

IMPLICATIONS OF WIDOWHOOD IN URBAN SETTING  
AS A BASIS FOR MINISTRY TO WIDOWS OF CHOSEN  
GENERATION BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,  
LAGOS

NBTS  
Ay 65-1  
M.A.T.S

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Theology The Nigerian  
Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Nigeria  
In Affiliation with University of Jos

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree Master of Arts in Theological Studies

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Matric No. 05/0179

June, 2008

08 - 0064

## ABSTRACT

“Implications of Widowhood in Urban Setting as a Basis for Ministry to Widows of Chosen Generation Baptist Association” of Lagos Baptist Conference is an attempt to reflect on the crisis of widowhood and the challenges facing widows especially in an urban setting. The research work also took a look at the pastoral and church ministry to widows in the context of urban life. This study had three major purposes to achieve. The first was to examine the challenges of widowhood among women in the church in an urban setting. The second was to determine whether the church is meeting the needs of the widows or not and the third is to determine how a more effective ministry towards widows can be done by the church, based upon insights drawn from a review of literature and the population sampled for the study.

To achieve the purposes stated above, a questionnaire was drawn which was segmented into three parts. The first segment, “A” is age related aimed at discovering the age bracket which the respondents fall into, to know how long they have been coping with the challenges of widowhood and also to know the burden they may carry where children are concerned. The second segment “B” focused on the financial status of the widows because this happens to be one of the most perplexing challenges that widows in urban centres have to face. The third segment, “C” examined the existence and or effectiveness of the expected church ministry towards widows and possibly suggests ways of improving.

The researcher spent two weeks to administer the questionnaire and the data collected were analyzed using simple percentage. The results of the findings showed that most respondents were middle aged widows of low income earning class without

dependable alternative sources of income. Hence the death of their spouses increased their needs for financial and material assistance. Unfortunately, the church in the urban setting has generally not lived up to expectation in meeting these and other needs.

As a result of those findings, it is recommended that widows should find better means of income and their children who are old enough should support them financially. Churches who already have a definite ministry toward widows should continue in well doing while those who do not should plan for particular ministry toward widows. It is also recommended that pastors, church leaders, associations and conferences also pay greater attention to widows. In addition, widows are equally encouraged to take an advantage of ministry opportunities offered them by the church. They should show interest in whatever is being done as ministry to them and also appreciate same.

5. Respondents will like that the church come to their aid financially, materially and otherwise, which is not quite so presently. This is because the church is one of the institutions which christian widows can look up to, for support and spiritual nurture in their plight.
6. The church is failing in some of its responsibilities towards widows. Pastors/leaders and members are failing in their ministries of presence to the widows either by personal visitation, phone calls or fellowship in prayer. Also in terms of financial, material, moral supports e.t.c. for the widows, the church needs to do better.

#### Conclusion

The increasing number of middle age widows should be a great concern to the church. The loss of spouses early in life may not be unconnected with the urban life of endless struggle, oppressive and dangerous life style. This need to be checked otherwise, the church will continually carry the burden of the inheriting young widows and their widowhood attendant problems.

The "wrong" attitude of widows in not finding means of increasing their income after the loss of their husbands will make them and their children continually dependent on the church and a few willing individuals for survival. And unfortunately, the nature of urban life where everyone is interested in him or herself may not quite help the widows and their many problems that are compounded daily by urban life pressures.

Anyhow if one looks at the data available for this study, the church is clearly seen to be failing in its duties of nurture and care towards widows. It is evident that the church is fast becoming a victim of urban life of struggle, oppression, selfishness, materialism, e.t.c. which characterize urban life. It is as if the church led by pastor/leaders and ably

supported by members has adopted the slogan of the city – “everybody for himself, God for we all.”

### Recommendations

Based on the findings from this research work, the following recommendations are made:

1. Widows should try and shake off their griefs as quickly as possible and think of how to carry on well in life again. The mentality of some of them that they are the most unfortunate victims of life struggle should not be carried forever. They can start to live well again. They should change jobs and possibly relocate where necessary and earn good income that can help reduce their poverty. Widows must stop being afraid of taking good, intelligent and worthwhile risks. They must not be timid but rather courageous to keep on with life.
2. Children who are old enough to support or assist their widowed mothers should take up responsibilities of doing so. This warning is necessary because if care is not taken, a young man or lady caught in the webs of the urban life may not quickly remember some other responsibilities outside him or herself and the immediate family.
3. This researcher observed that Churches with definite ministry towards widows with structure and consistency in ministry are performing better than those who carry on haphazardly. It is, therefore, advisable and hereby recommended that churches should emulate such churches.
4. Efforts made by churches with effective ministry to the widows should be appreciated by the widows. Those widows who do not show interest in participating in various enrichment and empowerment programmes because they

consider widowhood to be a label and a stigma should change their attitude. This will help in encouraging the organizers.

5. Pastors/leaders need to do everything within their power to fulfil their ministries towards widows no matter the urban challenges they have to cope with. Pastors and other church leaders must be pace setters in ministering to widows. If it is otherwise, it is most unlikely that their followers (other church members) will take the initiative, and the members should not be blamed for their inactions.
7. Ministering to widows has gone beyond local church level to the Associations, Conference and the entire Convention. This shows the importance of ministry to widows. Churches especially the ones that are not doing well can borrow a leaf from those who have been involved. They can consult with these institutions for material support and other technical details involved in ministering to widows.
8. Individuals and various professionals in the church can encourage the ministry of the church to widows and also encourage the widows themselves by assisting them with their professions. Christian professionals like doctors, lawyers, engineers, counselors, teachers e. t.c. can offer their expertise at little or no cost to widows and their family members where and when needed.