

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Developing A Curriculum Ministry For Widows

In The Local Church

A Thesis Project Submitted to

The Faculty of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

In Candidacy for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary

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ABSTRACT

An examination of widows in the local church reveals a growing percentage of widows in many churches today, signifying a significant ministry need for widows in the church. An abundance of widows sitting in churches, are not only suffering the grief, and loneliness from their loss, some have lost their only income and sometimes feel neglected or a burden to others. As a biblical mandate, it is imperative that the church, pastors, and counselors take heed to the biblical command of ministering to the comfortlessness and insecurity many widows are facing. This will entail revitalization of the care of widows, by implementing and developing a strategy of ministering to the widow in the local church with questionnaires being sent to pastors and widows of local churches in the Saint Louis area.

Abstract Length: 129

DEDICATION

I reverence the glory of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the head of my life. Thank you for granting me the spiritual strength to complete this project. Without your guidance and wisdom, Holy Spirit, I would not have been able to complete this project. In you I live, move, and have all my being. I am grateful for all your tender mercies.

This work is dedicated to the loving memory of my parents, Dr. Homer and Betty Hartsfield Smith. I am thankful for the seed they planted in me, the esteemed Word of God, so I could teach others.

To my husband Benjamin, who has gone on to be with the Lord. I am thankful for the forty sustaining years of love that taught me how to be resilient and persevere.

To my three children, E'rika, Benicia and Benjamin. To my grandchildren, Alisha, LaDarius, Kayla, Anthony, Amaia, Akila, and Nina. To my great grandbaby Aydan. Thank you for all your love, inspiration and enthusiasm. I love you all immensely.

To all my professors at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary for their counsel, guidance, and patience while I obtained a Master of Divinity and Master of Religion, and as I pursue my Doctorate of Ministry.

Many thanks to my great mentor, Dr. Jeffrey D. Ward, for your patience and mantle of support. I would also like to thank my reader, Dr. C. Fred Smith, for your academic support.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Why This Topic Is Needed

Throughout the centuries, women have been the majority of the church. Most notable are from the older generation of widows, who are recognized as pillars of the church. A pillar is well-defined as “bulwark,” a strong supporter or protection of something.¹ Paul the Apostle defined the church as the “pillar and ground of the truth.”² The imagery he speaks of is that of a solid and fixed foundation. As the church represents the pillar and ground of the truth, it supports the church and upholds the truth of God. The church supports the truth like a structured building that is supported by columns of pillars; therefore, the ground is the foundation on which a building rests on the firm truth of the church.

Paul referred to James, Peter and John as pillars.³ If he recognized these men as pillars, then fellow Christian brothers and sisters can be considered pillars of their “families, communities, societies in which they live, and in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴ In his ministry, Paul acknowledged and supported several women as pillars such as Phoebe and Dorcas, who demonstrated good works in the early church.⁵ Mary Magdalene, close friend of Jesus, as well as Joanna and Susanna were pillars during Jesus’ ministry.⁶ It was the respect

¹ *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield: MA, 2004).

² Timothy 3:15. King James Version will be utilized for this project, unless otherwise noted.

³ Galatians 2:9.

⁴ Hilary Johnson Chukwua Chukwurah, “Pillars and Caterpillars in the Church” (Nsukka Enugu State, Nigeria: Church of Christ Resource Center) March 2, 2011.

⁵ Romans 16:1-2, Acts 9:36-42.

⁶ Luke 8:1-3.

Jesus had for women that he attained from his mother. A mother has a natural tendency to demonstrate a deep nurturing for her children.

The support of women and widows of the church that sustain a firm and biblical foundational belief of certain kinds of ministry will support the present century. Many women of the church are not only a financial support of the church, but a support of their family as well. It was traditional for families to care for one's own family members. Yet many of the older generation of women are widows, who are not only without the support of her spouse, but many times are without the assistance of family. This is where it is incumbent on the church to come to their aid and reverse according to the doctrinal beliefs of the Bible, which God set in place a mandate in place for the church to observe.

Paul was concerned about the care given to the widows in the local church. He established guidelines for widows in the church. 1 Timothy 5:3-16 declares:

Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man. Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

In many congregations, the widows and the elderly are not always a priority. Support and care for the elderly is a low priority. For care to be acknowledged, church leaders and volunteers must all participate in support of the elderly and women of the church. The writer's grieving attention was drawn to the knowledge of widows who are dislocated after their spouses, (some pastors) demise. The writer observed several being drawn into a state of depression, with not only the loss of the spouse, but where the focus concerning her welfare fades away after the

funeral. One of the greatest opportunities of the church is caring for the fatherless and the widows.

Though churches have ministries that attract the younger generation, there is no specific ministry addressing the needs of the older generation and widows in most of the local churches. Some feel disdain or rejection that often occurs within the home church.⁷ Recognition is often overlooked, except when it comes to their financial contribution. Former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey once said, “The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life; the sick, the needy and the handicapped.”⁸ This is in reference to the biblical order and practical matters of the care and treatment of widows, as Paul the Apostle referred to in his First Epistle of Timothy.⁹ The Bible is adamant to how one should respond to the widows or the needy in regards to the church having a heart for the widows. Many times after loss of a spouse, the widow is in danger or at a disadvantage of being victimized. With the loss of the spouse and no immediate family, the church is responsible for the widow’s care in the church.

The older generation in local churches is experiencing an increase in population, signifying an increased need for ministry among the older generation in the church. The older population, generally 65 years and over, is rapidly increasing in the United States. According to statistics of the Administration on Aging, most of the older generation refers to women. The average American woman lives an average of six years longer than men; the ratio of men per 100

⁷ John Calahan, “Does Your Church Value Seniors? (2009), www.neverthirsty.org.

⁸ Hubert H. Humphrey, speech 1977. <http://www.quotes.net/authors/Hubert%20Humphrey>.

⁹ 1Timothy 4:11-16.

women, steadily declines with age according to the United States 2010 census.¹⁰ The Profile of Older American in 2012, accounted 23.4 million of older women, wherein 37% consist of widows.¹¹ Statistics such as these show that women, specifically widows, are making up a major group in local churches.

In order for the church to effectively adhere to God's commands regarding the widows of the church, there must be leadership in establishing and organizing a productive ministry. As church leaders and the church work together in providing the necessary requirements in preparing the ministry for widows, this curriculum will continue to enhance the church's overall mission. With a passion for the elderly of the church, the writer as a widow is motivated to establish a biblical ministry for the widows in the local church.

Background Leading to the Awareness of the Problem

The writer has observed a lack of concern for widows. A widow, according to Paul, is a godly woman who should be esteemed by the church.¹² The early church was concerned about the welfare of the widows. In the Gospel of Acts regarding the story of Tabitha, a non-Christian community was concerned with "continence," and overwhelmed with widows.¹³ It is apparent that the church has long suffered from the symptoms of neglect, wherein being untaught or

¹⁰ Carrie A. Werner, "The Older Population: 2010; Census Briefs," U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration (November 2011), <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs>.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Community Living, AOA, "Profile of Older Americans," (Washington, DC, 2012), http://www.aoa.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2012/docs/2012profile.

¹² 1Timothy 5:9.

¹³ Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *The Widows: A Women's Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Minneapolis Fortress Press, 1989), 46, 85. Acts 9:36-43.

inexperienced, the church failed to meet their expectations.¹⁴ This seems to be the prevailing occurrence in local churches today. The church is failing to acknowledge the need for a ministry program or training for widows.

