

**PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING WITH EXPECTANT MOTHERS: A CASE STUDY OF
NEW HEIGHT BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, LAGOS**

BY

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ABSTRACT

"Pastoral care and counselling with expectant mothers: A case study of New Height Baptist Association, Lagos" is an attempt to call attention of the ministers to the expectant mothers in the local churches as a special group with unique needs. Meeting such need is a ministry that can enhance the well-being of families within the local church, especially young couples carrying pregnancy for the first time.

Social, medical and traditional care attention is given to the expectant mothers while psychological and spiritual care are not provided and there is no ministry by the local church to care for their need.

The first chapter deals with introductory matters which includes the definition of operative terms, background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, methodology, scope of the study. Chapter two which serves as a theoretical foundation for the study is a review of current literatures on the experience of pregnancy. The review examines pregnancy from many perspectives which include: pregnancy as transition to parenthood, psychological dimension of pregnancy, socio-cultural dimension of pregnancy, economic dimension of pregnancy and sexuality in pregnancy.

Chapter three is a critical examination of what pastors are doing in New Height Baptist Association Lagos in their ministry to expectant mothers as a special group. It was discovered that the ministry is rather generalised and not specifically targetted at expectant mothers during pregnancy or as a special group. A more effective ministry of pastoral care and counselling which targets expectant mothers as a special group, and makes provision for attention to them during the period of pregnancy, is recommended in chapter four. Such a ministry requires specialised training and skills in pastoral care and counselling and an understanding of the experience of pregnancy.

Research and writing in the area of the psychological dimension of pregnancy is still new and the lack of locally written materials may be part of the reasons why many churches do not engage in a specialised ministry to expectant mothers. The study also recommends by calling for a specialised ministry to expectant mothers which will meet their needs and enhance their well-being emotionally and spiritually, and if pastors in local churches will engage in special ministries to expectant mothers, or lead their churches to do so, they require the appropriate training for such ministries.

5.2. CONCLUSION

A study of the pastoral care and counselling ministry to expectant mothers in New Height Baptist Association Lagos has revealed that some attempts are being made to minister to their needs. The ministry takes a generalised approach and lacks specific emphasis on expectant mothers as a special groups. It also focuses on some dimensions of the pregnancy experience, leaving out other dimensions with the needs unmet. For example, a pastor who sees pregnancy as only a physical/medical issue will encourage expectant mothers who are members of his church to attend ante-natalclinic. The ministries of prayer, preaching, visitation, family education and pastoral counselling as they are being done now could be made more effective. Some of the family centred programmes which are only carried out occasionally now can be made more frequent. Small groups in the churches should also be encouraged to include prayer, visitation and

other enrichment programmes in their plans rather than just being social interaction groups. These groups will enrich the lives of members including expectant mothers.

The interview with some of the pastors has helped to call their attention to the need for a more effective and socialised ministry of pastoral care and counselling to expectant mothers. Some admitted that they are only doing currently what their training and exposure can enable them to do in their pastoral care and counselling of expectant mothers.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

If pastors in local churches will engage in special ministries to expectant mothers, or lead their churches to do so, they require the appropriate training for such ministries. Some pastors will take the initiation to meet the needs of special groups based on their interests and what they consider to be priority needs in the lives of their congregations. The current emphasis on ministry to groups in the local church such as children, youth, students, widows, singles and aged is a step in the right direction. It is an emphasis that calls for specialised training in ministry. Pastors need training in group dynamics in order to be able to work with small groups in the local church and to enable such groups to promote growth and healing in the local church.

Pastoral care and counselling of expectant mothers through childbirth education, caring and growth groups, pastoral psychotherapy and referral requires specialised training and skill to carry it out. Seminars and workshops can be organised to equip pastors of local churches with the knowledge and skill needed for such a specialised ministry. Such training should seek to broaden the knowledge of pastors about the multi-dimensional nature of the pregnancy experience. A broader understanding of the experience of expectant mothers could help pastors see the emotional, economic and

spiritual needs of these members of their congregations and the need to minister to them as a group.

The child bearing stage of life is a transitional period for any family passing through it. In African communities transitional periods of life are recognised and often celebrated through various rites of passage. As a transitional period and a potential crisis period pregnancy presents an opportunity for pastoral care and counselling ministry from the local church. According to Enyioha (1992) rites of passage in African Traditional Religion are not only opportunities for educating and socialising members of a community, but also represent landmarks in an individual's spiritual journey (18). Hence transitional periods of life should be taken seriously as opportunities for the pastoral ministry of presence, supportive care and counselling and guidance (22).

The ministry of visitation and prayers offered for safe delivery of expectant mothers can be a ministry of pastoral presence during such a transitional period. The pastor can also offer words of support, encouragement and affirmation during visits or through his preaching ministry. Childbirth education lessons can help guide and educate expectant mothers about their experience. It can also help husbands understand their wives and give them the needed support. Expectant mothers' participation in caring and growth groups where they are involved in fellowship, prayer and Bible study can contribute to their spiritual nurture and growth. Pastoral psychotherapy will help meet the needs of expectant mothers experiencing emotional crisis and referral for further help can ensure that they get the best help available to meet their needs. Most of the books written currently for use in pastoral care and counselling, childbirth education and pregnancy are by western authors. More books written by africans who have an

understanding of the African context and have tested the theories of pastoral care and counselling in such context are needed.