

PASTORAL MINISTRY TO WIDOWERS

CNBTS
017-p
BIS
M. D. IY

**AN ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
OGBOMOSO**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY**

**BY
O. S. OLOKEDE**

**J. C. POOL LIBRARY
BAPTIST SEMINARY
OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA**

JANUARY, 2003

05-1092

ABSTRACT

Death as a crisis brings to human kind untold sufferings of bereavement such as emotional outburst and disturbances, grief, anger, confusion, depression and other negative but uncoordinated reactions. So, from the onset of the crisis, someone of good integrity and composure is sought to appeal and moderate the caring to the bereaved. The pastor because of his acquired skills, training, and his symbolic representation is much more significant of such carers and moderators.

It has been noticed that widows tend to receive more helps than widowers due to the erroneous belief that men have stronger nerves to cope with critical situations than women and children. However, widowers undergo experiences such as loneliness, lovelessness, and other emotional disturbances that often derail their spiritual lives. Thus, more effective pastoral ministry is required for widowers than as hitherto, been given to them. This will make them to quickly come back to normal relationship after the demise of their wives.

Chapters one and two of this research deal with the introduction, definition of terms and literature reviews of bereavement, and the events that necessitate pastoral care to the bereaved generally. Chapter three examines widowers and their responses to loss, scrutinizing their responses to their definite age group needs. It also researches into the responses of widowers at the announcement of bereavement, mourning and post funeral activities. Chapter four brings into focus the biblical basis of pastoral ministry to widowers, reasons for and necessary ministry of pastors that will make widowers to avoid physical and spiritual frustration. Chapter five is the conclusion and recommendation for more effective pastoral ministry to the widowers.

Conclusion

This work has been able to open the eyes of Pastors to the fact that though, they have been caring for widowers; such cares had hitherto been limited and have not met with that satisfaction of widowers. So far this research has been able to establish the fact that widowers do undergo grief and all accompanied symptoms that may endanger their physical health as well as their Christian faith. Also, the burden that widowers' children could bring at bereavement and post bereavement time has been properly elucidated, not to talk of the personal effect that Pastoral relationship with widowers' children could have on the grieving of the children and their possibility of avoiding maladaptive behaviours. Furthermore, some delicate issue concerning the post bereavement welfare of widowers, such as the issue of remarriage had been discussed. It can then be safely concluded that widowers need to be given more attention by discarding all erroneous belief such as men having 'strong strength' to cope with bereavement, or men can 'quickly marry' to alleviate their sufferings of bereavement; and by using the professional skill, the symbolic personality of Pastors to prevent all things that can escalate the grieving responses or derail the spiritual faith of widowers. Pastors should therefore pay closer and better attention to widowers' plight during and after

bereavement through their already discussed 'Pastoral Ministry To Widowers'. Effective Pastoral ministry to widowers will bring to them (widowers) more of the Pastoral work of concern, support, nurturing and caring through well established relationship to heal, sustain, guide and reconciled bereaved widowers to adjust fast and live their normal live again. Definitely the Pastoral concern and care that starts at the bereavement time for widowers should continue after funeral, enter the stage of remarriage and thereafter.

Recommendations

A serious but inevitable change occurs in the life of even the highly spiritual person when death strikes and brings bereavement to him.¹ Death is a crisis of life and brings the loss a change that stimulates emotional out burst and disturbances; and grief with all the attached symptoms. Widowers like all bereaved people need protection, reassurance, time to recoup and help in developing their blue prints for the future. This is a fact for the continual nature of the future. This is a fact for the continual nature of change²

Pastoral ministry to the widowers is a helpful way by which pastors express their concern for the burden and sudden change that bereavement bring to the widowers. However, lack of continuity is observed in the Pastoral ministry to widowers as a result of the age long premonition that widowers will soon get out of their grief by remarrying.

¹ Richard S. Dunlop Helping the Bereaved (Bowe Maryland: Charles Press, 1978). p. 127.

² Miller R. Williams and Kathen A. Jackson Practical Psychology for Pastors (New Jersey Prentice Hall, 1985). p.126

Though this is true in the past but with the prevailing circumstances where widowers are determining not to remarry³, widowers need more concern. Continuity is therefore expected of Pastoral ministry to widowers especially to block the gap created by the initial ministry that was performed before and at funeral. Even though many widowers do get married again the period of grieving in widowers have shown that widowers suffer many anguish due to lack of continuity of Pastoral ministry especially after the funerals. Pastors as shepherds should care for the totality of the welfare of their sheep both physically and spiritually (especially spiritually) spiritual area being a string area where widowers suffer due to temptations, trials and the burdens brought by the bereavement and maladaptive behaviours of children. The fact remains that expectations of people on marriage are 'MARRIAGE IS FOR LIFE' or should be for life' (as a result of religious and social cultural beliefs that matrimonial home is sacred); this fact necessitate concerned Pastoral ministry as many widowers have regretted their remarriage (which occurred due temptation of adultery) and they have to continue living an unsatisfied marital life which is linked with their previous bereavement.

All the above discussions point to the fact that ministry to the bereaved (widowers in particular) should occupy a central place in the Pastor's work when such is needed and the continuity of the relationship established during the mourning and funeral stage is highly desired.

³ Edith A. Ezekiel "Single Parenthood As it Influences Maladaptive Behaviours in Students" p. 151 in The Counselor edited by Ekennia C. C. and Adegoke A. Nigeria: CASSON VOL. 16 (2) 1998.

It is therefore recommended that Pastors should be knowledgeable in the symptoms of grief so as to be able to perform their ministerial duties effectively during widower's grief and the post grieving time. This demands the three-fold nature of the Pastoral ministry to widower aforementioned that is the ministry of care and compassion. Ministry of faith and prayer and ministry of guide and counselling. However, in performing their ministerial role to the widowers. Pastors must not prove to be super man or play God, and must be very careful when depression set on the bereaved so as not to be infected by depression. Also Pastors must be cautions of the calibre of people they can delegate their visitation to and even those of the opposite sex that could be sent to give support, comfort or care for the widowers, because widowers are very sensitive to over sympathizing and pity which cause a damage rather than healing to the widowers bereavement wound and sometimes such delegates could constitutes avenue of temptation.