

## Christian Hospitality: An Entrance to Christian Pastoral Assistance and Counseling in Times of Crisis

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**Abstract:** The need for pastoral assistance and counseling is increasingly being felt in various sectors of society, both Christian and non-Christian. The economic, social, and political crisis, which resulted in crises in other fields, including health, education, and morals, made a crisis that had a widespread impact in Indonesia. This has triggered the community's need for pastoral care and counseling. This works to help them through an interactive, reciprocal, and in-depth conversation to find the core of the problem and lead to a solution. However, for this interaction to occur, hospitality practices are undoubtedly needed so that the counselee is willing to be involved and open up. The purpose of this study was to examine the concept of hospitality as the first step in the presence of pastoral assistance and counseling in times of crisis for Christians. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. The results showed that Christian hospitality requires counselors to have empathy and openness to counselees while sharpening their ability to carry out congregational counseling. Without it, the congregation will remain in a depressed and stressed existence due to the crisis they are facing.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Perception Teacher, Students

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## Introduction

Pastoral care and counseling are an integral and inseparable part of church ministry. This ministry is not only a task that pastors must carry out but also a ministry task for ministers and church members. Pastoral care and counseling must concern all elements in the church because all age categories experience life struggles (Hasiholan, Setyobekti, & Trisna, 2021). Small children with school struggles (Purwanti & Suharni, 2018), teenagers with friendship struggles (Marbun, Paendong, & Silooy, 2019), youth with identity search struggles (Sumara, Humaedi, & Santoso, 2017), and parents with family (Gernaída Krisna R Pakpahan, 2020). It is wise and right to pay attention to all the categories in the church.

The global and local Covid-19 pandemic has created a new era known as the era of disruption. Many people say that 2020 is an era of disruption, where many new things happen and emerge. The definition of disruption is an era in which innovation and change occur on a large scale and fundamentally change all existing systems and orders in new ways (Andryanto, 2021). The same thing was conveyed by (Gernaída K.R. Pakpahan, Nugroho, Benyamin, Pantan, & Wiryohadi, 2022) that the era of disruption that changed the entire human order caused chaos in thinking and acting. Innovation and change on a large scale force society to adapt quickly. This certainly increases the pressures and struggles of life because humans do not only compete with humans but also with machines and technology.

Another impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has also caused many problems in the socio-economic sector. UNICEF, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Australia Indonesia Partnership for Economic Development (Prospera-DFAT), and the SMERU Research Institute conducted a series of assessments of the impact of COVID-19 in Indonesia on the socioeconomic dimension. The study found that crises and problems occurred in various ways, including employment, income, resilience to shocks, schools, social protection coverage, and access to immunization and health services (UNICEF, UNDP, Prospera, & Institute, 2022). The crisis has an impact on physical, mental, and spiritual health. The term today is called "burnout." The burnout that is not handled correctly will impact the loss of enthusiasm for life, depression, prolonged stress, and loss of enthusiasm to achieve goals or plans that have been set before.

In responding to the crisis and burnout, the church expects to take a solution. The most appropriate solution is to implement and prioritize pastoral principles. The need for pastoral assistance and counseling today is increasingly felt in various sectors of society, both Christian and non-Christian. The economic, social, and political crisis, which resulted in crises in other fields, including health, education, and morals, made a crisis that had a widespread impact in Indonesia. Consciously or not, this has triggered the community's need for pastoral care and counseling.

Pastoral care and counseling are services by finding and visiting congregations experiencing struggles in their lives (Wiryohadi, Sitompul, & Widiada, 2021). The purpose helps them through an interactive, reciprocal, and in-depth conversation to find the core of the problem and lead to a solution. However, for this interaction to occur, hospitality practices are undoubtedly needed so that the counselee is willing to be involved and open up.

The church should be open and have hospitality towards its members. The Lord Jesus first showed this attitude: "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). Suppose the church does not open up and does not have hospitality to its members who need guidance. In that case, the church is like closing the "entrance" to the Christian community. They will choose to look for "non-Christian counselors" such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and other professional experts. This reality is a challenge for the church in pastoral care and counseling.

