

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Need of the study

When I graduated from Chong Shin University Graduate School with a Th.M degree, my master's thesis was "A Study on the Pastoral Care of John Calvin's Ministry." My intended research area was pastoral care, and I was especially interested in pastoral care for pastors. Since the 1980's, the Korean church has successfully achieved rapid growth. Consequently, the Korean church became one of the fastest growing churches in the world. However, such overemphasis on rapid growth inevitably resulted in many problems in terms of the Korean pastors' ministry-related stress or burnout. Currently, Korean churches confront many serious pastoral problems. Meanwhile, I went to South Africa to study Theology (especially Pastoral Care and Counseling) at the University of Pretoria in January of 2001 to work on my Ph.D.

However, I felt that I needed the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) while studying at the University of Pretoria. I wanted to obtain techniques that were more professional. Thinking deeply about Korea's current situation, I made up my mind to get myself trained in a practical institution in the United States. Thus, I came to America in September of 2001 to pursue my practical training.

Since I have been in the United States, I have been deeply interested in pastoral care for Korean-American pastors, because there are more than 2,600 Korean churches and more than 3,000 Korean pastors in the United States (Ministry & Theology 1994:118). Since the beginning of Korean immigration, the Korean church in the United States has grown rapidly. Actually, there are countless Korean immigrants in the United States; more than in any other country. However,

I was able to observe that Korean-American pastors are experiencing several crisis issues in their pastoral context. These crisis issues, such as ministry-related stress and burnout, may ruin them unless they receive proper pastoral care (Rassieuer 1989:33). If the inadequate pastoral care continues, Korean-American churches will experience serious deterioration (Oswald 1991:24). Originally, I intended to research pastoral care for pastors in South Korea and to write a thesis with that theme. However, it was too much of a burden to research and write about pastoral care for pastors in South Korea while staying in the United States.

Instead, I have judged that it is necessary to deal with this problem for Korean-American pastors who are dealing with problems in their pastoral context. Due to the character of my major research, it is easier to research in the United States. Furthermore, while I ministered at the Grace Korean church in Grand Rapids, Michigan as an assistant pastor, I was able to experience practical problems in the context of the Korean immigrant church. There has been no research about pastoral care for Korean-American pastors (Lee 1994:1). I think that many Korean-American pastors may be on the edge of various crisis issues or mental health disorders.

Accordingly, we are now in urgent need of specialists, particularly in pastoral care for Korean-American pastors. Historically, the church body has dominated the concept and practice of pastoral care given to their pastors. However, this has generally disregarded that pastors are persons who have to receive proper pastoral care when they are in need. Pastoral care for pastors provides an additional dimension of pastoral care, when various models are used, all of which enable them to handle their pastoral work more effectively.

I was especially interested in studying the experiences of Korean-American pastors. It was particularly interesting to me to explore what the Korean-American pastors' ministry-related sufferings were for their lives, how they responded to

ministry-related sufferings in their current pastoral context, and what their hopes or expectations were in their lives for the future.

Thus, this thesis explores the role and function of pastoral care in caring for Korean-American pastors. We are concerned with Korean-American pastors who are facing and experiencing several serious issues, such as ministry-related stress and burnout in their pastoral context. We recognize that pastors are persons who are mandated by Christ to provide pastoral care for people in need. However, if pastors are in need, who provides pastoral care to pastors? Pastors sometimes need proper pastoral care in order to handle their pastoral work successfully. This is the central concern addressed in this thesis.

## **1.2 Purpose of the study**

The primary purposes of this thesis are to explore the experiences of Korean-American pastors in relation to their pastoral context, to analyze the sources of the issues these pastors experience, and to explore what causes them to seek pastoral care. These thesis further attempts to illustrate the flexibility of an alternative approach for helpful pastoral care for Korean-American pastors, by discussing a variety of pastoral care issues that they confront.

Therefore, I hope that this research will be able to be applied to the South Korean church's pastoral context at a later time. In addition, I hope that this thesis will be a significant resource for those who are designing models of pastoral care for pastors in the South Korean church.

## **1.3 Research methods**



This thesis is undertaken based on sociological methods, as well as by using a practical theological method, such as an empirical engagement with pastoral studies that enables me to seek to develop a pastoral care and counseling response. Thus, this thesis itself is a combination of sociological practical theological methods. Because my thesis uses a narrative research approach, I am conducting open-ended conversations with a few Korean-American pastors. I think that a narrative-based research approach is suitable to the character of my research, and also I construct this thesis by using Don Browning's practical theological methodology. According to Browning, "There seems to be a growing desire to make theology in general more relevant to the guidance of action and to bridge the gap between theory and practice, thought and life, the classical theological disciplines and practical theology" (Browning 1983:3).

