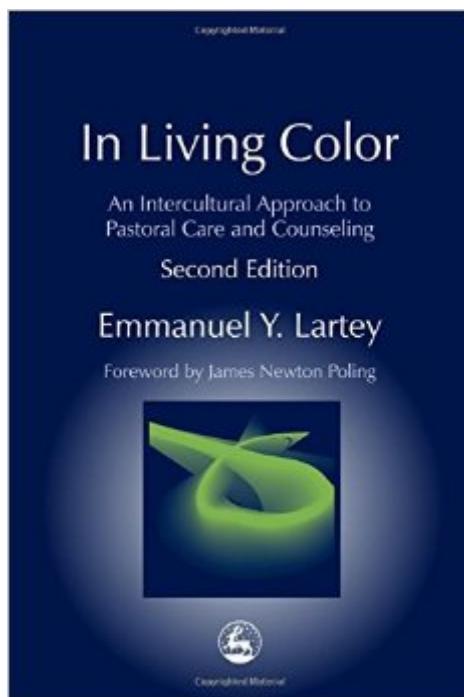


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# In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach To Pastoral Care And Counseling (Practical Theology)



## **Synopsis**

The meaning of pastoral care in modern multicultural societies is challenged and reexamined from a global perspective in this book. Emmanuel Lartey stresses the importance of recognizing different cultural influences on individuals in order to effectively counsel, guide and empower them. This new edition has been updated to reflect recent congregational studies and provides illustrations of how an intercultural approach can work in practice.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book is especially valuable for pastoral counselors. Having been an ordained, clinical, pastoral counselor for almost fifteen years, I have had the privilege of participating in intercultural settings both in worship and in counseling. Lartey says, "If there is to be any genuine human encounter, attempts need to be made to equalize the relationship through mutual awareness of power dynamics in such intercultural encounters" (173). The care giver and the cared for must both be vulnerable, open and sensitive enough to seek as much information as they can obtain in order not to offend or act inappropriately with the cultural other. In order to have a true appreciation for the rich color of diversity about which Lartey writes, pastoral care providers must first deal with their own insecurities, prejudices and assumptions about care. In these settings we must be secure enough to learn from our clients instead of thinking that they can only learn from us. For the most optimal outcome, power dynamics must be equalized in order for care to take place. The pastor and the

pastoral counselor are considered to be in a position of power or influence and we must be willing to abdicate that throne in order to tiptoe in the moccasins of our clients across the terrain they have traversed, even if that terrain is radically different from what we are used to. This book would be most helpful for those who find themselves in multicultural settings of any kind. There is a need to move beyond a simplistic, mono-cultural notion of care into a broader spectrum of understanding of those with whom we share this journey in life. Some may see this as threatening, but it has the potential of being an exciting and phenomenal journey.

Emmanuel Lartey has written a scholarly piece of work that addresses the activities of pastoral care and counseling from an intercultural perspective. He includes historical observations, current practices and trends, and issues of spirituality from a multiplicity of ethnic and geographical sources in his text. Lartey's theme of intercultural pastoral care is more relevant than one might think at first glance. The world is shrinking, and individuals from varying cultures and people groups are now our neighbors. This is the norm rather than the exception. Attention to this demographic phenomenon will only help us as we seek to minister to a global community in our several local contexts. Lartey has a keen interest and desire for all persons to be shown genuine care in interpersonal relations. This is nicely developed in his introduction in the following way: Every human person is, in certain respects, like all others, like some others, and like no other (34). Since we in fact do minister to individuals who are like no other, we can ill afford to use a monoculturalist (163) paradigm in our approach to pastoral care and counseling. While there are principles that will remain the same across cultures, the methods of applying those principles must take into consideration the plurality of cultural nuances that abound. Lartey's chapter entitled "Liberation as Pastoral Praxis" is only marginally helpful to me as a spiritual caregiver. While we must confront and process cultural dynamics that contrast our own, I do not believe Scripture should be altered in any way. Lartey quotes a theologian from Zimbabwe who suggests that the Bible should be edited; there is a need to "liberate it and make it more relevant for today." This type of comment is troublesome if the intent is to deliver a message that is hermeneutically sound.

In Living Color is an insightful book that offers a more inclusive and holistic approach to doing pastoral care. The author gathers together methods, techniques, and cultural understandings from all over the world that informs the practice of pastoral care. After tracing and defining both the historical developments of pastoral care and various models for doing care, Lartey outlines necessary functions and resources found within intercultural pastoral care. The author helpfully

describes intercultural pastoral care through the following areas common to counseling: respect, empathy, interpathy, respect, non-possessive warmth, genuineness, concreteness, confrontation, confidentiality, and immediacy. While I appreciate a broadly informed practice of pastoral care, I also sound a note of caution to the possibility of diluting the supremacy of Christ while incorporating techniques, wisdom, and theology from Islam, Hinduism, Marxism, and liberation theology. All in all, I found this book helpful, challenging, and thought provoking.

Although I have to give this author credit for his unique approach to this topic (for example, his fusion of liberation theology with the practice of pastoral care), the book is TOO organized, delineated far beyond the point of helpfulness. This is one of those books that has a point within a point with 3 subpoints and 4 explanations beneath each subpoint, etc. The author possesses the knowledge to offer good content, but it gets lost in his excessive organization of his material.

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