

THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

NBTS
M Div
Ogun 9-P

PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING WITH GUILT- RIDDEN
PARISHIONERS

AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY IN THEOLOGY

BY

SUNDAY OYEBAMIJI OGUNDIJO
03/0055

OGBOMOSO, OYO STATE

JUNE, 2006

06 — 1007

ABSTRACT

Pastoral Care and counseling of guilt-ridden parishioners is an attempt to draw the attention of Pastors to the guilt-ridden parishioners in the fold, and to challenge them to show concern and cater for their freedom. The thesis begins with an introduction which specifies the background, problem, purpose and significance of the study. Also, the delimitation, methodology, definition of operational terms and organization of the study are discussed.

Chapter two of the study examines the perspective of guilt. Here, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Psychological perspectives of guilt were surveyed. Attention is concentrated on the consequences of guilt in chapter three. Guilt is examined in details with special focus on types of guilt, causes of guilt and effects of guilt on relationship and love. Chapter four deals with the pastoral challenges of counseling for guilt. This segment is a discussion of practical ways to prevent guilt and the necessity for confession and forgiveness in the treatment of guilt. Chapter five contains the summary of the study, a brief conclusion and recommendations for the treatment and prevention of guilt. Guilt is real. It is a fearsome burden when it becomes a chronic state of mind with no appropriate means of resolution. Meanwhile, the Bible is a book of guilt resolution,, and not a manual for guilt indulging.

B. CONCLUSION

This work has established the purpose of this study and found that people are groaning under the yoke of guilt of which parishioners are not excluded. The writer comes to agree with the claim of Wayne and Charles Oates that, people are in pain, though they are not bedridden but rather move around and live with one kind of pain of another.³ In many instances, the pain that people experienced is their own fault and dare the result of bad judgment, wrong action and persistence abuse of their bodies.⁴

Therefore, Christian parents, pastors, Christian counselors, and the Church of God should arise and do their best to wage war against the guilt menace and deliver its captives. The deliverance is necessary to bring healing to guilt plagued victims, to promote Church growth and enhance good human relationship in the society generally.

³Wayne E. Oates and Charles E Oates, *People In Pain Guide for Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 11.

⁴ Ibid, 48.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

All that were considered in the preceding chapters have motivated the writer to make the under listed recommendations. The Church as a community in which God's love becomes an experienced reality in relationships must not be much concerned about itself than about God and His purpose for His people. Thus the Church must help people find full release from guilt by establishing an effective prayer and counseling ministry for her members (Philippians 4:6). This is necessary because the primary function of religion is to help people handle the anxieties fears, rages, doubts, guilt feelings and despairs.⁵ John and Margaret Tarpley while stressing the role of spirituality and prayer most especially in clinical medicine said it has been suggested that the belief system of the patient should be exploited to bring healing to them.⁶ The Christian faith is at a better advantage to tap this opportunity because Christians are serving a living God. We possess the key to health in our fellowship of believers where the goodness and forgiveness of God are preached.

The Church must also develop an atmospheres of support for her parishioners by helping them to lean heavily on the power of God's Word.⁷ The Word of God prevents from sinning (Ps. 119:11) and bring healing to His people (Ps. 107:20). There is power in praises too that can set the captive free. An atmosphere of praise and thanksgiving can bring healing to guilt-ridden parishioners.⁸ The role of Christian counselors had been discussed briefly in this work and will be considered below as well. It is the responsibility of the Church to train and develop effective counselors within the Christian community.

⁵ Harold O. Warlick, Jr., *Liberation from Guilt* (U.S.A.: n.p, Broadman Press, 1976), 44.

⁶ John Tarpley and Margaret Tarpley, *Lecture from Spirituality In Clinical Medicine*, Ogbomosho: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, 16 February, 2006.

⁷ Seamand, *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, 129.

⁸ Ibid.

This study has established that the conscience is largely a gift of one's parents. This places a tremendous responsibility on mothers and fathers to take the assignment of nurturing their children judiciously. Faulty parenting will lead to maladjustment and emotional disorder in children. Pastors are encouraged to listen attentively to complaints of parishioners with guilt pain. Wayne said, a pastor's attentiveness to people in pain is a royal road to their spiritual consciousness.⁹ Christian counselors and pastors should endeavour to examine and discern the type of guilt the parishioner in question suffers from and help him/her to interpret and gain insight into it. One's counseling is likely to be more difficult if he fails to distinguish between the different type of guilt.¹⁰

Pastors and Christian counselors should help the troubled parishioners to examine their self expectations and their standards of wrong and right. Because, often these parishioners feel guilty about things the Bible does not say are sin.¹¹ Since pastor has the ability to educate the congregation in forgiveness by word and example, he stands a better chance to assert forgiveness to parishioner who cannot get in touch with the roots of his/her alienation. He must help the guilt plagued parishioners to see the necessity for confession and forgiveness in getting deliverance from their problems as discussed in chapter four above. The goal of pastoral counseling is to bring men and women into right relationship with God and to lead them into the abundant life. The Church which is God's instrument of action and the pastor must help parishioners to find, develop, multiply and apply the Christian faith to ease their problem.

⁹Oates, *People In Pain: Guide for Pastoral Care*, 98.

¹⁰ N.V. Hope, "Guilt," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed., By Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books 1999), 490.

¹¹ Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 105.

Much freedom from guilt depends on the willingness and openness of the guilt victim to the members of the body of Christ who model non punitive, loving, correct give attitudes instead of condemnation. Guilt-ridden parishioners must be ready to forgive others and to forgive themselves. They should not dredge up any thing because whatever God forgives He forgets. Guilt, whether real or false, can be handled in only two ways. It must be forgiven or punished. If we cannot secure forgiveness, we find a way to punish ourselves physically, mentally, or circumstantially.¹² Therefore, the easiest way to treat guilt is to forgive.

Extending forgiveness to people who have hurt us is necessary if we are to experience God's forgiveness and to remain in fellowship with Him on a daily basis.¹³ Parishioners need to know that guilt feeling divides a man against himself and is distinct from constructive sorrow that brings about confession and repentance. Guilt feelings are devil's tool and they should not be considered to come from God.¹⁴ Counseling with Christian counselors and psychiatrist can help to make the distinction. It is good to love and be loved. Christian fellowship provides a medium for this experience. According to Warlick, to have true health a person must be concerned with two psychological needs, "the need to love and be loved and the need to feel that we are worthwhile to ourselves and to others."¹⁵ Regular participation in fellowship is good for health especially if the fellowship provides a setting in which true love is expressed.

¹² Betty Tapscott, *Inner Healing Through Healing of Memories* (Houston: Tapscott Ministries, 1987), 27.

¹³ Mivian J. Stark, "Choosing To Forgive" *Decision*. 37, no. 12, Dec. 1996, 32.

¹⁴ Narramore, *No Condemnation*, 123.

¹⁵ Warlick, *Liberation from Guilt*, 69.