Hospitality is the entrance to interaction in fellowship and community so that fellowship with God, who is the head of the church, can be enjoyed by all people. Therefore, the author considers hospitality a critical entry point in pastoral care and counseling. In the following article, the author will discuss Christian hospitality as an entry point for pastoral care and counseling from various perspectives.

Research related to Christian hospitality has been reviewed by (Sera Tuju, Siahaan, Ayok, Siagian, & Sampaleng, 2021), which examines from the perspective of Christian religious education. The primary purpose of his research is how Christians can place themselves in social relations by using a qualitative interpretative method, the results of the study state that the value that must be possessed to achieve Christian hospitality in a pluralistic society is the law of love.

## Method

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The research procedure starts from the study of the Bible about the idea of hospitality that God initiated through Christ by using several texts related to the theme. Then the analysis is relevant to implementing pastoral care and counseling in the church for all categories. The literature approach also examines some expert views on hospitality concerning pastoral care and counseling. By analyzing and considering some of these views and reflections from the Bible. Conclusions are obtained to be used as input for counselors in the church-related to pastoral assistance and counseling in churches during times of crisis. Researchers, in this case, are limited to hospitality design from

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a Christian perspective, which is relevant to pastoral assistance and counseling. The design and construction can later become a benchmark for the success of pastoral assistance and counseling in the church.

## Results and Discussion

### Pastoral Counseling

Pastoral counseling is a reciprocal relationship between God's servants (pastors, evangelists, etc.) as counselors and counsees. The counselor tries to guide the counselee into an ideal counseling conversation atmosphere that allows the counselee to truly recognize and understand what is happening to himself, his problems, his living conditions, where he is, and so on. So that he can see the purpose of his life in his relationship and responsibility to God and try to achieve that goal with the measure, strength, and ability God has given him (Susabda, 2014). Christian counseling is different from secular counseling. At least according to (Susabda, 2014), what distinguishes Christian pastoral counseling from secular counseling is that Christian pastoral counseling is a ministry entrusted by God Himself, absolutely dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit, based on the truth of God's word, and based on theology. In its integration with other sciences (Johni Hardori, 2014).

Although the purpose of pastoral counseling is not the same as evangelism, both have the same primary goal: to become the human being that the Lord Jesus wants or to have an abundant life in the Lord Jesus (John 10:10b). In contrast to secular counseling, pastoral care and counseling by Christian counselors can succeed if the path is open and the counselee has the will, determination, and courage to achieve the fullness of Christian life. The recovery in pastoral counseling can be achieved when the counselee gives himself to be visited by the Holy Spirit through the truth of God's word and accepts God's will for his life.

To achieve the goals of pastoral care and counseling mentioned above, an element of openness and freedom is needed to express the feelings and struggles of life experienced by the counselee. According to (Sumarno, 2012), the diagnosis and analysis of the subject matter cannot be correct if there is no openness and freedom on the part of the counselee to express his problems and feelings. To be open and free to express, the counselee must feel comfortable in his relationship with the counselor.

An effective counselor certainly has good qualifications as a Christian counselor in pastoral counseling. According to (Edu, 2010), the qualifications of a Christian counselor are as follows: have good spirituality, know God's will in his life, have love and are willing to help ease the burden, have knowledge of God's word and use it wisely. Righteous, gentle, patient, non-judgmental, empathetic, recognizes abilities and limitations, and relies on and relies on God's wisdom and strength.

From the qualifications mentioned above, it can be seen that knowledge is not the only thing that is a requirement to become a Christian counselor. A Christian counselor must also have good character and a good relationship with God. In addition to these qualifications, the counselor must also be ready to deal with the counselee. Even though a counselor has good knowledge, character, and spirituality but does not have physical, time, or other readiness, pastoral counseling not carries out properly.

### The Nature of Christian Hospitality

One of the things that can affect the course of the pastoral counseling process is communication. If communication does not run smoothly, pastoral counseling will not work well. Communication will be more complicated if the counselor and counselee do not know each other beforehand. Difficulty in communication can also occur if the counselee is reluctant to cooperate with the counselor in pastoral counseling if the first impression is not soothing or a tense/strange situation occurs (Abineno, 2002). Seeing this, one thing that needs to be implemented is hospitality (hospitality), although, on the other hand, there is undoubtedly the ability of the counselor to approach the counselee.