Therefore, my thesis explores the pastoral experiences of Korean-American pastors. I think that my thesis's contribution is that it describes ways that Korean-American pastors create meaning and structure in their lives outside of the dominant narrative of their ministry. Their pastoral life stories were illustrated in alternative ways to create theories that may help them.

### **1.3.1 A practical theological method**

#### **1.3.1.1 Don Browning's fundamental practical theology**

The purpose of processing the development of theology during the past several decades was to clarify the category of practical theology in various theological sections. As a result, several attempts have been made to redefine the identity of practical theology and the "practical" becomes an apparent part of theological inquiry. Furthermore, the assumption of practical theology may start from

examining the relationships of the church context, human knowledge, and human experience. According to Browning, the rebirth of practical theologies and philosophies meet in the basic ideas: “Practical thinking is the center of human thinking and that theoretical and technical thinking are abstractions from practical thinking” (Browning 1991:8).

*The second of Browning's sub-movements is historical theology. This examines*

Therefore, Don Browning insists that theology has to consider the practical life situation, and it also has to be examined by theoretical assumptions. Moreover, Browning's methodology goes from practice to theory and back again. In other words, theology's basic concept is practical at its center and thought. Thus the general movement of a practical theological model is from practice to reflection/theory and back to practice.

*comprehensive view of the practical situation at hand. The systematic theology*

Above all, Browning defines fundamental practical theology as “critical reflection on the Church's dialogue with Christian sources and other communities of experience and interpretation with the aim of guiding its action toward social and individual transformation” (Browning 1991:36). In addition, in this section he introduces a “revised correlation method.” This requires four movements which provide significant resources to process the author's thinking. According to Browning, “theology as a whole is fundamental practical theology and that it has within it four sub-movements of descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and strategic practical theology” (Browning 1991:8).

The initial sub-movement to Browning's method is descriptive theology. Descriptive theology involves a “thick description” of a practical action. As Browning says, the goal of this descriptive theology “is to describe the contemporary theory-laden practices that give rise to the practical questions that generate all theological reflection” (Browning 1991:47). The multidimensional hermeneutic character is required at this stage. Thus, Browning indicates that practical theologians as researchers already are embedded in their practices and

theories (Browning 1991:48). In addition, Browning offers questions to guide this descriptive theology. For instance, what, within a particular area of practice, are we actually doing? What reason do we use to interpret what we are going to do (Browning 1991:49)?

The second of Browning's sub-movements is historical theology. This examines the text of given communities and means putting "theory-laden question that emerge from contemporary practice to the great religious monuments of the religious tradition" (Browning 1991:175). Through this sub-movement, practical theology's dimension can broaden to biblical studies and church history.

Systematic theology, the third sub-movement, identifies and describes the comprehensive view in the practical situation at hand. The systematic theology involves two approaches-the critical and philosophical approach.

Finally, there is "strategic practical theology" in Browning's four sub-movements. This moves back to the praxis of doing theology. "This is where ministers and lay persons who think about the practical life of the church really function. If they are good practical thinkers, the richness and virtuosity of their work can contribute greatly to both the life of the church and the common good beyond it" (Browning 1991:55). After all, these practices themselves generate new concepts to maintain the circle.

In general, Browning's method reflects that the practical model of practical theology goes from practice to theory and back to practice. Although Browning does not treat in detail each part of practical theology such as preaching, worship, and religious education, I would like to apply the four movements of fundamental practical theology to the traditional practical disciplines like my study.

Additionally, another of Browning's sub-movement for doing practical theology is



historical and systematic theology. Browning says that historical theology and systematic theology are combined (Browning 1991:43). Consequently, this study pursues biblical and theological perspectives on pastoral care for pastors. Blending Browning's historical and systematic theology moves to strategic proposals. Such a methodological move provides the strategies of the topic at hand and makes future theories. Thus, the model of practical theology to be pursued in this study aims to utilize Don Browning's practical theological method.

### 1.3.1.2 Adaptations of Don Browning's method

(1) Focus of the study: The most obvious purposes of Browning's method for the adaptation of the present study on pastoral care for Korean-American pastors is that it deals with their sufferings and hopes in relation to ministry, as well as identifies and proposes a new model to help them. I am asking how pastoral care for Korean-American pastors bears within its usage Browning's four movements—descriptive, historical, systematic, and strategic practical theology.

