



BREATH OF LIFE: YOU, YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT, AND THE CHURCH

“The Caring Church” Ephesians 4:32

Introduction

Pastoral caring activities have a single center: life in Jesus Christ. The center is Christ's own ministry in and through us, according to Oden, and it is embodied in the frailties of our language, through the work of our human hands, and subtly through our physical presence (Oden, p. 4). There is unprecedented opportunity to touch the lives of people through pastoral care. Sadly, many find pastoral care among the most "distasteful and difficult" aspects of ministry (vocational and lay ministry). We must consider, however, that God himself came to visit and redeem us (Lk. 1:68), the shepherd sought out the one lost sheep (Matthew 18:12), and Christ bases true discipleship upon a caring interest in the neediest (Matthew 25:36).

Lesson aim: This lesson will explore ways to "shepherd" all of God's people through individual ministry, "continuing oversight and feeding."

I. Placing the Text in Our Context

A. A Quick Review: Ministry (*Diakonia*)

1. *Diakonia* is a Greek word that means “service” or “ministering” especially by those who obey the command of Christ. It also means “to attend to something that may serve another’s interest.”
2. It can also mean to *compassionately meet the needs of others*.
3. Jesus not only lived as a servant, but he expected his disciples to follow him in service (cf. Philippians 2:5-7).
4. A major New Testament concept of the church is the body of Christ. Christ’s body is to continue the ministry of service and servanthood.

B. Caring in Biblical Context (Ephesians 4:32)

1. Paul writes, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).
 - a. This means, “keep on becoming kind toward one another.” He uses “become” because his readers have not yet reached the full measure of maturity in Christ (5:13).
 - b. “Kind” means to *show a sweet and generous disposition*.
2. “Tenderhearted” is used two times in the New Testament (See also 1 Peter 3:8). The word is used of the center of one’s emotions (cf. “bowels”). Hippocrates used the word to refer to the healthy function of the intestines.
3. Forgiveness is a further mark of true Christian fellowship (Colossians 3:13). Our motivation is that Christ forgave us! Our forgiving spirit is to flow from “ungrudging love” (EBC).

II. Historical Foundations : Four Central Pastoral Care Functions

(See William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., softcover ed., 1994).

A. Background

1. Christian history has numerous historical examples of pastoral care.
2. In spite of changes—whether they be cultural, psychological, intellectual, and/or spiritual—throughout the centuries, four central functions have arisen and remained.
3. These functions are: healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling.
4. Even though one of the functions might be considered dominant in a certain historical era, all four functions remained operative in each era.

B. The Pastoral Functions

1. **Healing**
2. **Sustaining**
3. **Guiding**
4. **Reconciling**

III. How May a Church Respond with Caring Concern?

A. Definitions of “Care”

1. Background
2. Latin
3. Indicates
4. Therefore, 2-sided or 2 dimensions

B. Helpful Attitudes (Dayringer, 64-68)

1. Empathy
2. Reverence
3. Genuineness

IV. Gifted to Care

A. Faith (1 Corinthians 12:9)

1. Bible Meaning

2. Bible Examples

3. Practical Application

B. Mercy (Romans 12:8)

1. Bible Meaning

2. Bible Examples

3. Practical Application

C. Hospitality (1 Peter 4:9; Romans 12:13)

1. Bible Meaning

2. Bible Examples

3. Practical Application

D. Ministering (helps; service) (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28)

1. Bible Meaning

2. Bible Examples

3. Practical Application