Hospitality is etymologically derived from the Greek *philoxenia*, which consists of *philos* (love) and *xenos* (others/foreigners), which means love for strangers. Hospitality is more than an act (Hershberger, 2009). Hospitality is a way to make friends with people who are the responsibility of every human being (Martin, 2014). Hospitality is not just a concept; there needs to be action or practice in everyday life to establish relationships with others. Hospitality is an open attitude towards different. Hospitality embodies a sense of warmth in accepting, respecting, and friendly and fraternal attitudes toward others (Pohl, 2002).

Christian Hospitality is built on God's love, namely agape and unconditional love. God's love is love and not 'what is. If hospitality builds on 'what is up' love, then hospitality only happens to people who are friendly, kind, and love us, whereas when they do not do that, we are no longer friendly to them (FEBRIANA, 2020). This is the hallmark of Christian hospitality, which is built on God's unconditional love, does not discriminate, forgives, and accepts all people. Offering hospitality to another means creating a space where he or she feels welcome, like "at home" (Pembroke, 2021). A guest feels at home when allowed to be who he is. Apart from following the generally accepted rules of good behavior, he does not have to act in a certain way at the host's place to be accepted by him. He was given the freedom to come as-is.

#### **The Hospitality of Jesus is an example.**

We can see the hospitality Jesus shows as a manifestation of God's hospitality. In Luke's perspective, Jesus is the anointed Messiah, whose whole life and ministry were filled with the Holy Spirit to "preach the good news to the poor; and he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and a sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's mercy has come" (Luke 4:18b-19). Therefore, in this case, according to (Macchia, 2012), we can understand that the whole life and ministry of Jesus was shaped pneumatically or pneumatological. The Holy Spirit helped Jesus to serve effectively and touch today's society. Luke describes it more explicitly in the Acts of the Apostles how the Holy Spirit helped the disciples to be able to break through the walls of discrimination at that time (Hasiholan & Sihotang, 2022).

Jesus first demonstrated God's hospitality as one who received hospitality from others. The life of Jesus, from his conception in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit to his birth in a manger to his burial (in the tomb given by Joseph Arimathea), Jesus depended on the reception of others. As the "son of man" who had no place to lay His head (Luke 9:58), Jesus relied on the goodness of many such as staying in their homes and receiving whatever was given (Luke 10:5-7).

Jesus' hospitality can also be seen in the story of Zacchaeus climbing a tree to see Jesus (Luke 19:1-10), giving us a perfect model of this dynamic of Jesus' visit as an opportunity to experience God's hospitality (Pembroke, 2021). Zacchaeus was excommunicated for two reasons. In the first place, he was of short stature and could not see the crowds. In the second, he was a tax collector and, therefore, part of a class shunned by those who hated collusion with the colonial rulers of Rome (Paynter, n.d.). However, Jesus went beyond this exclusive attitude and invited Himself to Zacchaeus' house (Luke 19:5). He spoke the words of great healing and deliverance: "Today salvation has come to this house, for this man also is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9). In this case, God invites and accepts Zacchaeus into the kingdom of God, and this is God's hospitality which is shown through Jesus' role as a guest who comes to Zacchaeus' house.

God sent Jesus into the world to call people into the community of salvation. The encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus is the perfect paradigm of God's hospitality. Zacchaeus' healing visits and divine love show that lost humans can find welcome and new life in God's 'friendly hand.' Here we have a model for our communal life in terms of inviting and welcoming.

Jesus' hospitality was shown by serving a banquet for his two disciples: "When he sat down to eat with them, he took bread, gave a blessing, and broke it and gave it to them." (Luke 24:30). In his guest role, Jesus also showed hospitality when he was invited to stay with two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:29). As they experienced Jesus' hospitality in serving the banquet, "their eyes were opened, and they knew him" (Luke 24:31). The hospitality that Jesus displayed brought them to the knowledge of God. Likewise, when we show Christian hospitality, based on divine love, in pastoral care and counseling, the counselee will begin to know God, enter into the religious community, and fellowship with Him.

