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Pastoral Care to the Hurting: Restoring Broken Relationships in a Broken World

Accompagnement Pastoral des Personnes en Souffrance : Restaurer les Relations Brisées dans un Monde Brisé

Cliford Yiwong Fanfon[1]

Abstract

This paper focuses on providing emotional and spiritual support to individuals, irrespective of gender, social status, and age, who are experiencing pain, suffering, or trauma, particularly in the context of broken relationships. It addresses the problem that some victims of pain, suffering, and trauma go through their ordeal by themselves, struggling emotionally and psychologically to be able to thrive. In such a struggle, relationships with acquaintances are strained, making it difficult for them to cope. The principal argument of this article is that, through empathy, active listening, and spiritual guidance, caregivers can assist victims of pain, suffering, and trauma in coping with their predicament. Through a literary approach, the research submits that the ideals of God's presence in suffering, forgiveness, and reconciliation are key biblical principles that must be applied to restore broken relationships. The findings reveal that victims of pain, suffering, and trauma need active listening skills demonstrated through empathy to readjust to life and have a more fulfilling experience. Also, connecting individuals with counselling services, support groups, or other helpful resources is an essential pastoral care tip that can go a long way toward helping those suffering. The paper recommends that pastoral caregivers be more intentional in attending to the needs of victims of pain, suffering, and trauma, to help them find purpose and meaning in life.

Keywords: Broken World, Pain, Pastoral Care, Suffering, Relationships, Hurting

Résumé

Cet article vise à offrir un soutien émotionnel et spirituel aux personnes, sans distinction de sexe, de statut social ou d'âge, qui éprouvent de la douleur, de la souffrance ou des traumatismes, particulièrement dans le contexte de relations brisées. Il aborde le problème selon lequel certaines victimes de douleur, de souffrance et de traumatismes traversent seules leur épreuve, luttant sur les plans émotionnel et psychologique pour parvenir à s'épanouir. Dans cette lutte, leurs relations avec leurs connaissances se trouvent fragilisées, ce qui rend leur situation encore plus difficile à supporter. L'argument principal de cet article est que, par l'empathie, l'écoute active et l'accompagnement spirituel, les personnes engagées dans la relation d'aide peuvent aider les victimes de douleur, de souffrance et de traumatismes à faire face à leur situation. À travers une approche littéraire, cette recherche affirme que les principes bibliques de la présence de Dieu dans la souffrance, du pardon et de la réconciliation doivent être appliqués pour restaurer les relations brisées. Les résultats révèlent que les victimes de douleur, de souffrance et de traumatismes ont besoin de compétences d'écoute active manifestées par l'empathie, afin de se

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réadapter à la vie et d'en avoir une expérience plus épanouissante. De même, orienter les personnes vers des services de conseil, des groupes de soutien ou d'autres ressources utiles constitue une pratique essentielle de l'accompagnement pastoral, susceptible d'aider considérablement les personnes qui souffrent. L'article recommande aux accompagnateurs pastoraux d'être plus intentionnels dans leur attention aux besoins des victimes de douleur, de souffrance et de traumatismes, afin de les aider à trouver un but et un sens à leur vie.

Mots-clés : Monde brisé, douleur, accompagnement pastoral, souffrance, relations, personnes blessées

Introduction

The contemporary world is characterized by widespread brokenness, manifest in fractured relationships among individuals, families, and communities, as well as with God. Sin, conflict, loss, injustice, and suffering often lead to emotional, relational, and spiritual distress, generating a growing need for guidance, healing, and restoration. Within this framework, pastoral care serves as an indispensable ministry through which God's love, grace, and hope are extended to those facing pain and brokenness.

Beached in the example of Jesus Christ, pastoral care provides compassionate support, spiritual guidance, emotional encouragement, and practical assistance. It adopts a holistic approach by addressing the spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical dimensions of human suffering. Pastoral care is particularly significant for individuals facing grief, conflict, betrayal, family instability, marital challenges, and other relational difficulties. Sadly, some victims of these predicaments go through their ordeal by themselves, struggling emotionally and psychologically to be able to thrive. In such a struggle, relationships with acquaintances are strained, making it difficult for them to cope.

