

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

REINTEGRATION OF EX-CONVICTS INTO
THE LOCAL CHURCH: A Case Study of
Philemon Ministry at Nairobi Chapel

BY
EDDIE TOKPA

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts in Missions

JULY 2005

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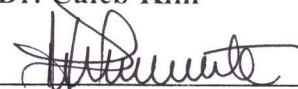
Approved:

Supervisor:



Dr. Caleb Kim

Second Reader:



Dr. Henry Mutua

External Reader:



Dr. Samuel Linge

July, 2005

Student's Declaration

REINTEGRATION OF EX-CONVICTS INTO THE LOCAL CHURCH: A CASE STUDY OF PHILEMON MINISTRY AT NAIROBI CHAPEL

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit.

The views presented in this work are not necessary those of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners.

(Signed) 
Eddie Kolison Tokpa

July, 2005

ABSTRACT

This research was a qualitative phenomenological study that inquired into the experiences of ex-convicts seeking to reintegrate into the society. Data was collected by means of open-ended questionnaires. Six ex-convicts were interviewed. The study reveals that ex-convicts face stigmatization and segregation as they sought to reintegrate into the society. The economic/material needs that have been observed as major themes in the study are unemployment, family disownment of ex-convicts upon their release and their lack of skills. It has also been revealed that Philemon Ministry tends not to be holistic in helping ex-convicts to reintegrate successfully into the society. It was recommended among other things that the Philemon Ministry be more holistic in helping ex-convicts to reintegrate, especially focusing on the barriers that hamper the reintegration process.

DEDICATION

To my beloved mom and dad, whom I have not seen for 14 years as the result of the civil war.

To the Almighty God who has brought different personalities into my life to shape me, many of whom I have had the privilege of working with.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been completed had many individuals and organizations not been used by God to help me. It is not possible to mention them all, however, I deeply acknowledge all their tireless, unwavering, caring and meaningful contributions and provisions. May God bless all of you.

I will like to also extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to the following to whom I feel personally indebted for their support:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Steve (not his real name) looks up just in time to see the first rays of the sun pierce through the small opening on the wall of his prison cell. Free at last! Today is the day he is to see freedom. Steve could hardly believe his good fortune. Ten years ago, he was jailed for stock-theft in Murang'a. When he was jailed, he was barely twenty years old. The only skills he possessed were the agricultural skills he learnt as he performed hard labor in jail. All in all, he thought, life out there must be brighter. His mind filled with fantasies of a better life, he collected the meager earnings he had managed to acquire, amounting to four hundred shillings and seventy-five cents. He bade farewell to his long time inmate friends.

The only place to go back to was Murang'a. He planned to ask for forgiveness and definitely get back to a reformed life. Time healed wounds after all. His journey to Murang'a was an adventure; there were too many new roads and buildings all over. "Life must have been good to many people," he thought. Maybe things would be better than he had thought after all. After arriving in Murang'a he had a hard time finding the path leading to his home as the place had really changed. His mother was the first to recognize him, and she welcomed him. Everyone else stood back and just stared at him and only said hello from a distance. He looked around and his father was nowhere in sight. As he inquired, someone pointed to the big white grave outside the hut. Three days into his freedom, it dawned on him that being in prison was not the worst thing that could happen to a man. "I was so happy upon my release, but when I

got to my village in Murang'a, no one in the community wanted to associate with me," said Steve.

As days went by, the only one who gave him an ear or attention was his mother. Everyone else treated him with increasing suspicion. It got to a point where no one would welcome him anymore, including his own family apart from his mother. He was confined to a small room outside the main house. He could not sit or eat in the main house unless his mother was around. The challenge that he had at this point was to think of the options of how best to fit into the world around him. The only idea that came into his mind was to move away and rebuild his life in a new place as a stranger, or go back to his cattle rustling 'business.'

This story depicts the realities and struggles of ex-convicts in their endeavor to make a successful transition back into the 'free' world. This struggle raises serious concerns in the lives of many people throughout the world. In the developed countries, the United States of America in particular, there has been a development of post-prison systems. These systems are meant to reduce the impact of problems that hinder the reintegration of ex-convicts into society and the church. These problems are addressed through the development of a "shared-responsibility" whereby all the stakeholders in the community, such as public and private entities, the faith community and law enforcement, participate (Wilkinson, 2002).

In the case of African countries, the contribution of social agencies or institutions such as families (nuclear and extended), neighborhood, churches, schools or other local institutions tends to be overlooked. However, their contribution to crime prevention is very essential. Fortunately, a number of African countries have begun to introduce community service as a punitive measure. For instance, research has shown that Zimbabwe laid more emphasis on non-custodial sentences and has developed an

expanding network of community service as an alternative means to imprisonment (O'Kubasu 1997, 25-26).

The need to avail for the ex-convicts more options for re-entry into the community is the reason that Philemon Ministry of Nairobi Chapel was established in 2002. It aims at rehabilitating and helping ex-prisoners to "find their feet" upon their release by establishing half-way houses. This study involves ex-convicts residing in the 'Half-Way House' located in Waithaka, Nairobi. The objective of this study is to explore and understand the experiences of these ex-convicts as they seek to integrate in the local Church. My interest in this study is to find out the experiences of the ex-convicts in the Philemon Ministry of the Nairobi Chapel as it tries to rehabilitate and integrate the ex-convicts into society.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this phenomenological study is to describe the re-entry experiences of ex-convicts into society with a view to helping the Church to play a meaningful role in the process of reintegration.

Purpose Statements

This study will seek to understand the experiences of ex-convict reintegration into society. Many ex-convicts have found themselves back in prison because of rejection from society. This case study seeks to help the church to listen to, understand and help ex-convicts to reintegrate successfully into society.

Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following questions:

1. What are the initial re-entry experiences of ex-convicts in Nairobi seeking to reintegrate into society?
2. What is the Church's attitude towards ex-convicts in Nairobi?
3. What are the ex-convict's perceptions of the Church's attitude towards them?

Assumptions

According to the literature reviewed, the researcher assumes that:

1. Ex-convicts often tend to re-engage in crime, thus finding themselves back in prison because of stigmatization from society.
2. Ex-convicts are not adequately prepared with the necessary skills from prison to enhance their smooth transition into society.
3. The church is not adequately enlightened and aware of the plight of ex-convicts as they seek to integrate into society.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant on various levels. Firstly, the study will be a resource to inform the academic community about the issues facing ex-convicts upon their release. Secondly, the study will be beneficial to the local church as it seeks to understand how to provide spiritual nourishment for the ex-convicts. Thirdly, the study will be beneficial to the Philemon Ministry workers in helping ex-convicts adjust into society, overcome the stigmatization and contribute meaningfully to the community in which they live. Fourth, the study will provide a voice for ex-convicts who have been marginalized by an unforgiving society. Fifth, the study will be very

significant to prison work in the African context since not much study has been done on the experiences of ex-convicts after their release from prison.

Delimitations and the Limitations

This study will be limited to ex-convicts in Philemon Ministry. The sampling procedure decreases the generalizability of findings because urban and rural responses to ex-convicts within the church and the society in general may be different. As a case study, Philemon Ministry ex-convicts may attribute their experiences in part to Philemon Ministry's successes and failures while other ex-convicts helped by other prison ministries may have fared better.

A further dynamic of this study is that the researcher does not speak fluent Kiswahili, which is a more commonly used language among the people concerned. The use of research assistants means that communication and translation of important concepts might be hindered to some extent.

Definition of Terms

Ex-convict or ex-prisoner: This is a person who has served time after being convicted and, upon release, set free to return to his or her normal activities as they try to fit back into society.

Church: The term "church" in its comprehensive sense is a community of believers of every race, every age and land who have been chosen by the blood of Jesus Christ and set apart by the Holy Spirit. However, in this study the term "church" will mostly be used to denote a local church. The local church is seen through the following criteria of measurement as presented by John Alexander:

A local church is a body and a community of reconciled rebels united through a commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord, whom the

Holy Spirit has called into a supportive, corrective, and redemptive fellowship; to live out a lifestyle of continuous worship of God and celebration of his love; in obedience and in service to the deepest needs of the world for whom Christ died (Alexander 1989, 6).