(2) Starting point and scope: Concerning Browning, a starting point is the contemporary practice. Therefore, the emphasis in the descriptive sub-movement is to start with what is actually being found in a given current context. In addition, Browning's book, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, includes congregational case studies. This present study on pastoral care for Korean-American pastors pursues both Browning's starting point and the starting point based on research's context.

The geographical scope is restricted to special areas, such as the state of Michigan in the United States. However, when describing pastoral care for Korean-American pastors, the pastoral experiences of those in the state of Michigan are taken as the general case of the pastoral experiences of the nation.

(3) Historical, systematic, and strategic sub-movements: Other sub-movements of Browning's proposal for doing practical theology are historical, systematic, and strategic theology. Although Browning mentions that there is a clear distinction between these two in the four steps of his methodology, he later combines the historical and systematic sub-movements for his methodology's treatment and application. It seems that Browning separates between descriptive theology and strategic practical theology.

This study on pastoral care for Korean-American pastors follows Browning's practical theological method that combines the two sub-movements: historical and systematic. This study is required as a background in order to understand Korean-American pastors' current situation. The identification of Korean-American pastors is pursued in the background as part of the two reflective sub-movements: historical and systematic discourses. It is necessary to hear and conduct an analysis of the facts by using the theories and methods of social sciences, in addition to those of theology. This step takes a more deliberate practical theological track. Through reflections and analysis, this step is able to conduct preparations for theory. In conclusion, reviewing the models for pastoral care for Korean-American pastors as the strategic stage of Browning's proposal for doing practical theology is utilized to propose an alternative model for pastoral care for Korean-American pastors.

(4) Proposed outline of the study: To be more specific about the detailed use of Browning's method in the present study, the organizational structure of the study is outlined.

In chapter two, the identification of Korean-American pastors in the United States will be undertaken by using existing materials for the assessment of the historical background and the characteristics of Korean immigrant churches. In addition, I will examine the roles of Korean-American pastors. The major purpose of this



chapter is to discover the significant meanings that will be important resources to find a new model for pastoral care for Korean-American pastors.

Chapter three will make an effort to portray the four Korean-American pastors' narratives including the range of their opinions and voices. The significant themes will be identified by using two complementary methods: a narrative perspective and a thematic analysis. This analysis will be utilized as the basic materials by which models for pastoral care for Korean-American pastors will be reviewed. This review will further be clarified by the criteria to find out and develop a new model for pastoral care for Korean-American pastors.

Chapter four and five will critically review contemporary pastoral care approaches for pastors. Special attention will be given to approaches as they represent the typical ways of pastoral care for Korean-American pastors. In order to discern the pastoral context of Korean-American pastors, I will analyze the proposed approaches and gain an alternative approach that will be intended to be a normative approach for pastoral care for Korean-American pastors. The premises that I will follow in constructing a new approach will be that the approach should be consistent with the biblical and theological perspectives, and that the approach will be tested to apply to contemporary pastoral contexts.

### **1.3.2 Sociological methods**

#### **1.3.2.1 Design of the study**

In the narrative approach, I focus on four Korean-American pastors' life stories. Although their past experiences are important, I would like to put the emphasis on their current situations. My interest in Korean-American pastors' sufferings, hopes,

and lives in relation to ministry draw me to this topic and method of inquiry. My interest in pastoral care for them also draws me to this study.

Personally, I observed and experienced that many Korean-American pastors in the United States are experiencing life problems and severe ministry related stress. These cross-culturally induced problems may destroy them unless they know or learn how to respond to the problems. I made an effort to portray these Korean-American pastors' narratives honestly. By honestly, I mean to share the whole picture of the pastors' narratives.

In addition, I made an effort to include the range of the Korean-American pastors' opinions and voices rather than reporting only the pastors' life stories. Initially, it was my belief that the cross-cultural stress was an inevitable ministry-related suffering for Korean-American pastors. The painful stress was a reality that they have to face. Thus, I think that I have a responsibility to help them. I used an in-depth conversation in this thesis to gather information about Korean-American pastors' experiences in the pastoral context.

As a researcher, I positioned myself within the narrative paradigm. This narrative paradigm tries to make sense out of the pastors' life contexts by representing the individual life stories. Therefore, a way to understand the experiences of Korean-American pastors is to obtain their individual pastoral stories that represent their narrative realities. In addition, a narrative approach is one of the particular methods of understanding a person in the social sciences (Howard 1991:187).

Thus, I researched the experience of their ministry-related sufferings and hopes, particularly of Korean-American pastors, in relation to their pastoral context. I think that a narrative approach is concerned with the special stories of people's lives. I made certain that this study was conducted by a narrative approach. In addition, I involved relevant members of my family, friends, and church in order

to ensure the authenticity of this study.

