

ON THEOLOGY

*Vol. 1 Nos. 1& 2, March, 2018.
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**IMPACT OF PASTORAL COUNSELING AND CARE ON CHURCH GROWTH: A
LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT**

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Received 1 January 2018; Accepted 9 January 2018; Published 10 March 2018
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ABSTRACT

The church is both a spiritual living organism and a social entity. As a spiritual body, it survives by feeding on spiritual food- the word of God. As a social organization, it requires effective leadership and direction. The pastor plays a very crucial role in feeding the church not only spiritually as its shepherd, but also providing the requisite leadership and direction necessary for the church to achieve its primary mission and mandate. Pastoral care and counseling represent one means by which the shepherd and leader of the church (the pastor), fulfills his spiritual and social obligation to the church who are his flock. Pastoral care and counseling are therefore critical ingredients in the life of the church. Without them, there is no real bond between the church leadership and memberships. Without pastoral counseling and care, the problems of members cannot be known and addressed. For churches to grow, pastors and pastoral teams need to ensure that they care for their sheep. This is certainly a critical aspect of the pastoral ministry.

Key words: Pastoral Care, Counselling, Church Growth.

1.1 Introduction and Background

The church, as revealed in the Pauline epistles is usually analogous with a bride, body, temple or living organism¹. Growth is a necessary component of all living organisms. From a biological perspective, the features of adaptive significance that distinguish living from non-living entities is the ability to carry out life processes including movement, respiration, sensitivity to stimuli, reproduction, excretion, nutrition and growth². An organism that is not experiencing growth is certainly malfunctioning and this may be the result of mal-nutrition, diseases or inherent biological disorder or unfavorable environmental circumstances.

As a living organism, the church of Jesus Christ needs to experience growth and there is no question that the command of God and the major concern of churches are quantitative and qualitative church growth³. This fact has been reflected in various kinds of books or dissertations including the Bible. Church leaders, especially missionaries or pastors have reported strategies, principles, perspectives or experiences from their ministry fields through books or dissertations. No wonder almost every resource in theology is connected to church growth directly or indirectly.

As the body of Christ, meaning that the Church could be construed as a social organization that comprises people coming from divergent backgrounds, problems are inevitable. Problems people face in life are myriad but may be classified generally under spiritual, psychological, emotional, physical, material, financial or social. Spiritual problems might include people under demonic oppression or attacks. Psychological problems might include people suffering from various forms of addictions. Emotional problems often relate to relationships including dating, marriage, divorce etc. Physical problems include presence of sickness, diseases and disorders in the body. Material problems include lack of some material necessities in life such as shelter, clothing etc. Financial problems include lack of money but could be stretched to encapsulate financial difficulties that affect people's personal businesses and plague their households. Social problems might involve children or spouses who are exhibiting deviant behavior such as engaging in marital unfaithfulness, prostitution, or armed robbery. While these classifications may not be exhaustive, they help in properly conceptualizing the various categories of problems that people in general, and church congregations, in particular face. It must be noted, however, that these areas are interdependent and may have some relationships with each other and should in no way be treated as separate completely unrelated entities.

¹ Rom12:4-5; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Eph 1:22-23; Eph 2:21-22; Eph 4:16; Col 2:17-19; 1 Cor 12 :14-27

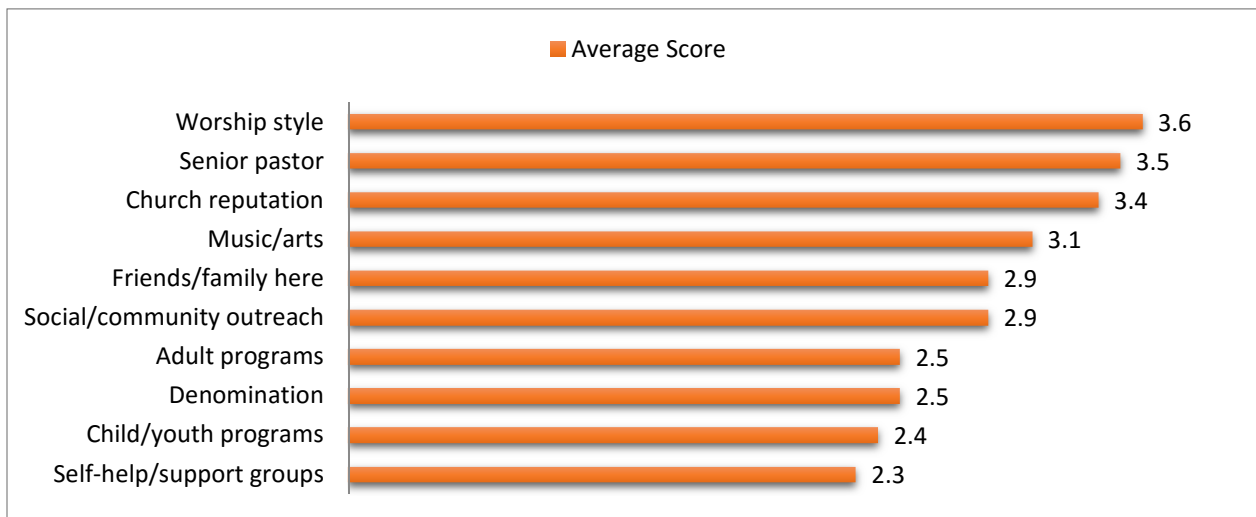
² Muttaqui, I. A., Banu, N., Hasan, M. A., & Ahmed, G. A. (2009). Secondary Biology. National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 67-70, Motijheel Commercial Area, Dhaka.

³ Δοναλδ Ανδερσον ΜχΓαπραν, *Εφφεχτιπε επανγγελισμ α τηεολογιχαλ μανδατε* (Πηλλιπσυργ, ΝΘ: Πρεσβυτεριαν ανδ Ρεφορμεδ Πυβλισηινγ Χομπανψ, 1988), 15–20.

People join the church congregation for several reasons. In a National Survey of Mega church attenders⁴ which was conducted from January to August 2008 at 12 mega churches across the United States, 18-year-old and older attenders of these churches at all their campuses and services during one weekend's worship services was surveyed. From this effort, the research collected usable responses from 24,900 attenders out of a possible total of 47,516 people, for a 58% response rate. Additionally, the researchers supplemented the survey at these churches with site visits, interviews, surveys of staff and other data collection efforts.

The survey asked mega church attenders to score a series of 10 items on a 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot) scale on how influential each factor was in initially attracting them to come to the church. The worship style, senior pastor and reputation of the church were most strongly influential in initially bringing people into the mega churches. A secondary level of influence was attributed to music and arts, the presence of one's family and friends and the church's social and community outreach. An exception to this general pattern was if the person was a visitor or a recent attender of 1 year or less. In that case, the friends and family characteristic is an equal primary initial attraction, but it still doesn't have a greater influence than the three most influential items. It is interesting that an often-stated reason for switching churches – that of the children's and youth programs – rated very low even though most mega churches, including the 12 churches researched, had excellent youth programs. These programs were more attractive for couples and single parents with children, yet even for these groups youth programs were not the draw one might expect (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Factors that attract new people to Mega churches



⁴ Thumma, S. & Bird, W. (2009). Not Who You think they are: The Real Story of People Who Attend America's Mega churches. Hartford Institute for Religion Research and Leadership Network, June 2009.

Source: *Thumma, S. & Bird, W. (June, 2009). Not Who You think they are: The Real Story of People Who Attend America's Mega churches. Hartford Institute for Religion Research and Leadership Network.*

Other surveys have shown that people pursue religion in general, and attend church in particular, in order to provide emotional boost for their impoverished situation. Poverty has been found to be positively correlated with church attenders⁵, suggesting that most people attend church, among other things to seek answers to their poverty problems.

Recent trends in Ghana, especially as could be observed within the charismatic movement appear to support the hypothesis that poor people often attend church. But beyond that the current so-called "prophetic" and "miracles" movement in Ghana reveals a lot of interesting things. By observing the activities of these "prophetic and miracle –working" preachers and prophets on television, it becomes apparent that most congregants attend church for diverse reasons including; finding answers to spiritual problems, emotional and marital problems, seeking financial breakthrough, breaking ancestral curses, becoming successful in life and business, obtaining visa to travel, finding a spouse to marry, obtaining healing or other miracles, or dealing with other socio-economic problems⁶.

The increasing desire of people to find answers to the myriad of problems facing them, coupled with the failure of traditional Catholic, Orthodox and Pentecostal churches to address these needs of their members partly accounts for the proliferation of the charismatic and prophetic movement in Ghana. This trend is also associated with counseling, which in the charismatic and prophetic ministries, has become a form of business for these counselors. It is estimated that some of these counselors (i.e., prophets and leaders of churches) within the so-called "prophetic" and "miracle-working" ministries charge from Ghc50 to as high as Ghc1,000, per counselee. And several people keep trooping to these ministries because of the issue of positive testimonies others have given. Some of these prophets sell other products including so-called anointed water, anointed oil, anointed soaps etc.-which if a counselee purchased and applied are meant, purportedly, to help the counselee address all forms of problems –spiritual, emotional, psychological, material, physical, financial or social⁷. In effect, people join the churches where they think they could be cared for at least - spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, materially, physically, financially and socially. This makes the issue of pastoral care and counseling very critical.

