

Think Tank “Trauma Healing and Deliverance”: Final Document

From October 9 - 16, 2016, we have met in Goma as a group of psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, pastors and counselors from the Communauté Baptiste au Centre de l’Afrique (CBCA, DR Congo), the Anglican Church of Rwanda (EAR), the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (EPR), the Evangelical Church of Cameroon (EEC), and Germany on invitation by the UEM Evangelism Department, to discuss trauma healing and deliverance. After a week of exposures and discussions, we have come to the following conclusions:

The situation in our churches:

1. We have realized that we put much emphasis on mass evangelism, but neglect personal counseling and care.
2. There are many diseases which we attribute to demon attacks and witchcraft, even though they may be ‘normal’ diseases.
3. Many pastors are busy and do not have time to visit Christians in need.
4. Our healing and deliverance ministries are too often done randomly.
5. Some pastors and lay people are involved in healing and deliverance ministries, but they do not have enough infrastructure, tools and materials for this ministry.
6. People involved in deliverance ministries often do not have knowledge of psychological factors, while those involved in therapy may not know much about the ministry of deliverance.
7. Our churches are also challenged by many new ‘revival churches’ engaging in questionable practices of deliverance, which can nevertheless be attractive to our church members and also sometimes influence our own ministries of deliverance.

What we have learned during this week:

8. We observed some infrastructure in CBCA which can be helpful for our work: Listening Houses, ‘Upper Room’ (rooms for deliverance) and how they are used.
9. We learnt again that in healing ministry, it is God who delivers, and ministers are just God’s instrument. For this, ministers have to humble themselves and work without pride. Nevertheless, the faith of the ministers who deal with deliverance as well as the faith of the patients to be delivered are also important.
10. We found out by looking into the Bible that the nature of demons is not clearly defined, but that they are described as harming, binding, oppressing and possessing people. Healing and deliverance are part and parcel of Biblical practices.
11. We found that in our context, witchcraft can be a mighty power which destroys human life and leaves behind suspicion and bitterness. We also found that sometimes, it is only the belief in witchcraft that is destructive. But we know that God’s power is always mightier than such evil.
12. Through exposure visits and discussions of cases, we found that it is not easy to separate and distinguish spiritual, psychological and medical aspects when a client comes to us for help. Most of the time, all those aspects interact.
13. We conclude: Trauma healing and deliverance have the same purpose, the liberation of human beings. Therefore, psychologists, pastors, theologians and lay people in prayer groups have to collaborate in their work. They need to collaborate from the beginning, not only when something goes wrong.

Recommendations

To our churches:

1. To harmonize, strengthen and empower the healing and deliverance ministries which already exist in our churches, and develop such ministries in parishes where they do not yet exist. In these ministries, pastors, evangelists, lay members and mental health professionals should work as a team.

2. To develop and implement a basic liturgy of deliverance (following the suggestions in the document of the Butare Think Tank of UEM, 2012); and establish healing and deliverance ministry teams on different levels. This may include to set up special rooms for listening/counseling and deliverance in parishes, hospitals and schools where pastors, evangelists or lay church members can meet with those seeking help.
3. To develop curricula and different forms of training in the healing and deliverance ministry:
 - a) Trainings for pastors and lay members of prayer groups in counseling and basic psychology;
 - b) Trainings in healing and deliverance ministry, counseling and basic psychology for theological and Bible school students to deepen their understanding of the ministry and to enable them to own the program.
 - c) These trainings should include exposures/learning visits to deliverance ministries and mental health institutions which will allow pastors, evangelists, members of prayer groups, and mental health professionals to interact, exchange experiences, and learn from each other.

For these trainings, we recommend to make use of church members who are mental health professionals. Where possible, we recommend to train mental health professionals for service in the church.
4. To promote research into topics concerning healing and deliverance, and to create a network to share experiences and documents on healing and deliverance.

We, the participants of this think tank, commit ourselves to do whatever is possible to put these recommendations into practice.

To UEM:

5. To organize a follow-up conference with the members of this think tank after one year.
6. To support the trainings organized by the churches.
7. To help set up a system to regularly evaluate the healing and deliverance ministries in the churches.

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