### 1.3.2.2 Research participants

The participants in the study consist of four Korean-American pastors who minister in the United States. A small number of participants are appropriate to qualitative research, which is aimed at obtaining an in-depth understanding of their narratives (Creswell 1998:45). In qualitative research, the small sampling is one of the appropriate methods by which the researcher can accomplish the intended purpose of study (Dole 1999:51). Although a small group of people is used in the selected cases, the character of qualitative research lies in its depth, thus “the reader who intends to conduct a qualitative research study is referred to other texts that explore this topic in more depth” (Mertens 1990:175). In addition, as Merriam states (1998:6), “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world.” Therefore, the focus of the investigation was the life experiences of four Korean- American pastors who are devoted in their immigrant pastor context.

This study reviews the experience of four Korean-American male pastors of urban and suburban churches in the Grand Rapids area who had served their churches for at least ten years. I am interested in the pastoral stories of Korean-American pastors, and I do not intend gender to be a criterion for participation in the study. However, only Korean-American male pastors were referred to in my study.

In addition to meeting the criteria of my study’s participants, prospective participants are screened for their suitability for the study, such as (1) availability (2) willingness to verbalize feelings and experiences, and (3) willingness to be audio-taped during the conversation. It is important that the Korean-American



pastors who participate in this study meet criteria regarding their ability and willingness to share their experiences and feelings with me.

Research participants were recruited through a personal networking approach. I made and sent a letter of recruitment, describing my study, to friends and church colleagues who possibly knew prospective participants. I asked research participants if they had flexible schedules, and I determined whether they expressed openness to discuss their thoughts with me. The participants ranging in age from 40 to 50 were considered to be entering, or about to enter, mid-life pastoral experience. Guba and Lincoln (1989:178) say that maximum variation sampling provides the broadest scope of information and is the sampling mode of choice for qualitative and narrative inquiry.

The Korean-American pastors who participated in my study meet my criteria with respect to their willingness to share personal material and their openness to articulate their feelings, thoughts, and experiences to me. I told the prospective participants that the focus of the study is to analyze the sources of the ministry-related suffering and hope that Korean-American pastors face. The aim of the study is to provide various models of pastoral care for to help Korean-American pastors.

Furthermore, I informed the participants that the study involved at least two audiotape conversations, with the possibility of additional conversations and meetings. Their anonymity was guaranteed and I told them that they are able to receive a report of the data analysis. I arranged a mutually convenient date, time and place to meet. In addition, I again explained to each participant the purpose of the study, allowing a decision to cancel involvement, and explained how I would protect their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. The research participants were told that their actual names would not be used in the study.

### 1.3.2.3 Researcher's role

In narrative research, the stance of a researcher is to observe fairly and be aware of one's own biases and values so that these do not distort what he experiences and finds. As a narrative researcher, it is necessary to be aware of how the research affects me, as well as how I affect the research. Rubin and Rubin (1995:40) indicate three themes that guide qualitative interviewing research. The first is that the researcher is required to ascertain in detail how and what the participants understand about their experiences. The second is that what the researcher observes is affected by the interaction with the participants. This means that the researcher has to be careful to pay close attention to how the participants are affected by the researcher.

Furthermore, the researcher needs to be aware of how his perceptions can distort what is heard. The third is that the researcher's interest and concern impulse the participants to give in-depth responses. The researcher is skilled in the use of in-depth conversation techniques, using open-ended questions, and reflective listening. Rubin and Rubin (1995:12) have identified such techniques and skills in encouraging and showing understanding as necessary in helping methods to be frank and open.

My interest in unearthing Korean-American pastors' stories in an effort to understand how they are experiencing and living their lives seems like fertile ground for research. Throughout the course of this study I confronted, redefined, and re-shaped my beliefs, feelings, values, and assumptions about Korean-American pastors in the United States. Also, I strived to see the participants' perspectives rather than imposing my own. In order to maintain alertness for unexpected developments, I used my study support group or reflecting team including my family, friends, and church members for my support, insight, and practical help throughout the years.

### 1.3.2.4 The in-depth conversations

In narrative research, the in-depth conversation is used to gather descriptive data in the subject's own words so that the researcher can develop insight about how this study helps the researchers to understand their stories (Denzin 2000:384). According to Spradley, an interview involves developing rapport and eliciting information (1979:57). Above all, the important thing is to establish a comfortable atmosphere to build rapport. In this atmosphere, people can feel comfortable expressing themselves and feel free to converse without barriers.