⁵ Crabtree, S. & Pelham, B. (2009). Religion Provides Emotional Boost to World's Poor. Gallup Survey, March 6. Retrieved from: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116449/Religion-Provides-Emotional-Boost-World-Poor.aspx>, 2nd May, 2016 at 4:10 pm, GMT.

⁶ Author's personal Communication (2016).

⁷ Ibid., 21.

Pastoral care is an ancient model of emotional and spiritual support that can be found in all cultures and traditions.⁸ Historically Christian in its origins, the pastoral-care movement has expanded to embrace many different faiths.⁹ The Bible does not explicitly define the role of a pastor but associates it with teaching.¹⁰ Pastoral care involves shepherding the flock and shepherding involves protection, tending to needs, strengthening the weak, encouragement, feeding the flock, making provision, shielding, refreshing, restoring, leading by example to move people on in their pursuit of holiness, comforting, and guiding (Ps 78: 52; 23).¹¹

There are many assumptions about what a pastor's care is. Commonly, a pastor's main job is to preach messages in mainline Protestant churches, but in addition to preaching sermons, pastors are also expected to be involved in local ministries, such as hospital chaplaincy, visitation, funerals, weddings and organizing religious activities. "Pastoral care" is therefore both encouraging their local congregation and bringing new people into the church. That is not to say that the congregation is not to be involved in both activities, but the pastor should be the initiator¹².

In Roman Catholic theology, pastoral care for the sick and infirm is one of the most significant ways that members of the Body of Christ continue the ministry and mission of Jesus. Pastoral care is considered to be the responsibility of all the baptized. Understood in the broad sense of "helping others," pastoral care is the responsibility of all Christians. Sacramental pastoral care is the administration of the sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, Matrimony) that is reserved to consecrated priests except for Baptism (in an emergency, anyone can baptize) and marriage, where the spouses are the ministers and the priest is the witness¹³.

Pastoral counseling, on the other hand, is a branch of counseling in which psychologically trained ministers, rabbis, priests and other persons provide therapy services. Pastoral counselors often integrate modern psychological thought and method with traditional religious training in an effort to address psycho-spiritual issues in addition to the traditional spectrum of counseling services¹⁴. What distinguishes pastoral counseling from other forms of counseling and psychotherapy is the role and accountability of the counselor and his or her understanding and expression of the pastoral relationship. Pastoral counselors are representatives of the central images of life and its meaning affirmed by their religious communities. Thus pastoral counseling offers a relationship

⁸ Arnold, Bruce Makoto, "Shepherding a Flock of a Different Fleece: A Historical and Social Analysis of the Unique Attributes of the African American Pastoral Caregiver". *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, Vol. 66, No. 2. (June 2012)

⁹ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰ *Ephesians 4:10-12*. Retrieved 2016-06-02

¹¹ Neil Pembroke, *Renewing Pastoral Practice: Trinitarian Perspectives on Pastoral Care and Counselling* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2006) (Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology).

¹² George R. Ross, *Evaluating Models of Christian Counseling* (Eugene (OR), Wipf and Stock, 2011).

¹³ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴ Abbott, Stephanie; Ronsheim, Douglas; Xander, Donna (June 2005). "[Counselors and Clergy: Partners in Healing](#)". *Counselor: Magazine for Addiction Professionals* 6 (3): 32-37.

to that understanding of life and faith. Pastoral counseling uses both psychological and theological resources to deepen its understanding of the pastoral relationship.^{15 16} Membership in several organizations that combine theology and mental health activities (achieved through pastoral counseling) has grown in recent years^{17 18}. Some pastoral counselors have developed special training programs to encourage cooperation between religious professionals and medical professionals on treatment of issues like addiction, since spirituality is an important part of recovery for many people and this seems to have had tremendous impact on church growth¹⁹.

While it may be quite difficult to define the term "church growth", it has generally viewed as a movement within evangelical Christianity which aims to develop methods to grow churches based on business marketing strategies. Various church leaders have proposed different ways to grow churches. One prominent example is the "seeker-sensitive" approach, which aims to make churches more accessible and sensitive to the needs of spiritual seekers.²⁰

The church growth movement began with the publication of Donald McGavran's book *The Bridges of God*. McGavran was a third-generation Christian missionary to India, where his observations of *How Churches Grow* (the title of another of his books) went beyond typical theological discussion to the need to discern sociological factors that affected receptivity to the Christian Gospel among non-Christian peoples. In 1965, he organized the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, which was the institutional homebase for Church Growth studies until after his death. It has been the training ground for tens of thousands of pastors and missionaries of one hundred mainly evangelical denominations.²¹

Two key attributes of Church Growth are a passion for the "Great Commission" and a willingness to apply research to attracting members, including quantitative methods. Scholars and leaders

¹⁵ Hunter, R.J. (2005). "Pastoral Counseling". Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling. Nashville: Abingdon Press. ISBN 0-687-10761-X.

¹⁶ David G. Benner, Strategic Pastoral Counseling: A Short-Term Structured Model (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.) ISBN 0801026318.

¹⁷ Paul, Pamela (May 2005). "With God as My Shrink". Psychology Today. Retrieved 2016-06-02.

¹⁸ Buice, Allison (June 27, 1987). "Pastoral Counselors Increasing in Numbers". Spartanburg Herald-Journal (Spartanburg, SC). p. B3. Retrieved 2010-10-12.

¹⁹ Abbott, Stephanie; Ronsheim, Douglas; Xander, Donna (June 2005). "[Counselors and Clergy: Partners in Healing](#)". *Counselor: Magazine for Addiction Professionals* 6 (3): 32–37.

²⁰ Newton, P. A. (May 2007). "The Package Matters: Problems with the Church Growth Movement". *Areopagus Journal (Apologetics Resource Center) (Troublesome Movements in the 21st-Century Church)*.

²¹ Armstrong, J. H. (May–June 1994). "[Problems related to seeker-sensitive worship](#)". *Reformation & Revival Journal (Carol Stream, IL: Reformation & Revival Ministries)* 3 (3). Retrieved 2016-06-03.

from many denominations continue to meet annually to discuss the implications of these insights as the American Society for Church Growth.²²

The "seeker sensitive" label is associated with some mega churches in the United States where Christian messages are often imparted by means of elaborate creative elements emphasizing secular popular culture, such as popular music styles. Such churches often also develop a wide range of activities to draw in families at different stages in their lives²³. The "seeker sensitive" label, a purely business marketing approach to church growth, supposedly underpinned by the desire to fulfill the great commission, appears to be the fundamental philosophy employed in most of contemporary charismatic churches/ ministries in Ghana. Interestingly, this approach to church growth allows these ministries to place crucial emphasis on pastoral care and counseling. It is no wonder that most of these recent charismatic and "prophetic-based, miracle-working churches" have been experiencing exponential growth. Sunday church service attendance for most of these charismatic churches far exceeds that of traditional Orthodox and Pentecostal churches.

It has become apparent that people go to church to find answers to their problems and this makes the issues of pastoral counseling and care very crucial in contemporary church settings. While people may be happy to worship God, join the church in order to feel part of a family, engage in evangelism, or listen to the word of God, it is an undeniable fact, in the light of recent developments, that churches which fail to meet the needs of their church members stand the risk of not achieving significant church growth, as many of their church members could easily defect to some of the other churches and ministries that appear to have answers to the problems these defecting members might be facing. This also implies that if pastors and leaders do not get closer to their church members to know the problems members face, in addition to implementing appropriate solutions to solve such problems, church growth might become an illusion to most traditional, orthodox churches.

Counseling and pastoral care are two approaches pastors could employ to discover and understand the problems being faced by their congregations so that they could solve them. Indeed, pastoral counseling and care is expected to, at least theoretically speaking, influence and impact church growth. However, the exact mechanism by which this happens is not well understood. It is against this backdrop that this paper seek, primarily, to understand the impact of pastoral counseling and care on church growth by conducting a literature review on the subject.

²² ["American Society for Church Growth"](#) (official website).

²³ Newton, P. A. (May 2007). "The Package Matters: Problems with the Church Growth Movement". *Areopagus Journal (Apologetics Resource Center) (Troublesome Movements in the 21st-Century Church)*.

1.2 Problem Statement

The link between pastoral counsel and care and church growth is an area that is attracting increasing attention amongst scholars and practitioners. But empirical evidence on the matter is very scarce. Most of the available literature on church growth are found in books and on website posts written by pastors, counselors and other practitioners from an experiential perspective²⁴ but even then most failed to link it with pastoral counseling²⁵. There is also some few literature on pastoral counseling and care but these are not specifically related to church growth^{26 27 28}. Thus there is currently no single available study that specifically reviews the nexus between pastoral counseling and care and church growth and this paper seeks to address this empirical gap.