This paper argues that effective pastoral care, rooted in biblical principles of God's presence in suffering, forgiveness, and reconciliation, provides a practical framework for restoring broken relationships and fostering emotional and spiritual healing in a broken world. It highlights the church's responsibility to participate in God's redemptive mission by promoting reconciliation with God and with one another, ultimately leading individuals and communities toward healing, wholeness, and renewed relationships through Christ. It concludes by suggesting practical ways to attend to the hurting and restore broken relationships.

Theological Understanding of Human Brokenness

The creation tells the paradoxical story of human dignity and depravity. In dignity, man was created in the likeness of God, unspoiled by any blemish of sin. In this state, man pleased God in all aspects of his life. He knew no sin, suffering, pain, death, hardship, or infirmity – in short, life was blissful in the very presence of God. Man then could experience a heaven-on-earth life – a glimpse of life in heaven.

Nevertheless, the story changed when the enemy defied the confines God had set in place and lured man away from the life order He required. Man chose to disobey God, and this first act of disobedience in the human race is what let loose the hounds of hell that distorted the divine image in man. In place of honesty, dishonesty set in; in place of love, hatred, animosity, bitterness, grudge-bearing and unforgiveness set in; in place of blessings, curses became a reality to man; in place of life in abundance, death set in; in place of joy, fulfilment, and satisfaction, pain and suffering became true to man's experience of life. The beautiful creation of God became ugly,

made so by the entrance of sin. The ground was cursed, and thorns and thistles appeared on plants to make life bitter for man (Gen. 3:17-18)! The entire human race was bound to be partakers of the curse of the sin of the first parents – Adam and Eve.

The fall of man explains why everyone living in this world experiences some form of pain or suffering. That is why no one can experience a pain-free, suffering-free, sickness-free, death-free, problem-free, and hardship-free life here on earth. Danu H. Wonosikou corroborates the foregoing by noting that human suffering comes along with pain, distress, and depression.[2] Human relationships broke down, and conflict and death became part of the human narrative. Hence, the soul of man – the seat of his personality – needs care to cope with the realities of earthly life, or life will become a nightmare. That is why God, the Creator, has put a yearning in every human heart to be connected to the Divine (Ecc. 3:11). The role of the minister (or the pastor) in offering care to the sheep under his care cannot be jettisoned. Charles Gerkin notes that this arena of pastoral work is multifaceted and full of surprises, unexpected problems, and opportunities for profound insight into the human situation.[3] James D. Berkley corroborates the foregoing by noting that pastors answer a call into crises when they care for people in a fallen world.[4] "It is the arena in which the pastor is privileged to be with people who live and breathe, succeed and fail, relate intimately and experience alienation. It is the down-to-earth world of human living."[5]

One of the implications of man's creation in God's image is that man is a relational being, connecting with others in vital ways, either consciously or unconsciously, through which their needs are met. Human relationships are bound to break down because life is experienced in a broken world. However, one must understand that "God created humankind for a relationship with God and with God's other creatures. God continues in a relationship with humankind by remembering and hearing us. Our human caring is based on God's care; we care for each other because God cares for us."[6]

It is an irrefutable fact that God cares deeply about His creation. However, the devil in his diabolical schemes against humanity is determined to make the latter see God as a remote being who is unconcerned and, as a result, has left man on their own. When the devil succeeds in making humanity believe that God does not care about them, he frustrates their lives and makes them believe the lie that the latter, on the contrary, is closer, offering them "needed" help in the affairs of life. As a result, he suggests alternative sources of the desired help, all carefully planned to draw humanity away from the Creator. God's transcendence does not do away with His immanence (Ps. 18:16; 91:1; 138:6; 144:7; Is. 6:1; 57:15). It is through this that He is seen as involved in the broken world.

