ill*?
- If God is proclaimed as unsurpassably powerful and good, how shall the pastor deal with the *suffering* of parishioners, and what sort of care and reasoning shall be provided for inquiries concerning the justice of God amid suffering, temptation, and inequality?
- How shall the pastor minister to crises in *marriage and family* living: premarital counsel, marital counsel, divorce counsel, celibacy counsel, parental counsel, youth counsel, abortion counsel, and adultery counsel?
- How shall the pastor effectively care for the *poor* and needy, the stranger, those deprived of familial and economic resources, orphans, widows, the destitute, the imprisoned, and the enslaved?
- Finally, how shall the pastor care for souls amid the crisis of terminal illness, *death*, and burial, and the grieving process?