1.3 Objectives of the Paper

The paper seeks to achieve the following research objectives:

1. Understand the concepts of pastoral care and counseling
2. Review the historical antecedents of pastoral care and counseling.
3. Understand the concept of church and church growth
4. Examine the nature of existing theories on pastoral care and counseling and church growth
5. Review relevant empirical literature on the link between pastoral care and counseling and church growth
6. Develop a conceptual framework that could theoretically explain the possible link between pastoral counseling and care and church growth

1.4 Scope and Organization of Study

²⁴ Cho, Y. (1998). *My church Growth Stories*. Haper Publishers, New York.

²⁵ Newton, P. A. (May 2007). "The Package Matters: Problems with the Church Growth Movement". *Areopagus Journal (Apologetics Resource Center) (Troublesome Movements in the 21st-Century Church)*.

²⁶ Neil Pembroke, *Renewing Pastoral Practice: Trinitarian Perspectives on Pastoral Care and Counselling* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2006) (Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology).

²⁷ Abbott, Stephanie; Ronsheim, Douglas; Xander, Donna (June 2005). "[Counselors and Clergy: Partners in Healing](#)". *Counselor: Magazine for Addiction Professionals* 6 (3): 32–37. [ISSN 1047-7314](#). Retrieved 2016-06-02.

²⁸ Ross, G., *Evaluating Models of Christian Counseling* (Eugene (OR), Wipf and Stock, 2011).

This study is limited only to a literature review relating to the subject matter. Data was collected mainly from secondary sources through reviews of papers, publications, books, website posts, articles, journals and the Bible. No Primary data was obtained using interviews or questionnaires. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2.0 deals with the review literature. Section 2.1 addresses theoretical literature and empirical literature is examined under section 2.2. Section 2.3 involves the development of a conceptual framework that would enable us theoretically understand the possible nature of the link between pastoral care and counseling and church growth. Section 3.0 is the conclusion of the article.

2.0 Literature Review

This section reviews all relevant literature pertaining to the subject matter of the study.

2.1 Theoretical Literature

The concepts of Pastoral Care and Counseling

In order to understand the concepts of pastoral care and counseling we need to first understand the meanings of the term "pastor" because the word "pastoral" is related to the term "pastor".

The concept of Pastor or Shepherd

The term "pastor" usually refers to an ordained leader of a Christian congregation. A pastor also gives advice and counsel to people from the community or congregation. The word "pastor" derives from the Latin noun *pastor* which means "shepherd" and relates to the Latin verb *pascere* - "to lead to pasture, set to grazing, cause to eat". The term "pastor" also relates to the role of elder within the New Testament, but is not synonymous with the biblical understanding of minister. Many Protestant churches, however, call their ministers "pastors".

Contemporary usage of the word is rooted in the Biblical image of shepherding. The Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament) uses the Hebrew word רועה (*ro'eh*) which appears 173 times and relates to the feeding of sheep, as in Genesis 29:7, or to the spiritual feeding of human beings, as in Jeremiah 3:15, "Then I will give you shepherds[pastors] after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding" (NASB).

English-language translations of the New Testament usually render the Greek noun ποιμήν (*poimēn*) as "shepherd" and the Greek verb ποιμαίνω (*poimaino*) as "to shepherd". The two words occur a total of 29 times in the New Testament, most frequently referring to Jesus. For example, Jesus called himself the "Good Shepherd" in John 10:11. In five New Testament passages though, the words relate to church workers:

1. John 21:16 - Jesus told Peter: "Shepherd My sheep" (NASB)

2. Acts 20:17 - the Apostle Paul summons the *elders* or presbyters of the church in Ephesus to give a last discourse to them; in the process, in Acts 20:28, he tells them that the Holy Spirit has made them *bishops*, and that their job is to *shepherd* the flock of God among them.
3. 1 Corinthians 9:7 - Paul says, of himself and the apostles: "who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?" (NASB)
4. Ephesians 4:11 - Paul wrote "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers" (NASB)
5. 1 Peter 5:1-2 - Peter tells the *elders* among his readers that they are to, "shepherd the flock of God among you" (NASB)

Putting all the above descriptions together a pastor could be understood as one who is a shepherd of the flock of Christ and is responsible for attending to their welfare. That includes responding to their spiritual, emotional, psychological, physical, material and social needs. A pastor by nature needs to be concerned about and interested in the welfare of his 'sheep', who are actually the members of his local congregation. A pastor is expected to follow the example of Christ by serving as "the good shepherd" who lays down his life for his sheep.

John 10:11-16

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

KJV

In the above scripture, Christ establishes the foundational principles or characteristics that should exemplify a true pastor or shepherd:

- *A true pastor should give his life for his sheep*- this means the pastor should sacrifice himself for his flock in order for them (these members members) to succeed and receive salvation in Christ[Jn. 10:11]
- *A true pastor should be called not hired – a hired pastor is not a true pastor.* A hired shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, has no incentive for protecting the sheep. In

times of adversity, a hired pastor will run away, leave the sheep, and allow them to be devoured by their enemies until the sheep scatters. A hired/false pastor, according to the passage, does not care for the sheep [Jn. 10:12-13], meaning that a true pastor/shepherd cares for the sheep (this is Christ's foundation for pastoral care).

- *A true pastor should have dyadic relationships with his flock* – Christ says the true shepherd knows his sheep and his sheep also know him. This is only achievable when there is sound, mutual and ongoing dyadic relationship between the pastor and his members. This is Christ's basis for pastoral counseling [Jn.10:14].
- *A true pastor should be interested in the community of lost people (unbelievers)* – The focus of the true pastor is not just the members of his congregation but also other potential members within the community, society or nation. Christ emphasizes the need for the shepherd to be personally involved in bringing lost souls-those who have not yet heard the voice of their shepherd. This shows that a true pastor has passion for evangelism as a primary means of reaching lost souls [Jn.10:16].

The concept of Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is the term that is broadly applied to a ministry of compassion, encouragement and transformation within the Christian life. It encapsulates the need to care for, support, and demonstrate unconditional love, acceptance and encouragement, bringing hope, biblical truth and practical advice to people (usually but not limited to church members). Pastoral care also involves being present with, listening to and journeying alongside the problems of people, sharing burdens and praying for those in our care²⁹. Oates (1970) defines pastoral care as "... the Christian pastor's combined fortification and confrontation of persons in times of both emergency crisis and developmental crisis"³⁰. Oates goes on to identify some of the situations in which pastoral care, both for comfort and confrontation, is most commonly needed. Examples include birth, baptism, marriage, significant events and milestones, empty nesting, retirement, death, as well as many unexpected and trying events.³¹

Anderson (1990) refers to discipline in caring for individuals: "Giving proper pastoral care to people means helping them become independent in faith in a healthy way."³² Southard (1975) sees proper pastoral care as a balanced combination of shepherding, administrating, and discipline: "The new solution is to provide breadth and depth of care through the involvement of

²⁹ Premier Mind-Soul (2016). Exploring Christianity and Mental Health. Draft Pastoral Care Policy for Churches or organizations – Retrieved from: http://www.mindandsoul.info/Articles/245325/Mind_and_Soul/Resources/Leaders/Pastoral_Care_Policy.aspx#sthash.wJo941PB.dpuf, Tuesday, May 03, 2016, 10:54AM, GMT.

³⁰ Wayne E. Oates, *New Dimensions in Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³² Bruce Larson, Paul Anderson, Doug Self, *Mastering Pastoral Care* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1990), 120.

a wide range of caring persons in gradations of tasks for which they are trained and motivated."³³ Southard captures the novel idea that the pastor's top priority should be care and ministry to the healthy members of his congregation, so that they may minister to those who are lonely and sick. This does not mean that the pastor will neglect to minister to the sick, the dying, the destitute, and the disenfranchised, but instead goes to them as a teacher and model of ministry.³⁴

The Concept of Pastoral Counseling

Pastoral counseling or psychotherapy is defined as a distinctive form of counseling in which the full resources, theoretical knowledge, and clinical methods of secular psychology and psychotherapy are brought together with pastoral theological method and practice to provide a holistic approach to psychotherapy that honors and integrates the spiritual dimension of each patient's life and experience³⁵. Pastoral counseling seeks to hold open a space between 'secular' counseling (where some practitioners can be uncomfortable with religion) and 'Christian' counseling (which can be obsessed by it) – a space in which it is possible for psychology and theology, faith and counseling practice to remain in dialogue and for religion to be seen 'as a source of meaning and a resource for living'³⁶.

The term "pastoral counseling" simply alludes to counseling performed by pastors. But the question of what counseling actually is might be quite difficult to answer as there is no universal consensus on what exactly the concept represents. Moreover, the word "counseling" and "psychotherapy" are used interchangeably except where they have special meanings as defined by the theorist³⁷. This definition is however worth noting:

"Psychotherapy and counseling are interactions between a therapist/counselor and one or more clients/patients. The purpose is to help the patient/client with problems that may have aspects that are related to disorders of thinking, emotional suffering, or problems of behavior. Therapists may use their knowledge of theory of personality and psychotherapy or counseling to help the patient/client improve functioning. The therapist's approach to helping must be legally and ethically approved" (p. 4).