Brokenness has to do with the inability of humankind to be able to live optimally, pleasing the Lord as a result of the depravity that came in due to the fall; hence, humankind faces suffering, pain, trauma, shame, guilt, conflict, betrayal, broken relationships, war, and ultimate alienation from God the Creator, just to mention these. Henri Nouwen, in his book, *The Wounded Healer*, observes that the "world stands helpless before the threat of atomic war, eroding poverty, and the starvation of millions."[7] This paints a graphic picture of the human condition in a world which he

[2] Danu H. Wonosikou, *African Concept of Suffering and Pastoral Care* (Jos, Nigeria: The Eagle Ness Christian Church, 2014), 79.

[3] Charles V. Gerkin, *An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 11.

[4] James D. Berkley, *Called into Crises: The Nine Great Challenges of Pastoral Care* (Waco, Texas: World Book Publishers, 1989), 4.

[5] Gerkin, 11.

[6] John Patton, *Pastoral Care: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 1.

[7] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Doubleday Religion, 2010), 35.

describes as dislocated, convulsive, and dying,[8] with a shift from a guilt-based to a shame-based culture.[9] Humankind is hurting emotionally and psychologically, yearning and groaning for ultimate redemption of their bodies, which will happen when Christ returns (Rom. 8:22-23). Human brokenness is a call for intentional soul-care.

Pastoral care derives from the biblical image of the shepherd. According to Wayne E. Oates, pastoral care is the solicitous concern expressed within the religious community for persons in trouble or distress.[10] It simply denotes the care of a community for its members;[11] it is the more intensive dimension of the larger ministry tasks, in conversation with persons or groups seeking interpersonal, moral, or spiritual guidance.[12] In this light, John Patton points out that "pastoral care is the action of a community of faith that celebrates God's care by hearing and remembering those who are somehow cut off from the faith community.[13] Pastoral care encompasses the routine duties and responsibilities of the pastor aimed at building, healing, reconciling, nurturing, and sustaining parishioners amid their existential challenges.[14] Care is pastoral when it looks beyond the immediate circumstances of a person's life and reminds that person that they are a child of God, created in and for relationship. In R. J. Hunter's opinion, pastoral care refers, broadly and inclusively, to all pastoral work concerned with the support and nurturance of persons and interpersonal relationships, including everyday expressions of care and concern that may occur amidst various pastoring activities and relationships."[15] The foregoing implies that human brokenness and its effects can be addressed only through the mediation of pastoral care.

Biblical Foundations for Pastoral Care

This section presents the groundwork for pastoral care. It discusses God's presence in suffering and the need for forgiveness and reconciliation.

God's Presence in Suffering

The fall of man brought suffering to humanity. But God did not leave man alone to face his predicament. God reminds His children that He is walking with them in the midst of their suffering; that He is co-suffering with them (Ps. 91:15). He is an ever-present help in suffering, even in silence, and at their time of deepest need (Ps. 46:1). God pledges Himself as the shepherd of those who trust in Him. As a shepherd, He is committed to tend them, leading them to find good pasture and rest for their souls (Ps. 23; Jn. 10:27-30, 2 Cor. 1:8-10, Is. 43:2, Matt. 28:20). Though God does not necessarily take away the suffering, He is with us through it. God is not distant, but walks beside us, giving comfort and holding His children through the storm. Suffering is a way through which God shows His presence and strength. The assurance of God's presence with His own in suffering should encourage them to face the challenges of this broken world courageously.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

[8] Nouwen, 4.

[9] Nouwen, 38.

[10] Wayne E. Oates, "Pastoral Care: Contemporary Methods, Perspectives, and Issues." In *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 835.

[11] Gerkin, 92.

[12] Gerkin, 92.

[13] Patton, 1.

[14] Sam O. Oyedele, *Principles and Practices of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Ogbomoso, Nigeria: Samak Press and Publishers, 2011), 7.

[15] R. J. Hunter, "Pastoral Care and Counseling" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 845.