Jesus showed that Christian hospitality departs from loving others, namely all people, including strangers and even people who are hostile to us. Furthermore, Jesus taught the disciples and the crowd about hospitality through the good Samaritan story (Luke 10:25-37). The exciting thing is that Jesus told this story sometime before the visit of Jesus, and the disciples were rejected in the area of Samaria (Luke 9:52-56). Despite experiencing the attitude of rejection from the Samaritans, Jesus remained friendly and brought up the story of the good Samaritan. In the story, Jesus taught that the Samaritan fulfilled the law of loving one's neighbor. The love that the good Samaritan did was to help his fellow human beings who were even his enemies because the Jews and Samaritans were enemies.

Following the example of Jesus, in pastoral care and counseling, we must not choose people as counselees. The church is open to others, namely, everyone who comes asking for assistance and direction

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in God's love. The church should not be exclusive. The church is called to show the hospitality of Christ even if there are the poor, big sinners, criminals, adulterers, thieves, and others. It often happens when the counselee initially rejects, belittles, or even insults the church. However, like the example Jesus set, when they came to ask for assistance, the church should not repay evil for evil but show love through divine hospitality by still welcoming and inviting them.

According to Pembroke, Christ came in the power of the Spirit to invite people into fellowship with God. To be indeed human means to share in fellowship with the Living God. Jesus came to call people to become fully human through the offer of a saving relationship. He is the model and bearer of this healing and liberating fellowship (Pembroke, 2021). He is the link between God and man. When people conform to Jesus, they are united with God. Pastoral care and counseling that brings the counselee into the community, led by the Holy Spirit and living like Christ, is shaped by radical openness and acceptance. When pastoral care and counseling function optimally, all who come are welcomed and confirmed as children of God.

### **Christian Hospitality in Pastoral Assistance and Counseling.**

Christian hospitality is essential in achieving good communication in pastoral care and counseling. Suppose the encounter is not initiated and built through Christian hospitality. In that case, the communication and implementation of pastoral and counseling assistance feel 'tasteless.' Without Christian hospitality, the counselor may still be able to establish communication with the counselee. Mentoring can still carry out, but the grace of God who blesses cannot be seen and felt, so the fundamental goal of pastoral counseling is to invite the counselee to enter and stay in fellowship with God. Therefore, Christian hospitality is essential in pastoral care and counseling because it aims to present God's love to the counselee so that they accept the invitation, enter, and stay in fellowship with God.

Although counselors already know about pastoral counseling, good character, and the ability to convince their counsees, this is not enough. In pastoral care and counseling, counsees need a sense of acceptance and empathy that can realize through Christian hospitality. To help others feel welcome, the counselor not only gives her undivided attention but also creates a space where guests feel free to be themselves. According to Pembroke, there is a paradox in hospitality: counselors want to create emptiness, not scary emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and find themselves freely; free to sing their song, speak their language, dance their dance (Pembroke, 2021). Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt a counselor's lifestyle but a gift of opportunity for guests to discover their style. The Lord Jesus accepts us as we are, but He does not force us to dress like Him, have nothing, be rabbis, have long hair, or so on. Jesus accepts us as we are, so we invite to feel God's love and respond to it in our way. Likewise, the counselor needs to sincerely accept the counselee to channel God's love so that when the counselee experiences God's love, the counselee can respond in his way.

In providing acceptance, hospitality creates a friendly 'space' so that clients can feel free to be themselves. However, it is essential to note that this freedom has its limits. Values of love, respect, togetherness, and justice form the boundaries of Christian hospitality. In acceptance, the counselee is still invited to respect the values of love, respect, togetherness, and justice while remaining free to be himself. Clients must be challenged and guided when they go beyond these boundaries. Acceptance of the person in the practice of pastoral care and counseling is not limited but limited to their behavior. Their behavior should limit according to the character of Christ.

Furthermore, apart from feeling accepted, the counselee receives attention from the counselor as a form of Christian hospitality, namely a sense of empathy. Empathy is a person's ability to feel and understand what is experienced by others which in pastoral and counseling contexts is related to what is experienced by the counselee. Etymologically empathy comes from the Greek *Empatheia*, which means 'to feel,' which is to have a deep feeling to understand the world of others. Empathy is different from sympathy; sympathy can be a feeling of caring for the feelings of others, but sympathy is not as deep as empathy. We have not said to be able to feel something others feel. Empathy will be more vital if we have experienced the same incident or the people closest to us have experienced the same incident.