Although some authors have attempted to draw a distinction between psychotherapy and counseling, it is generally observed that the difference between the two is very thing. Counseling

³³ Samuel Southard, *Comprehensive Pastoral Care* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1975),6.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 6.

³⁵ Cooper-White, P. (2004). *Shared Wisdom*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press 2007 *Many Voices*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press.

³⁶ Lyall, D. (2001). *The Integrity of Pastoral Care*, London, SPCK.

³⁷ Sharf, R. S. (2012). *The Theories of Psychotherapy and Counseling: Concepts and Cases* (5th ed.). Brooks/Cole Belmont, USA.

or psychotherapy could be offered by different classes of experts including clinical and behavioral psychologists, medical doctors, psychiatrists, counselors, social workers, and pastors. It must be noted that while counseling in general addresses issues relating to the clients' emotional, psychological, physical and socio-cultural well-being, what probably distinguishes pastoral counseling from all the others is its capacity to address spiritual problems affecting clients.

Pastoral counseling, is therefore, a psychotherapeutic approach to counseling that employs Biblically spiritual and ethical principles to decode and address client problems that may be of emotional, spiritual, psychological, physical and material or socio-cultural nature. Pastoral Counseling is a healing, supporting, guiding, and liberating ministry of the faith community that is based on a relationship between a pastor or a pastoring team with counseling skills and a person or family who come together to engage in conversation and interaction. The relationship is a dynamic process of caring and exploration with a definite structure, and mutually contracted goals. It occurs within the tradition, beliefs and resources of the faith community which surrounds and supports the participants.

Pastoral care

Pastoral care is an ancient model of emotional and spiritual support that can be found in all cultures and traditions. In its most general sense, pastoral care refers to the ministries/services usually performed by a pastor. Some denominations of the Christian faith use the phrase to refer to more specific aspects of a pastor's ministry, such as counseling and visitation. Thus in a sense pastoral counseling may be construed as a sub-set of pastoral care. The core idea of "pastoral care" is that pastors are to care. The word *pastor* comes from the Latin word for "shepherd." A pastor is to be a shepherd or caretaker of God's flock.³⁸ Peter, the apostle admonishes:

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock"³⁹

There is generally a misunderstanding of what exactly pastors do and many erroneously think the pastors' job is to only preach on Sunday. However, beyond preparing and delivering a sermon, pastors provide biblical counseling, visit the sick and injured in hospitals, pray for and disciple members of the congregation through phone calls, lunch meetings, and other social engagements.

Many pastors serve as chaplains in hospitals, the military, workplaces, schools, and prisons. All of these ministries are aspects of pastoral care. In reality, pastoral-care ministries are just as valuable as the delivery of a sermon. Caring for a person who is struggling with a difficulty, being present during a time of pain, praying with someone in a crisis—these are the moments when

³⁸ <http://www.gotquestions.org/pastoral-care.html>

³⁹ [1 Peter 5:2-3](#) (Emphasis added).

spiritual breakthroughs occur. Ministering through a good, biblically sound sermon is absolutely necessary. But ministering through a personal touch, i.e., pastoral care is just as important.

Historical Antecedents of Pastoral Care and Counseling

Pastoral care and counseling perhaps began with God Himself. The first man (Adam) created perhaps was the first to enjoy the providence and care of His Maker as recorded in Genesis 2. The Creator, playing the role of a Shepherd or Pastor, actually provided for all the needs of Adam. The Garden of Eden was a rich pasture, a field divinely created by God to make man happy and fulfilled. After the fall of man God still continues to care for man until the time of the patriarchs. God's care for his people does not fail even under the Mosaic era as He delivers the Israelites from captivity, leads them through the wilderness and takes them into the promise land-*the land flowing with milk and honey*. From the era of the judges, through the kings to the prophets, God, in diverse ways demonstrates His love and care for his people (sheep).

The epitome of God's care for His people is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ-*the Great Shepherd of the sheep*- who laid down His life for His sheep (John 10). After the ascension of Jesus the early apostles continue to care for and counsel the people of God (the church).

In succeeding centuries, however, pastoral care and counseling have taken different forms. In primitive Christianity the focus was on supported care and the endurance of persecution in view of the imminent end of the age. In the period of Roman persecution (ca. 180-324) reconciliation of those who broke down under pressure and disciplining those who erred was central. Under Constantinian Christianity (after 324 A.D), the central motif was guidance and unification of values. Medieval Christendom stressed healing through sacramental rituals as means of grace. In the Protestant Reformation individual reconciliation, particularly of men and women to God, received most attention. During the 18th-century Enlightenment, supportive care, which sustained people with moralistic guiding, experiential rigor, and conversionist change was prominent. In the 20th century, individual guidance for self-realization and self-fulfillment has followed the trend toward individualism in the midst of Christian pluralism and private religion⁴⁰.

In contemporary times, pastoral care and counseling have become even more critical as millions of people around the world suffer from diverse kinds of multi-faceted problems. Today, pastoral care and consoling seems to focus more on helping people deal with problems. In effect, contemporary pastoral care and counseling techniques are solutions-focused⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Augsburg, D. (1986). *Pastoral Counseling across Cultures*. Philadelphia: Westminster.

⁴¹ Miller, P. M. (2013). *Peer Counseling in the Church*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.

Theories on Pastoral Care and Counseling (Psychotherapy)

There are several theories of counseling (psychotherapy). However, the following are the ones that have received massive acceptance among both academics and practitioners.

i. Psychoanalytic (Or Psychodynamic) Therapy

Psychoanalytic or psychodynamic psychotherapy is a form of clinical practice based on psychoanalytic theory and principles. These multiple theories focus on increasing self-understanding and deepening insight into emotional issues and conflicts that underlie the present difficulties. Typically, therapists pay particular attention to the exploration of unconscious thoughts and feelings, understanding aspects of the relationship between therapist and client—which may relate to underlying emotional conflicts—interpretation of defensive processes that obstruct emotional awareness, and consideration of issues related to one’s sense of self and self-esteem. The focus is on exploration of the patient’s inner experience, emphasizing this as it occurs in current daily life, as it carries over from significant and influential events and relationships of the past, and as it manifests in the context of the therapeutic relationship. This theory has roots in the early works of behavioral psychologist Sigmund Freud⁴².

ii. Jungian Analysis and Therapy

More than any other theorist, Jung placed great emphasis on the role of unconscious processes in human behavior. Jungians are particularly interested in dreams, fantasies, and other material that reflects unconscious processes. They are also interested in symbols of universal patterns that are reflected in the unconscious processes of people from all cultures. Therapy focuses on the analysis of unconscious processes so that patients can better integrate unconscious processes into conscious awareness⁴³.

iii. Adlerian Therapy

Alfred Adler believed that the personality of individuals was formed in their early years as a result of relationships within the family. He emphasized the importance of individuals’ contributions to their community and to society. Adlerians are interested in the ways that individuals approach living and family relationships. The Adlerian approach to therapy is practical, helping individuals to change dysfunctional beliefs and encouraging them to take new steps to change their lives. An emphasis on teaching and educating individuals about dealing with interpersonal problems is another characteristic of Adlerian therapy⁴⁴.

⁴² Sharf, R. S. (2012). *The Theories of Psychotherapy and Counseling: Concepts and Cases* (5th ed.). Brooks/Cole Belmont, USA, p.6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7.

iv. *Existential Therapy*

A philosophical approach to people and problems relating to being human or existing, existential psychotherapy deals with life themes rather than techniques. Such themes include living and dying, freedom, responsibility to self and others, finding meaning in life, and dealing with a sense of meaninglessness. Becoming aware of oneself and developing the ability to look beyond immediate problems and daily events to deal with existential themes are goals of therapy, along with developing honest and intimate relationships with others. Although some techniques have been developed, the emphasis is on issues and themes, not method⁴⁵.

v. *Person-Centered Therapy*

In his therapeutic work, Carl Rogers emphasized understanding and caring for the client, as opposed to diagnosis, advice, or persuasion. Characteristic of Rogers's approach to therapy are therapeutic genuineness, through verbal and nonverbal behavior, and unconditionally accepting clients for who they are. Person-centered therapists are concerned about understanding the client's experience and communicating their understanding to the client so that an atmosphere of trust can be developed that fosters change on the part of the client. Clients are given responsibility for making positive changes in their lives⁴⁶.

vi. *Gestalt Therapy*

Developed by Fritz and Perls in the 1940s, gestalt therapy helps the individual to become more aware of self and others. Emphasis is on both bodily and psychological awareness. Therapeutic approaches deal with being responsible for oneself and attuned to one's language, nonverbal behaviors, emotional feelings, and conflicts within oneself and with others. Therapeutic techniques include the development of creative experiments and exercises to facilitate self-awareness⁴⁷.

vii. *Behavior Therapy*

Based on scientific principles of behavior, such as classical and operant conditioning, as well as observational learning, behavior therapy applies principles of learning such as reinforcement, extinction, shaping of behavior, and modeling to help a wide variety of clients with different problems. Emphasis is on precision and detail in evaluating psychological concerns and then assigning treatment methods that may include relaxation, exposure to a feared object, copying a behavior, or role playing. Its many techniques include those that change observable behavior as well as those that deal with thought processes⁴⁸.

viii. *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy*

Developed by Albert Ellis, rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) focuses on irrational beliefs that individuals develop that lead to problems related to emotions (for example, fears and anxieties) and to behaviors (such as avoiding social interactions or giving speeches). Although

⁴⁵ Sharf, R. S. (2012). *The Theories of Psychotherapy and Counseling: Concepts and Cases* (5th ed.). Brooks/Cole Belmont, USA, p.8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁴⁷ Sharf, R. S. (2012). *The Theories of Psychotherapy and Counseling: Concepts and Cases* (5th ed.). Brooks/Cole Belmont, USA, p.9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.9.