Philemon Ministry: This is a compassion ministry that was established as a Nairobi Chapel outreach initiative to those in prison and those that are being reintegrated into the community after serving time. The ministry derives its name from the book of Philemon. Philemon was a slave master, and one of his slaves, Onesimus presumably had run away. Therefore, Paul writes to Philemon, admonishing him to accept Onesimus back, saying that he had become a Christian while away. The slave in this case is likened to a prisoner. The philosophy of Philemon Ministry is to carry out rehabilitation programs aimed at training the ex-convicts in basic skills such as carpentry, tailoring, and dressmaking. The assumption is that, with these basic skills, it will give them a sense of worth, means of income, and a role to play in society, thus enhancing their re-entry into society. Counseling service is also provided to enable ex-convicts to cope with their traumatic situation.

Half-Way House: This is the settlement of ex-convicts as they await acceptance in their real homes and it provides basic needs such as food and shelter.

Reintegration: To restore or re-establish to a position or state.

Re-entry: This is the process of bringing released prisoners back into the society after a period of imprisonment. This re-entry implies that the ex-convicts are prepared before they are released back into the society in which they have left for a long period of time.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this section, the researcher reviewed related literature. The aim was to show from the literature the relevant materials related to the researcher's area of study. This included a general overview of ex-convicts' adjustment, theoretical basis for Re-entry program, characteristics of ex-convicts, reintegration and rehabilitation.

Overview of Ex-Convicts' Adjustment

Generally, ex-convicts faced adjustment issues when released. The rate of incarceration has grown very rapidly over the past few years in Africa. It seems that an increasing number of ex-convicts is being injected back into the society without proper mechanisms or programs to prepare them for re-integration. The correctional systems in our context do not approach the sociological issues that the ex-convicts face after their release from prison. Gordon described his experience of returning home, having been a prisoner of war, in these words:

When we thought of returning home we saw ourselves as ghosts of the past. The Britain most of us had known was the Britain of 1939. Six years had gone by; and six years is a long time when one is in his twenties. Our friends and families would have changed as well as we. They had known us as boys; we were going back as war-hardened men (1962, 238).

On the basis of the above, the re-integration and re-entry process of a prisoner into the society regardless of where they are is not easy. There is always the feeling of stigmatization by society and relations. Once a person has served a prison sentence, life can never be the same again, especially for those who have served jail sentences

in Africa. From the foregoing it is obvious that ex-convicts particularly in the African context encountered a lot of difficulties, and thus, coping with life after imprisonment becomes challenging. Ex-convicts' families usually shun them after their release from prison. As a result, they develop a subculture that based its premise on reaction against segregation, stigmatization and family rejection. Cohen states that a "subculture is a subdivision within the dominant culture that has its own norms, beliefs and values" (1955, 194). Cohen goes on to state the following:

The delinquent gang member's behavior is rooted in the parent's aspirations, the desire to achieve the middle class dream. This dream cannot be realized because of economic conditions that result in frustration. The child then must confront the middle class value structure in the poor urban school setting. The school evaluates by middle class standards, something the child does not aspire to. The result is a total rejection of the middle class and everything middle class through a process known as reaction formation. This reaction formation creates a situation where those who form the gang may achieve status by seeing who can reject middle class values the most (1955, 194).

The above could be seen as the precipitating factor responsible for people engaging in criminal activities in one way or another. Most people desire to achieve the middle class dream. But because of the economic difficulty that does not allow them to achieve their dream, they tend to engage in illegal means to reach their goals. From the foregoing, it is apparent that subcultures typically emerge when people in similar circumstances find themselves isolated from the mainstream and bound together for mutual support. For instance, people who live in Kawangware and Kibera slums can form a type of subculture that will bind them together for a common goal. Ex-prisoners have a subculture that exists among them because they find themselves as a minority group rejected by the wider society.

The media consistently reports the difficulties ex-convicts face upon their release. The Daily Nation published an article enumerating the plight of an ex-convict who received a presidential amnesty. The writer said:

Six months after he walked out of the Naivasha maximum prison following a presidential amnesty, Kenya's longest serving convict, Mr. Mutua Kisilu, has realized that life in free world is not a bed of roses. His life in a remote village in the hilly Kyethivo area of Machakos District is one of misery, helplessness and abject poverty.... "At 59, I don't know where to start. As an eldest son, I am supposed to play the role of steering the family" (Daily Nation [Nairobi], 20th February 2002).

From the above, it is obvious that there is an element of adjustment that the ex-convicts must undergo. The feeling of total abandonment, rejection, unemployment, joblessness and isolation from family and friends is humiliating and it sometimes causes the ex-convict to be susceptible to recidivism. It is apparent that the conditions faced by ex-convicts today have not improved and may have even deteriorated. Travis and Petersilia (2001, 301) wrote, "prisoners moving through the high-volume, poorly designed assembly line (of corrections)...are less well prepared individually for their return to the community and returning to communities that are not well prepared to accept them." Indeed, ex-convicts encounter enormous difficulties in their endeavor to integrate into society because they are returning to a community that is not adequately prepared to accept them as members.

A further adjustment issue is the temptation for ex-convicts, as unemployed individuals, to engage in criminal activities in order to provide for themselves and their families. The sluggish and deteriorating economic situation in some of the African countries is a major cause of the escalating crime. These are all issues and circumstances that the ex-convicts have to adjust to. It is imperative that when people's living conditions are not improved and if they are not able to reach their goals, they resort to unlawful activities as a means of realizing their dreams and goals.

Thus, the consequence of poverty in some respect is criminal actions as seen here in Africa.

Interestingly, in a community where the level of poverty is high, the people engage in illicit businesses, thus increasing the crime rate in that community. One of the major adjustments that ex-convicts have to make is restoring their broken social relationships with the society at large. In truth, crime is caused by a combination of several factors, some psychological, some economic, and environmental.

Psychological Effect of Imprisonment and Adjustment

The adaptation to imprisonment is difficult and at times, it creates habits of thinking and acting that can be dysfunctional in the event of ex-convicts' adjustment. The psychological effects of imprisonment vary from individual to individual and from place to place. Imprisonment has some psychological effects. Prison is painful, particularly our prisons in Africa. So, one who is imprisoned often suffers long-term consequences from having been tortured and severely beaten by prison wardens. Thus, ex-convicts return to the society with psychological disorders because of the degrading treatment that they have undergone while serving their jail term. The psychological consequences of imprisonment may also pose serious impediments to ex-convicts' adjustment and obstruct their successful reintegration into society. A research carried out by People Against Torture to examine the effect of imprisonment and torture on prisoners states that:

The extreme psychological trauma that survivors of torture often go through cannot be easily described. Torture is used for obtaining information, forcing confession, getting incriminating testimonies, taking revenge on perceived enemies and spreading fear and terror in the community. Torturers also aim at destroying the personality of the survivors, especially of people of high integrity so as to make them become the 'living dead'. They will thus serve as a warning to

others. Behavior, feelings and thought may change dramatically due to this trauma (People Against Torture 2001, 9-10).

From the above, it is clear that anyone who has experienced brutal beating and torture will likely suffer from some kind of effect such as physical, emotional or psychological trauma. Typically, the person who has experienced mental torture will most likely have a psychological disorder as a result of the torture. When ex-convicts think of their experiences, it disrupts their stability and transition from prison life into society. In most cases, the one who has experienced physical punishment feels a sense of helplessness, low self-esteem and worthlessness. Gendreau and his colleagues (1999, 8-9) argue this forcefully:

Punishment only trains a person what not to do. If one punishes a behavior what is left to replace it? In the case of high-risk offenders, simply other antisocial skills! This is why punishment scholars state that the most effective way to produce behavioral change is not to suppress "bad" behavior, but to shape "good" behavior.

