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Melvin University
and Me

The meaning of pastoral care

Modern people are getting busier and busier, so it is difficult to meet with them unless someone contacts them first or goes to them. Especially Korean people are not as open as Western people, so you cannot wait. You have to go directly. This is how we see pastoral care.

Pastoral care is not limited to churches or any particular place. Pastoral care should take place everywhere, just as Jesus did. There are some people who are unable to come to church. They need to be visited, talked to, prayed for, and worshipped right there and then. The Lord has promised to be present wherever two or three people are sitting and talking in His name, so there are countless opportunities for pastoral care that can be missed because of the stereotypical notion that it should only take place in the church. I don't think we need to be limited by the sphere of mission.

In pastoral care, the spiritual is not necessarily seen in terms of religious or non-religious people, but in a broader sense, the whole human person, all human feelings have a spiritual dimension. For example, sadness, loneliness, anger, love, and so on, whether you are religious or not. Eventually, the conversation will turn to religious topics, but that's the process.

However, there are two approaches to pastoral care for individuals: 'Thinking Level' and 'Feeling Level'. In other words, pastoral care is not a head-to-head dialogue, but a heart-to-heart interaction. The Thinking Level tends to be like a 'perfectionist', trying to process every event first in the head, in the mind, in the thoughts, so that everything is thought through in a 'right or wrong' way. This becomes a school teacher style, a 'Teaching Ministry Style' and you

become satisfied with that, and you end up with 'I am me, you are you' and it doesn't lead to any action. It swirls around in your head and then fades away like a mist over time.

I can't tell you how many church things end up this way. It never becomes an effective ministry. I once knew a Lutheran pastor who had studied philosophy as an undergraduate in the United States and theology at Concordia. He had been pastoring for 23 years, but he understood 'pastoring' only as 'teaching' or 'preaching'. Even counselling has been done in a way of teaching and learning. It took five people eight hours a day for three months to change that philosophy of ministry to the concept of pastoral care, and even then it was only the beginning of the awakening.

If you only understand, teach, and deal with the person you are ministering to with your head, you will not be able to meet each other's souls, and it will be over when you part. I was once pointed out to me in seminary. A professor once pointed out to me, 'You have a developed head, but you don't have a developed heart, and you can't pastor properly with that.' I didn't really understand what he meant at the time, but afterwards it made sense to me.

Sometimes in ministry, when something happens, the congregation says, 'We need you,' and the pastor is thinking at the 'Thinking Level' and working with the six principles. Often, a person comes to you dying, and you're just thinking this way and that, but your body doesn't move. Hundreds of people live and die depending on what kind of pastoral philosophy their pastors have. A ministry that is transmitted only from head to head, a ministry that finds only 'right' or 'wrong' and creates only such church members, will never be an influential minister who can inspire or move others.

Maybe the church members respect him, but it is because of the name 'pastor', not because they are moved by his personality or his philosophy of ministry. They just turn around and smile bitterly. Many pastors are sadly judged in this way. Why did people like Jesus and Mother Teresa have such an impact on the world? I think it's because they cared for people individually and lived in service from their hearts.