REBT uses a wide variety of techniques, the most common method is to dispute irrational beliefs and to teach clients to challenge their own irrational beliefs so that they can reduce anxiety and develop a full range of ways to interact with others⁴⁹.

ix. Cognitive Therapy

Belief systems and thinking are seen as important in determining and affecting behavior and feelings. Aaron Beck developed an approach that helps individuals understand their own maladaptive thinking and how it may affect their feelings and actions. Cognitive therapists use a structured method to help their clients understand their own belief systems. By asking clients to record dysfunctional thoughts and using questionnaires to determine maladaptive thinking, cognitive therapists are then able to make use of a wide variety of techniques to change beliefs that interfere with successful functioning. They also make use of affective and behavioral strategies⁵⁰.

x. Reality Therapy

Reality therapists assume that individuals are responsible for their own lives and for taking control over what they do, feel, and think. Developed by William Glasser, reality therapy uses a specific process to change behavior. A relationship is developed with clients so that they will commit to the therapeutic process. Emphasis is on changing behaviors that will lead to modifications in thinking and feeling. Making plans and sticking to them to bring about change while taking responsibility for oneself are important aspects of reality therapy⁵¹.

xi. Constructivist Therapy

Constructivist therapists see their clients as theorists and try to understand their clients' views or the important constructs that clients use to understand their problems. Three types of constructivist theories are discussed: solution-focused, personal construct theory, and narrative. Solution-focused therapy centers on finding solutions to problems by looking at what has worked in the past and what is working now, as well as using active techniques to make therapeutic progress. Personal construct theory examines clients' lives as stories and helps to change the story. Narrative therapies also view clients' problems as stories but seek to externalize the problem, unlike personal construct theory. Frequently, they help clients re-author or change stories, thus finding a new ending for the story that leads to a solution to the problem⁵².

xii. Feminist Therapy

Rather than focusing only on the individual's psychological problems, feminist therapists emphasize the role of politics and society in creating problems for individuals. Particularly, they are concerned about gender and cultural roles and power differences between men and women and people from diverse cultural backgrounds. They have examined different ways that gender and culture affect development throughout the life span (including social and sexual development,

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.9.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.9.

⁵¹ Sharf, R. S. (2012). *The Theories of Psychotherapy and Counseling: Concepts and Cases* (5th ed.). Brooks/Cole Belmont, USA, p.10.

⁵² Ibid., p.10.

child-raising practices, and work roles). Differences in moral decision making, relating to others, and roles in abuse and violence are issues of feminist therapists. By combining feminist therapy with other theories, feminist therapists take a sociological as well as a psychological view that focuses not only on gender but also on multicultural issues. Among the techniques they use are those that help individuals address gender and power inequalities not only by changing client behavior but also by changing societal groups or institutions⁵³.

xiii. Family Therapy

Whereas many theories focus on the problems of individuals, family therapists attend to interactions between family members and may view the entire family as a single unit or system. Treatment is designed to bring about change in functioning within the family rather than within a single individual. Several different approaches to family therapy have been developed. Some focus on the impact of the parents' own families, others on how family members relate to each other in the therapy hour and yet others on changing symptoms. Some family systems therapists request that all the family members be available for therapy, whereas others may deal with parents or certain members only⁵⁴.

xiv. Solution-focused therapy

The solution-focused approach is founded on the premise that clients come to us equipped with solutions to their problems. Insoo Kim Berg is one of the model's pioneers and the founder of brief solution-focused psychotherapy. Under this approach, it is the therapist's role to guide clients towards their own strengths and resources to solve the problem. Listening remains one of the approach's chief techniques. The therapist responds to clients using their words, carefully tracking how they talk about their problems, and mirroring back the strengths and skills they already possess.⁵⁵

The Concept and Origin of the Church

The church is as far as this article is concerned is defined as an *assembly, congregation, company, or organized body of people*, representing a gathering of citizens, *called out* from their homes into some public place to fulfill a particular spiritual purpose on behalf of the kingdom of heaven⁵⁶. The church appears to be almost completely hidden in the Old Testament but only revealed in the New Testament. However, in Genesis, the picture of the church being born out of the death and resurrection of Christ is seen in the "deep sleep" that fell on Adam. Here, Adam is seen as a type of Christ and Eve, a type of the church (Gen 2:21-24; Eph 5: 21-32). From Genesis, another place where the church is perhaps seen in the old testament in during the wilderness journey of Israel. From exodus, the church is not so clearly pictured until in Ezekiel 40-48, which

⁵³ Ibid., p.10.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.10.

⁵⁵ Sommers-Flanagan, J. & Sommers-Flanagan, R. (2012). *Counseling and Psychotherapy: In Context and Practice*, 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

⁵⁶ Millard, E. (1998). *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. Retrieved from: <http://www.theopedia.com/church>, Tuesday, May 03, 2016, 11:18AM, GMT.

many scholars consider to be a prophesy of the restoration of the church of God under Christ in the New Testament era. This restoration occurs primarily under the Old Testament symbolism of the temple, both the tabernacle and the temple being significant symbols in the Old as well as the New Testaments (Psalms 27:4; 48:1-3,12-14; 84:4; 1 Corinthians 3:17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 12:22-24; 9:1ff.).

Central to this prophecy is Ezekiel 43, where we read that the glory of the Lord, which had left the old temple (Ezekiel 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:22, 23), will re-enter his new temple (the church) in the Person and work of Christ (vv. 3-5). Central also is Ezekiel's vision of the prince (45:7, 16, 17; 46:16; 48:21). The prince is none other than Christ, as clearly taught in 34:24 and 37:25, where he is referred to as "my servant David." Christ is the one who comes, as David's greater Son (Matthew 22:41-45), to reign on his throne forever (Luke 1:32, 33). As divine king, Christ comes to and reigns over his church.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus Christ informed His apostles that He would build his church upon "this rock." There has been some controversy through the ages regarding what Christ must have intended by that statement. The Papists, perhaps in order to bolster their unscriptural elevation of the Pope to the position of "head of the church," have claimed that the rock must be the apostle Peter. Protestants and others have consistently denied that to be the meaning of the passage.

It should be noted, however, that the Greek words "*petros*" and "*petra*," while cognate, are not the same word. The Greek word by which Christ named Peter is a masculine noun that refers to a boulder or rock. The Greek word that refers to the rock upon which Christ will build his church is a feminine noun that means "bedrock" or at the least a large mass of rock⁵⁷. The two words are admittedly similar, but they are not the same word, regardless of what one reads in the apologetic literature of the Romanists. So then, if Christ was not saying that He would build His church upon the Apostle Peter, what is the rock upon which Christ would build His church? Peter's previous confession gives us the answer to our question.

Just previous to Christ's announcement that He would build His church upon "this bedrock," Peter had confessed "thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." It is no secret to regular Bible students that God is referred to throughout Scripture as being the Rock or Refuge of His people⁵⁸. This is especially the case in Ephesians 2:20-22, where Christ is referred to as the "cornerstone" of the church or temple of the Lord. The cornerstone is that stone laid at the beginning of construction by which all other stones in both foundation and wall are to be measured. The cornerstone determines line, level, and plumb. It is the standard by which all else is to be built. The author subscribes to the protestant view (as opposed to the Roman Catholic view) that the eternal Christ is the Rock upon which the church is built not Peter or by extension the "Pope".

⁵⁷ There is yet another Greek word, "*lithos*," that means stone or chunk of rock.

⁵⁸ Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 18, 30-31; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 22:2, 3, 32, 47; 23:3; Psalm 18:2, 31, 46; 28:1; 31:2, 3; 42:9; 61:2; 62:2, 6, 7; 71:3; 78:35; 89:26; 92:15; 94:22; 95:1; Isaiah 8:14; 17:10; Matthew 7:24; Luke 6:48; Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:8. All Scripture references are English Bible, not Hebrew. Because 1 Corinthians 10:4 by inspiration interprets the Rock that followed Israel in the desert to be Christ, it was not necessary to detail the numerous Old Testament references to the fact of the Rock following the wilderness generation.

