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WIDOWHOOD IN YORUBA CULTURE:
A CHALLENGE FOR
PASTORAL CARE

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ABSTRACT

"Widowhood in Yoruba Culture: A Challenge for Pastoral Care" is an attempt to examine the crisis of widowhood for a better understanding. Also, it is the aim of this research to look into the effects of widowhood on marriage and family, the Church and how pastoral care can be provided to deal with the crisis of widowhood. The research also seeks to motivate pastoral care givers towards accepting widowhood as an important aspect of pastoral ministry.

Chapter one is the introduction which comprises the statement of the problem, motivation for the research, statement of the purpose and definition of operative terms. Other features of the chapter include delimitation, thesis, methodology of the research and the structure of the thesis. Chapter two is a case study of a Christian widow which is analyzed through social, emotional, psychological, ecclesiological and theological dimensions.

Chapter three focuses on the concept of widowhood. The chapter deals with the concepts under two sub-headings. Firstly, the Yoruba concept of widowhood is addressed in the light of Yoruba concept of death, widowhood and cultural practices of widowhood. Also an evaluation of Yoruba cultural practices of widowhood is carried out under her understanding of widowhood, its effects on the

family, care of culture for widowhood and church ministry to widows. Secondly, the biblical concept of widowhood in the Old and New Testaments is discussed.

Chapter four examines some pastoral care approaches that are effective in ministering to widows. The approaches include: healing, sustaining, guiding and educating. They are useful guides for every care giver in the pastoral ministry to widows. The last chapter which concludes the paper has two sub-divisions: the first part rounds up the study, while the second proffers some recommendations that can be used in ministering to the widows.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSION

Widowhood in Yoruba culture is a developmental crisis that has protracted effects on widows and their children. The motivation to research on widowhood crisis led to the discovery of sufferings encountered by widows. Some of the sufferings they undergo can be emotional, mental, psychological and spiritual problems which can disrupt or hinder them the ability to function as a whole person. The crises of how to handle and run domestic affairs and manage financial issues that were formally handled either by their husbands or jointly tackled as a couple is an example. The nature of the problems or crises widows encounter makes them a unique class of people that need pastoral care attention.

The Yoruba culture is rich in all its ramifications, and the truth about the culture is that it is people-centred. However, the culture had no adequate care that provides wholistic solution to widowhood crises. For example, the provision of care which Yoruba culture has for widows includes levirate marriage. In most cases it does not work as thought because of individual differences and problems that may develop from the wife of the new husband. This creates setbacks in meeting the widow's physical,

emotional, social, and psychological needs. Also the culture's provision of care for the orphans of the family is sharing them among the deceased's relatives. This also disrupts child-parent relationship such that the children could enjoy in life and add to their burden. Moreover, cultural norms and principles that are meant to guide the widows from falling prey to health, emotional and psychological hazards that are likely to complicate the widows' crises.

The study of widowhood in Yoruba culture has revealed the fact that Yoruba cultural provisions of care only touch the fringe of widowhood crises with a partial solution. The intention of Yoruba cultural provision of care turns out to cause, fear, panic and insecurity which hamper widows from living a normal functional life. Some examples of such provisions include levirate marriage, sharing the orphans among relatives, cooperative supply of materials by relatives with its high tendency to fluctuate or cease. As life becomes unbearable to widows, they seek to search for meaning of life and to living. The pastoral care provides meaning to widows' life when it deals with the intricacies of loss which comprises hurt, pain, shattered hope, disappointment and grief that are capable of affecting the widows' personalities adversely.

Moreover, pastoral care provides an elaborate care where Yoruba cultural provision is inadequate. It cares

for both external and internal problems of grief, anger and depression through its healing approach. Also, it provides sustenance to the widows through group or society that provides social and economic service for the widows. There is also provision in the pastoral care approach to guide widows when they reach crossroads of life in decision making. Such crossroads comprise what to do when their minds are occupied with thought on either to remarry, who should they marry and/or whether to relocate. The widows need enlightenment through education which pastoral care can provide in order to enrich the widows' lives about what to do and how to live to please God.

Widowhood stage of life is encompassed with crises to be lived through. The crises are progressive as widows and their family members are advancing in life. Moreover, as new situations of life arise, different crises of life to be tackled also surface. The pastoral care is with a difference because of its wholistic view of care which has concern and consideration for the widows who are going through crises. That is to say the pastoral care responsibility through the Church to widows is a service of longer period if not for a life time. Therefore, this research is an attempt to stimulate pastoral care givers to the significance and necessity of providing adequate and appropriate care to widows. Also, the pastoral care giver has a unique opportunity through the Church as a

