

## A Biblical Framework for Soul Healing In the Church

One of the ways in which the church can be relevant to society today is by becoming a healing community, a therapeutic instrument for a hurting world. Many people today who are discouraged due to distress, depression or loneliness, or who are hurt by broken relationships or infernal family situations wander through life as “injured” and “weak” (Ezekiel 34:16). It is these weary and heavy laden people who will make their way to a church in search of a balm for their wounds and meaning to their lives.

The role of the church as a support community lies in its very nature. Its natural solidarity – “for we are all members of one body” (Eph. 4:25) – is strengthened by the supernatural love of grace: “because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Rom. 5:5). The love of Christ is the motivation that “compels us” (2 Cor. 5:14). This is how the church becomes a support and healing community. In the first centuries, this was such a natural characteristic of the church that the concept of “hospital” is inseparably joined to Christianity. In fact, the first hospitals were founded by Christians.

### Pre-Readings:

*A Thorn in the Flesh*, Pablo Martinez, Inter Varsity Press, 2008, chapter 5, especially pages 115-121

*Tracing the Rainbow: Walking Through Loss and Bereavement*, Pablo Martinez & Ali Hull, Authentic Media, 2004, chapter 3, pages 78-84

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## 1) THE BIBLICAL PORTRAIT

Four main needs

I-The right motivation: our love for Christ.

II -Clear ideas: our theoretical framework does not come from psychology or philosophy (sciences), but from Scripture.

III-A clear model: the two fold action of the Holy Spirit (*parakaleo*)

- Comforting

- Teaching: “guiding to all truth”

#### IV-Right resources

- The church as a healing community
- The gifts in the church practiced at three levels:
  - Every member in the body (Gal. 6:2): mutual pastoral care
  - Trained lay persons: counselling
  - Professionals: psychotherapy

## 2) THE PRACTICE OF PASTORAL CARE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Colossians 4: 8-13

-It was performed by non specialists (i.e. Tychicus, Epaphras, Justus (Jesus). Paul calls them *faithful minister and fellow servants or fellow workers*. Most likely they had the gift of *exhortation*

-It is addressed to the whole church, not only to a small “sick” part of it.

-Five verbs to describe the actual process of pastoral care which are a reflection, like a mirror of our Great Shepherd in John 10:

- To know, to be aware of their needs and real situation: “*that you may know about our circumstances*” (v. 8)
- To encourage: “*that he may encourage your hearts*”(v. 8) (Encouragement =*parakáleo*)
- To comfort: “*they have proved a comfort to me*” (*paregoría*), (v. 11)
- To pray earnestly (how) and specifically (what) : “*He (Epaphras) he is always wrestling in prayer for you that you may stand firm ...mature and fully assured*” (v. 12)

- To have great zeal: “*For he has great zeal for you..*” (v. 13 (*tselon*) much concern,

### 3) THE DISTINCTIVE TRAIT: “GUIDING TO ALL TRUTH”

- The ultimate goal in pastoral care *is not feeling better*, a mere relief of tensions (eastern influences, i.e. in Buddhism). The purpose is to help the person **grow**.
- This pedagogic element is a requisite in any form of Christian counselling.
- This process of growth into maturity is primarily related to *ethical discernment* rather than personal well being (Hebrews 5:14).