God's love for the widows, seen through His special provisions for the care of widows, is expressed throughout the Bible.¹⁵ In the Book of Acts, the support of the community is through a select group of men, who served the widows who were being neglected of their daily sustenance.¹⁶ It is essential for the church to take up the mantle of servicing the needs of the misfortunate. There is a sensitive awareness within today's church community that a ministry for widows is essential for the health of the local church. The grieving widow has practical and extenuating needs that must be met on a daily basis. There is a perceptible lack of practical support generally for the elderly generation in the church. As a widow, the writer can relate to a ministerial support for widows in the church, where there is lack of care and concern for them. The church seems to neglect a needed ministry for the widows, and an interest as well for the care of the older generation in the local church.

The writer's father was a pastor for over thirty years, and witnessed his pastoral influence in the church, as he demonstrated and encouraged spiritual support to the widows and elderly in the church. It was through his ministry she witnessed needs to the older generation, with prayers, consistent contact, financial and transportation support, including other services provided that impressed her. The writer has also had the opportunity to assist with both the elderly and widows in the local church with needed services. As a result, this created a yearning to designate the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 24:19-21; 1Timothy 5:1-14; James 1:27.

¹⁶ Acts 6:1-3.

biblical mandate for the care of the widows in the local church.

Rationale for Selecting this Topic

Many churches have individuals within their church that provide leadership and support for congregational needs. This topic is of great value for several reasons. First, it is a biblical mandate that will personally plan and help the writer develop a strategic proposal in the development of a ministry program and development for the widows in the local church without family or financial support. Secondly, this project will be invaluable to the local church in training and equipping a ministry team for widows in the local church. Finally, this project will be beneficial to the work of the church as a ministerial mission, as it makes an available planned curriculum developed for the widow of the local church and other local churches in the Saint Louis, Missouri, and surrounding areas.

Many churches lack a ministry for the widows or are unaware of the grieving widows' process and needs. The local church should have an organized ministry that ministers to the needs of the widow. Change is the focus of the church in regards to widows in the church. As an appropriate time for church involvement in developing a ministry program for widows, it is imperative that the church invest in the care and preparation of a productive ministry for the widows of the church. This process involves total church commitment and the support of the ministerial leaders and volunteers in establishing a curriculum within the local churches.

Statement of the Problem

America's adult population is growing and advancing rapidly in the 21st century. The majority population in most congregational churches comprised of women, mothers, and widows. Many sit in churches, not realizing the pain and agony of those widows who daily are

grieving the loss of the spouse. Subject to neglect, many do not know what to do or say to one who has lost a spouse. Although the scripture lays out the foundation of supporting the widows of the church, and the Pastor has most likely spoken on it numerous times, it does not affect many unless it comes to their door.

This project addresses the lack of programs, support, or services for widows in the local church. The project will attempt to address such a curriculum in the local church. This curriculum will address the biblical and theoretical in developing a productive curriculum for widows, by utilizing assistance of leaders and volunteers in the local church. The first approach to serving widows starts with identifying the widows in the congregation who faithfully support the church. It is said that the women are the pillar of the church. The greater part of that pillar are the widows who have given faithfully and dedicated support to the church even while living alone. The rise of living alone represents the greatest social change in America, wherein women represent more than half of the older generation living alone not by choice. According to the United States Census in 2010, the senior citizen population 65 and older consisted of 40.3 million.¹⁷ This is the fastest age group growing in America today. Conferring to this census the senior citizen population was greater than any previous census. Of this age group 65 and older, the Administration of Aging accounted 42 percent of the population in 2008 to widows, wherein the estimation of one-million Americans would lose their spouses each year, “joining the 11 million who have already walk that territory.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Carrie A. Werner, “The Older Population: 2010 Census Briefs,” U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration (November 2011), <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/>.

¹⁸ Anita Creamer, “After Death of a Spouse, Grief Makes its Own Rules,” Sacramento Bee News, (June 2010), Accessed from Liberty EZ Proxy 5/15/14.

This growing adult population is no surprise to the American society. According to George Barna of the Barna Research Group, his study of single adults consisted of three separate groups: those who have never-been-married, divorced and the widow. The singles Barna expresses, are the youngest, optimistic and most active. While the divorced adult group are usually middle-age with different needs and goals, the widowed adults are usually female, generally in their sixties and beyond, and possess a different viewpoint of the future in contrast to their counterparts.¹⁹ Even though all three groups are single says Barna, it is unfitting to treat all these groups the same according to their perspectives and lifestyles. In reference to the local church, taking note in providing a spiritual leadership in support of a ministerial program for the elderly and the widows of the church can benefit from the age of adult. A program will offer local churches an opportunity to develop and participate in a program in preparation for a future success and security within the church environment. Revitalization is essential in strategically planning and implementing a program for the care of the widows and the elderly in the local church for those who struggle not only forms of solitude, but physical and emotional concerns.

Terminology Defined

This project will utilize the term “widow” or “widows” throughout exclusively. Merriam-Webster defines a widow as “a woman who has lost her husband by death and usually has not remarried.”²⁰ This is how “widow” or “widows” will be used in this project. Another term used is “curriculum” or “program(s)” throughout this paper. Both are defined as the same in reference

¹⁹ George Barna, “A Revealing Look at Three Unique Single Adult Populations,” Sermon Central (August 2002), <http://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-statistics-marriagesingleness-9269.asp>.

²⁰ *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield: MA, 2004).

to the “courses offered by education institution or area of specialization.”²¹ The latter is more intended for this paper in reference to the widow’s ministry. The ministry to the widows will be the intended program. Ministry is defined as the “work or vocation of a ministry of religion.”²² Ministry is the faithful service of God's people rendering unto Him and others on God’s behalf.

The pastoral staff, church leaders, deacons, church mothers, and volunteers will oversee the ministry program as mentors for the widows. The challenge of any leader is motivating and leading the church in becoming leaders and servants of Christ. Jesus Christ, our example preached and taught his disciples to displace the quality of charity among others.²³

Statement of Limitations

When young women plan their wedding, rarely do they anticipate the possibility of becoming a widow; yet, in reality, many will become widows. This project acknowledges that there are churches that lack the necessary training or skills, as it refers to the biblical relation to the widows of the church. This stems from the biblical mandate God instituted as the task responsibility of the church. This project is designed in observance of and preparation for the local church. There are, however, obvious limitations that must be noted.

The goal is to support the local church to develop a ministry support program for the widows of the local church, in lieu of developing a ministry program in other local churches within the Saint Louis and surrounding areas of Missouri. The thesis project does not attempt to research all the aspects of widowhood.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Chad Brand, Charles Draper and Archie England eds. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Publisher, 2003).

²³ Mark 10:43-45.

This project will not corroborate with the few churches that lack the necessary support or skills in ministering to widows in the church. The topic is so broad and diverse that no thesis could begin to align the complexities of this project without other religiosity views regarding widows of the church.

The rationale will be the focus and guide for the writer, in introducing resources concerning a productive program to the biblical family regarding widows. As this study is limited to a particular area, reviews can be considered bias. Therefore, this writer's purpose for this thesis is to focus on the biblical aspects of widows in retrospect to the church.

Theoretical Basis for this Project

God has a heart for the widows and has given the church a foundational principle to care for the widow. It is the role of the local church and leaders to prepare and train individuals for the ministry. This project was instituted by God with the children of Israel when he stated, "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless."²⁴ This command in scripture was His concern for the misfortune. The Bible is adamant about how the church should respond to those in need.

There are an abundant of passages in the Bible that direct the care for the widows in the Old and the New Testament. God is always interested in the helpless, the poor, lonely, and the discouraged, as he illustrated in preparing Moses and the children of Israel with directives prior to their entrance to the promise land. One of the chief obligations was to look out for the older

²⁴ Exodus 22: 22-24.

and younger generation. God advises them of the consequences of not complying with His warnings, such as curses and death.