God, through the atoning work of Christ on the cross of Calvary, forgave wayward humankind of their trespasses and reconciled them back to Himself. When this happened on the cross, He did not count men's sins against them, but justified and acquitted them of those sins (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:29-30). Divine forgiveness and reconciliation to the Godhead form the basis for forgiving and being reconciled one to another. Therefore, there is no scriptural basis for bitterness, hatred, grudge-bearing and vengeful feelings toward one another, no matter how painful life gets in this broken world. Forgiveness needs to be freely given and received, even to those who do not deserve it, because God first forgave humankind (Matt. 6:14-15; Eph. 4:32). Hurting individuals need to be pointed to the ultimate reconciler, Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

Principles of Pastoral Care for the Hurting

It has been mentioned that the pastoral care ministry thrives because people are hurting emotionally and psychologically and yearning for someone to alleviate their predicament. It suffices to talk intimately with others to understand the nature of the pain they are going through. That is why the caregiver must adopt relevant ways to care for the hurting. Family breakdown, marital crises, betrayal, domestic violence, addiction, mental health struggles, social isolation, terrorism, war, and cultural divisions are among the things that hurt people, especially in the African context, for which they seek help. All of these crises fundamentally are a result of the fall. This section presents three (3) key principles to offer care to the hurting:

Compassion

Compassion means bearing and suffering with the hurting. It suggests more empathy (feeling with) than sympathy (feeling for) the hurting. It is the ability to enter a person's private world; the capacity to hear, comprehend, envision, and describe their perceptions and feelings to the person.[16] This is validation of the hurt by acknowledging the individual's emotions and experiences. J. Ezhanikatt, Q. L. Hand, and L. Skwerer submit that from a psychological perspective, compassion is rooted in the capacity to reconstruct the situation of another imaginatively and to respond to it emotionally in ways shaped by the meanings and values of the culture.[17] In the pastoral tradition, compassion is the cardinal virtue and the indispensable quality that not only motivates but deepens all charitable, healing, and caring acts into events of moral and spiritual significance.[18] L. O. Mills agrees with this assertion and submits that compassion is any pastoral act motivated by a sincere devotion to the physical, mental, material, psychological, and spiritual well-being of the other(s).[19]

The writer avers that during Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, He modelled compassion by ministering to the people (Matt. 9:35-38). That is what was responsible for the impact that He created. Gary Collins submits that Jesus "was committed to serving His heavenly Father and His fellow human beings, prepared for His work through frequent periods of prayer and meditation, was deeply familiar with Scripture, and sought to help hurting persons turn to Him, in whom they could find ultimate peace, hope, and security."[20] It can therefore be concluded that the compassionate pastor exemplifies a deeply felt sense of solidarity with suffering persons,

[16] Sam O. Oyedele, *Principles and Practices of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Ogbomoso, Nigeria: Samak Press and Publishers, 2011), 30.

[17] J. Ezhanikatt, Q. L. Hand and L. Skwerer, "Compassion" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Rodney Hunter (Gen. Ed). Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 206-207.

[18] Ezhanikatt, *et al.,* 207.

[19] L. O. Mills, "Care" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Rodney Hunter (Gen. Ed). Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 836.

[20] Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling* (Rodney Hunter (Gen. Ed). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 30.

transcending class and culture, yet maintaining the distance necessary to sustain them in their search for an authentic understanding of the meaning of their afflictions.[21]

Listening

Listening is a fundamental principle in providing care to the hurting. It involves providing a safe and non-judgmental space for individuals to share their stories. Listening is a skill that can be developed. Many people hear others, but very few actually listen to them. According to J. L. Cedarleaf, listening must go beyond signs, words, and sounds that mark the concealed condition of the soul.[22] Gary Collins submits that listening is more than giving passive or half-hearted attention to the other person's words. Instead, as an active process, it involves, among other things, setting aside one's own conflicts, biases, and preoccupations to concentrate on what the person is saying. It involves waiting patiently through periods of silence or tears as the client summons enough courage to share something painful or pauses to regain their thoughts and composure.[23] Such listening is what brings the therapy to the hurting. Listening must be active, that is, through a quiet question, a perceptive comment, or a sensitive story that portrays hearing beyond the overt words to engage the other at a deeper level of the communicative relationship.[24] This implies that the pastor must employ verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to be a therapeutic listener. The verbals in communication include good questioning, paraphrasing, and restating the issue at stake. This helps to open up the contact. The non-verbals include touch, physical distance, facial expression, vocal tone, attentive silence, body position, and eye contact. How the pastor uses these greatly determines his effectiveness as a good listener. The hurting need a listening ear from the pastor who communicates hope and concern, qualities that facilitate healing.