Thus, psychological adjustment is fundamental in the reintegration of ex-convicts. Prisoners are destabilized as a result of their long prison sentence coupled with the inhuman treatment that they get which affects their reasoning capacity. Therefore, ex-convicts will need a lot of counseling so that they can rediscover their true selves. Bazemore and Malony also emphasized the same point when they write, "punishment now appears to have become the dominant objective of sanctions in many jurisdictions" (1994, 24)

Social Adjustment of Ex-Convicts

Social adjustment is one of the difficulties that prisoners encounter after they are released from prison. The possibility of climbing the social ladder for all prisoners whether in Africa or the developed countries, is not easily obtained. It is very hard for them to associate with those in the community because the community stigmatizes

them. Because of stigmatization, some prisoners learn to find safety by dissociating themselves from others as much as possible. This self-imposed social withdrawal and isolation means that they retreat deeply into themselves, trust virtually no one, and adjust to stress by themselves without the help of any individual. For instance, when prisoners are released from prison, families and friends disown them. Thus, life in the 'free' world can become very frustrating for the ex-convict leaving them with no options other than to relapse into crime.

Bartol states, "behaviorism is a perspective that focuses on observable measurable behavior and argues that the social environment and learning are the key determinants of human behavior" (1999, 408). When the social environment is not conducive and it does not bring together all the stakeholders such as the church, family, social workers, and so forth, to synchronize the reintegration of ex-convicts into society, the likelihood of them engaging in criminal behavior is high. For example, in the case of Susan Mwikali, as reported by the Daily Nation, her brother drove her out of his home because she came from prison alive (Daily Nation 2002,1). Like Susan, ex-convicts have to undergo a tremendous social adjustment upon their release from prison. It was based on the above report that the participants at the international seminar on prison conditions in Africa, held in Kampala observed the following:

Prisoners should be given the opportunity to maintain and develop links with their families and outside world, and in particular be allowed access to lawyers and accredited paralegals, doctors and religious visitors. Prisoners should have access to education and skills training in order to make it easier for them to reintegrate into society after their release [The Kampala Declaration on Prison Conditions in Africa 1996, 1].

It is important to state that we cannot control crime unless we deal effectively with the conditions that give rise to it. For example, the social or economic ailment

that most ex-convicts face upon their release from prison can be deeply rooted in the social neglect, economic hardships and financial deterioration experienced by many ex-convicts particularly in the Africa context. When people are pressed against the wall- with so many demands to be met, children to be fed and the like, if they do not have any other means, then crime becomes a tempting alternative. In this day and age, particularly in Africa, the primary instinct of survival dictates human behavior. In light of the prevailing atmosphere of frustration, desperation and necessary survival, the socio-economic conditions must enhance ex-convicts' reintegration into society.

It is also true that sociological influences can cause one to commit crime. For example, many young people and children today commit crime mainly because of pressure from their peers. Likewise, adults also fall prey to the pressure of society by engaging in criminal behavior in order to escape from "the measuring rod" of society. So the amount of social adjustment that ex-convicts have to go through is enormous, and if they do not apply the proper mechanism in their social adjustment process, it leads them to criminal activity.

An important process of adjustment to their newfound freedom is the procurement of living arrangement and the reestablishment of ties and bonds to family, spouses and friends. The researcher has noticed criminological literature and statistics which indicate that the majority of ex-convicts tend to plan at the time of their release to return to their parental household (O'Brien 2001, 30). There are undoubtedly numerous reasons for ex-convicts' reliance on family ties after their release from prison; among them includes their lack of resources immediately following their release.

Theoretical Basis for Re-entry Program

Theoretically, the aim of imprisonment is to protect the society by separating offenders who are a serious threat to the lives and personal security of members of the community. The other aim of imprisonment is to condemn behavior that society considers to be highly disgraceful and which constitutes a serious violation of basic values. According to Rabie and Strauss (1994, 253) "imprisonment is seen more and more as a harsh and drastic punishment to be reserved for callous and impenitent characters". Up to now, imprisonment throughout its history has been considered as one of the measures of social control imposed by organized society upon a transgressor of its norms. If we look at the African situation, Kenya in particular, imprisonment neither acts as a significant deterrent of crime nor serves to rehabilitates prisoners. The crime rate in Kenya is extremely increasing. Traditionally, the purposes of the prison have been identified as rehabilitation, deterrence and retribution. Generally, there has been a debate over these purposes and effectiveness of imprisonment. The aspect here under consideration is the extent to which imprisonment makes provision for the realization of rehabilitation as an objective of punishment. In simple terms rehabilitation means to restore to a previous stage.

Conrad (1973, 22) suggests that rehabilitation is the process, which makes it possible for an institutionalized and ostracized individual to function as a responsible citizen by enabling him or her to exercise his or her rights to meet his or her obligations. The aim of rehabilitation has to do with the reorientation, reeducation or reform of an offender with a view of self-improvement, self-uplifting and personality change. The aim is to make sure that an offender is being prepared for his or her release into society. In our context, rehabilitation has not achieved its aims because of

the infrastructure of prisons systems. For instance in Kenya, there are not enough programs available in most prisons to help prisoners in their rehabilitation.

For the thousands of prisoners who are released from each prison, their re-entry into society can be a grueling process. The lifestyle they knew before imprisonment is the very one that awaits them when the prison doors are open for them. This can cause numerous problems for ex-convicts, particularly when the society does not accept them. When released, the temptations and opportunities to continue with criminal behavior greet the ex-convicts because of the stigmatization from the society. So how can released prisoners deal with issues of desisting from crime in a society that stigmatizes them? Re-entry programs that use criminological theory in order to prevent ex-convict from habitual relapse into crime help them to enter into society as successful and responsible citizens.

According to theories that concentrate on social bonds and informal social control, re-entry programs that focus on employment, vocational training and education would be an important step in reducing the possibility of committing crime again. The criminological theory that would provide support for re-entry programs is "routine activities theory", including everyday family, leisure, and work-related activities. These theories state that crime and other forms of deviance result when an individual's bond to society is in some way weak or broken (Cullen and Agnew 2003, 284). One of the problems with re-entry without some intervention is that ex-convicts return to their old neighborhood without a job.*With a lot of free time and unemployment, ex-convicts may be faced with some challenges or temptations to commit crimes. If they are given a job, they will have fewer opportunities to commit crime because they could be in work and in non-vulnerable situation. On the same basis, rational choice and deterrence theorists assume that offenders are rational

people that seek to maximize their pleasure, gain, and so forth, and minimize personal pain and inconvenience. These theorists believe that people are most likely to commit crime when they think it is to their advantage to do so (Cullen and Agnew 2003, 263, 267). Both of these theories could contend that re-entry programs that focus on employment or vocational skills would benefit the ex-convicts because having a job could provide them with strong incentives to abstain from criminal behavior.

Differential Association and Social Learning theories are other theories that would support re-entry programs geared towards employment. The theory of Differential Association suggests that people learn how to act (both lawfully and criminally) through associations with other people. By simply interacting with other deviant people, a person learns about committing crime and continues to commit crime while associated with these people (Cullen and Agnew 2003, 131). Social Learning theory takes Differential Association theory a step further, stating that this behavior is learned through receiving punishment and reinforcement for certain types of behavior from people associated with them (Cullen and Agnew 2003, 142).

Another theory that posits that having a job may be necessary to avoid engaging in crime is the theory of Social Disorganization. This theory states that the community in which the ex-convict will return to are socially disorganized, meaning that the social institutions in that community are broken down and chaotic. This could easily lead to social isolation and the breakdown of cultural values that are needed to restrain ex-convicts from criminal activities or conduct (Cullen and Agnew 2003, 95-97).

Judging from the number of criminal behavioral theories that would encourage employment to be focused in re-entry programs, it is clear that these programs have strong theoretical support. However, one must keep in mind that these theories are

meant to describe criminal behavior and are not yet very competent at predicting the conduct of ex-convicts. Simply being able to obtain and maintain a job does not necessarily mean that any of the possible good outcomes from these theories will occur and it does not guarantee that ex-convicts will not commit crime again.