Based on the preliminary findings, I decided that this study would be designed using in-depth conversations that would be flexible and open-ended with respect to response. With this approach, participants are able to take whatever direction and use whatever words they want to represent what they have to say (Patton 1989:157).

Each conversation was audio taped and an observational note was completed during and immediately following each conversation. I encouraged each subject to tell his own pastoral story (Rubin & Rubin 1995:122). During the conversation, I had in mind general areas of interest, questions, and several inquiries derived from my previously-stated research questions and from my preliminary study. In addition, I observed how qualitative research design is an evolving process and that the questions to be asked and the data to be collected emerge in the process (Mertens 1998:317).

I selected the important topics in the course of the conversations, and I introduced a particular topic for discussion. This process was an important aspect of the conversation. The sequence of the conversation moved from the more general to the more specific questions or from the more specific to the more general questions, respectively. After all, the reason is to motivate respondents who are not fully committed and to relax the conversation. In addition, the conversations took



place at times and locations convenient to both the participants and researcher. I conducted several conversations and collected the information of in-depth conversation results to reveal the pastoral stories of a small number of Korean-American pastors in order to promote an understanding of how these pastors experience their lives at this stage.

#### **1.3.2.5 Data analysis**

The primary sources of data are the four Korean-American pastors' narratives. I created themes to integrate the data for each Korean-American pastor and the whole group through the data analysis. Also, data analysis involved using two complementary methods to the Korean-American pastors' lives: a narrative perspective and a thematic interpretation. In narrative perspective, I arranged the data in chronological order. This means that the chronological order involves their pastoral context in which the story takes place, and the main characters that affect their pastoral context. The thematic interpretation presents individual participants and compares participants. Thus, I identified and interpreted phenomena from the various sources of data in the process of data analysis.

Their stories were audio taped, transcribed, and summarized or reduced to a core narrative. Each theme from these stories was then reviewed, and the researcher's responses given to each individual story, to edit, or otherwise change as necessary. The transcripts and the responses were given to the participants to be sure that Korean-American pastors' life stories had been accurately stated. As Creswell (1998:153) suggests, after collecting data from the conversations, I constructed each Korean-American pastor's pastoral narrative and each individual theme. Following their narratives and themes, I focused on their overall thematic interpretation.

In particular, my expectations are to explore what these Korean-American pastors' expectations are for their lives, what the important relationships are in their lives, and how their vision of their life story has evolved. The expectations in planning my research helped to articulate the process of this study. For example, what were their sufferings and hopes in relation to ministry for themselves in the past? What are their sufferings and specific pastoral care issues that are of concern to them now? What are their hopes, plans, and expectations in relation to ministry to tap into for their benefit for the future?

#### **1.4 Limitations of the study**

This study does not intend to address the issues by providing a specific sociological and psychological approach to several significant issues that Korean-American pastors experience. This study takes in-depth conversations about the significant issues by examining the symptoms of issues in various aspects of ministry. Instead of limiting the research to a given past situation, this study examines the current Korean-American pastors' experiences in relation to their ministry-related sufferings and hopes of pastoral care for them. This study thus enables Korean-American pastors to realize their status as well as to find healing through various forms of pastoral care.

A further limiting aspect of this study is that it is not aimed at addressing pastoral care of a specific denomination, however it provides general information on pastoral care and how denominations in the United States conduct their Korean pastors. Denominations can use these implications in their own contact with Korean pastors. These implications can also enable the denomination to better work with and care for their Korean-American pastors. By processing this study, I have used some available sociological methods and my personal experiences.

However, with a constructive response to it, I evaluated utilizing a practical theology method. My ultimate focus is on practical theology.

## 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will provide basic information about Korean immigrant churches in America in order to identify Korean churches and pastors and create a pastoral care approach for Korean-American pastors in the fourth chapter. Above all, it is necessary to examine the roots of Korean churches in America and the results of the examination are important background to understand current Korean-American churches and pastors.

Although their circumstances expose them to American culture, Korean immigrant churches and pastors maintain their Korean cultures such as Korean cultural heritage and religious tradition. In fact, the position of the Korean immigrant church in Korean society is very significant. This means that Christianity is influenced by the Korean immigrant society very much (Kwon, Kim, & Werner 2001:28). According to the statistics of sociologists who research Korean immigrant society, seventy percent of all Korean-Americans attend church and they participate in the church's several meetings at least once a week regularly (Chosun Daily Newspaper, p-4).

The examination of the Korean-American church's identification is also intended to help the understanding of Korean-American pastors' individual narratives concerning their pastoral contexts. From this work, the fundamental resources for a pastoral care approach for Korean-American pastors will emerge.