

PASTORAL COUNSELING A TOOL FOR CHURCH GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

Pastoral counseling is lacking in the church today because the church do not see it as a tool to enhance church growth. There is need to assist the individuals, pastors and churches at large to give maximum attention to counseling ministry. This research work however presents pastoral counseling as a tool for effective church growth. The study comprised five chapters. Throughout the chapters of this study, the researcher emphasized and established an inevitable and immense contribution of pastoral counseling to church growth. Attempt is made in the second chapter to elucidate the understanding of pastoral counseling as important ministry of the church, and as well look at the concept of church growth in order to see how the two goes together. The various ways pastoral counseling can be done to enhance church growth and what is usually targeted in the task of pastoral counseling are contained in the chapter three of the study. While chapter four presented the approaches to which various highlighted ways of doing pastoral counseling can be carried out. And chapter five concluded that pastoral counseling and church growth are not merely complementary but inseparably consistent, that, when the principles of pastoral care and counseling are carefully applied then effective church growth will be attainable. And some recommendations were made.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that Pastoral Counseling remains as an aid to church growth. It is a tool on its own to boost the growth of the church. However, no matter the level of performance of the church in other ministries when counseling ministry is missing this will definitely lead the church to experience setback. To guide against embarrassment that may arise such as poor attendance, idleness, irregular payment of tithes and offering and so on, there is need for pastors and church members to see pastoral counseling as a remedy to these effect

In the same vein, this research work reveals that pastoral counseling is very much important in the church, that proper coordination of pastoral care and counseling in the church will help both the pastor and church members to gain good relationship in the family, church and society.

On the other hand, pastors are encouraged to demonstrate their skills and at the same time to intensify their counseling efforts so as to guide against lapses that may occur which will not help the church to growth. In this connection, there is need to recall that a church growth as God's work through Christians who labour to add to those who are saved through Jesus Christ, equipping them for responsible mature members. As members of a church band to have problems in life such as physical, social, marital, moral or spiritual crises, growth can be gravely hindered and stagnated without counseling intervention. The purpose of pastoral counseling therefore, in this situation is to help counselee open his or her eyes to discover ways

by which problems can be solved by themselves. In all of this, the goal of pastoral counseling majorly is to lead counselee to Christ.

Finally, an effective church growth will be fostered and attained only by careful application of the pastoral relationship between pastors and church members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The writer has presented and recommended some vital tips that can be of assistance for churches and pastors on pastoral counseling ministry and church growth. They are as follows:

1. The calls of church growth movement should not be seen as an additional load for pastors, but as a call for more effective pastoral care ministry. It should be known that effective performance of the task of pastoral care and counseling could be used of God to bring growth unto our churches.
2. The church should encourage their pastor in the provision of opportunities for pastoral counseling in all age groups
3. Each church leader or pastor should educate the church members on the necessity to make use of the opportunities available by making contact at any point in time they are in need of help.
4. The church leader or pastor should formulate programmes that will better the lives of members through pastoral counseling.
5. Any pastor who has not been having set-aside time for counseling in a particular day of the week in which church members or non-members will come to meet with their spiritual leader should work on it as soon as possible.
6. The church leader or pastor should develop interest in educating their church members to fill free at any time they need help.

7. No church leader or pastor should see pastoral counseling as a ministry one can handle with human wisdom. It should never be thought as a matter that one can use or embark upon with human skill or techniques.
8. The counselor should also know that people they are to counsel are of different background, faith, opinions, status, race and character. The attitude of the counselor and manner of approach to issues must always be non-aggressive and to a large extent passive.
9. Church leader or pastor should be whole heartedly broken, non-judgmental, empathic, and encourage self-disclosure that will encourage confidentiality so that counselee will not go out with more burden in his or her heart.
10. To maintain integrity of pastor and for relationship to persist between him and counselee, it is very essential for him to watch his caring attitude. He should also exercise confidentiality in all most every matter.