

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE ATTITUDE OF THE BAPTIST CHURCHES
TO THEIR WIDOWS**

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BY

**MATTHEW AYODELE OLUSINA
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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a report of an examination of the attitude of Baptist churches to their widows. It attempts to see to some plausible ways to help the widows out of their predicaments or plight. The researcher will look into some problems faced by widows among which are socio-cultural, loneliness, remarrying and rearing of children. What can the pastors and the church do to help in assisting widows to find solutions to them? How can the widows be motivated to face the reality of the new life being experience? These and many more are what this research aimed at .

The methodology is an empirical research with questionnaire to be administered by the respondents. Simple random sampling technique was also used to selecting 200 Baptist churches among all the Baptist churches in Osun Baptist Conference. This was within three Associations Beulah, Ejigbo and Zion I respectively with analysis of findings and discussion.

The statistical method used for collection of data in this study has an internal consistent reliability of 0.58. Mean, standard deviation, t-test and analysis of variance were used. Three of the five null hypotheses were significant at 0.05 level.

From the research findings, it is hereby recommended that prayers, retreats, seminars, and vocational training for widows should not be taken lightly. Baptist pastors should also have positive attitude to widows. This will encourage the church members to play their noble roles too.

Conclusion

From this research, it is concluded firstly that Beulah Baptist Churches relate best with their widows. The major factor responsible for this is not far fetched. Churches under the association cooperate well with their pastors in terms of supplying the needs of the widows; as well as organizing regular workshops and vocational training for them to be self-reliant.

The statement credited to a renowned scholar is relevant here that, “any minister of the gospel who wishes to enjoy his pastorate must be very concern in sustaining church members in the crisis of sorrow and bereavement especially widows” (Akande 2004:287).

Secondly, Baptist churches located in urban areas relate better with their widows. The good reason for this is that, there are lots of job opportunities for church members to engage the themselves with in the cities of which widows are not exempted. The crisis situation that widows are passing through can arouse the minds of members to care and support them out of their own resources however little.

Thirdly, Baptist churches headed by married pastors relate better with their widows. This is because they too have families, which they cater for. Their wealthy of experience in managing family crisis in their homes can be applied in the ministry. Also as God’s servant, the biblical injunctions about caring for the widows can motivate them to practice what they study and preach.

In line with the above, God the creator of heaven affirms that He is both the judge and defender of the widows and the fatherless (Psalms 68:5, 146:9). He played significant roles in the lives of some widows in the Bible. For instance, Ruth and Naomi were restored after their bitter experience in the foreign land as recorded in the book of Ruth. The widow of Nain was another one where Jesus raised her only son from the dead (Luke 9:14). These biblical references show that God did not underrate widows in the society. Among the community of believers, the pastors and the church should have positive attitude to widows.

Recommendations

Widow's ministry is an inevitable ministry for pastors in churches under the Nigerian Baptist Convention. And since the ministry is a concern for every undershepherd on the field, the following recommendations are made to the church, the widows and the pastors:

To the Church:

- ❖ It is recommended that churches who do not have standard welfare committee for widows should organize one without wasting time, especially in churches where they exist.
- ❖ That those churches having such a special committee for widows, should equip them with all the necessary material and financial resources to function well.
- ❖ That church members should display their Christian virtue in identifying with widows. This could be done through showing them love, giving them fair treatment in the congregation, paying constant visit to them with prayers relevant to meeting their needs.
- ❖ The authority of Baptist church should be aware of poor attitude to widows among the churches of more than twenty years of establishment and look for how to improve on the welfare of the widows within such churches.
- ❖ There should be a workshop for identifying what makes the churches in urban areas in Beulah Association and churches headed by married pastors to have better attitude. Seminars should be organized in training others for better attitude to widows.

To Widows

- ❖ Widows are encouraged not to hide their feelings but to open up to people especially their church pastors. By so doing the right solutions will be applied to their problems.
- ❖ Widows should have confidence in their pastors who can use their expert advise to relief their minds of marital problems.
- ❖ Widows should put their trust and hope in God their creator for perfect solutions to all kinds of problem faced in their matrimony. The Bible says that “Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall” (Psalms 55:22)
- ❖ Widows should be ready to make some sacrifice to sustain themselves. They should be hardworking, be self-reliant and prefer any gainful employment to any benevolence/gift either from individuals or the church.

To Pastors

- ❖ Pastors at every level of their pastoral experience are strongly encouraged not to take widows ministry with levity. From the research findings, it appears that widows are looking on to pastors as their mentor and spiritual fathers they could share their burdens with. In that wise, pastors must be more available to widows in the church for counselling and prayers.
- ❖ Pastors must not shy away their responsibilities in ministering to widows but be very careful to maintain their integrity and reputation.
- ❖ Pastors should educate the church members very well on how to carry out widow's ministry and promote special committee for the widows. They should

ensure that there is a special vote to run widow's ministry in the church's annual budget.

- ❖ Pastors should cooperate very well with their deacons to lay emphasize on visitation to widows as avenue to know what they are passing through at home.
- ❖ Prayer retreats, seminars and vocational training for widows must not be taken lightly. In other words pastors should have have attitude to widows.

Suggestion for Further Studies

A replication of this study could be made in other state of Nigeria. Other studies could be on other factors or variables, and church relationship on attitude to teenagers or retirees. A comparative study in respect of the above among other Christian denominations could also be carried out.