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TOWARDS A MORE EFFECTIVE CARE
AND COUNSELLING MINISTRY
FOR THE AGED

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ABSTRACT

The concern of this study is to develop a more effective care and counselling ministry for the aged. An adequate ministry to both the physical and the spiritual needs of the contemporary aged will help them cope with the demands of life.

The needs of the aged are many but this researcher has concentrated on only five of them. They are: the health and shelter needs, social relationship needs, economic needs, spiritual needs and ministry opportunities needs. The effective provision for these crucial needs of the aged will give them a lease on life.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one serves as the introduction to the whole work. It gives the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, methodology, delimitations and definitions of the operative terms used in the thesis. In addition, the chapter gives an overall picture of this work.

Chapter two is a review of the available literature on the aged. This is done with the aim of helping an adequate understanding of the aged needs and interests. The review focuses on the health/shelter needs, social relationship needs, economic needs, spiritual needs, and ministry opportunities needs of the aged. It is

believed that such an understanding will help the church and pastoral counsellor provide a more effective care and counselling ministry for the aged.

In the third chapter, the investigator does a critical evaluation of the church's ministry to the aged. The focus of this evaluation is mainly on the Baptist churches in Oyo State. The evaluation based on the researcher's interviews with some pastors is that though many churches are now aware of the needs of the aged in their midst, they have no effective ministry to them.

Chapter four discusses the results of the findings of the research. These findings are helpful because they are used as implications for effective care and counselling ministry for the aged.

The fifth and the final chapter gives suggestions and makes recommendations for improved care and counselling ministry for the aged. It is hoped that such an adequate ministry will meet the needs of the contemporary aged.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study on an effective care and counselling ministry for the aged has been an interesting and insightful one. Through the survey conducted in four churches in Oyo State, it was found that both the churches and the pastors are not doing enough in their ministry to the aged. The unmet needs comprised health and shelter needs, social relationshipss needs, economic needs, spiritual needs, and ministry opportunities needs.

Following these findings, the church and the pastoral counsellor as agents of God's grace and love, must wake up to their responsibilities and design a more effective care and counselling ministry for the aged. Such an efficient

ministry for the contemporary aged will enable them to spend the remaining days of their life in happiness, and not in sorrow.

In order to provide the things that are lacking in the church's ministry to the aged and to stress the benefits that will accrue to the church when the booming population of the aged are effectively ministered to, the following recommendations are made.

The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, has served and continues to serve as the source of manpower supply for the Nigerian Baptist Convention churches and churches of other Christian denominations in Africa. This is noble. Unfortunately, this premier seminary has not been able to include gerontology in its curriculum. This failure has deprived the ministers trained in this institution from gaining expertise in ministry to the aged. The churches should encourage the seminary to include this important course of study in its curriculum to prepare ministers for ministry to the aged. Additionally, the seminary should make it compulsory for every minister training in the institution to have an indepth training in pastoral counselling. Such training should include having at least 800 hours of clinical pastoral education (CPE) before graduation. Such experience will give the minister a solid counselling experience. The minister will then use his or her counselling skills to minister to his members including the aged.

Nigerian Baptist Convention churches have started to employ ministers of music, ministers of education, ministers of outreach, ministers of youth, etc. These ministers assist the pastor to carry out effective ministry in their various areas of specialization. This is a commendable development indeed. Examples of churches that have multiple staff ministry are: New Estate Baptist Church, Lagos; Ikoyi Baptist Church, Lagos; and Christ Baptist Church, Gbagada, also in Lagos. As a result of this new phenomenon in the Convention to boost the ministry of the church, the churches should be encouraged to employ ministers for the aged. As experts in their area, the ministers should be able to lead the church to have effective ministry for the aged.

One conspicuous lack in the Nigerian Baptist Convention churches ministry are: home for the aged. The lack of this facility does not however mean that Nigerian Baptist Convention churches cannot build homes for the elderly, if not single handedly, at least collectively. The failure, to this investigation, is that churches' awareness has not been raised so that they will see the need to build such homes. Affluent churches in the Convention, associations, and conferences and even the Convention, should be helped to engage in this important project. The presence of this type of ministry will provide the senior adults "neighbourhoods made up of people similar in age and interests."²⁷ The facility

²⁷J. Paul Brown, Counseling With Senior Citizens (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), p. 50.