It is by God's design that women be protected, and He is their sole protector for widows and children without parents. As the welfare of the children of Israel was God's concern in the Promised Land, likewise the church's concern should be for the less fortunate. People have a tendency to forget the promises of God, and tend to focus on other things, rather than the wellbeing of others. This stems from a program that involves training and mentorship, developing a ministry support program and supportive teams following up with their needs and welfare in the community.

Statement of Methodology

The purpose of this project is to awaken the body of Christ in the local church to the essentials of widows and to introduce a strategic plan in assembling requirements for a curriculum. The proposed project will involve four chapters. These chapters will provide an overview of the need for a support program for widows in the local church. This project will examine and present a strategic and effective curriculum for equipping the local church for the work of ministry. The program will be based on current research and surveys. This writer will pursue what research is available on the current biblical mandate for widows and its influence on local churches.

How to surpass the hurt and loneliness of widowhood? Are there biblical principles for a local church to follow in establishing a ministry support for widows? What are the positive and negative influences in establishing such a ministry program for widows in the local church? What values can be learned from the surveys of this study? These are some of the questions of the writer's experience in developing the groundwork for this project. When each of the

questions is adequately answered, the writer will conclude the chapter with a summary and conclusion. Below are the chapter listings for the project and a summary of what each chapter will encompass.

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Profile of Regional Area

Chapter Three: Developing the Curriculum

Chapter Four: Summary and Conclusion

Chapter One-Introduction

Chapter One, the introduction addresses the biblical foundational principle for the care of widows to the church, starting with the need and rationale for the project and background of the project. This chapter consists of the problem, limitations, theological basis, and methodology statement. The conclusion of this chapter will consist of literature reviews, journals, articles, Internet sources, and biblical passages.

Chapter Two-Profile of Regional Area

Chapter Two will address the importance of a local church developing a curriculum ministry for widows in the Saint Louis and surrounding areas of Missouri. This project will provide research and gather data from pastors, widows, and churches that supports the project with surveys, literature, journals and articles. It is critical the church understand the importance of providing support for the widows of the local church.

Chapter Three-Developing the Curriculum: Widows Left-Behind

Chapter Three involves the actual curriculum to be used for the strategic plan for a ministry program for the left-behind widows. This will entail the process for local churches of

the Saint Louis area to be used in developing an effective program, with an organized strategy that assures a strong and productive ministry support within and outside the local church.

Chapter Four-Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter Four provides a complete overview of the thesis, surveys, and recommendations in developing a productive curriculum in the local church and surrounding target area. This will include providing a proposed plan that will involve education of a support group of leaders and volunteers of the local church.

Review of Literature

When the writer began to see the need for a strong ministry for widows in the local church, it was discovered that very little work has been done and few books written in the care of widows. There are limited resources of authors or publishing companies willing to produce such literature, prompting a serious need for the widow more and more within the context of the local church. The analysis noted had to do with the less attention of the “left-behind” widow within the local church, all the more for a much needed widow ministry within the local church. All the circumstances regarding the widow and the widow’s family are too extensive to examine.

Only the biblical mandate of the church and/or the family involved in regards to the widow are addressed. There are a surplus of books and articles available for research on the subject of the elderly and widows. Many are written by widows. This writer has selected a few of those books and articles, including two notable dissertations, which have influenced her materials for this project.

Books

Don't Take My Grief Away by Doug Manning, is a respectable book that identifies the many stages of grief.²⁵ It helps one to understand the recovery processes of grief, as it allows the widow to exercise the grieving course at her own pace without the guilt of just overcoming or prolonging grief. The book is very helpful in understanding the philosophies of overcoming sorrow that involves the daily healing process.

The Grief Process: Analysis and Counseling by Yorick Spiegel, is a great reference that outlines the bereavement process.²⁶ The author introduces a four step in-depth development, includes with a coping mechanism and psychological aspects that affects the grief healing process. It is an excellent source that assents the passage of healing. Her insights of support is not only recorded in her book, but she also offers a website for other widows to share their experiences and questions.

For Widows Only by Annie Estlund, is a helpful guide in addressing all stages of grief.²⁷ The author inputs her experience and perceptions of her coping mechanism of widowhood. Her book is a great resource for other residing widows experiencing the stages of grief. This book offers a suitable introduction to the subject matter of widowhood.

Getting to the Other Side of Grief Overcoming the Loss of a Spouse by Susan J. Zonnebelt-Smeenge and Robert C. De Vries, is more of a psychological viewpoint of the other

²⁵ Doug Manning, *Don't Take My Grief Away: What to do when you lose a Loved One*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: First Harper and Row, 1984).

²⁶ Yorick Spiegel, *The Grief Process: Analysis and Counseling* (Nashville, TH: Abingdon Press, 1977).

²⁷ Annie Estlund, *For Widows Only* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Incorporated, 2003).

side of grief.²⁸ The author institutes the benefits of stepping out of the comfort zone by helping the reader to eliminate any guilt of pursuing a normal life after the loss of a spouse. The book is productive in assisting the widow's daily difficulty of grief, which can benefit the church.

Finding Your Way After Your Spouse Dies by Marta Felber, is an excellent source for coping with practical issues.²⁹ The author uses encouraging material that contains helpful counsel for the widow. Understanding the continued recovery courses of grief can be a short or long-term progression of healing. This book is built on the author's insights and own personal experience of surviving grief.

How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies by Therese Rando, expounds on the clinical psychologist's perspective of the different types of grief.³⁰ The book is a great resource as it lists an array of topics for the widow coping with loss. The reader will benefit from the widow's gradual process of the stages of grief as it helps the reader understand the resolution of healing from a loss.

Widow Ministry, by Alice Cullinan, is an excellent source for the start of a widow's ministry in one's church, a small group environment or community.³¹ The author presents a short guide manual, developed with strategies and questions for a productive ministry for the grieving widow. All is vital to the widow and her perspective needs, in understanding the developing curriculum, and providing spiritual direction.

²⁸ Susan J. Zonnebelt-Smeenge and Robert C. De Vries, *Getting to the Other Side of Grief Overcoming the Loss of a Spouse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998).

²⁹ Marta Felber, *Finding Your Way after Your Spouse Dies* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000).

³⁰ Therese Rando, *How to Go on Living When Someone You Loves Dies* (Bantam House, 1991).

³¹ Alice R. Cullinan, *Widow Ministry* (Shelby, NC: Three-Twenty Ministries, 2013).

Caring for Widows: You and Your Church Can Make a Difference by Wesley Teterud, is an excellent resource for the church and the widow in understanding the underlining principles of the care and ministry for widows.³² As a tremendous writer, this source is a great reference of the grieving process of the widow, and for developing a curriculum regarding the biblical requirements.

Articles/Journals

“A Widow's First Five Years” is an article written by Barbara Lazear Ascher. The author asserts a psychological review of how death affects the stressful event of every aspects of one’s loss of a soul mate.³³ The writer describes the endurance of loss during the first five years. That time period is usually the breaking point of surviving the pain of losing a spouse. This is a great added resource for understanding the developing process of grieving to existing and living without the loss of a spouse.

“After Death of a Spouse, Grief Makes its Own Rules” by Anita Creamer expresses the grieving process, and how the residing spouse continues living without their mate.³⁴ This is an excellent read of starting over after the loss of the love of one’s life. It is not always an easy or quick process. The author identifies the practical resources of one’s pursuit to the healing process of grief. This is found to be an excellent guide to adjusting to the matters of life as a widow.