Characteristics of Ex-Convicts

There are several characteristics of ex-convicts that typically distinguish them as people who have experienced psychological and emotional disturbances in their lives. Ex-convicts have a variety of characteristics that greatly limit their chances of employment and earning capacities. Employment experience is common among ex-convict. When prisoners are released, they encounter the issue of unemployment. Majority of ex-convicts have limited education and cognitive skills thus hindering their chances of employment. Erickson et al (1973, 65) point out that unemployment not only deprives a person of the necessary material and physical resources, but also of primary group support, identity and self-worth, as well as a linkage to society. It denies the prisoner trying to reintegrate a sense of belonging and reinforces that he or she has no meaningful role to play in society. It also indicates that life has moved on and he or she has been left behind. Many individuals after prison find themselves isolated as interpersonal relationships have disintegrated. It is clear that the person leaving from prison is immediately confronted with the pitiful lack of resources. He or she finds himself or herself virtually unemployable and no means of obtaining money-the commodity without which almost all is impossible.

One common characteristic among ex-convicts is stress. The whole idea of imprisonment in itself is indeed stressful. When people are imprisoned, they adapt to a different kind of life in prison, live there “successfully” for a few years; however,

when they are uprooted from that environment into a “new life”, it becomes unbearable. It is common that any radical change causes stress. Thus release, although desired, is usually extremely stressful. This is combined with anxiety and fear of not knowing what to expect or how they are going to manage. The change in environment causes disorientation. As they come to settle down, being overwhelmed by the changes and unexpected reality, they experience a strong sense of alienation and find themselves missing prison, the familiar routine and the old friends. This leads to depression as they try to cope with stressors.

As indicated above, many prisoners do not adapt very easily to society upon their release from prison. It is important to note that majority of the prisoners in Africa, particularly in the Kenyan context, leave the prison ill- prepared and ill-equipped for their reintegration and re-entry into society smoothly. The stigmatization, segregation and the unemployment issue do not provide the atmosphere for the ex-prisoners to adapt very easily into the society.

One of the characteristics of ex-convicts is that all have a common experience. They have all experienced the struggle and the pain of imprisonment. This common life clearly suggests that ex-convicts can develop a subculture whereby each member within that subculture aims at helping one another to achieve a common goal.

The Impact of Imprisonment on Families and Communities

It is beyond doubt that imprisonment affects more than just the prisoner. Its impact is felt both on the offender’s family and community. Imprisonment has both positive and negative effects. For instance, removing a criminal from the community makes the community safer, but it weakens family ties, and in most cases increases their burden in the sense that the breadwinner is taken away. At the same time, though

returning ex-prisoners back into the community may also make the community less safe in some cases, it reunites families. The effects of crime on the offender's families are also very evident, whether in Africa or in other societies. For example, it is often difficult for the ex-convict to find meaningful employment to support their families. The reason for this is because of the stigma and the label that society has given to those who have had a prison sentence. This researcher believes that if reintegration and reentry is to be a meaningful concept in Africa and the world at large, presumably it implies more than just physical reentry into society, but it also includes some sort of relational reintegration back into the community. Braithwaite and Braithwaite (2001, 49) list four facets of what they call "reintegration".

1. Approval of the person- praise
2. Respectfulness
3. Rituals to terminate disapproval with forgiveness
4. Sustaining pride in having the offender included as a member of communities of care (families, the school, the abiding community at large).

Reintegration then means full inclusion in and of a wider moral community. As Johnson writes, "released prisoners find themselves 'in' but not 'of' the larger society and suffer from a presumption of moral contamination" (2002, 319). From this statement it is obvious that ex-convicts cannot be excluded from the community. To combat this social exclusion, there is a need to develop a new paradigm whereby ex-convicts are given the opportunities to make amends for what they have done, demonstrate their value and potential, and make positive contributions to their communities. In the language of the New Careers movement, the goal is to "devise ways of creating more helpers (Pearl and Riessman 1965, 88). When this paradigm shift of alternative means of punishment is implemented, it sends a message to the community that offender is worthy of their support and investment. Pearl and Riessman go on to say, as part of a helping collective, the "wounded healer" or

community volunteer is thought to obtain “a sense of belonging and esprit de corps” (Pearl and Riessman 1965, 83). According to the helper principle, as discussed by Peal and Riessman whereby the offender lives and works in the community as a means of punishment is geared toward helping the offender to successfully reintegrate into the community. They need to be accepted and given the opportunity to make a useful and purposeful contribution to society rather than asking for the person’s deficits for what he or she has done to society.

Furthermore, it is obvious that this stigma is not just directed at the offender returning home, but often times it is transferred to the entire family. Gainsborough and Mauer emphasize the same point that the ex-convict’s entering into society is met with a variety of challenges that affect the individual, his or her family, and the surrounding community (Gainsborough and Mauer 2000, 25). Austin et al also notes that stability of family relationships, for example, could predict the course of one’s criminal dealings. If family ties are strong and they encourage the ex-convict, it is possible that they will desist from criminal activity (Austin, Hardyman, and Irwin 2002, 56). This researcher believes that this accounts for the breakdown of family ties when prisoners are released. Although released prisoners face a host of issues upon their release, their smooth transition into society will be enhanced if they have strong family ties.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design and Rationale

This chapter describes the design of the study, the area of the study, participants, sampling technique, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and method of verification. This study has employed the qualitative research design. Qualitative research employs several designs: for example, phenomenological studies, grounded theory, ethnographies and case studies (Creswell 1998, 27). For the purpose of this study, the researcher has used the phenomenological approach.

Phenomenological study deals with understanding human experiences. Creswell describes phenomenological research by saying that,

Phenomenological research, in which the researcher identifies the ‘essence’ of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study. Understanding the “lived experiences” marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. In this process, the researcher “brackets” his or her own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study (2003, 15).

Phenomenological research is mostly concerned with asking the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ questions in order to understand a phenomenon. In this design, the present researcher has basically asked the participants to tell their experiences. In general, the researcher is interested in writing in literary style, engaging a story-telling narration, as it were, from the horse’s mouth (Creswell 1998, 17).

Rationale for a Qualitative Design

Qualitative research design takes place in a natural setting where the researcher goes to the homes or offices of the participants to conduct the research. The participants' involvement in the data collection is sought for and a rapport built.

Qualitative research is an inquiry process understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell 1998, 15).

The present researcher was interested in understanding the intricate details from the ex-convicts' personal experiences. The researcher interacted very closely with those involved in the study by asking open-ended questions and allowing the participants to explore the areas they considered to be relevant in their integration process.

The Role of the Researcher

“Qualitative research is interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in sustained and intensive experience with participants” (Creswell 2003, 184). In other words, the present researcher hopes to be intensively involved with the participants as he is the primary data-gathering instrument. Before making any judgment or conclusion, all research into a new phenomenon must begin with honest and humble attention and a willingness to be absorbed in learning about the phenomenon for a long period of time in order to avoid misinformation and misinterpretation. There may also be a tendency for the present researcher to bring in his biases in the research. Due to this tendency, the present researcher might have brought certain biases to this study because of the assumption that the participants were not being accepted into society, particularly the local church. Moreover, owning

to the researcher's close involvement with the ex-convicts, the tendency to be subjective exists. However, for objectivity to be ensured, the researcher has sought to detach himself from any constraints that might influence the result of the research. The researcher also sought to establish a genuine and open rapport with the participants, with no ulterior motives, so as to enhance the data collection process. The researcher has also attempted to examine thoroughly the data collected and interact with them in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of the ex-convicts as they strove to adjust into the local church.

Research Site and Participants

This study has been conducted at the Half-Way House. The Half-Way House is situated in Waithaka, which is northwest of Nairobi. The participants for this study are six ex-convicts residing in the Half-Way House of Philemon Ministry. The ministry has fifteen ex-convicts living in the house, both males and females. However, the researcher could not use all fifteen ex-convicts for this study due to time and resource constraints.

Sampling

The process of selecting the participants was convenience sampling, which is also regarded as non-random sampling. Convenience sampling was possible because the researcher's participants voluntarily made contributions in the study. "A single stage sampling procedure is one in which the researcher has access to names in the population and can sample the people (or other elements) directly" (Creswell 2003, 156). The study has involved the stratification of the population before selecting the sample, meaning that specific characteristics of the individuals would be represented (Creswell 2003, 156). Both males and females are represented. The availability of

participants usually affects the number of males and females to be interviewed. In the Philemon Ministry the male ex-convicts are much more in number than the females, so the female population is less in this study. Six ex-convicts have been chosen to participate in the research. This sample size is manageable considering the time involved and the resources available.

