

## **Pastoral Care: The Essential Guide**

**John Patton**

Abingdon Press, 2005.

**Reviewer: Chaplain Henry Zukowski**

As the subtitle indicates, this book is indeed an *essential* guide for anyone either entering into pastoral ministry or already finding themselves engaged in it. I would broaden the scope though, and include anyone practising any form of spiritual care, including chaplaincy. I have found this book to have been an invaluable resource that provided me with a sound Biblical foundation upon which I was able to develop my spiritual care ministry.

What I came to appreciate about this book was its conciseness in covering a variety of aspects of pastoral care based on sound Biblical teaching as well as first-hand experiences. The topics that the author, John Patton covers in his book include Pastoral Wisdom, asking such questions as, “where can wisdom be found to deal with the human lostness that calls for pastoral care?” This topic is followed by what I would say is the most significant aspect of spiritual care, namely *Pastoral Presence*, recognizing that as Spirit-filled individuals, we bring the presence of God into the midst of our interaction with others, especially those who are struggling with such issues as loss and grief, which in turn are also covered in one of Patton’s chapters.

As well, the topics of *Caring for the Sick*, both physical, emotional and mental are also addressed, along with *Abuse of Self and Others* that require a great deal of sensitivity. The author also covers the topics of *Care of Marriage and Family* as well as *Pastoral Counseling* and in doing so, affirms the importance of utilizing other professionals who may be able to provide additional support that a spiritual caregiver may not necessarily be trained or experienced enough to extend to a given “client.” In addition, the significance of community is stressed throughout the book, as being one of the aims of pastoral care, where relationships that may have been severed or where distance from community has been experienced, encouraging individuals to renew those relationships where possible and re-enter into a caring community.

Without a doubt, this resource is one that as a spiritual care-giver, one would read more than once, just even to refresh one’s perspective but also as a way to exercise some accountability in fulfilling God’s mandate that as fellow image-bearers of God, we are called on to care to others just as God cares for us.