

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This final chapter is intended to report the summarized discussions and conclusion of the thesis, and to suggest recommendations for further study of pastoral care for Korean-American pastors in the United States.

6.1 Reflection and conclusion

The ultimate purpose of this study was to devise a pastoral approach of pastoral care for Korean-American pastors. In order to construct the purpose of the study, the study described and interpreted a few Korean-American pastors' ministry-related sufferings and their hopes from a qualitative perspective. Empirical research about them was also reviewed in this context. Qualitative research and utilizing in-depth interviews were employed with four Korean-American pastors. Furthermore, two premises were utilized in this study. One premise is that the existing pastoral approaches are inadequate to apply to the Korean-American pastoral context. Another premise directly corresponded to the purpose of this study; this is to propose an alternative approach of pastoral care for Korean-American pastors.

An examination of Korean-American immigrant history was conducted for the purpose of discovering the significance and necessary information which would lead the reader to understand the Korean-American immigrant church's characteristics and to introduce the Korean-American pastor's roles in chapter 2. Four characteristics of the Korean-American immigrant church have been raised by that Korean immigrant historical study: The Korean-American immigrant church (1) has a stability of membership; (2) has both characteristics of in-group commitment and out-group indifference; (3) is dominated by the older male model of eldership; (4)

emphasizes conservative theological orientation and personal beliefs. In addition, the roles of Korean-American pastors include religious leaders, pastoral care-givers, and social supporters.

In chapter 3, the ministry-related sufferings and hopes of the Korean-American pastor were examined through their individual narratives. The Korean-American pastors who participated in this study were recruited through personal networking. I selected participants on the basis of age, ministry experience, and immigration experience. The participants ranged in ages from 40 to 55 at the time of our first interview and were all considered as either having entered or about to enter mid-life. All of them were married and were ministering at Korean immigrant churches, except for a Korean-American pastor who was ministering at an American church.

In order to understand the ministry-related sufferings of the Korean-American pastor, I met with each pastor one to two times. The audio-taped interviews were open-ended and flexible to allow for the different kinds of questions and answers. The interview topics ranged from their early childhood to their current lives, including pastoral experiences. Each pastor shared his story about his life and ministry. I conducted four interviews of approximately two or four hours each. In order to protect their anonymity and confidentiality, the names that were used in this study were fictitious.

Narratives were developed based on the characteristics of each story. The findings included individual descriptions of each Korean-American pastor's ministry-related sufferings and hopes in the Korean immigrant context. A thematic analysis for each of the four Korean-American pastors resulted in approximately two or three individual themes for each pastor. These themes reflect upon each Korean-American pastor's pastoral experience. In this chapter, each participant's narrative based on the interview has been introduced. Their narratives have described the four Korean-American pastors' pastoral sufferings in relation to the ministry that they

experienced in the past and present, and their hopes for the future. Then, the ministry-related sufferings and hopes of the Korean-American pastor have been examined through thematic interpretation. The ministry-related sufferings of Korean-American pastors are identified as the two themes: “We’re struggling with authority versus submission” and “We’re trying to solve financial problems.” Here the Korean-American pastors revealed their struggling in relation to pastoral authority and their financially inferior status.

The cores of the following three themes were also identified and have been related to their hopes: “We hope in God’s comfort and encouragement,” “We hope in counselors or mentors who help us,” and “We hope for appropriate financial assistance.” The Korean-American pastors still view comfort from God as the best pastoral care. Otherwise, they need pastoral counselors or spiritual mentors helping them. Furthermore, the Korean-American pastor reveals that financial assistance from the church or denomination is absolutely necessary for their stability in ministry and life.

In chapter 4, the three reflections on pastoral care for pastors were examined for the purpose of discovering why the church has to be responsible for pastoral care for the pastor. There are three main themes: “All believers as priesthood,” “A caring church,” and “We are one body.” I concluded that both pastors and congregation members should be provided with pastoral care in order to manage and accomplish the divine will of God. In the following section, an extensive critical review of the three existing pastoral approaches for the Korean-American pastoral care (The Traditionalist, The Ethno-centrist, and The Adoptionist) was undertaken in order for the church to respond to the crucial needs and pastoral care issues of Korean-American pastors. Consequently, the current pastoral care approaches for the Korean-American pastor have been inadequate because of their misinterpretation of the Korean-American pastor’s reality and their misinterpretations of Korean immigrant’s socio-cultural characteristics of marginality.

