



Lecturing from the President Byeong
in the light of
Ministry, Philosophy, and Leadership of Dr. Melvin
(Number 29)



Pastoring or Pestering

Dear students,

Rev. Melvin dealt with this issue. I am paraphrasing mine. Caring can be called "Pastoring" in the pastoral language, and there is another similar word, "Pestering," which means "bothering." But both have similar pronunciations: [Festoring] vs. [Festering]. These two questions are about "Am I taking care of them?" or "Am I bothering them?" These two English words look very similar but have completely different meanings.

We talk a lot about caring in the church. There is also a saying in the Bible, "Take care of my sheep." However, they say that there are cases where they bother them when they say "I am taking care of them." For example, some people ask too much about other people's privacy, with the saying, "The more I know about you, the better I can take care of you." But it seems to give the impression of tiring and bothering the other person by asking, "when did you get married?" "How many children do you have?" "Why were they so late?" and "why they were fast." This is actually Pestering, but not Pastoring at all. It's like police's interrogation to the criminal. It's not caring, it's bullying, and damaging.

In one case, a small group said they would pray for a new believer and asked her to sit around and let her come up with her prayer request. That's why the young woman opened up various private lives under the prayer request. And they all prayed for it together and finished well. By the way, the following Sunday, her private life spread to the whole congregation. Probably, someone talked about her privacy here and there. This is not caring at all, it is damaging.

This is also one of the most emphasized training in the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). It's called "confidentiality," which means what we've heard about their privacy is not to be disclosed to the other people. It's okay to open up what's already publicly known, but don't open up what they talked to you about very privately. That should not be opened up even between couples at home. It's like a sealed private letter. When we get a job at a company, they ask for a resume including transcripts of the school. And can the company trust the contents in the envelope if there are any traces of opening it up?

What we heard personally means to handle it so carefully, and it means to keep it to ourselves alone. Even such content is far from being written on the paper anywhere.

It's so good to think that you're helping and taking care of others, but if you think and act from your own perspective, it's rather bothersome. When I was in Kenya, I use a lot of group chatting rooms in Kakaotalk (aka SNS in Korea), and I have participated in the group chat room of my elementary school classmates in Korea, but there is time difference between Korea and Kenya, so it was uncomfortable because it was 3 a.m. in Kenya if 9 am in Korea. In the end, I said I was sorry and withdrew it.

After three or four times of this experience, I came to think very carefully about joining the group chat. I am also being very careful of it because after a few experiences like this, I realize that continuing to send Kakaotalk to anyone, in the end, it might be bothering the person.

In many other cases, we put pastoring ahead with the idea of "care," but in fact, there are too many and often cases of bullying, that's pestering. We're so grateful for the care of others, but I think we should think carefully about whether it's bothering them or not.

Weekly Axiom

In any work, there are limits to the amount of information one can share.

Confidentiality is essential.

(Gijs de Vries)