Entry Procedure

The researcher was favorably disposed by the fact that the leadership of the Philemon Ministry personally knew him. Nevertheless, the researcher presented a letter requesting the participation of the ex-convicts (See Appendix 1). The letter gave the participants an opportunity to commit themselves to be interviewed.

Data Collection Procedures

Data for the study has been collected through semi-structured interviews with participants in the Philemon Ministry. The interview has been recorded on audiotapes. The aim of the recording was to capture accurately the story as it was told in relation to the subject of the research. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data was also analyzed in order to reveal emerging categories, patterns and trends.

The method of the interviews was structured in such a way that the participants have become the leading speakers. The researcher only served as a guide into areas relevant to the research during the interview. When there was a need for clarification, the researcher requested the respondent to elaborate on it. Mugenda and Mugenda stated that the “interviewer can clarify and elaborate the purpose of the research and effectively convince respondents about the importance of the research. This is advantageous because respondents can then give more complete and honest

information” (2003, 84). Imperative in the interview procedure is to understand what the respondent is saying. The researcher has done it to understand by what was said by using probing questions. Weiss emphasizes the importance of interview in data collection by stating that:

We can learn also, through interviewing, about people’s interior experiences. We can learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions. We can learn how events affected their thoughts and feelings. We can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work, and their selves. We can learn about all the experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition (Weiss 1994, 1).

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis included steps that identified and described patterns: themes and theories revealed during the course of the study. Data was organized and broken into pieces. Categories were identified and labeled. The categories were compared and contrasted to produce complex categories that were examined repeatedly for relationships. A paradigm model was developed showing the interrelationship of the axial coding categories by using the headings: causal conditions, phenomenon, context, reentry problems, strategies and consequences.

Finally, selective coding was done to the core category that emerged from the data and relating it to other categories. The process of coding and categorizing continued until all of the data had been considered and no new categories emerged.

Method of Verification

The participants were one of the primary sources of verification. The researcher gave them the opportunity to interact with the data collected by allowing them to participate in an active search for disconfirming evidence and to affirm the

results of the analysis. The researcher also used fellow student in the missions department who reviewed the data collected and asked questions to validate the accuracy of the finding. Finally, the researcher used his supervisor who served as one of the primary source of verification.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The aim of this study is to understand the reintegration experiences of ex-convicts into the Church. The study focused primarily on the experiences of ex-convicts at the Philemon Ministry. These findings are the result of data collected through in-depth interviews with six ex-convicts. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and used as the basis for data analysis. Qualitative research findings are often reported in the form of stories. Thus, this study laid out the stories of the lives of the participants. The findings of this study were intended to help the Church to better understand the challenges facing ex-prisoners after their release from prison. This chapter presents the researcher's findings and his interpretation of them. The following questions were used to guide the research.

The data was gathered through a questionnaire administered by the researcher and its purposes were as follows: To examine ex-convicts' reentry experiences, the church's attitude towards ex-convicts and the ways in which the church can be involved in empowering ex-convicts for successful reintegration. The format of the findings will be to examine these responses and to understand the three research questions that the researcher posed at the beginning of this work.

Reentry Experiences

Six ex-convicts released from six different prisons were interviewed separately about their reentry experiences either into a local church or society. The findings show that the ex-convicts had different reentry experiences depending on the

segment of society they were entering. The reentry experiences of ex-convicts who tried to enter into secular society were different from the experiences of ex-convicts reentering into the church. The findings show that those ex-convicts reentering into secular society faced rejection. This is how one female ex-convict described her reentry experience into secular society.

When I came from prison and I went home, it was so hard for me because people were not happy to see me. They looked at me like a thief and even my family was not happy with me (Njoki 2005).

On the other hand, when the same female ex-convict reentered the church, her experience was that of acceptance. She said:

...So I came to Philemon Ministry (church). We are all the same; they don't see you different (Njoki 2005).

The reentry experience of these ex-convicts demonstrates how the two communities (secular society and the church) are responding to ex-convicts differently.

Kelvin was 39 years old. He was married and had two children. He comes from Machakos. He was the founder and director of Philemon Ministry. Kelvin was charged for the crime of robbery with violence and was imprisoned for four years at the Machakos Maximum Prison where he served his sentence until he was released on August 9, 1996. After his release from prison, he experienced difficulty as he tried to reintegrate into the society. He said:

After my release I went to my cousin's who was in Nairobi so that he can [could] accommodate me and help me as I begin [began] my new life. Unfortunately, my cousin told me that 'you know in my house I don't have a room for you so you have to get a room for yourself somewhere else'. Having spent four years in prison I walked out and went about to get a place where I will [would] be accepted. They treated me with suspicion and were not willing to give me a second chance. They were not willing to give me a provisionary condition to see how I would behave (Mwikya 2005).

At the point when Kelvin struggled with this rejection as expressed above, he began thinking of other options like joining a church organization where perhaps he thought he would be more accepted without discrimination and suspicion. However, Kelvin discovered that the church was not prepared to receive ex-convicts. He said,

I went to a church and as a released prisoner who is a Christian; I thought I would be received and welcomed but this did not happen. I was also treated with suspicion and discrimination. ... They were not willing to give me the same platform with any other person that has never been into prison. I was marginalized, creating the idea that I am unable to reintegrate with free society. (Mwikya 2005).

The words of Kelvin as articulated above indicate that successful reintegration within the community whether secular or the church is characterized as one of constant struggle. The findings from these two respondents also demonstrate that the disadvantages facing ex-convicts are not only numerous and insurmountable, but often make worse by all kinds of beliefs and social policies. Kelvin said,

Our Kenyan society holds to the view that prisons and ex-prisoners are the work of the police and the state. It is on the basis of this mindset that the society treats us the way they do (Mwikya 2005)

According to him, the community should be prepared to receive the ex-prisoner and help to reform him.

Maurice was 45 years old. He was married and had three children. He stayed in Nairobi at the Philemon Half-Way House. He was charged for a crime of obtaining money by false pretence and jailed for three years at the Kamiti Maximum Prison, where he served his sentence until its expiring date. He narrated his ordeal in these words:

It is by sheer chance that an inmate leaves Kamiti Maximum Prison intact. Either he or she will contract contagious diseases due to the terrible conditions that one encountered or one may leave the prison as a corpse because the prison is very bad (Okute 2005).

Maurice's statement says something about what life looks like in prison. Life is generally bad due to poor hygienic conditions. But life out of prison for ex-convicts is as difficult as life in prison. Maurice also described his life after prison as being difficult. This is how he narrated his reentry experience.

The initial reentry experience I encountered when I came out of prison was somehow mixed. There were people who were really happy to see me back into the normal life like my immediate family. On the other hand, there were people who were feeling guilty because they did not come to visit me when I was in prison. Generally, there was that sense of negative feelings and suspicion towards me. People tend to think once you are from prison you are no longer a good person. People look at an ex-offender as though he is cursed and I could easily see it in people's eyes. My consolation was that, despite my prison life I had a strong positive attitude towards life (Okute 2005)

The reentry experience of this ex-convict also illustrates that the society as well as the local church do not easily accept ex-convicts. It is clearly evident that no matter which segment of the society that the ex-convict enters they were bound to encounter rejection and segregation. It also shows that ex-convicts' reentry experience varies from individual to individual. A certain ex-convict was released and was rejected by his family; while another was accepted by his family.

This reentry experience explained above also indicates that the ex-convicts' attitude plays an important role in the reintegration process. Common sense dictates that the prisoners' attitude toward themselves and others affects their ability to reunite and reintegrate successfully. To assess the respondents' attitude, the researcher asked a number of questions regarding readiness to change, self-esteem, control over life and feelings toward the legal system. Most respondents indicated a strong desire to change and become better persons. Maurice said:

I don't want to be seen as an object of sympathy and that is what people usually do when they meet an ex-convict. I want to be

treated as a normal person and as a matter of fact, I am capable of doing what a normal person can do (Okute 2005).