Spiritual (or Pastoral) Guidance

Those who are hurting need spiritual guidance to cope with their predicament. Sometimes, the weight of their struggles becomes too much to bear, and the only option left is to consider other ways to address the predicament. This usually follows seeking help from a counsellor. The pastoral caregiver is responsible for helping the hurting make good decisions and move on the right path despite the challenge. K. R. Mitchell submits that pastoral guidance involves helping a hurting person find their way through an unfamiliar, confusing, or difficult situation, often involving some decision-making or action.[25] Adequate guidance requires counselling, listening, and empathy, which can be inductive or educative. Sometimes, the client depends solely on the counsellor's guidance to know what to do. This is because life crises can leave people facing dilemmas, and without guidance, they would not know how to handle them. This explains why pastoral guidance is necessary to help clients make informed and objective decisions. The counsellor needs to know that guidance does not consist of giving ready-made answers to clients' problems, but rather of presenting several options to the client so they can take responsibility for their choices. The caregiver needs to be aware of the client's hopeless situation and of the fact that the victim ultimately relies on the guidance the caregiver offers. Through prayer, Scripture, and spiritual wisdom, the individual can find comfort and hope. Therefore, the caregiver needs wisdom in their guiding functions and techniques, as misguidance can jeopardise the client's entire life.

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[21] Ezhanikatt, *et al.,* 207.

[22] J. L. Cedarleaf, "Listening" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Rodney Hunter (Gen. Ed). Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 654.

[23] Collins, 68.

[24] J. L. Cedarleaf, 654.

[25] K. R. Mitchell, "Pastoral Guidance" in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Rodney Hunter (Gen. Ed). Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 486.

Pastoral Strategies for Restoring Broken Relationships

According to Nouwen, many people are convinced that there is something terribly wrong with the world in which they live, and that cooperating with existing models of living constitutes a kind of betrayal of the self. People are restless and nervous, unable to concentrate and often suffering from a growing sense of depression. Though they understand that what is should not be as such, there is no perceivable, workable alternative. Consequently, they are saddled with frustration, often expressed in undirected, purposeless violence, or in suicidal withdrawal from the world.[26] The following can be applied to restore broken relationships with one another:

Reconciliation

The pain people go through sometimes makes them live at odds with God, others, and even themselves, and they tend to blame these for their predicament. In the traditional African context, nothing happens for nothing; there is a cause for everything they go through, and in most instances, it is evil spirits or fellow humans considered enemies.[27] Consequently, people live in bitterness, hatred, and grudge-bearing toward one another; hence the need for reconciliation among themselves. The ministry of reconciliation has a basis in the Eden experience after the fall (Gen. 3) where God, in His mercy, planned the solution for restoration in Christ, who, according to Wonosikou, performed this ministry of reconciliation in three ways, namely preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing the sufferers and sacrificing His life for the redemption of sinners.[28] Only the sacrifice of His life was worthy to reconcile fallen man to the holy God, and He has handed the ministry of reconciliation to His servants (Jn. 20:21; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). His death on the cross to reconcile fallen man was the cornerstone of the Christian faith, the most important fact of His coming. Philip Yancey submits that "God did not give us words or theories on the problem of pain, He gave us Himself. A philosophy may explain difficult things, but it has no power to change them. The gospel, the story of Jesus' life, promises change."[29] Gospel ministers must help sufferers let go of their pride, ego, bitterness, and reservations toward one another, and offer the sacrifice of time, energy, and resources to connect in vital, life-enhancing ways, as a testimony of their submission to God. No matter the pain or the source, there is a need to see each other as brothers and sisters, closely connected.