³² Wesley Teterud, *Caring for Widows: You and Your Church Can Make a Difference* (Reno, NV: Baker Books, 1993).

³³ Barbara Lazear Ascher, “A Widow’s First Five Years,” *Town and Country*, (2007): 113.

³⁴ Anita Creamer, “After Death of a Spouse, Grief Makes its Own Rules,” *Sacramento Bee News*, (2010), Accessed from Liberty EZ Proxy 5/15/14.

“On Being a Widow” by Gwyneth Whilsmith expresses the process of a widow’s grief.³⁵ The short article indicates there is no actual course or expectation to prepare one for the loss of a spouse, yet allows the reader a picture of the critical nature of loneliness.

“The Widow’s Might” by Miriam Neff, addresses the changes in the widow.³⁶ In continuing a life without the mate, the article offers what seems to be a very simplistic way to bringing positive change to the spouse that defines the limits of peacefulness through the help of God.

Internet

“The 12 Rules for Moving Forward in Life.”³⁷ Though no identified author, the website addresses the concept of the positive efforts to moving on after the loss of a loved one. It is a good source to use as a model for churches to pursue these steps in developing a curriculum for widows.

Theses/Dissertations

The American Theological Library Association publishes an annual publication entitled Research in Ministry (RIM). This publication is a listing of titles and abstracts of the Doctor of Ministry projects. The research in RIM was to examine articles in refereed journals, contemporary books written by authors from the academic community and/or those who have produced a study from research and/or survey.

³⁵ Gwyneth Whilsmith, “On Being a Widow: Look Away Across the Sea, Where Mansions are Prepared for Thee,” *The Presbyterian Record*, (May 1, 2006): 130-131.

³⁶ Miriam Neff, “The Widow’s Might,” *Christianity Today* (January 2008): 43-47.

³⁷ 12 Rules for Moving Forward in Life (July 10, 2009), <http://12-rules-for-moving-forward>.

Richard W. Sadler, “A Strategy for Widows in the Local Church” D.Min Thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.³⁸ This is a research found in RIM that conducted a comprehensive study of personal interviews, surveys/and statistical analyses to determine the provisions for the widows. His conductive results recommended ways that the church might utilize it as a ministry to the widows.

Wesley Teterud, “A Church with the Bereaved Widow” D.Min Thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary.³⁹ This is a research found in RIM that composed a study of the bereaved widows, wherein a church manual was created. The focus of his work was on not only the church’s perspective ministry for the widows, but emphasis was placed on the responsibility of the family. A ministry scope was conducted within the community, home/retirement home or nursing home.

Biblical Passages

The following verses and passages deal with the command of God to the local church as to their responsibility toward widows. The following scriptures show the weight of the biblical mandate to the church. It is directly the responsibility of church leaders guidance is leading and directing the church in following God’s instructions. God demonstrated His love and establishment for the widow in the Old and the New Testament.

³⁸ Richard W. Sadler, “A Strategy for Ministry for Widows in the Local Church” (D.Min. diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997).

³⁹ Wesley M. Teterud, "Church Work with the Bereaved Widows" (D.Min. diss., Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1992).

Exodus 22:22-24 expresses the care and concern for those less fortunate. It was God's concern for the widows and the orphans, and is evident for others to perceive as well. The promises of God was not fulfilled with mistreatment of the widows or else curses came upon those who disobeyed God's commands. Leaders and the body of believers need to study and heed to the principles of God.

Deuteronomy 10: 18 lets the reader know that from the beginning of time with Israel, God's love and care has always been the defender of widows. This passage institutes the motivating factor of love that should be entrusted of others, and how it is the church's responsibility for the care of widows.

Deuteronomy 27: 19 lets the reader know that curses comes from God and to those who abuse even the widows. This scripture clearly illustrates the failure to show kindness to all is against God's authority. The church should be careful when ministering to the needs of the widows.

Psalms 68:5 describes God as a guardian and a judge of the widow. This helps the reader to understand the importance of bestowing biblical knowledge to the care of the widows. Teaching such is of the upmost importance for every believer and church.

Psalms 146:9 expresses that God's love and care for the widow is not without merits.

Proverbs 15:25 affirms God's symbolism of humility and pride. He will always be a protector of the widows, which is likewise advice to others to pursue in guarding the widow.

Isaiah 1:17 shows God demands the quantity of treatment for the widows be measured with fairness. It is imperative that the church be taught and remain under the biblical principles, as it considers treating the widows and others fairly.

Jeremiah 22:3 is a simple message from God as He commanded no violence or mistreatment to the stranger, fatherless or widows. Doing what is fair and right was evident then and still remains today. It is vital for the church to actively demonstrate the love of God.

Jeremiah 49:11 leaves a promise of God's love and His protection for the children and the widows. All are the object of His provision and His protection. Leaders and the church, must focus on the precepts God has positioned as a biblical mandate for the church.

Job 22:9 discourages the attempts of sending widows away with nothing. Though Job was not guilty of sin, it is also a recommendation for the believer and the church not to do so in respect to widows.

Mark 12:41-44 passage helps the reader not to forsake those with little means. This scripture comforts the reader to understand the heart of true giving that the widow demonstrated amounting to a few cents, (two mites amounts to a penny). Giving all that she had was the core lesson Jesus addressed to His disciples of one's devotion and generosity of having nothing. It is a divine right that the church should honor with obedience to those with little or nothing.

Luke 2:36-38 is the story of the widow Anna's faithfulness and dedication to God in the temple. Not only does God demonstrate His passion and love for the widows, this passage shows the love of one that is mutual. Being a widow she knew the grief of losing a spouse and the heartache of pain it brought, and most likely had to depend on the church for survival.

Luke 7:11-15 teaches Jesus as our prime example of His mercy and care for widows. Jesus' demonstration of care should be the same displayed with all believers and the church regarding the widows. Attending to the physical and spiritual needs is vital to the church and is evident to developing a ministry.

Acts 6:1-3 shows how godly men were selected by the congregation to serve the widows when the widows were being neglected in the daily provision of food. Stepping up as men of God, this passage lays out the responsibility of others to serve and care for the widows in need as a community effort.

John 19:27 is the demonstration of care for not only the widows, but it shows that Jesus devoted His love for His widowed mother, Mary, upon his resurrection at the cross. He entrusted her care to a believer of Jesus Christ, John the apostle. This is an incentive for believers and the church in the care for the widows.

1 Timothy 5:3-16 offers an extensive treatment of the subject of widows and the endeavor of honoring widows. This passage affirms the biblical mandate that God has commanded the church to comply with in addressing the financial care of the widows, especially those without relatives to tend to her care. It is against the will of God to neglect the biblical principles set forth regarding the care of the widow.

James 1:27 illustrates brotherly love and care for the widows who are without a spouse. Ministering to the needs of widows, who are lonely and without a mate illustrates the need for a ministry for widows.

CHAPTER TWO

PROFILE OF REGIONAL AREA

*A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,
is God in his holy habitation.
God setteth the solitary in families:
Psalm 68:5-6*

In research for this project, it was discovered that one of the reasons that the elderly generation and widows are overlooked in the local church, is due to a lack of recognition and education regarding treatment and welfare. Not negating leadership abilities, however, many may not always be aware of every member's status or situation in the church. Though when it comes to the care and ministry to the older generation, it is imperative that pastors reiterate the biblical mandate. The goal is for pastors to be the kind of leader God chooses and desires to lead His flock. The Word of the Lord says "...I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."⁴⁰ Pastors are responsible for the care of members and their needs, and to respectfully be sensitive to the wellbeing of orphans and widows, such as living arrangements, food, shelter, transportation services or financial assistance.