In empathy, there are also aspects: a) Warmth, a feeling that a person has to be warm towards others. b) Tenderness is a feeling that a person has to act or speak gently towards others. c) Caring is a person's attitude to giving attention to others and the surrounding environment (Amalia, 2019). So the counselor needs to have a sense of empathy to explore the counselee's problems and build sensitivity to the needs and struggles of the counselee. Counselors with good empathy qualities will make the counselee feel understood and

understood. The counselee will become comfortable and more open to the counselor in expressing his struggles because he feels that the counselor understands the problem.

In conducting Christian hospitality, the counselor must realize the two approaches, acceptance, and empathy for the counselee. Without genuine acceptance, counselees can feel inferior or unable to express themselves and cannot even find themselves in pastoral care and counseling. However, without empathy, the counselor does not feel comfortable, and it is difficult to open up because he suspects that the counselor does not understand the problem.

God first gave an example of hospitality to humans through Jesus Christ. Humans receive the feeling of acceptance through the work of Christ, namely the redemption of humans from sin that makes believers not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). God accepts and saves people even while they are still sinners (Romans 5:8). Humans who are unclean because of sin are accepted into the holiness of God to be sanctified and sanctified (Hebrews 13:12).

God also shows empathy to humans through the work of the incarnation. Namely, God emptied Himself, took the form of a servant, and became in the likeness of humans (Philippians 2:7). God is not only sensitive to human problems and suffering, but He also feels all that humans feel through Jesus, who became human (Hebrews 4:14-15). The Lord Jesus feels our pain, poverty, and all our weaknesses.

Therefore, Christian hospitality in pastoral care and counseling is not just a church program, a profession/position requirement, or periodic action for specific purposes and benefits. Christian Hospitality must continuously manifest as a lifestyle for church counselors and everyone involved in pastoral care and counseling. In this case, hospitality can be an entry point for everyone to attend church. Just as Jesus manifested hospitality to all people so that He became a way for many people, counselors must manifest hospitality to counselees. Hence, they have access to knowledge of God.

So what is the focus of Christian counselors is not only solving problems but bringing the counselee to know Christ through the experience of divine hospitality. Christian counselors are not only required to answer the counselee's questions but are also required to make disciples of his counselees. Not everyone calls to be an evangelist, but everyone calls to be a witness who proclaims the good news (Collins, 2017). Jesus' command in Matthew 28:18-20 is the command to make disciples of all people. This is the real difference between secular counseling and Christian counseling. Everyone can find solutions to their problems anywhere and anyone skilled, but the kingdom of God and his righteousness and eternal life is only through the church whose head is Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

## Conclusion

The practice of Christian hospitality in pastoral care and counseling follows the example of Jesus, who is the embodiment of God's hospitality to humans. Hospitality carried out by counselors needs to be based on agape love, namely God's love, unconditional love, and love as it is. This means that the counselor is not picky about people, serving all counselees who come to him for assistance, regardless of their status and actions. In realizing hospitality, counselors need to show a sincere sense of acceptance and have a sense of empathy for their counselees. The acceptance given by the counselor gives freedom to the counselee to express and feel comfortable, but the limitation is the noble values in behavior. Therefore, although accepting a person's personality in the practice of pastoral care and counseling is not limited, it is limited to their behavior. Counselors with good empathy qualities will make the counselee feel understood and understood. The counselee will become comfortable and more open to the counselor in expressing his struggles because he feels that the counselor understands the problem.

Christian Hospitality in pastoral care and counseling is not just a church program, a profession/position requirement, or just a periodic action for specific purposes and benefits. Christian Hospitality must continuously manifest as a lifestyle for church counselors and everyone involved in pastoral care and counseling. In this case, hospitality can be an entry point for everyone. Christian counselors are not only required to answer the counselee's questions but are also required to make disciples of his counselees. So what is the focus of Christian counselors is not only solving problems but bringing the counselee to know Christ through the experience of divine hospitality.

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