

Within the limits of the two-hour, once-a-week format, a seminar must use ready-made tools, only slightly adapting them to its purposes: designing and making the tools would take so much time that little use could be made of them. Thus, here are structures for writing and group-processing cases in integration seminars--developed from experiences of these seminars here at NYTS. Of course we have some flexibility, and critique throughout is welcome.

1 TYPE OF CASE--The case you choose should....

1. Derive from your own ministry....2. Exhibit your style of involving yourself, your commitment, and your competence....3. Be finished in the sense that at least most of the chickens have come home to roost: the case can be filed as "finished" for all practical purposes....4. Be unfinished in the sense that it continues to nip at you, maybe even nag you, with questions about your style of involving yourself and/or your commitment and/or your competence, maybe even your career-choice --so you think maybe, by having a group-go at the case, you may come upon further learnings, further leadings from God: a spiritual exercise, a heuristic experience....5. Be at mid-range: close enough to continue to read high in your lower coil, distant enough so your upper coil can handle it with some cool....6. Have integrative potential, i.e. promise payoff in terms of your getting your thing together and the church/world getting its thing together....7. Be appropriate to the integration seminar's theme (whether general ministry, pastoral counseling, or what have you). [For a biblical self-questioning toward case, see #653.]

2 WRITING YOUR CASE--Important to write it out? Glasse has a down-to-earth way of putting it [73, PUTTING IT TOGETHER IN THE PARISH, Abingdon/72]: It's so important that the leader should rub your nose in your business until you do it on paper! We've found the one-page limitation important: less is skimpy, more is prolix and tiresome, and one page is just the right discipline....And spine, too, is important. Left to yourself, you'd be apt to overweight some factors and underweight others....Getting all the factors in is important, but the amount of space each takes should be case-determined. Best to double-space your case rough with no thought for space, then edit the material down to the one page, letting each factor fight for space....What's said above (section #1) about case-selection applies also to case-writing: what's to be in focus is not your ego (Did I win/lose this one?) but your ministry (What potential has this case for the group's helping me to learn from it, both about myself as person and as minister and about ministry?). The polar temptations are sadism [I got 'em!] and masochism [self-censoring being the deepest oppression when it becomes censorious]....Edit slowly, prayerfully, your rough draft. Relive the feelings at each stage of the case history. While in our discursive culture we need explanation to permit ourselves to feel, is explaining getting in the way of, maybe even covering, feeling?....As you review your rough draft, ask yourself whether it balances down-analytic, problem-solving thinking [from part to whole] with up-synthetic, planning thinking [from whole to part--now called "systems thinking"]. And was/is my "head," in this case, conflict-oriented or ministry-oriented? In YOUNG MAN LUTHER, Erikson says "Human nature can best be studied in the state of conflict; and human conflict comes to the detailed attention of interested recorders mainly under special circumstances," of which he lists two: "the clinical encounter" and history-writing--the two, it happens, that converge in case-writing. But watch out for the Freudian psychosociodynamic overstress on conflict.

3 VISUALIZING YOUR CASE CONFERENCE AS YOU WRITE AND EDIT YOUR CASE--You're in the squeeze between what did happen [in the case] and what you hope/fear will happen [in the case conference]! Write not for the conference, but toward it, being vulnerable, i.e. not protecting yourself against anticipated embarrassments in the group. Master the design we'll vary only somewhat: "The Case Conference," 88-91 in Glasse.