There must be leaders willing to establish and organize productive services for not only the congregational members, but for the care of the elderly and widows of the local church. As church leaders and the church work together in providing the necessary requirements in preparing services as a ministry for widows, the work will thus enhance the church's overall mission. The goal of the church is to make a transformation in people's lives by generating followers as disciples. Criticism seems to be the biggest downfall of most churches 'hindrances

⁴⁰ Jeremiah 3:15.

to transformation. Many pastors, however, may not be neglecting the commandment of taking up the mantle and engaging the commission of Christ as it pertains to the church. Some, however, may be in error of neglecting the decree regarding the elderly care in the church. Leadership is an important position requiring much dedication to the church, as they are God's servants in serving the people of God. Pastors also invest much time in addressing the needs of the church with other services, such as telephone calls, visitation, performing funerals and other pastoral services. What is found in most churches is "People are either not getting out of the boat or just sitting in the boat, going in circles."⁴¹ The local church should be considered of one another's emotional pain, financial hardship or spiritual brokenness, which are often the life experiences of the widows and the elderly.

This chapter will introduce the regional area of Saint Louis, Missouri, and the surrounding areas. This project will examine a demographic study of the regional area, and of some of the biblical approaches provided. This will include the perceptions within the local church in reaching and engaging the many widows and the elderly. Many are sitting unnoticed and without substantial programs and services provided in the local church. With the information obtained, the writer tried to develop a composite outline of the metropolitan area of the widows and elderly residing in those areas. Though the project addresses a program of study for widows in the local church, it is recognized that the projective for aged widows will fall within the senior age group, rather in contrast to widows in general.

⁴¹ Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group and LifeWay Research, 2010), 3.

Regional and Surrounding Areas

As the writer approaches this topic, she used the following methods to research, gather data and information in the surrounding areas of Saint Louis, Missouri. This includes 114 counties and one independent city.⁴² Jefferson City has been the capital of the state of Missouri since 1821, though development of the capital was not completed until 1826. It is confirmed that Jefferson City, with approximately 40,000 residents, was named after the Third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson.⁴³ Born in Shadwell, Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, never resided in Jefferson City as members of his staff did. However, Thomas Jefferson and the assemblies of his staff met in the temporary capital in Saint Charles, Missouri, until the capital in Jefferson City was completed in 1826.

The population of Missouri, as of 2014, was estimated at approximately 6,063,589.⁴⁴ The city of Saint Louis, Missouri, is an independent city with an estimated population of 317,000 within the city limits. However, “the Greater Saint Louis area is the 19th largest metro area in the US with a population of 2.85 million.”⁴⁵ As a large city, there are many seniors residing within the metropolitan area which clearly cannot be accounted. The diversity of ethnic groups is high among the African-Americans with a 49.22%, followed by European-Americans at 43.93%, and

⁴² Maps of World, “Missouri County Map,” Accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.mapsofworld.com/usa/states/missouri/missouri-county-map.html>.

⁴³ Jefferson City History Examiner, “Jefferson City, Capital of Missouri,” Accessed November 5, 2015, <http://www.examiner.com/article/jefferson-city-has-been-state-capital-since-1826>.

⁴⁴ Maps of World, “Missouri State Profile,” Accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.mapsofworld.com/usa/states/missouri/missouri-state-profile.html>.

⁴⁵ World Population Review, “Saint Louis, Missouri Population,” Accessed November 6, 2015, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/st-louis-population/>.

the percentage of Hispanic-Americans is at a low of 3.49%.⁴⁶ All other ethnic groups are below the 3.00 percentage rate.

According to the 2010 United States census, Saint Louis is the 58th most populous city in the United States.⁴⁷ Yet, Kansas City, Missouri, as the largest city in the state, was last estimated in 2013 with 466,600 residents, containing a large population of Irish-Americans, approximately 250,000.⁴⁸ The population growth of the proximity regional area encompasses the state and municipality growth.

Pro Sport Teams

Missouri's urban growth has been helped by the presence of five professional teams. The National Football League has two teams in Missouri, the Kansas City Chiefs and the Saint Louis Rams. The Major League Baseball has two teams in Missouri, the Kansas City Royals and the Saint Louis Cardinals. The National Hockey League has one team in Missouri, the Saint Louis Blues. This year was a great win for the Kansas City Royals, who recently won the 2015 World Series. The Cardinals last won the series in 2011. The people of Missouri demonstrate extreme sportsmanship in supporting their home teams, regardless of weather conditions. Furthermore, sporting organizations and events have a profound impact on the community growth of the city, which most likely impacts the multicultural generation of ages.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ World Population Review, "Saint Louis, Missouri Population," Accessed November 7, 2015, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/kansas-city-population/>.

Climate

The environment weather changes significantly, and its surroundings yearly can prompt changes worldwide. Missouri is noted for its severe weather changes and lots of tornadoes. Consisting generally of the four seasons of winter, spring, summer, and autumn, the bulk of temperatures often felt yearly throughout Missouri seem to be of two seasons: sweltering summers and freeing winters. Spring and autumn are short lived. Summer temperatures are usually hot and humid, whereas the winters are often icy cold and snowy. The temperature typically varies from 23°F to 89°F and is rarely below 8°F or above 97°F.⁴⁹

Contrary to yearly statistics, from experience, the warm season can start in May and last until the end of September or early October. The cold season can last from November to as late as April. The likelihood of snow falling can relatively be within that time frame. Regardless, the weather was an overwhelming climate shock to the writer, who was born and raised on the West Coast of the sunny blue skies and beautiful waters. Visible sights of snow was a trip to the mountains to play in, then back down to the coast without the cold or snowy roads. Regardless of weather conditions in the Missouri area, it does not forbid the Missourians from attending to daily activities.

Educational Opportunities

The state of Missouri has an extensive array of colleges and universities. Accessibility is not at a disadvantage in the metropolitan area. Below is a list of some of the educational opportunities and seminaries for the young and aged:

- Aquinas Institute of Theology

⁴⁹ Weather Spark, “Average Weather for St. Louis, Missouri, USA,” Accessed November 6, 2015, <https://weatherspark.com/averages/31697/St-Louis-Missouri-United-States>.

- Art Institute of St. Louis
- Broadcast Center
- Brown Mackie College
- Central Methodist University
- Columbia College
- Concordia Seminary
- Covenant Theological Seminary
- Deaconess College of Nursing
- East Central College
- Eden Theological Seminary
- Fontbonne University
- Greenville College
- Harris-Stowe State University
- Hickey College
- Jefferson College
- Kenrick-Glennon Seminary
- Lindenwood University
- Logan College of Chiropractic
- Maryville University
- McKendree University
- Midwest Institute
- Missouri Baptist University
- Missouri College Missouri Tech University
- Missouri Western State University
- National Academy of Beauty Arts
- Ranken technical College
- Stevens Institute of Business and Arts
- St. Charles Community College
- St. Louis Christian College
- St. Louis College of Pharmacy
- St. Louis Community College St. Louis Theological Seminary
- Saint Louis University
- University of Missouri
- University of Missouri-Kansas City
- Urshan Graduate School of Theology
- Vatterott College
- Washington University in St. Louis
- Webster University⁵⁰

⁵⁰ 4International Colleges and Universities, “Universities in Missouri,” Accessed November 6, 2015, <http://www.4icu.org/us/Missouri.htm>.