This shows that this ex-convict is determined to live above his circumstances and the label that society placed on him. Maurice said:

Truly speaking, I have a different kind of attitude. I am not bothered about what people think about me and how they view me. Whether they consider me a thief or not but what concerns me is that Christ has redeemed me and He wants me to serve Him and I will not allow anything to be a hindrance (Okute 2005).

Maurice had optimistic expectations of getting his life back together and making a meaningful contribution in the society. He was confident that God would lift him up and was determined to remain focused. Nonetheless, there were other respondents who had a pessimistic perspective of life and blame the church and the society for their reentry problem.

James Muindu was 40 years old. He was single. He originally came from Tharaka, Meru but now stays in Nairobi. He also got saved while in prison when a Church group came to share God's word with him. After the message was preached and an invitation was extended for people to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, he raised his hand and invited Jesus Christ to come into his life. While in prison, James discovered that it was necessary to take advantage of the opportunity that was provided for them in prison. James tried to enroll as an apprentice for tailoring and he succeeded.

He had been arrested and taken to the police station on suspicion of having participated in land clashes. He stayed there for 10 days without being interrogated. He was taken to a Meru magistrate court to answer charges for caused disturbance. The case went on for several days until he was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. James' reintegration experiences were parallel to the other two ex-

convicts interviewed. He said that he was received quite well by the Church in fact, far better than he anticipated being received upon his release from prison. He said:

I was very well received upon my release from prison. The first people that I met received me and accommodated me and provided for me. I got all the initial facilities that an ex-convict would need immediately they are released from prison. I was given food, shelter, clothing and they showed me love, something I have not experienced in eight years (Muindu 2005).

Although James and his other two colleagues have been under confinement of the prison cells away from society, their reentry into the society was smoother than expected. Their experiences, gauging from interviews with others are exceptional.

The church's attitude towards Ex-convicts in Nairobi

All of the participants were interviewed to find out the attitude of the church towards them as they sought to reintegrate. The findings show that the church's attitude towards ex-convicts was different from that of the secular society. One ex-convict narrated how the church through the Philemon Ministry responded towards him upon his release from prison. Said was 26 years old. He was arrested and sentenced on suspicion of theft. He narrated how the Church tremendously supported him upon his release. He said:

When I was released, the Church responded to me well. I was taken to Philemon Ministry where I was given accommodation, shelter, food, and clothing. Beyond and above everything else, they have loved me without segregation and discrimination (Hassan 2005).

This finding describes to some extent that the church is involved in helping ex-convicts to reintegrate into society by meeting their basic needs. Another respondent also describes how the church through the Philemon Ministry responded to him as he sought to reintegrate into a ministry of the church. Dennis was 29 years. He was

found in possession of firearms. He was arrested and sentenced for nine years. He described the church's attitude in these words. He said:

When I was released, I came straight here at Philemon. I don't know any other place that I call home because my family rejected during my imprisonment. Philemon has become home for me. At Philemon I have really experienced real love. They have helped me to be transformed and better prepared for reintegration after I leave Philemon. They have helped me develop my gift of singing (Mtei 2005).

The respondent seems to suggest that the church is very relevant in the reintegration process of ex-convicts into the society. As indicated above, the church provides social support and helps ex-convicts to realize their self worth. However, when two other respondents were asked the same question, they stated that the church's attitude toward ex-convicts was rather negative. Kelvin said:

When I was released, the first person I sought for help was a Christian but he rejected me. The first social gathering I attended was the Church service but I was treated with suspicion because most of the people knew that I was an ex-prisoner (Mwikya 2005).

This finding indicates that ex-convicts desire their community, including the church, to enhance their reintegration process. It also shows that the church has not advanced its efforts towards ex-convicts' reintegration into the community.

• **The Church's Roles for Ex-convicts' Reintegration into Society**

This study was also structured to focus on ways in which the church can be involved in empowering ex-convicts for successful reintegration into normal life. Part of the punishment associated with imprisonment was the restrictions on the freedom of individuals. Thus the researcher assumes that for successful reintegration to take place, the ex-convicts need to be involved in the decision making of their reentry.

When interviewed, all six respondents stated how the church could be involved. This is how one respondent outlined how the church could be involved. He said:

The church can be involved first of all, by visiting the prison and getting acquainted with life inside the prison through evangelistic work. In this way they will know those who are about to be released so that they can continue to disciple them after prison. I see the potential of the churches here in Nairobi to disciple released prisoner especially those who have accepted Christ (Mwikya 2005).

Kelvin stated that, “the church is an important social institution that can help to bridge the gap between the ex-convicts and the society”. Another respondent also said, “the church can be involved by helping to address the societal barriers to employment and housing which confront ex-convicts when they are released”. One respondent added, “the church can provide counseling”. Generally, all of the respondents value the place of the church in the reintegration process.

The Commonalities among Ex-convicts Interviewed

Prisons are full of all kinds of people. There are bad people, sad people, old people, young people, ill people, professional people, ordinary people, the guilty and the innocent. They are all suspected of committing an offense, arrested and taken to court, sentenced and imprisoned for a number of years. After their sentence is fulfilled, they are released, seek acceptance into the society again. There are all kinds of people, yet they have one thing in common. From the interview conducted and findings, it was observed that all six ex-convicts are at a crisis point. Apart from the fact that they have all experienced hardship in prison, unemployed, needing food, housing and shelter, they all needed to be reassured of their own self-worth. The ex-convicts, particularly those who have experienced severely overcrowded prisons, consistently emphasize the harshness and the dehumanizing and overbearing treatment in prison. Life in prison does not give the prisoner an opportunity to

exercise their freedom. This means a loss of dignity. As one respondent put it, “when I was arrested the police stripped me naked, kicked and viciously whipped me before putting me into the cell without giving me the opportunity to state my case.” Once an individual’s dignity is lost, the personality is all but destroyed, causing low self-esteem. The prison environment considerably affects the behaviors of prisoners and so the issue of self-actualization is a serious concern for ex-convicts. All of the respondents expressed both a sense of rejection and a sense of acceptance depending on which segment of society they were entering to be helped to come out of a crisis point. It is this feeling of low self-esteem that hindered the progress in the reintegration process. If the reintegration is not successful, there is a possibility of returning to criminal activity again. Figure 1 below shows the sequence of events the researcher has described. The dotted arrows indicate the return of ex-convicts into crime if the reentry is not successful to enhance their reintegration into society