Forgiveness

Helping individuals work towards forgiveness and reconciliation with others is essential in restoring broken relationships. Forgiveness involves accepting someone's faults and tolerating the consequences of their actions, even when it is painful; it frees one from bitterness, vengeful feelings, and grudge-bearing and allows one to live freely with them. Although forgiveness is a very difficult emotional decision, especially when hurt by someone very close, it can strengthen relationships tremendously and help the hurt party. Andreas Kostenberger corroborates the foregoing by submitting that "Forgiveness is crucial for overcoming past hurts and keeping a healthy relationship."[30] The Scriptures admonish us to receive from and offer forgiveness to others

[26] Nouwen, 38.

[27] Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Theology* (Nairobi, Kenya: Hippo Books, 2012), 57; Danu H. Wonosikou, *The Concept of Suffering and Pastoral Care* (Lagos, Nigeria: Rehoboth Publishing, 2005), 28.

[28] Wonosikou, 128-129.

[29] Philip Yancey, *Where is God When it Hurts?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990), 226.

[30] Andreas Kostenberger, *God's Marriage and Family* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2004), 145.

(Matt. 6:12-15). It is unfortunate to note that while Christianity teaches and preaches forgiveness, and has as its central focus grace, redemption, mercy and healing, many Christians still struggle with guilt. "Unforgiveness hurts us more than it hurts anyone else."[31] The process of forgiveness begins with awareness and understanding of sin; ignorance of this leads to living self-absorbed lives that hurt others.[32] God created man as a relational being, and pursuing the path of forgiveness is the means of fulfilling his inherent God-created potential. Un-forgiveness puts one in a terrible prison because it constitutes trying to live a life for which one was not meant. Joyce Meyer submits that what God freely gives, He expects that it is freely given to others; hence, we can forgive others who sin against us or harm us in any way, for "if we don't forgive, we will be miserable, and our soul will be poisoned with the malignancy of bitterness."[33] Throughout life, people get hurt, wounded, and offended. Life itself is filled with injustices. The only way to free ourselves from the pain of these wounds is to let go, trusting that God will vindicate His own and bring justice. Every day or week, there are opportunities to be offended and become angry, but proper knowledge of God's will gives the courage to move beyond anger and enjoy the life God has given us.

Communication

Communication is key to restoring broken relationships. When relationships get strained, many people either refrain from talking or stop listening to each other. It takes effort to restore broken relationships. Facilitating healthy communication is one way to restore broken relationships between hurting parties. Frank and effective communication builds and strengthens vital relationships and is essential to convey feelings and needs. Through this, catharsis occurs, soothing the emotional wounds in the heart.[34] Open and truthful communication about disputes can clear up misinterpretations and restore trust. Harold J. Sala cautions that if communication will yield the desired results and help the hurting, it is necessary to choose the right time, place, words, attitude, and tone so that the words are not inflammatory.[35] According to Peter Nyumnloh, communication is vital for building and maintaining relationships with others.[36] This aligns with active listening: when both parties feel heard and understood, tensions ease, and space is created for healing. The premise of the foregoing is empathy – acknowledging each other's feelings and perspectives – thereby mending emotional wounds. Therefore, seeking to express oneself when hurt is important for emotional healing.

Boundary Setting

Boundary setting, that is, encouraging people to set healthy limits in their relationships, can be a boost for those struggling with noxious relationships or feeling shattered. Boundary setting communicates one's needs and limits, helping others know what they can and cannot tolerate in their interactions. According to Tim LaHaye, understanding one's temperament is essential to understanding one's behaviour. "Temperament sets broad guidelines on everyone's behaviour – patterns that will influence a person as long as they live. On one side are his strengths, on the other, his weaknesses.[37] Understanding one's temperament and, hence, behaviour promotes healthier

[31] Joyce Meyer, *Do Yourself a Favor…Forgive* (New York: Faith Words, n.d), 6.

[32] Adam Hamilton, *Forgivenes: Finding Peace through Letting go* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2012), 16.