The English word "church" comes from the Greek *kuriakos*, which means "belonging to the Lord" (*Kurios*). The Dutch *kierke*, the German *kirche*, and the Scots *kirk*, all come from the same root. But the word translated "church" in the English Bible is the Greek *ekklesia* (from which we get "ecclesiastical"). Etymologically, *ekklesia* comes from *ek* ("out of") and *kaleo* ("to call"). Thus, by word derivation, the church consists of those "called out" of the world by God to himself. In this sense, they constitute the "assembly" of God's people. Jesus teaches this in John 15:19: "I have chosen you [the elect] out of the world." Further support can be found in other New Testament words with the same root (e.g., *kletoi*, "chosen ones" [Romans 1:7], *eklegomai* "to choose or elect" [Mark 13:20]).

Therefore, the church may be said to consist of God's elect from the time of Adam (Genesis 3:15, 21), who were also chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). That Israel in the Old Covenant was the Old Testament church is obvious from passages such as Acts 7:38, where Stephen calls the chosen nation "the *ekklesia* in the wilderness," which was with the Angel of the Lord (the pre-incarnate Second Person of the Godhead). Then in Jude 9, the Old Testament church is referred to as the body of Moses, the Old Testament mediator, just as the New Testament church is the body of her Mediator: Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18). This interpretation of the "body of Moses" is attested by the learned Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: "Some hence explain Jude 9 as referring to this passage [Zechariah 3:1]: 'the body of Moses' being thus *the Jewish Church*, for which Satan contended as his by reason of its sins; just as the 'body of Christ' is *the Christian Church*."⁵⁹

The word *ekklesia* is frequently used in the New Testament referring to God's people. Often certain figures are used for the church. In Colossians 1:18 and 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, she is called "the body of *Christ*." In Ephesians 5:22-33 and Revelation 21:2, the church is pictured as the bride of *Christ*. In Ephesians 2:19, the church is God's household. In 2 Corinthians 6:16, she is "the people and temple of *God*." Hebrews 12:22-24 speak of the church as Mount Zion, the city of *God*. Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, and Ephesians 2:21, 22, Paul refers to the church as the temple of the *Holy Spirit*. In this phraseology it is hard to miss the Trinitarian nature of the church.

Another very interesting use of "synagogue" is found in Matthew 24:31, where Jesus said that he would "gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The word "gather" (*episunago*) here is a Greek verb meaning, literally, "to synagogue," i.e., to lead, gather, bring together. The point Jesus is making is that with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, he will send out his messengers to gather his elect into his gospel synagogue: the church. In this verse, Christ is actually citing Moses, from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), who promised:

⁵⁹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1998), Commentary on Zechariah 3:1.

"If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will bring you" (Deuteronomy 30:4).

Christ came in fulfillment of prophecy to restore God's house, the organized congregation of his covenant people. The continuity of the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament people of God is seen, then, in the fact that the destruction of the Old Testament temple did not put an end to the ingathering of the elect. Rather, it signaled the fact that the ingathering would now be from all the nations of the earth. The imagery of gathering is the same in the Old Testament as in the New, where the Hebrew words *qahal* and *edah* are used for the assembly of God's people (Deuteronomy 9:10; 10:4; 23:1-3; Exodus 12:3).

While there is no universally accepted definition of the term "church", these two definitions following are succinct in clearly helping us understand the concept more precisely:

The church is "the whole body of those who through Christ's death have been savingly reconciled to God and have received new life ... while universal in nature, it finds expression in local groupings of believers that display the same qualities as does the body of Christ as a whole"⁶⁰.

The church is an assembly of professed believers under the discipline of the Word of God, organized to carry out the Great Commission, administer the ordinances, and minister with spiritual gifts⁶¹ (Towns 2008:187).

The Concept and Origin of Church Growth

The term *church growth* has different meanings to different people. Literally, church growth has been understood in many ecclesiastical settings to refer to numerical increase. In that regard, church growth has been construed as a movement within evangelical Christianity which aims to develop methods to grow churches based on business marketing strategies.

While the Bible does not specifically address church growth, the principle of church growth is inherent understanding what Jesus said, "*I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it*" (Matthew 16:18). Paul confirmed that the church has its foundation in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). Jesus Christ is also the head of the church (Ephesians 1:18-23) and the church's life (John 10:10). Having said that, it should be remembered that "growth" can be a relative term. There are different kinds of growth, some of which have nothing to do with numbers and others without. Hence, there could be spiritual growth, physical/numerical growth, character

⁶⁰ Erickson M 1998. *Christian Theology* (6th ed). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, p.1044.

⁶¹ Τῶνσ Ε 2008. *Χηυρχη γρωωτη στατε οφ τηε αρτ*. Ονλινε βουκ: ωωω.ελμερτωωνσ.χομ/βουκσ/ρεσουρχεΠκτσ/χη στατε αρτ/Χηυρχη ΓρωωτηΣτατεοφτηεΑρτ%5BEΤῶνσ%5δ.πδφ, 2008-12-01, π.187.

growth, growth in grace and in the knowledge of God and of Christ etc. It needs to be appreciated that a church can be alive and growing even though the number of members/attendees is not changing. If those in the church are growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, submitting to His will for their lives, both individually and corporately, that is a church that is experiencing true growth. At the same time, a church can be adding to its rolls weekly, have huge numbers, and still be spiritually stagnant.

Growth of any kind follows a typical pattern. As with a growing organism, the local church has those who plant the seed (evangelists), those who water the seed (pastor/teachers), and others who use their spiritual gifts for the growth of those in the local church. But note that it is God who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:7). Those who plant and those who water will each receive their own reward according to their labor (1 Corinthians 3:8). Thus in the view of Paul, the major causal factor in church growth is God (1 Corinthians 3:7).

There has to be a balance between planting and watering for a local church to grow, which means that in a healthy church each person must know what his/her spiritual gift is so that he/she can best function within the body of Christ. If the planting and watering get out of balance, the church will not prosper as God intended. Of course, there has to be daily dependence upon and obedience to the Holy Spirit so His power can be released in those who plant and water in order for God's increase to come.

Finally, the description of a living and growing church is found in Acts 2:42-47 where the believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." They were serving one another and reaching out to those who needed to know the Lord, for the Lord "added to their number daily those who were being saved." When these things are present, the church will experience spiritual growth, whether or not there is numerical increase.

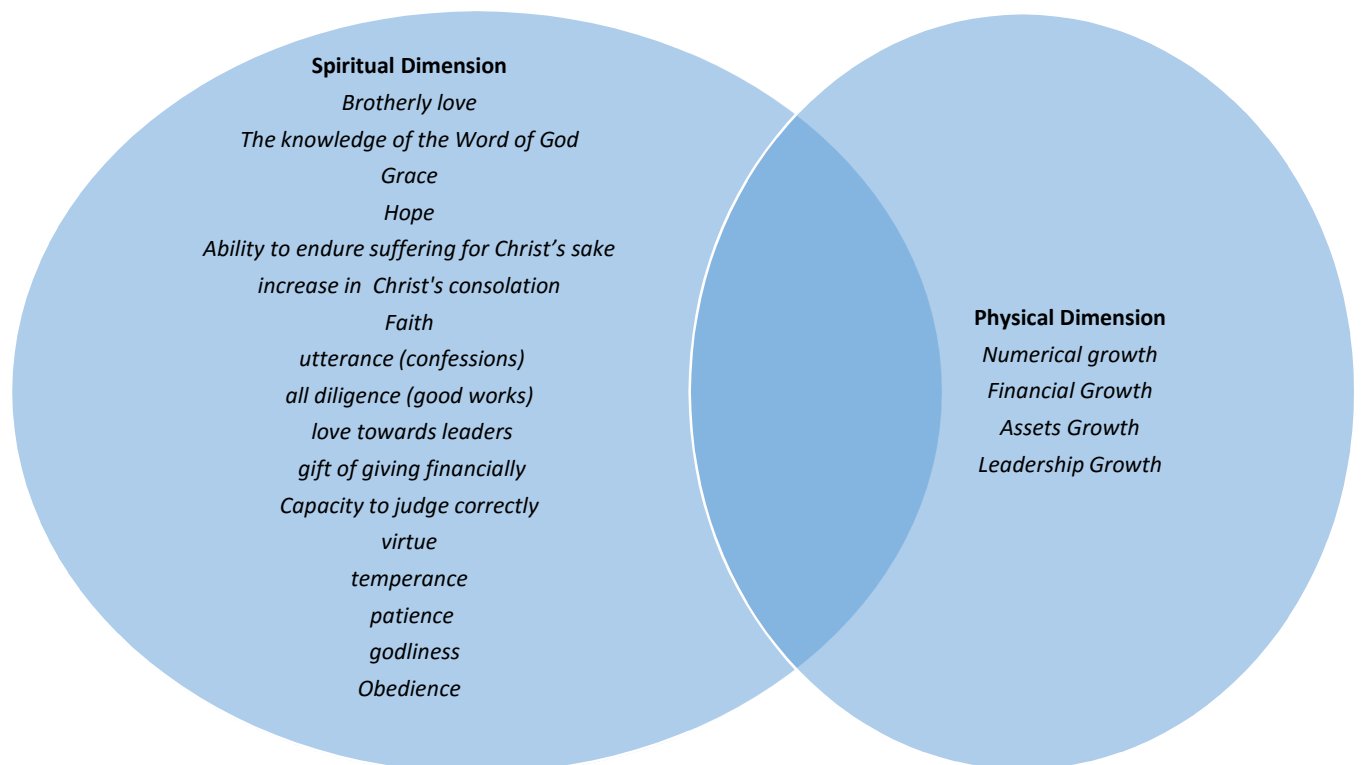
The word "growth" is synonymous with "increase". To cause growth or increase in the church in all things (Eph 4:15), God requires human agency to first do the planting, and the watering (1 Cor 3:6). Yet He that ministers the seed to the sower and causes multiplication of the seed sown is God (2 Cor 9:10). Moreover, Christ builds the church (Mat. 16:18) and He is also responsible for fittingly joining together His own body (*the church*) and keeping it compacted (united in the spirit of love) by that (*the individual gifts manifested*) which every joint (*member of the church*) supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part (*individual member*), bringing about increase of the body (*church growth*), for the purpose of edifying of itself (*the church*) in love (Eph 4:15-16, Emphasis mine; Col 2:19). Some areas apart from numerical growth wherein the church is expected to also increase include:

- Growth in brotherly love (1 Thess 3:12-13)
- Growth in the knowledge of the Word of God (1 Peter 2:2-3).

- Growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).
- Growth in Hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost Rom 15:13.
- Growth in ability to enduring suffering for Christ's sake in order to increase in His consolation (2 Cor 1:5)
- Growth in faith, utterance (confessions), knowledge, and in all diligence (good works), love towards leaders, gift of sowing financially (2 Cor 8:7).
- Growth in ... all judgment; Phil 1:9
- Growth in ... all diligence, faith, virtue; knowledge, temperance; patience; godliness; brotherly kindness; charity (Peter 1:5-8).
- Growth in obedience (e.g Mat. 28:18)

Therefore, the author argues, on the basis of the New Testament conceptions, that church growth should be measured on both the spiritual and physical aspects.

Figure 2: A Conceptual Framework of Church Growth Dimensions



Developed by Author (2017).

According to the model above, a church is truly experiencing growth when there is real increase, improvement and advancement in all factors under the spiritual and physical dimension. Spiritual growth may occur in the areas of brotherly love; knowledge of the word of God; grace; hope; ability to endure suffering for Christ's sake; ability to be comforted by Christ during crisis; faith; utterance (confessions); good works; love towards leaders; gift of giving financially; capacity to judge correctly; virtue; temperance; patience; godliness and obedience to the word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Physical growth is tangible growth which is observable when there are obvious increases in numerical, financial, assets and leadership aspects of the church. It must be noted that both spiritual and physical growth should be treated as two sub-sets of one broad construct, "growth" and the two sub-sets are interrelated. Moreover, the list of items under physical and spiritual growth is by no means exhaustive.

While there is no universal agreement on what might truly constitute church growth, it is generally reckoned that church growth is the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), a theology-centered process including both spiritual formation and effective evangelism strategies⁶². Church growth is the science that investigates the nature, function, and health of Christian churches as they relate specifically to the effective implementation of God's Commission to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). Church growth is simultaneously a theological conviction and an applied science, striving to combine the eternal principles of God's Word with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioural sciences, employing as its initial frame of reference the foundational work done by Donald McGavran and his colleagues⁶³.

It is difficult to classify church growth under distinct types. However, Towns⁶⁴ identifies four types of church growth namely: (1) *Internal-growth* of Christians in grace, relationship to God, and to one another; (2) *Expansion-growth* of the local congregation by the evangelization of non-Christians within its ministry area; (3) *Extension-growth* of the church by the establishment of daughter churches within the same general homogeneous group; and (4) *Bridging-growth* of the church by establishing churches in different cultural areas.

Towns further refers to the vital signs of a healthy church as the normal signs of life that are found in healthy and growing churches. He recognized seven vital signs are commonly recognized: (1) the pastor; (2) the people of the church; (3) church size; (4) structure and functions; (5) homogeneous unit; (6) methods; and (7) priorities⁶⁵.

⁶² *Χηριστιαν γρωωτη*. Χηριστιαν Γρωωτη Ρεσουρχε Νετωορκ. Ονλινε αρτιχλε: ωωω.χηρνονλινε.χομ/ασσε τσ/πδφσ/φαθ.πδφ, 2001–16–06.

⁶³ Τοωνσ, Ε. (2008). *Χηυρχη γρωωτη στατε οφ τηε αρτ*. Ονλινε βοοκ: ωωω.ελμερτωνσ.χομ/βοοκσ/ρεσουρχε Πκτσ/χη στατε αρτ/Χηυρχη ΓρωωτηΣτατεοφτηεΑρτ%5ΒΕΤοωνσ%5δ.πδφ, 2016–12–05.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.187.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.201.

2.2 Empirical Literature

Empirical literature on the role of pastoral care and counseling in church growth is scarce. However, a research conducted between 2001 and 2009, by seven different teams of national researchers around the world used quantitative data to suggest 14 different factors that correlate with church growth : (1) *witnessing*, (2) *strictness*, (3) *high fertility rates*, (4) *caring for children and youth*, (5) *high involvement*, (6) *welcoming new people*, (7) *leadership*, (8) *prayer*, (9) *being a church of 1000+ attendees or under 50 attendees*, (10) *being located in rural counties*, (11) *being in rapidly growing zip codes*, (12) *being in a tradition that is altering worship practices slightly but not too much*, (13) *churches that offer "intimacy and choice"* and (14) *attractive worship style, senior pastor, and church reputation*.

With regards to witnessing, Rodney Stark suggests that fervent witnessing and strict beliefs are the key factors. He writes, "Why do conservative churches outperform the liberals? Because they work much harder at attracting and holding members. How do they do that? By inspiring their members to witness to others."⁶⁶

Strictness is another factor that influences church growth. In that respect, Stark goes on to say, For many observers of the American religious scene, especially Europeans, the real mystery is why the strict churches—those who demand the most of their members—are the ones that are flourishing, while the more permissive and accommodating churches are falling by the wayside. The finding can be summed up in a sentence: strict churches are strong because groups that ask more from their members get more from them, which provides them with the resources to provide a more satisfying religious 'product.'⁶⁷

Another factor that effects church growth is *High fertility rates*. Some recent research by Michael Hout, Andrew Greeley, and Melissa Wilde suggests that high fertility rates are really the main factor contributing to growth. U.S. Protestants are less likely to belong to "mainline" denominations and more likely to belong to "conservative" ones than used to be the case. Evidence from the General Social Survey indicates that higher fertility and earlier childbearing among women from conservative denominations explains 76% of the observed trend for cohorts born between 1903 and 1973: conservative denominations have grown their own. Mainline decline would have slowed in recent cohorts, but a drop-off in conversions from conservative to mainline denominations prolonged the decline. A recent rise in apostasy added a few percentage

⁶⁶ Rodney Stark, [*What Americans Really Believe: New Findings from the Baylor Surveys of Religion*](#) (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 25.

⁶⁷ Stark, *What Americans Believe*, 29.

points to mainline decline. Conversions from mainline to conservative denominations have not changed, so they played no role in the restructuring.⁶⁸

Caring for children and youth has been found to also propel church growth. Churches where pastors and pastoral teams care for and counsel children, youth and other vulnerable groups were observed to grow at faster rates. In addition churches where there is High involvement have been found to experience tremendous growth. Some authors have also indicated that churches with a culture of welcoming new people tend to grow faster than those which do not. In this respect, Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce suggest that “Three congregational strengths are positive predictors of numerical growth: *Caring for Children and Youth, Participating in the Congregation* [including giving rates], and *Welcoming New People*.”⁶⁹ However, they also note: “Other factors don't predict growth — denomination or faith group, congregational size, income levels of worshipers, average age of worshipers, and population growth around the church.”⁷⁰—conflicting with some other theories. They also note:

Many new people (47%) visit for the first time because someone invited them; only 6% came for the first time due to advertising . . . People return because of the quality of the sermon (36%), the friendliness of the people (32%), and the overall worship experience (30%) . . . Growing congregations are more likely to hold events to meet new people or to add members, advertise in the newspaper or telephone book, use email, have a church Web site, and send materials to or telephone first-time visitors . . . Services in growing congregations are more likely to include contemporary music and laughter.⁷¹

Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson report that quality leadership is a critical success factor for church growth⁷². But Stetzer and Dodson go on to suggest that “Prayer, Children’s Ministry, Evangelism, Youth Ministry, and Leadership” were the top five areas that were changed in the growing churches they studied.⁷³

David Olson points out that large (1000+ attendance) and small churches (1-49 attendance) are growing at the fastest rates. “While the larger churches grew according to expectation, the

⁶⁸ Mark Chaves, *Congregations in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 33. Michael Hout, Andrew Greeley, Melissa J. Wilde, “The Demographic Imperative in Religious Change in the United States,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 107: 2 (Sep 2001): 468-500.

