

## Sample Ministry Action Contact (MAC)

### Persons Involved

Jane

- A single mom in her mid-40's with a 6-year-old daughter
- She runs a landscaping business
- Her mother often takes care of her child when needed
- Her father comes from an Italian Catholic background

Steve

- Associate Pastor in his mid-50's at the church
- Celebrating 12 years of marriage to a loving Christian woman
- Has two young daughters of his own
- His father and mother were married for 47 years until his dad's death from Parkinson's

### Background

During a Christmas play, Jane requested a separate CD from Steve for her daughter so she wouldn't have to deal with Frank, her ex-husband. In other conversations, she has told Steve she is Catholic and attends church regularly with her 6-year-old daughter. She has gone through a bitter divorce and the stress in their current relationship is immense. Her ex-husband has a girlfriend who attends the same school functions as Jane, compounding her anxiety.

Steve met Jane after he taught her daughter in the Christmas play at their Christian school. He is the Christian school's music teacher and was a co-worker on an outdoor project with Jane. They had teamed up to landscape the front of Steve's church since Jane designed the exterior grounds. The project took a lot longer than anticipated with lots of ups and downs. Through the course of the project, they became friends and at times Steve saw the stress of life on her face. He offered to talk with her some time at her convenience, expressing the need for spiritual counseling. She finally agreed to make an appointment after several months.

### Conversation

The following is a condensed version of a recent hour-long conversation. Steve prefaced the conversation by stating that he is not a professional therapist, nor does he have a license in counseling. He is there to talk to her as a spiritual advisor. Steve made some tea to offer Jane in anticipation of a conversational approach, however, the session ended up being more about listening. Before Steve had a chance to ask her what she wanted to talk about, as soon as she sat down, she began to cry. Steve allowed for the silence and handed her a tissue. He then listened for a good 15 minutes before speaking.

Jane1: The other day I was making coffee and I started coughing blood. I began to see stars and felt all the blood rush from my head. I couldn't breathe, so I made my way out to the front lawn and saw my neighbor. He asked, "Do you want me to call 911?" I said, "NO, I don't have medical insurance right now. Just get my daughter inside the house." He said, "Okay, I'll call Frank to come and get her." I said, "NO, that's the last thing I need, for him to call me incompetent in court!" I regained my breath and did finally see a doctor later that day. The whole thing really scared me.

Steve1: What did the doctor say?

Jane2: He said it is due to my cough. I got some antibiotics, but I'm not so sure he's right.

Steve2: If you are unsure, you should get a second opinion. Is this a recent health issue?

Jane3: Yes, but the feeling of helplessness I had isn't. I feel like everything works against me. My ex-husband doesn't take care of my kid properly, my boyfriend doesn't care about my child, and I have to pay for my mother's mobile home while none of my other family members pitch in.

Steve3: Tell me about your boyfriend.

Jane4: The other day we went camping, and he didn't even think of holding my daughter's hand while she climbed a big rock. He has openly stated that he had his kids and doesn't want to parent mine, nor does he want any more.

Steve4: So, I don't mean to sound blunt but, if you know he doesn't care about your daughter, and having more children is important to you, then why do you stay with him?

Jane5: I don't know...I don't know.

Steve5: How long were you two married?

Jane6: Five years.

Steve6: And when did the trouble start in your marriage?

Jane7: Day one. He got me into a business I didn't want. He ruined my credit. We bought a house and lost it. He's the worst. I don't know why I get involved with these types of guys.

Steve7: Did you ever feel like you are feeling right now as a child?

Jane8: No, I had a perfect upbringing.

Steve8: Was your father a good Catholic like yourself?

Jane9: Yes, he was a wonderful man. Although he did leave my mother for another woman.

Steve9: Was he excommunicated?

Jane10: Yes.

Steve10: Do you think your upbringing might have anything to do with your decisions today?

Jane11: I don't know?

Steve11: What I see is that you are so busy dealing with multiple emotional experiences on a daily basis that it is impossible for you to think or be in touch with what you are really feeling. There is a lack of margin in your life. I just read an incredible book by the same title on the subject of personal space that I'd like you to read. You don't have to do it in one sitting. Take your time and enjoy it. I'd also like to prescribe some homework for you. Find five things that you can stop doing that cost you time unnecessarily. Automate your coffee pot, cancel Netflix, take away something that will allow you more time for yourself. I know you care greatly about your daughter, so if you won't do it for yourself, do it for her. She deserves a physically and emotionally healthy mom. You've already taken the first step by accepting this appointment. I know we're out of time, so let's take the next step and make an appointment to continue the process next week. Okay?

Jane12: Okay. And thank you so much.

### **Head**

It is quite obvious that Jane is overworked and confused. She makes impulsive decisions based on her immediate perceived need. She has allowed bitterness to take over her life and rule her behavior. She also over-extends herself, causing her life to crash in around her. She needs to slow down and hear the soft voice of God calling her to himself. There is a disconnect between her Catholic religion, and the life she leads. Jane has also observed this disconnect from her parent's marriage.

### **Heart**

Jane is an emotional wreck and it has affected her physical body. She needs to slow down and feel a sense of down time. She cried most of the time in Steve's talk, and continued to point to her ex-husband as the source of the problem. He may be a contributor, but her decision-making has led to her continued stress as reflected in her question as to why she continues to get involved with "these types of guys." She must understand that Satan is behind all of it, and surrender to the power of Christ in her life.

### **Holy**

Given Jane's Catholic background and her fervent attendance, one would think that she is solid in her faith. But her actions speak otherwise. When the priest refused to wed her and Frank under an oak tree outside rather than in a Catholic church, she had a "non-Catholic" retired priest perform the ceremony, making it an illegitimate Catholic wedding. Her religious upbringing leads Steve to believe she may be going to church out of obligation to her family, to God, or to offer her daughter a moral upbringing.

### **Pastoral Care**

Jane dismisses her dad's infidelity like it never happened. She told Steve that when her father was in the hospital for surgery, her brother walked in on his female visitor. Jane's father then introduced her as the "woman he loved." Jane's dad then ended the marriage he had with their

mother. Jane needs to come to grips with her past and embrace the love that Jesus has for her. Jesus is the only one who can completely heal these deep wounds.

### **Evaluation**

Steve did not want to move straight into a religious conversation about God immediately since Jane might think that his sole motivation was proselytization. Steve wants her to know that he cares about her, just as God cares for her. Steve hopes to have further discussions about how God wants a personal relationship with her. He suggested the book *Margin* because it has plenty of biblical backing to introduce her to God in a practical way. The abrupt start precluded Steve's planned prayer at the beginning. Jane's stream of consciousness dialog lasted up to the time both of them had to pick up their kids at the school they jointly attend. Steve should have interjected prayer before and after the session and strongly regrets not assuming his role as a spiritual advisor, rather than just offering counsel. He hopes to slow the conversation down next time to offer her the spiritual breath that Jane needs.