

**THE ROLE OF PASTORAL COUNSELING IN A LOCAL CHURCH: A CASE
STUDY OF THE NEW COVENANT BAPTIST CHURCH, AGEGE – LAGOS**

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ABSTRACT

The role of Pastoral Counseling in a local church is the focus of this research work. The researcher used “The New Covenant Baptist Church, Agege, Lagos” as a case study for his research. He noted that globally many people face difficulties and wants solution to their problems, the church need to be relevant to the need of the members and not lose focus on its role as a life changing body, by providing the right atmosphere for counsel to be received.

Firstly, the researcher in this thesis brings it’s reader abreast with the problem, purpose and its interest in the subject. He defines some key terms in which he said Pastoral Counseling is the relationship between a trained pastor (Counselor) and another person or group of people (Client) who needs help or guidance to solve a problem or conflict with the aim of helping the person to take a right step in making decision that will bring solution to the problem and improve their relationship with God the giver of peace.

Secondly, the researcher explains that Pastoral Counseling is not a new language but right from the creation, counsel has been given to man in which he traces counsel giving to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to the time of the Judges, the time of the Kings, Prophets and when Jesus continued in giving counsel to men in the New Testament where the disciples carried on until the church of our time and he noted that Pastoral Counseling will continue till we reach eternity.

In chapter three of this thesis, the researcher noted that many programs organized in order to improve the living condition have failed all over the world, for many seek meaning to lives problems including members of our local churches, hence the need for Pastoral Counseling whose goals is to present every counselee mature in Christ Jesus. Pastoral Counseling play a very unique role in our local churches due to the uniqueness of pastors training, his symbolic role, and his explicit goal of spiritual growth. In counseling the researcher emphasizes the need for every pastor to be familiar with various methods of

counseling available, and the need to know how to use it and recognize the value and the limitation of any of the method.

The researcher used "The New Covenant Baptist Church, Agege, Lagos" as earlier said as a case study in finding the role Pastoral Counseling plays in our local churches in which he discovered that many members of the church are not well informed about the opportunity of meeting their pastors or elders for counseling. Due to this break down in communication about this opportunity and lack of trust in the leadership, they seek counsel elsewhere.

Finally, the researcher confirmed in the conclusion that Pastoral Counseling occupy a very important role in our local churches and he recommends that the Pastors should have a 'seat' in their churches, so that it will become very easy for members to meet their pastors in time of need and not seek for solution where the objective is not to mature them in Christ Jesus.

CONCLUSION

This work has given us the opportunity to know that the role of pastoral counseling in our local churches cannot be overlooked or taken with levity but it needs to be taken seriously if really the church wants to grow spiritually. As shepherd of the flock which the pastors are, they wear many hats: one frequently worn is that of a counselor, they need to make themselves available, because everybody want a pastor to counsel them. According William Hulme. "Young people need their pastor, not only as the preacher, or as the youth group leader, or as the energetic dynamo of congregational life but as the one to whom they can go with their personal problems. They need a representative of the adult world with whom they can share and find in such sharing an incentive for developing their own identity. The pastor is in a unique position to be such a representative since he represents also the world of the spirit."⁵ The pastor as a counselor plays a very important role in the counseling ministry of the church.

RECOMMENDATIONS

"Human need is everywhere. It exists in every community, whether rural or urban. It is present in every part of the community in the inner city, in the suburbs, in the slum and on the campus. It is present among the rich and the poor, the wise and the simple, the scholar and the unskilled laborer. John

5 William E. Hulme Pastoral Counseling with Youth. Pastoral Psychology October 1964 Vol. 15 No 147 p. 48.

Watson was right when he said 'Be kind everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle' people do think of the pastor, the church, or religious agencies when they need help some come hesitantly, some reluctantly, some hopefully, but they do turn to the church and its ministry in great numbers."⁶ Pastoral counselors should be spiritually inclined and be sensitive to the need of the members of the local church they belong. From the findings, members seek counsel outside which shows no confidence in their leaders who should work hard to make parishioners believe in their ability as counselors.

The church may not have the capability to employ a pastor whose area of competence is primarily designed for counseling. The pastor can train layperson to counsel. The mature Christian who had skills that is appropriate to a ministry of counseling. The training will help them fine-tune their skills and become involved in the counseling ministry of the church. In addition, pastors should organize preventive Educational services which will be primarily rehabilitative in nature. This involves distinguishing education from indoctrination and striving to teach people of all ages how to cope with life "Christianly" by using biblical principles in meeting everyday challenges.⁷ Very importantly, pastors who involve in counseling in our local churches should attend;

- Refreshers course in counseling to improve on his knowledge of counseling today and how better to handle people in crisis.

⁶ Charles F. Kemp A Pastoral Counseling Guide book (Nashville: Abingdon Press) p. 130.

⁷ Marving G. Gilbert and Raymond T. Brock (Editors) The Holy Spirit and Counseling Volume II Principles and Practice (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc 1988) P. 4