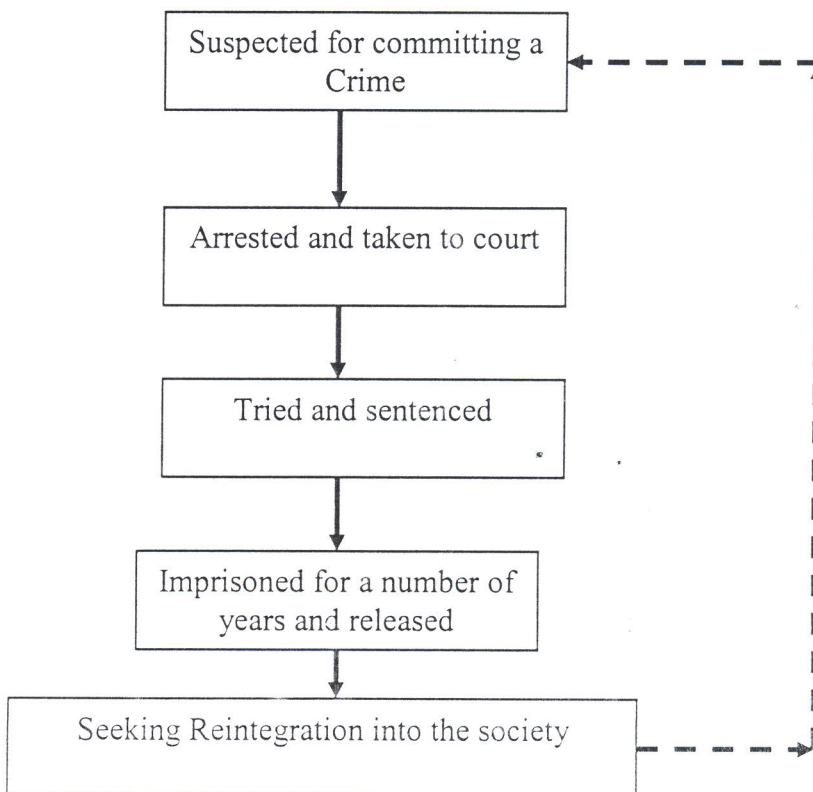


Fig. 1. Ex-convicts’ commonalities

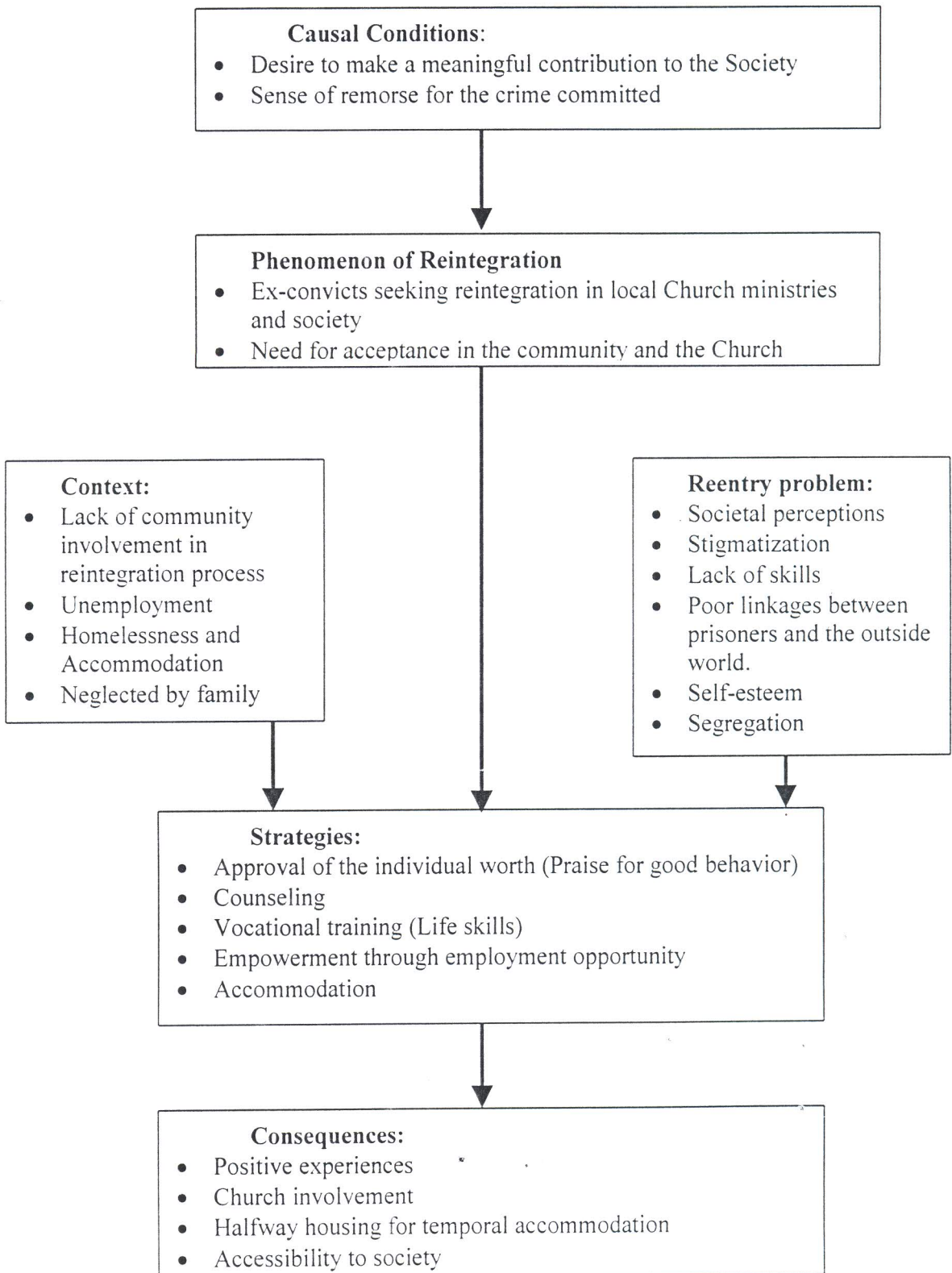


Fig. 2. The relationships between the factors responsible for reintegration

All the ex-convicts interviewed desired acceptance into society. The reasons behind this desire include:

- They accept that they have done wrong against the community in which they are seeking acceptance.
- They all realize that they have been alienated from the normal societal interaction for several years, which is essential for relational integration.

These reasons become the source of the desire to seek societal forgiveness and consequently, acceptance into the society and the churches as shown in Figure 2.

There is a direct relationship causal condition and the phenomenon, that is, the desire for acceptance and contribution in the society.

A look at the context in Figure 2 reveals the properties of the phenomenon, that is, to display the relevance of the ex-convicts to the society. Some of these ex-convicts lack skills, which would make them ineffective for successful reentry into the society. On account of the relevance of ex-convicts, some of them are seeking ways of using the program and services in which they participated while in prison. These strategies are also noted in Figure 2. Notice that these strategies have a direct relationship with the phenomenon because the phenomenon is the central piece that holds all these relationships. The reentry problems are those factors that have hampered the ex-convicts' successful reintegration. These are the forces that have worked against the ex-convicts. The consequences reveal that if there are good strategies, there will be good results thus positive reentry. The reentry problems then determine the strategies.

Summary Statement of the Reintegration Experiences

Participants' experience of going back into the community was varied and depended on a number of factors. The type of crime was one factor and equally

important was whether it was committed against a member of the community or not. Many of the participants committed their crimes in the community and others outside their area. The fact that the ex-convicts had committed an offence against the society, coupled with their confinement in detention and alienation from the society, brought them to the realization that they needed to be reformed so that they could also make a positive contribution to the society. However, when they were ready to reintegrate into normal life, some of them experienced a lot of obstacles, such as stigmatization, segregation and discrimination, although some others seemed to have great success. The difficulties seemed to be closed doors for reintegration, while the successful reintegration comes from the society's full willingness to forgive ex-convicts and forget their past.

Factors responsible for Reintegration Success and Difficulty

The reintegration experiences of the ex-convicts could be summarized in two broad themes. They are the positive and negative reintegration experiences. The ex-convicts who experienced success attributed it to the following factors: Their sense of remorse for what they have done and desire to repent, the desire to accept responsibility for their action, the role of the Church in recognizing their situation and helping them to adjust to normal life and preparing them for full inclusion in community life, and making use of the skills acquired in prison.

Those who experienced reintegration difficulty attributed it to societal perception of criminals that is, ("they should pay for what they have done"), lack of community awareness to accommodate ex-convicts, and social and economic disadvantage. Reintegration success demands the following conditions:

- More involvement of Para- Church and Church organizations right from the prison until the time of release

- The provision of counseling for ex-convicts
- Active involvement of Churches in helping ex-convicts to reintegrate successfully

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes some conclusions that have emerged from the findings of the study. It gives some recommendations resulting from the findings relating to the strengths and weaknesses of Philemon Ministry as an organization seeking to help ex-convicts reintegrate.

Observation

This study has revealed that ex-convicts face many difficult barriers as they reenter the society to which they belong. The most occurrences of them are rejection, segregation and discrimination. The finding also shows that for reintegration to be successful all the stakeholders such as the Church, the family, prisons authority and the community at large should fully participate. Their participation in the reintegration process should begin right from the convicts' prison life and continue after their release until the ex-convicts are fully stable to sustain their self. This will enhance the reintegration procedure and make it more successful. The goal of reentry is to improve public safety by providing ex-convicts with services that are perceived to reduce the risk of recidivism.