Education is a valuable resource of variety in the regional area of Missouri that is vital to life and opportunities to learn. Remembering the great words of truth from Nelson Mandela, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”⁵¹

Value of Seniors

The senior generation of the local church is of great significance in conjunction to the congregation as a whole. Much work is instilled in them, wherein many desire to be a support to not only the church but also to the younger generation. It is imperative that the local church and the Christian community endeavor to assist the elderly to continue a life of value and service as they sustain a place of service to others. One such mention is the extraordinary mission of Pope John Paul (1920-2005). His value of dedication is acknowledged in his walk as a great example of church work and witnessing throughout America. He did not allow his age or handicap to exempt his value to the church. In his travels, he often was observed walking with a cane, as he acknowledged “I’m an elderly priest.”⁵² Many of the elderly as Pope John Paul believe trust and value in the church is a commission to Christ that has not been exhausted, with or without physical restrictions.

Societies today could be better if they would learn to benefit from the “charisms” of older persons.⁵³ There is a role for the aged generation in the local church. As role models for the younger generation, they are to be spiritual examples as leaders. It is the model that God wants

⁵¹ Nelson Mandela Education Quotes, http://www.searchquotes.com/Nelson_Mandela/Education/quotes/.

⁵² Pontifical Council for the Laity, “The Dignity of Older People and their Mission in the Church and in the World,” 1999, www.ewtn.com.

⁵³ Ibid.

the next generation to develop.⁵⁴ The wisest man in the Bible, Solomon, advises in Ecclesiastes, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with they might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”⁵⁵ It is not about women attaining leadership positions above the pastor. That is a debating topic of women’s work in ministry that has been a heated controversy for many years throughout congregations. Women leadership can be a very broad controversial thought, because women of all ages have always served in some capacity in the church.

In the twenty-first century, the awareness of seeing woman Pastors, Elders, and Bishops in many denominations is not a rarity, but that is not the topic of this project. It is essential for all, whether the elderly, men or widows, to have a place of value in the local church. The effect for the elderly is profound when it comes to the younger generation. It is imperative that the older generation, likewise, take heed to the younger generation, by encouraging them to take every opportunity to lead in whatever position is available, as an initial start. This is seen as the church maintaining its youth, by supporting and promoting the younger generation to engage in church ministry with ideas, visions and dreams.

God puts forth His strategy and plan for one’s search of achieving dreams, whether it is a ministry, career or family. His plan for mankind is eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. God proclaims potential success in Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”⁵⁶ Contentment comes from knowing and following God’s plan in seeking

⁵⁴ Steve Mathewson, “Older People: The Future of Our Church” *Christianity Today*, (2015), www.preachingtoday.com/site/utilities.

⁵⁵ Ecclesiastes 9:10.

⁵⁶ New International Version.

“first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” and all other things shall be added.⁵⁷ Ministry is a continuous action plan of serving others and spreading the gospel as servants of Jesus Christ. To achieve this purpose is to know Him, love Him, and to become more like Him as a creation of God’s glory.⁵⁸ All should not encompass waiting on God or others to articulate the dreams, but all should develop a plan relevant to the dream, which God has laid out in His Word. Paul was adamant in giving Titus explicit instructions for the young and the old:

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.⁵⁹

Noteworthy, is the directions of the position of the aged mature women, who are to teach the younger women. The ever present and prospect of the church are women. Although a woman’s work is never done, work in ministry is essential and encompasses many aspects of the church and its leadership. There are many opportunities for women, including widows of the local church to exalt themselves in doing, such as ministering to others in Prayer, conducting Bible study groups or teaching a Sunday School class. It can be to the betterment of any local congregation to take heed to the seasoned member’s wisdom and knowledge of honoring the elderly.

Much disrespect today is directed not only towards the elderly but also against one’s own parents. There was a time when this was not even thought of, but it is now more common in society. Most Christians are thoughtful enough to care and provide for their elderly parents. It was a Greek law from the time of Solon, who was a wise scholar of Greece, that “sons and

⁵⁷ Matthew 6:33.

⁵⁸ Isaiah 43:7.

⁵⁹ Titus 2:1-5.

daughters were morally and legally bound to support their parents.”⁶⁰ The fifth commandment God instituted in Exodus 20:12 admonishes children to honor their parents: “that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” Unlike the Fifth Commandment in the Old Testament, Paul foresaw parental respect as the First Commandment in the New Testament as well.⁶¹ To honor parents means to show respect for them and to provide for them when needed. Honoring parents is the first loyal step to reverencing God, yet it is a “capital offense to curse one’s parents.”⁶²

In the Gospel of Matthew and Mark, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for dishonoring their own parents.⁶³ They had approached Jesus concerning the hygiene practice of his disciples, when in actuality, it was not about hygiene yet rather the washing ceremonial of religious cleanness. The Pharisees had made a practice of making donations of their material possessions and properties to the temple, all to exempt them the responsibility of caring for their aged parents. The Pharisees justifiable excuse, “It is Corban.” In this text, the Hebrew word for Corban and the practice simply meant offerings or sacrifices dedicated to God. According to the Talmud, the Jews made a practice of “making rash vows to God with no intentions of carrying them out.”⁶⁴ It was considered an illegal profit to God, since the priest usually gave the Pharisees a percentage of their donations.

⁶⁰ William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975) 106.

⁶¹ Ephesians 6:2.

⁶² Harold Willmington, *Great Truths from God Word: Old Testament Survey* (Lynchburg, VA: Zondervan, 2003), 115. Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9; Proverbs 20:20.

⁶³ Matthew 15:4-6; Mark 7:10-11.

⁶⁴ Walter, C. Kaiser, Jr. *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 1639.

Contrary to belief, parents have contributed immensely to their children, and children should give back to their parents or meet their parents' needs, out of gratitude. To this Paul says, "Is good and acceptable before God."⁶⁵ Paul further considers one's failure to provide for their own, is less than an infidel.⁶⁶

Certain cultures respect the elders such as in the African, Indian, and Asian community. The elderly need not worry of respect or welfare, because they are valued within their communities. If it comes to the decision where the senior population cannot care for themselves, children or family members assist in their care. In western cultures, the elder parents prefer to stay with families rather than be admitted into an assisted living environment. The cause for alternative living would entail long-term chronic illness, such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease, which would generate an enormous financial burden on the family.⁶⁷

Many times, the elder parents reside with the children due to financial reasons or as a part of their culture belief. Paul respected and enjoyed the teachings of his elder, Gamaliel, the Pharisee teacher of law. As a student of Gamaliel, Paul was trained and educated of the Jewish laws and customs of his day, while sitting at the feet of his teacher.⁶⁸ Throughout the years the era of disrespect has developed into a comprehensive problem, not realizing the senior generation's input and lifespan of knowledge that adds value to others.

⁶⁵ 1Timothy 5:4.

⁶⁶ 1Timothy 5:8.

⁶⁷ Shireen Rehmatullah, "Challenges for Senior Citizens," *Hamdard Islamicus*, 34 (2011):106-108.

⁶⁸ Acts 22:3.

Elderly Population in Communities

The average age of the elderly generation or senior group is usually defined as those individuals who are at least sixty to sixty-five years of age. Many basically retire at this age conferring to the United States Census Bureau. The population number of this aged group has increased drastically over the centuries and is expected to increase more by 2030 conferring to the census when the "baby boom generation enters their senior years."⁶⁹ One is familiar with the term baby boomers that was used to identify the massive increase of births following World War II.⁷⁰ This is the number of Americans aged 45-64 that were born between 1946-1964 and who started approaching the retirement age of sixty-five over the next two decades, as of 2011.⁷¹

By 2011, the population of seniors increased to 41.4 million, representing "13.3% of the United States population, over one in every eight Americans."⁷² This number, since 2000, however, has increased by "6.3 million or 18%, compared to an increase of 9.4%" for those under the sixty-five age population.⁷³ The number and percentage of the elderly generation will continue to rapidly grow, as the age recognizes the presence of baby boomers. According to the most recent data available as 2013 per the Administration of Aging statistic, the older population

⁶⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Brief, "Sixty-five Plus in the United States," Accessed October 23, 2015, <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/statbriefs/agebrief.html>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, and Community Living, "Profile of Older Americans: 2012," (*Washington, DC*), Accessed August 23, 2015, http://www.aoa.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2012/docs/2012profile.

