

DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM FOR SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL STABILITY  
OF SINGLE PARENTS IN IWO BAPTIST CHURCHES

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## ABSTRACT

This research is borne out of the problem the researcher observed among single parents of various categories, ranging from the divorced, the widow or widowers, and the teenage single mother. The researcher observed the gradual drifting of these categories of people from the church and how other faith adherents are using the opportunity to lure them into their faith through caring means and marriage. They observed that the church seemed to have neglected them and indirectly placed an emblem on them to the society as unwanted, and un-useful, or to sum it up "the problematic people". The project was undertaken with the presupposition that the contemporary church can emulate the first century church in taking proper care of single parents in order to avert incessant poverty experienced by these people and most importantly their being lured into other religions. This project started with the biblical basis of the study. The Bible recognized and strongly recommended that the poor, the widows, and the destitute be taken care of (James 1:27). They are to be reached with the message of hope and trust in the Lord. True religion is said to be that which considers the widows, the fatherless and the less privileged. This research is to remind the Baptist Church of her duty to the single parents. Two questionnaires were employed in the process of this research. The pre-test was used to determine the present situation of single parents in eight Baptist churches in Iwo. Fifty participants did the pre-test and post-test. Teaching sessions was employed and the participants were taken care of spiritually, and materially. The returned and completed pre-test and post-test were statistically analyzed. Library research was also used. It was discovered that the single parents have been greatly neglected. Some find it difficult to see the love that the church preaches happening in the church as they (Single Parents) were seen as the outcast. It is a challenge to the church to rise up and rescue the single parents from the social stigma placed on them. The church should help them financially, materially and counsel them on how to make life worth living again in spite of their bitter experience in the past. The project has come out with the recommendation that the church should organize specific programmes like Bible study and vocational training for single parents that will solve their problems of neglect, poverty and instability of their Christian life-style. It is also recommended that there should be undiluted teaching of the Word of God that will build up genuine Christian faith in children and youth in the church. This will enable them to be well informed about the danger of premarital sex and run away from teenage pregnancy. It was also recommended that the philanthropists in the church should try hard to sponsor children of indigent single parents in school. The church should not fold her hands and should render necessary help to sustain and retain them in the church.

This study has focused on the need of the church to recognize and minister to the material and spiritual needs of single parents in order to help them develop an enviable Christian life-style. A number of conclusions can be drawn from the project. First, from the review of literature related to the project, it can be concluded that single parenting is a universal phenomenon with its numerous problems that is common to every generation of people. The responsibility of the church is to deal with those problems and solve them.

Second, from the Biblical framework, one can also draw the conclusion that single parenting developed from different avenues like death, divorce, and un-aborted teenage pregnancy. These groups of people are found neglected in the church. Through this project we have found that efforts must always be made by the church to organize special programmes that will meet their peculiar needs. The early church took quick step in Acts 6:1-6 to cater for single parents amidst them and so the contemporary church must do the same.

A third conclusion that can be drawn from the project is that some of the single parents that were not attending church services on Sundays and mid-week services changed after the first lesson of this project. This is a signal that when the church



recognizes and teaches them the word of God, their spiritual needs will be met and they will remain faithful to God and His church.

In the fourth place, the current trend of events going on among youths that cause pre-marital pregnancy must be addressed by the church. Likewise, the issue of separation or divorce among couples has to be reduced to the lowest ebb if not totally eradicated in the church. The fifth conclusion that can be drawn from this project is that for single parents to be stable materially, they have to learn different trades through vocational training in order to cater for most of their daily needs. The church could help them in this training process, purchase necessary machines or equipments, set up small scale business for them and monitor it.

Lastly, the objective of the project was to examine the pain and agony of neglect of single parents in Baptist churches in Iwo and to help them spiritually and materially to build a stable Christian life-style. It was also to identify Biblical examples of single parent's vis-à-vis the causes and effects. It was also to introduce them to the joy of hard work and spiritual stability that would boost their trust in God for help as found in the scriptures.

It can be concluded that from the project, especially the analysis of the pre-test and post – test questionnaires that the objectives had been achieved. For instance, single parents were gathered together for three teaching sessions with six lessons where they learnt about the love of God for single parents; Biblical basis for single parents; causes and effects of single parents; spiritual and material stability of single parents. They have become knowledgeable about their condition and how to handle their challenges without stress. In addition, the researcher resolved to continue with the programme

once in a month and to extend it to other denominations and people from other religions in town. The participants also agreed to co-operate with the researcher.

The participants were willing to continue this programme because it met their spiritual needs. Each time they came for fellowship, food stuff and transport fare was given to them. It can be concluded that these programme was viable and helpful methods of catching their attention for God so that they would be better Christians.

### 5.3 Recommendations

The result of this study revealed that single parents were in dare need of help both spiritually and materially. It is, therefore, recommended that efforts should be made by the church to design (1) Bible study, that will address their problems, (2) a “Fellowship of Hope” where they will be free to share their experiences among one another, and (3) Vocational training where experts and professionals will be invited to train them on different trades in order for them to establish small scale business on their own. When these are done it will help them develop spiritual maturity that will assist them to face crises, have confidence and practice dependence upon God in the faith that comes through complete consecration to God.

The calibers of people that constituted single parents according to this study were female of about ninety-eight percent (98 percent) and only two percent (2 percent) was male. Was it because there were no single parents among men in the church even among the youth? Majority of them were ashamed of what they did and they dropped the child with their parents to train. In the light of this, it is recommended that the church should give cognizance to the teaching of God’s Word among the