This study has provided a foundation for Churches and organizations involved in prison work to begin thinking about ways of improving reintegration among the released prisoners returning to their society. Reading about the experiences of ex-

convicts in this research should point the way to policy innovations that are experiential, pragmatic, and reflective of the realities of reentry.

Missiological Implications

The recommendations are divided into two sections: those made by the participants and those made by the researcher. The researcher has done this in order to give a voice to the participants. They had much to say about what was wrong with the prison system and what were the obstacles in their way upon release. However, it was not just a case of complaining about the system. They were quite proactive in coming up with suggestions and made them throughout the interviews sessions.

Participants' Recommendations

Many participants felt that there should be an increase in the number of transition homes or half-way houses for prisoners coming out into the community because homelessness was seen as being one of the main causes of the problems experienced by ex-convicts. A common concern amongst participants was their lack of skills to enable them to adequately contribute to the society upon their release. As one participant put it, "We need to be trained in different skills while in prison so that when we come out we can be able to stand on our own." Almost all of the participants admitted that the facilities are there in theory but not in practice. Some participants felt that there should be a drop-in center established for ex-convicts upon their release to provide counseling services. Counseling plays an important part in their reintegration.

Researcher' Recommendations.

For reintegration to be successful the researcher recommends the following to be used at Philemon Ministry and for those who are involved in prison work.

1. Emphasize informal social control. Family, peers, and other informal community networks and support are likely to have more direct and lasting effects on offenders' behavior than formal government and service agencies, such as law enforcement, corrections and treatment programs.
2. Ensure sufficient duration of the intervention. Behavioral change is a long process that requires a long period of time that includes different stages. For example, a period of six months is not enough time to ensure that a person is stable enough to stand on his or her own, as is the time frame allotted in the Philemon Ministry. The intervening process should begin in prison and continue in the community when the person is released.
3. Provide comprehensive, integrated and flexible services designed to address the psychosocial needs of ex-convicts. The services must address the countless needs and risk factors that affect long-term success. Ex-convicts typically present diverse deficits and strengths; all programs are to be designed toward meeting the multiple needs of the individuals. Valid assessment tools should be used to prioritize needs, and services must be integrated so that there are not competing demands and expectations placed on ex-convicts.
4. There should be an establishment of a reentry management team or court. The reentry management team or court will work in collaboration with the prison authority. The work of the reentry management team will be to manage the return to the community of individuals being released from prison. Its work will also be to assemble resources to support the prisoners' reintegration. The reentry management team will ensure that the communities in which prisoners are returning to are prepared to receive them. This team will be involved in assessment and strategic reentry planning involving the ex-convicts, the prison authority and other key partners such as

the family if accessible, and organizations responsible in half way houses for released prisoners. The team will also be able to provide regular status assessment meetings involving both the ex-convict and his or her circle of supporters or representatives from his family and community.

5. Provide clear communication of ex-convicts' responsibilities and expectations. Ex-convicts' accountability and responsibilities are critical in their reintegration. Any organization involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-convicts must ensure that they communicate clearly their expectations, rules and consequences for non-compliance.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Philemon Ministry

It is imperative to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of Philemon Ministry as an organization involved in prison ministry. The following are the key areas the researcher observed as the strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths

- The desire to give ex-convicts a "second chance". In so doing the ministry has established a half-way house to accommodate released prisoners who might not have any where to go. This is moved in the right direction. The researcher applauds the Philemon leadership for the vital support they give to the released prisoners.
- Counseling. Counseling is important in helping released prisoners reform. Without proper guidance and direction, released prisoners are most likely to engage in criminal activities again because of the many constraints that ex-convicts encounter as they seek to reintegrate.
- Strong emphasis on Christian beliefs and principles.

- Providing legal support for prisoners whose cases are pending.

Weaknesses

- Lack of proper framework or mechanism for empowerment.
- The leadership's lack of communication to stakeholders. If Philemon Ministry will impact the life of released prisoners in Nairobi, the leadership needs to be pro-active and take initiative in persuasively communicating the vision of Philemon to the various stakeholders, especially the Church.
- Addressing reentry from a holistic framework. For example, strengthening families will reduce some barriers that confront ex-convicts as they seek to return home.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research mainly focused on the experiences of ex-convicts returning home. The research did not look at the circumstances or the factors that might have influenced the participants' criminal behavior. Neither did the research examining the upbringing of the participants to determine whether there could be any trace of bad childhood behavior that might have precipitated the participants to engage in criminal behavior.

There is a need to carry out a research to analyze and find out the factors responsible for criminal behavior. Moreover, specific research should be done to evaluate the effects of educational and vocational programming within prisons to enhance successful reintegration.

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APPENDIX 1

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT



NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

P.O. Box 24686 - 00502 Karen, NAIROBI, KENYA

Tel: 254 (020) / 882104/5, 88
Fax: 254 (020) 88
Email: info@negst.org
Website: www.negst.org

18th April, 2005

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH WORK

The bearer of this letter, Mr. Eddie Tokpa is a student at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST) and is doing research towards the completion of the Master of Arts in Missions degree. The research is on “Reintegration of Ex-Convicts into the Local Church: A Case Study of Philemon Ministry at Nairobi Chapel.”

Any assistance that you can give to Mr. Tokpa will be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

George L. Huttar, PhD
Ag. Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs

APPENDIX 2

Qualitative Questionnaire for Ex-Convicts in Philemon Ministries, Nairobi

Date _____

Name (Optional) _____

PART 1: The Case

1. Tell me about your prison experience. How did it all begin?
2. Did your relatives support you during the case? Explain.
3. Did your friends support you during the case? Explain.
4. Describe the reaction of your relatives before your imprisonment.

PART 2: Imprisonment

5. Describe your feeling the first time you were imprisoned?
6. Describe your present feeling to the imprisonment.
7. Did you look forward to your release? Why?
8. What were your plans after being released from prison?

PART 3: Relationships

9. Church Response:
 - a) What has been the Church's response towards you as you seek to integrate in the ministry of the Church?
 - b) Can you give an example from personal experience when you felt stigmatized by the Church?
10. If question 9 above does not apply to you, explain where you went upon your release from prison.
11. Do you still maintain the relationship with your relatives?

10. If question 9 above does not apply to you, explain where you went upon your release from prison.
11. Do you still maintain the relationship with your relatives?
12. What is Philemon Ministry doing to help you adjust into normal life?
13. How do you perceive your relevance for Church ministry?

PART 4: Church Leader

14. What has been the churches involvement in the prison ministry?
15. What led to the establishment of Philemon Ministry?
16. If you have been involved in the prison ministry, what have been the challenges that you have faced?
17. Describe your involvement in helping ex-convicts to reintegrate into society?
18. Do you think ex-convicts experience stigmatization problem as they seek to reintegrate into society? Explain.

APPENDIX 3

Quantitative questionnaire for ex-convicts in Philemon Ministries, Nairobi

Date _____

Name (Optional) _____

PART 1: The Case

19. How many times have you been in prison?

Once () other ()

20. State the cause of your imprisonment in the first occasion?

- a) Robbery ()
- b) Rape ()
- c) Drunkenness ()
- d) Other (please specify) _____

21. Were you ever charged in court of Law for the crime stated before your imprisonment?

PART 2: Imprisonment

22. Were you visited while in prison? If yes, by whom?

23. Were you visited while in prison? If yes, by whom?

24. How frequent was the visit?

25. How long was your jail term?

26. What are you doing to earn a living?

- a. Employment ()
- b. Self-employment ()
- c. Other _____

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL DATA

NAME: Eddie Kolison Tokpa
DATE OF BIRTH: 8 July 1972
Gender: Male
MARITAL STATUS: Single
NATIONALITY: Liberia

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

2003-2005: NEGST Master of Arts (Mission Studies)
1998-2002: Daystar University Bachelor of Arts (Biblical Studies)
1995-1997: Ghana Christian College (Diploma)
1992-1994: Ghana National College (WAEC Certificate)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2004-Present: Staff, Nairobi Chapel
2003-2004: Pastoral Intern, Nairobi Chapel
1999-2000: Secretary, International Student Association, Daystar
1998-2002: Trainer, Doulos leadership development, Daystar