⁶⁹ Cynthia W. & Bruce, D. *Beyond the Ordinary: 10 Strengths of U.S. Congregations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 113.

⁷⁰ Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, “Myths and Facts about Evangelism and Church Growth,” *U.S. Congregations* website, n.p. [cited 8 December 2008]. Online: <http://uscongregations.org/growth.htm>

⁷¹ Woolever and Bruce, “Myths and Facts.”

⁷² Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 34.

⁷³ Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 193.

smallest churches actually grew at a faster yearly rate. The churches that declined the most were those with a weekly attendance between 100 and 299.⁷⁴

Confirming these findings from another angle, Olson reports that in the fourteen diverse denominations he studied, all the denominations that were growing were planting lots of churches; specifically, all those denominations planting at least one new church per year for every one hundred existing churches continued to grow.⁷⁵

Mark Chaves affirms the movement of people into large churches. He reports:

In every denomination on which we have data, people are increasingly concentrated in the very largest churches, and this is true for small and large denominations, for conservative and liberal denominations, for growing and declining denominations. This trend began rather abruptly in the 1970s, with no sign of tapering off.⁷⁶

Olson points out from his research that “Growing churches were more likely to be rural and less likely to be small town, suburban, or urban. While the common assumption is that rural churches are under the most stress, the research supports the opposite.”⁷⁷ Thumma and Travis similarly notes that “We are now seeing a rapid rise in the number of churches reaching mega church proportions that are located in more exurban, formerly rural counties.”⁷⁸

Olson also points out that growing population areas tend to have growing churches. Another study shows that only one [other] external factor was significant in the growth or decline of the church—the change in the population of its zip code. Fast-growing churches—those that increased by more than 20 percent in attendance—were more likely to be located in zip codes where the population growth was *higher* than the national average. If a church declined or was stable, it was more likely located in a low-growth zip code where population growth was *lower* than the national average.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ David T. Olson, [*The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based on a National Database of over 200,000 Churches*](#) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 86.

⁷⁵ Olson, *American Church in Crisis*, 146.

⁷⁶ Mark Chaves, “All Creatures Great and Small: Megachurches in Context,” *Review of Religious Research* 47 (2006): 329.

⁷⁷ Olson, *American Church in Crisis*, 132-133.

⁷⁸ Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, [*Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America's Largest Churches*](#) (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 26.

⁷⁹ Chaves, *Congregations*, 152.

Chaves hypothesizes the development of denominational traditions through “an ecological interpretation of denominational variation.”⁸⁰ He argues that denominations have developed from one another in terms of worship practices. New religious traditions (like the Pentecostal tradition) “position themselves relative to already existing groups such that their worship is different, but not too different, from prevailing worship practice.”⁸¹ Chaves is just doing descriptive work but it is hard not to make the connections between this movement and the charts about denominational winners and losers in other books. He also tacitly acknowledges this, “It is remarkable that newer religious traditions tend to appear . . . less ceremonial and more enthusiastic . . . than older religious traditions. No major religious movement has successfully moved” the other direction.⁸² It seems that this type of gradual variation “change that occurs through relatively small alterations in existing practice” toward more enthusiasm and less ceremony is a factor in growth.⁸³

Churches that offer “intimacy and choice” also often end up growing. Scott Thumma argues that “niche” house churches and mega churches both are offering individuals a product they are interested in. “In certain ways, the mega church is the complete opposite of the house church, but with hundreds of ministries, programs, and fellowship groups, it offers intimacy and choice in one package.”⁸⁴

Thumma’s latest report about mega churches notes that people report being attracted to the mega church for three main reasons: worship style, senior pastor and church reputation. The worship style, senior pastor and reputation of the church were most strongly influential in initially bringing people into the mega churches. . . Clearly, most people coming to a mega church need a direct personal contact with someone they know but it is the public image and their first impression of the church (shaped by the worship style, the personality and quality of the senior pastor and the church’s reputation) that potential, permanent participants find most appealing . . . those characteristics that are most influential for keeping the largest percentage of attenders are indeed the same three items that initially attracted them to the church – the senior pastor, worship style and church reputation.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.156.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 157.

⁸² Olson, *American Church in Crisis*, 132-133.

⁸³ Chaves, *Congregations*, 155.

⁸⁴ Scott Thumma, “The Shape of Things to Come,” in *Faith in America: Changes, Challenges, New Directions* (ed. Charles H. Lippy; Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006), 194.

⁸⁵ Scott Thumma and Warren Bird, “Not Who You Think They Are: The Real Story of People Who Attend America’s Megachurches” The National Survey of Megachurch Attenders report (June 2009), *Hartford Institute for Religious Research* website, n.p. [cited 16 June 2009], 15. Online: <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/National%20Survey%20of%20Megachurch%20Attenders%20-final.pdf>

In his article, *How Pastoral Care Stunts the Growth of Most Churches*, Carey Nieuwhof⁸⁶ seems to project the view that pastoral care and counseling activities have a negative effect on the pastor and church growth. In substantiating his claims, he explains that how the single-handed, individualistic efforts of the pastor in relation to ministries such as visiting every sick person, officiating every wedding and funeral event, making regular house calls, attending every meeting, and leading every bible study or group would ultimately render such a pastor incapable of doing almost anything else. This is linked to the principle that a *good pastoral counselor and care person* (and many pastors are) stimulates love in people towards the pastor so that the church could grow up to about 200 members after which point at the pastoral care and counseling expectations become *crushing*. Inevitably, pastoral leaders with larger churches can't keep up and end up disappointing people when they can't get to every event any more. According to Nieuwhof, "...Caring for 30 people personally is possible. Caring for 230 is not..." Many pastors burn out trying (para 3).

The church begins to decline when the pastor begins to default in delivering his pastoral counseling and care obligations to his members (who are in love with him) because he (the pastors) is experiencing emotional burn out and physical stress. The result is that both the pastor and his members get frustrated. The pastor is worried because he has failed to deliver his responsibilities and the members are frustrated because they feel their pastor perhaps doesn't care about them any longer.

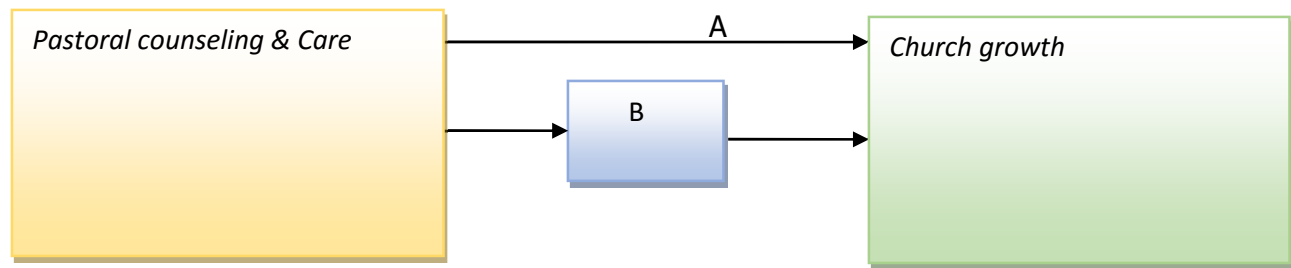
How then could pastoral care and counseling be related to church growth? The next section postulates a conceptual framework.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework below seeks to theoretically explain the possible link between pastoral counseling and care and church growth. According to the model, pastoral counseling and care may have both direct (path A) and indirect effects (paths A1 and A2) on church growth. This effect may be positive, negative or neutral. However, the exact mechanisms by which pastoral care and counseling influences church growth are not yet understood. The model shows that there may be some mediating variables (B) that link pastoral care and counseling to church growth. The exact mechanisms that would link pastoral counseling and care to church growth, however needs to be discovered through further empirical research.

⁸⁶ Nieuwhof, C. (November 16, 2015). *How Pastoral Care Stunts the Growth of Most Churches*. Online article. Retrieved : from <http://careynieuwhof.com/2015/11/how-pastoral-care-stunts-the-growth-of-most-churches/> on 16/05/16.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework postulating the Impact of pastoral Counseling & Care on Church Growth



Source: Author, 2017.

3.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, pastoral care and counseling are critical ingredients in the life of the church. Without them, there is no real bond between the church leadership and memberships. Without pastoral counseling and care, the problems of members cannot be known and addressed. For churches to grow, pastors and pastoral teams need to ensure that they care for their sheep. This is certainly a critical aspect of the pastoral ministry.

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