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TITLE PAGE

TOWARDS A MORE EFFECTIVE BEREAVEMENT CARE AND COUNSELLING
IN THE
MINISTRY IN THE CHURCHES OF THE NIGERIAN
BAPTIST CONVENTION.

An Essay Presented to the
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ABSTRACT

The modern times are characterized by experiences that bring heart wrenching sorrow. Many individuals go through crises that bring bereavement and grief which are difficult to cope with alone. Death crisis especially brings very hard times for the bereaved because of its nature. There is therefore the need for those that could give assistance to people experiencing grief.

Out of all the care - giving institutions in the society, the church with its pastor stands out and remains unrivalled. In the actual ministry to the grief sufferers, this research findings show that truly a lot is being done but still there is so much to be done. The ~~concern~~ here is how the church and the pastor would effectively keep on fulfilling their roles as unparalleled care giving institutions to all and every soul in crisis moments.

This work therefore seeks after a more creative bereavement care and counselling ministry in the church in these modern times. Thus, the first chapter of this work states clearly the purpose of the thesis, the methodology and definitions of some key terms used in the work. The second chapter is a review of some experts' writings on certain aspects of bereavement care and counselling. The third chapter is the analysis of the information gathered on present practice of bereavement care and counselling. It also contains the writer's comments as informed by the questionnaires and ideas of experts. In the fourth chapter, the writer examines what a creative bereavement care and counselling entails. This is based on experts' submissions. Lastly in the fifth chapter, the summary of the thesis is presented with the writer's recommendations and final conclusion.

A.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the greatest things that the church and pastor could do for a member is to be of effective assistance during bereavement. How to minister most effectively to the bereaved should therefore be a concern of every congregation and every pastor. Much of what the bereavement care and counselling practice of any congregation would be, lies with the pastor and the type of example he himself is to his parishioners. The pastor should consider the following recommendations in order to have an effective bereavement care and counselling ministry:

(1) The pastor must understand and accept that the core of the work he is called to do is caring, and that one of the most important periods to demonstrate this is during bereavement.

(2) Having realized the nature of the work to be done, the pastor must seek to be equipped at any cost. One of the banes of the bereavement care and counselling ministries of many pastors is lack of knowledge. This research work shows that most pastors do not know what bereavement care and counselling entails. The would be effective bereavement care and counselling pastor must seek to get equipped.

(3) The pastor must realize the importance of bereavement care and counselling in his ministry as a parish minister. The pastor then, must give himself /herself totally to the work by being available at the right time to do the right thing.

(4) In order to be successful as a parish minister and an effective bereavement care-giver, the pastor must work seriously on his/her view and attitude to bereavement, grief, and grief reactions. It is positive attitude towards these things that can make a pastor effective in his/her bereavement care and counselling ministry.

(5) On no occasion should the pastor delay in attending to the bereaved. In instances when delay cannot be avoided a very close alternative must be provided. Bereavement cases usually demand urgent and prompt attention. Part of the effectiveness of the ministry are tied to urgency and promptness.

(6) The pastor must know that there would be cases of bereavement that he or she cannot handle. Such cases call for referral ministry which the pastor should not delay to do. A referral ministry when needed is usually a blessing to the bereaved, and a relief to the pastor counsellor who has referred.

(7) To keep on being an effective bereavement care-giver and counsellor, the pastor must keep in touch with latest and current discoveries in the field of bereavement care and counselling.

(8) The pastor should realize that bereavement care and counselling practice is not for himself/herself alone. The wider the ministry spreads within or over a congregation, the better and the more effective the ministry becomes. The pastor should therefore select group of individuals who will carry on with him the ministry of bereavement care and counselling. The most important thing is that these individuals must be knowledgeable. They should know at least the rudiments

of bereavement care and counselling. This is a ministry on its own, especially for follow-up of the bereaved.

(9) If bereavement care and counselling will thrive and be effective in any congregation, the entire congregation needs awareness. There is the need for the pastor to teach the church the importance of bereavement care and counselling. Though not all of them can be practically involved, it is important for them to know why bereavement care and counselling is being done. Again, the entire church must be involved in one way or another in caring for the bereaved, so the members need teaching.

(10) The church must make special and adequate provision in all ways for instances of bereavement. It is not in vain that James challenges all God's people that what God the Father considers to be pure religion is to take care of the orphans and widows in their suffering. (James 1:27. GNB).

CONCLUSION

The ministry of pastors and churches to the bereaved is a ministry of care, love and hope. There is neither a better person nor better place that the bereaved could turn to and obtain healing. The mandate to care, love and build up as received by pastors and churches is from God. It would be excellent and beautiful if pastors and churches would fulfil their roles of caring, loving and building up of individuals torn apart by grief. Bereavement care and counselling is a work best done by pastors and churches. May God grant pastors and churches the wisdom and grace needed to meet the needs of the sorrowful in an effective manner.