⁷³ Ibid.

of women calculated at 25.1 million has increased via sex ratio of 19.6 million of older men.⁷⁴

This keeps the age group of the older population at sixty-five.

To correct the current, largely negative image of old age is therefore a cultural and educational task which ought to involve all generations. We have a responsibility towards older people today: we need to help them to grasp the sense of their age, to appreciate its resources, and to overcome the temptation to reject it, and so succumb to self-isolation, resignation and a feeling of uselessness and despair. We also have a responsibility towards future generations: that of preparing a human, social and spiritual context in which each person may live this period of life with dignity and fullness. The multigenerational society we aspire to shall only become an enduring reality if it be based on respect for life in all its phases. The presence of so many older persons in the modern world needs to be recognized as a gift, a new human and spiritual potential for enrichment. It is a sign of the times which, if fully accepted and understood, may help contemporary men and women to rediscover the fundamental meaning of life, which far transcends the purely contingent meanings attributed to it by market forces, by the State and by the prevailing mentality.⁷⁵

Multigenerational communion is a part of the family church or society. In retrospect for the church, it is imperative for local churches to consider that the multigenerational exists within the church community. Leadership should consider the elderly population and the value of their places in the local church. Ministry is effective for all, regardless of age, race, financial or marital status. The contribution and experience of the elderly provides balance to the church community, making them a value source to society. In many cultures, the senior age starts at fifty-five rather than sixty but for this study, the writer has chosen the selected age of sixty and older regarding the seniors and widows.

Diagrams in this study will detect ages up to approximately eighty and older residing in certain counties and cities. As seen in Table1 below, it detects the years 2030-2050, the

⁷⁴ U.S, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Community Living, AOA, "Profile of Older Americans: 2013," (Washington, DC), Accessed October 26, 2015, http://www.aoa.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2013/docs/2013_Profile.pdf.

⁷⁵ Pontifical Council for the Laity, "The Dignity of Older People and their Mission in the Church and in the World," 1999, www.ewtn.com.

percentage growth of the elderly at the age of sixty-five and older is not foreseen at a diminishing rate starting after 2030. If the age group dropped to sixty and older, the percentage rate would most likely rise to above the year 2030, even with the coming age of baby boomers elevating to their retirement age.

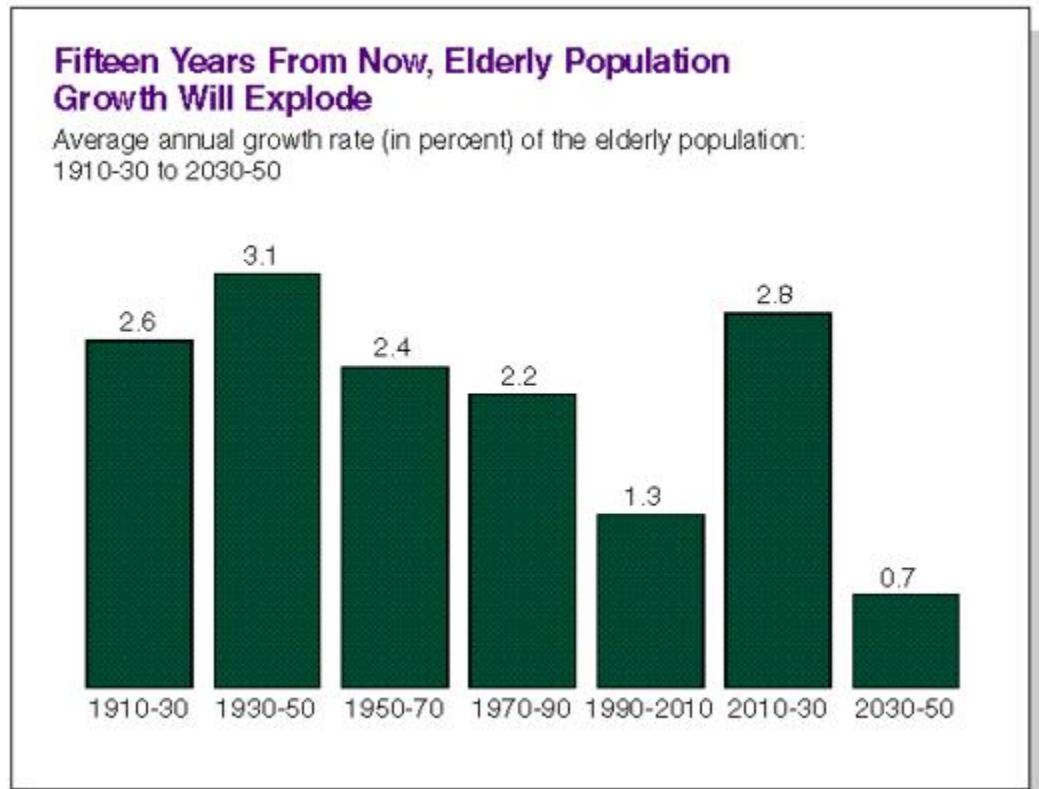


Table 1: The Expected Growth of the Elderly Population⁷⁶

The chart above is an estimation of the future growth and declining rate of the elderly population. Of the counties in the below project's regional area, Independence, Missouri, rates high in percentage population for the elder generation sixty-five and above residing in that county.

⁷⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Brief, "Sixty-five Plus in the United States," Accessed October 23, 2015, <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/statbriefs/agebrief.html>.

The elderly are consumed with wisdom and knowledge that can be offered to the local church throughout the community. It is good practice for leaders who could benefit in educating the local church and those residing in the community to be a needed support system for the elderly. Many in the church and community are struggling with loads of issues, such as finance, emotional or physical ailments. Therefore, it is important for the local church, via the Christian community, to make themselves accessible through services for whatever necessities the elderly may need. The local church, like families, is integrated with a whole realm of families that consist of parents, grandparents, and children of different age groups. Many in the community can be drawn to Christ. Living a life of value is essential for the senior generation.

Demographic Population Of Homes With People 60 Year Olds And Over	
Households In Independence Containing People Over 60	
Total Population:	48,742
Population of homes with one or more people 60 years and over:	17,703
1-person household:	7,110
2-or-more-person household:	10,593
Family households:	10,006
Nonfamily households:	587
Population of homes with no people 60 years and over:	31,039
1-person household:	8,325
2-or-more-person household:	22,714
Family homes:	20,159
Nonfamily homes:	2,555

Table 2: Demographic Population of Homes with People 60 Years and Over⁷⁷

The above chart records households with people over sixty, at approximately 17,000 in Independence City, Missouri. Documents do not notate if the individuals over this age group are married or widowed, however, the persons within the elderly age group are living alone or with family members. The itemization between households and diversity groups, such as European-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans or Native- Americans, are outlined in Table 3 below. This is according to statistical reports and studies of the years 2014 and 2015.

⁷⁷ U.S. Census Bureau Population Survey: Suburban Stats, Current Independence, Missouri Population, Demographics and Stats in 2014, 2015, Accessed October 23, 2015, <https://suburbanstats.org/population/missouri/how-many-people-live-in-independence>.