[33] Meyer, 4.

[34] Kostenberger, 58.

[35] Harold J. Sala, *Connecting: 52 Guidelines for Making Marriage Work* (n.c: Oasis International Ltd., 1984), 143-145.

[36] Peter N. Nyumnloh, *Church Administration for Beginners* (Nkwen, Bamenda: CBC Printing Press, n.d), 146.

[37] Tim LaHaye, *Why You Act the Way you Do* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers Inc., 1984),

relationship dynamics and can mend them. For persons who are hurting, boundary setting helps them regain control, reduce stress and anxiety, encourages respect for their needs by others, and fosters a sense of self-worth. Myles Monroe submits that visions are only achieved when self-imposed limits are adhered to.[38] Purpose fulfilment can only happen when personal indulgence is given up. Setting boundaries helps sufferers gain emotional stability and hope in the midst of pain, a goal expressed in their hearts.

Accountability

Accountability involves holding individuals accountable for their actions and promoting personal growth. God designed man to relate with one another. Pursuing a solitary life is one of the most difficult endeavours for humans. This is because the latter is made for relationships. In relating to one another, conflict is inevitable. The hurt arising therefrom can be so heavy that the relationship is significantly strained, making open communication difficult. When someone acknowledges their part in the hurt and takes responsibility via owning mistakes, sincerely apologising to each other and making amends, trust can be rebuilt. Such actions help the other person to feel heard and validated. This can be a significant step toward emotional healing and rebuilding the relationship. Accountability entails looking each other in the eye and being able to express inner hurt and pain. It has to do with holding each other responsible for offering help as emotional and spiritual needs are shared, and the other is upheld through prayer and counselling. Of course, accountability works well in a context of trust and transparency where individuals share and report their actions, admit their failures and seek to correct or learn from them. Learning from each other in such a relationship would entail lovingly pointing out each other's faults and suggesting ways to help, thus bringing emotional balance. There is a need to hold each other lovingly accountable so that coping when facing challenges becomes easier.

Practical Recommendations for Pastoral Caregivers

To ensure effective pastoral care, this study recommends the following:

1. **Active listening:** Gospel ministers and pastoral caregivers should give individuals going through challenges their undivided attention as they seek help. Active listening is therapeutic.
2. **Empathetic responses (Attending):** Gospel ministers and pastoral caregivers should actively attend to crisis victims. This can be done through eye contact, natural posture, and gestures that are neither excessive nor distracting. The counsellor should be courteous, kind, and strongly motivated to understand the individual's emotions and concerns.
3. **Open-ended questions:** In ministering to those experiencing challenges, pastoral caregivers and gospel ministers should encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings freely. This encourages catharsis, that is, emotional release, which facilitates healing.
4. **Referral to resources:** Sometimes, individuals' needs require concerted efforts to assist them. When a diagnosis reveals this, the caregiver should connect individuals with counselling services, support groups, or other helpful resources, because carefully and objectively made referrals produce tremendous results.

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[38] Myles Munroe, *Becoming a Leader* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 2009), 139.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the role of pastoral care in providing emotional and spiritual support to individuals experiencing pain, suffering, and trauma arising from broken relationships. It has been demonstrated that life in a fallen and broken world is inevitably accompanied by various forms of suffering that affect individuals emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. Within this context, pastoral caregivers serve an essential role in offering guidance, hope, and compassionate support to those facing life's challenges. The study has further established that Scripture consistently portrays God as deeply concerned about humanity's suffering and provides enduring principles for coping with adversity. The assurance of God's presence and active involvement in the lives of believers offers encouragement and hope, regardless of the nature or intensity of their circumstances. Moreover, the redemptive work of Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection provides the theological foundation for reconciliation, forgiveness, and the restoration of broken relationships between God and humanity, as well as among individuals. Consequently, pastoral caregivers have a vital responsibility to embody Christ's ministry by facilitating emotional healing, spiritual growth, and reconciliation, thereby enabling individuals to navigate the realities of a broken world with faith, resilience, and hope.

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