In chapter 5, the need of an alternative approach for pastoral care for the Korean-American pastor has been suggested through the critical examination of existing pastoral care approaches. Accordingly, it was a basic goal of this study for the Korean-American pastor. The pastoral care approach should include both the Christian traditional content of pastoral care and the cultural context of Korean-American immigrants. On the one hand, in order to be satisfied at the Christian traditional content of pastoral care, the pastoral care approach should be adequate to a biblical heritage and a theological tradition. On the other hand, in order to fulfill the cultural context of Korean-American immigrants, it ought to be applied to the Korean-American pastor who is the concern for this study.

Pastoral care approaches of Wayne Oates' *The Christian Pastor* have been merged with some pastoral theological issues from my empirical research with Korean-American pastors. Wayne Oates' approaches of *The Christian Pastor* combine my practical pastoral experiences in the Korean-American pastoral context and the theological and biblical perspective. Oates' pastoral care approaches promote the relationship between the Korean-American pastor and God. Therefore, Korean-American pastors are able to discover the true origin of their pastoral authorities and self identities.

Indeed, the pastoral approach provides integrative useful sources of pastoral care for the pastor that can be managed by the church or the denomination as various therapeutic tools for the pastor. I have revealed how Oates' model can be used throughout these works, and I have suggested some implications: cultural implications, implications for the pastor's family, congregational and denominational implications, and various therapeutic tools for the pastor. I have concluded that Wayne Oates' model has satisfied the requirements for an appropriate pastoral care for the Korean-American pastor.

6.2 Recommendations for future research

This study has suggested some implications for further research. The major purpose of this study was to construct an appropriate model of pastoral care for the Korean-American pastor. It may be limited in its effectiveness to all Korean immigrant churches in the United States because each Korean immigrant church may have many unique characteristics depending on each given situation. If so, each church may need its own model of pastoral care because of its own particular needs. Therefore, some factors such as Korean immigrants' socio-economic status, educational status, language problems, age, cross-cultural stresses, and each Korean immigrant church's own particular needs should be seriously considered and reflected in further research.

In addition, other possibilities of further research are found in different denominations that the Korean-American pastor belongs to. There is much denominational pastoral care for the pastor in the United States. As examined in chapter 3, the United Methodist denomination has its own pastoral care model for the United Methodist pastor. It would also be important in further research to introduce and review what special pastoral care model of each denomination in the United States has and how each denomination maintains pastoral care to its own denomination's pastors. This research could include Korean-American pastors because the denominational responsibility of each pastor should never be neglected.

As I reflect upon my whole research process, I have adopted Don Browning's practical theological method as pertinent to my research. According to Browning (1991:8), "Practical thinking is the center of human thinking and that theoretical and technical thinking are abstractions from practical thinking." Therefore, I agree with him that theology has to consider the practical life situation and it also has to be examined through theoretical assumptions in order to apply to the human life.

Furthermore, Don Browning's methodology includes that theology as a whole is fundamental theology and it goes from practice to theory and back again. In other words, theology's basic concept is practical at its center and thought. Browning argues (1991:55), "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." The general movement of a practical theological model is from practice to reflection/theory and back to practice. Therefore, practical theology came to be viewed as an apparent theological part beyond the basic applied theology. Furthermore, although Browning does not deal in detail with another practical discipline, his four movements of fundamental practical theology can apply to various traditional practical disciplines (Browning 1991:xi). Consequently, theory in practical theology is not an abstract image in the air but a theoretical and technical thinking that is rooted in the practical context.

In addition, the Christian value that has been maintained traditionally is not symbolized as one philosophical and theological value. The Christian value is an original heritage in the Christian history, and the characteristic that is identified as the present trend is not. Theology itself has enough possibility to be abstract, although the researcher tries to pursue the endless relationship of praxis and theory. Thus, the true trial to examine and confirm the church context is necessary for doing theology in the future. In addition, my stance of practicing theology as a practical theologian should be combined with practical aspects of life and a theological theory.

Therefore, it is my hope that the alternative model will move from theory to practice just as I have adopted Browning's practical theological method. I especially hope that the present study may contribute to promoting the development of an integrative pastoral care approach for the Korean-American pastor.