Population By Races And Gender			
	Male	Female	Total
Total Population	2,933,477	3,055,450	5,988,927
White	2,436,316	2,522,454	4,958,770
Black or African American	329,174	364,217	693,391
Hispanic or Latino	110,740	101,730	212,470
Two or More Races	61,531	63,058	124,589
Asian	46,093	51,990	98,083
Some Other Race	43,461	36,996	80,457
American Indian	13,786	13,590	27,376
Three or more races	3,838	4,295	8,133
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	3,116	3,145	6,261
Native Hawaiian	457	501	958
Alaska Native tribes	120	142	262

Table 3: Population by Races and Gender for Independence, Missouri⁷⁸

Within the following target area and according to population reports, the higher percentage population of European-American residents is in contrast to the lower percentage rate of Native Americans in the geographic area. The European-American population rates high be among women at 52,200 and men closely behind with 47, 912, with a total approximately of 100,112 residing in the area.⁷⁹ This, though only a fraction of the regional surrounding area, has a low percentage of persons over sixty residing alone or with other individuals in a household. One cannot affirm the percentage of elderly among these groups.

⁷⁸ U.S. Census Bureau Population Survey: Suburban Stats, Current Independence, Missouri Population, Demographics and Stats in 2014, 2015, Accessed October 23, 2015, <https://suburbanstats.org/population/missouri/how-many-people-live-in-independence>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

The distribution list below is of those sixty-five and older. It reflects the two counties in Missouri: Independence City and Springfield City.

Ten Places With the Highest and Lowest Percentage of Their Population 65 Years and Older: 2010

(For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/doc/sf1.pdf)

see www.census.gov/hhes/cen2010/doc/s17.pdf

Place ¹	Total population	Population 65 years and over	
		Number	Percent
Highest percent			
65 years and over			
Scottsdale city, AZ	217,385	43,471	20.0
Clearwater city, FL	107,685	21,330	19.8
Hialeah city, FL	224,669	42,864	19.1
Surprise city, AZ	117,517	22,327	19.0
Urban Honolulu CDP, HI	337,256	60,162	17.8
Metairie CDP, LA	138,481	23,716	17.1
Cape Coral city, FL	154,305	26,180	17.0
Warren city, MI	134,056	21,644	16.1
Independence city, MO	116,830	18,769	16.1
Miami city, FL	399,457	63,987	16.0
Lowest percent			
65 years and over			
West Jordan city, UT	103,712	4,817	4.6
Killeen city, TX	127,921	6,618	5.2
Frisco city, TX	116,989	6,298	5.4
Fontana city, CA	196,069	11,084	5.7
Provo city, UT	112,488	6,570	5.8
Gilbert town, AZ	208,453	12,628	6.1
Enterprise CDP, NV	108,481	6,734	6.2
Moreno Valley city, CA	193,365	12,134	6.3
Aurora city, IL	197,899	12,789	6.5
Thornton city, CO	118,772	7,726	6.5

Table 4: Highest and Lowest Percentage of 65 Years and Older⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Carrie Werner, United States Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, "The Older Population: 2010 Census Briefs," (November 2011), <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-09.pdf>.

The population of Americans sixty-five and older has increased since the 1900s. By 2013, the age of sixty-five had an “average life expectancy of an additional 19.3 years; 20.5 years for females and 17.9 years for males.”⁸¹

Ten Places With the Highest and Lowest Percentage of Their Population 85 Years and Older: 2010

(For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/doc/sf1.pdf)

Place ¹	Total population	Population 85 years and over	
		Number	Percent
Highest percent 85 years and over			
Urban Honolulu CDP, HI	337,256	11,781	3.5
Clearwater city, FL	107,685	3,725	3.5
Santa Rosa city, CA	167,815	4,654	2.8
Warren city, MI	134,056	3,636	2.7
Scottsdale city, AZ	217,385	5,821	2.7
Metairie CDP, LA	138,481	3,665	2.6
Pueblo city, CO	106,595	2,818	2.6
Billings city, MT	104,170	2,749	2.6
Springfield city, MO	159,498	4,209	2.6
Rockford city, IL	152,871	3,970	2.6
Lowest percent 85 years and over			
West Jordan city, UT	103,712	390	0.4
Enterprise CDP, NV	108,481	423	0.4
Frisco city, TX	116,989	470	0.4
Killeen city, TX	127,921	524	0.4
Gilbert town, AZ	208,453	999	0.5
North Las Vegas city, NV	216,961	1,068	0.5
Fontana city, CA	196,069	1,020	0.5
West Valley City city, UT	129,480	689	0.5
Moreno Valley city, CA	193,365	1,083	0.6
Miramar city, FL	122,041	725	0.6

Table 5: The Highest and Lowest Percentage of Population 85 Years and Older⁸²

From the above statistics, it is clear that Springfield, Missouri rates low in percentages of those eight-five and over in their population in contrast to the rate of individuals sixty-five and

⁸¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, AOA, “Profile of Older Americans: 2014,” Accessed November 18, 2015, www.aoa.acl.gov/aging_statistics/profile/2014.

⁸² Ibid.

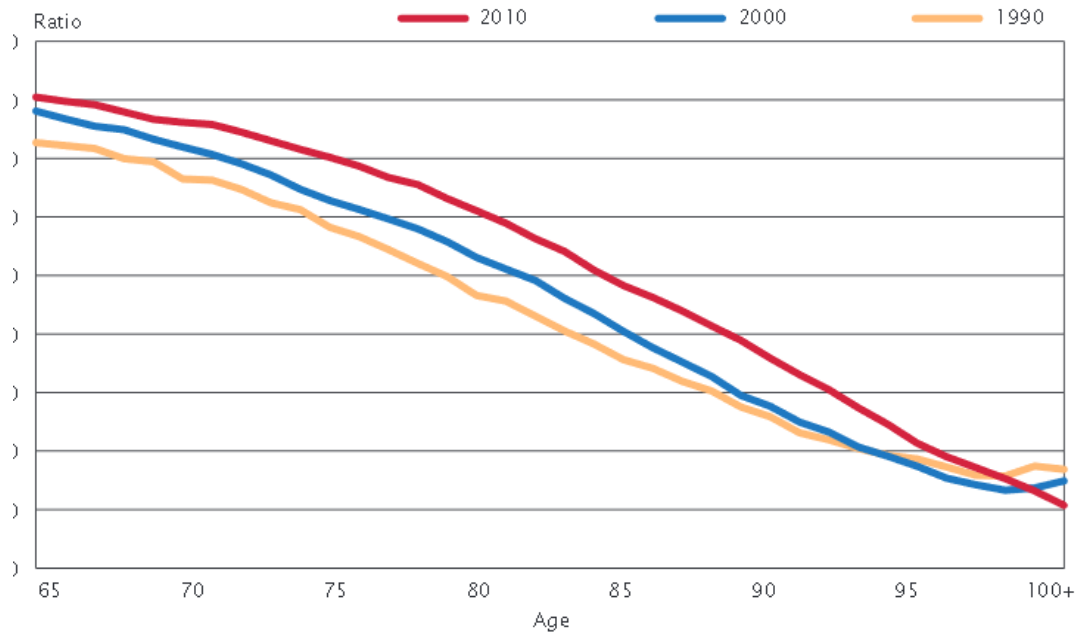
older in Independence, Missouri.⁸³ Jefferson City, compared with Independence and Springfield, lacks a tremendous population for seniors over sixty. With approximately 43,000 residents, and just about half female population, only 5,592 are qualified as seniors in the area.⁸⁴ This review of three of the metropolitan cities in Missouri was to get a demographic study of the elderly and/or ethnic diversities in the community. There are certainly widows among the elderly age group. The outcomes of the elderly appear to be living a little longer, yet they are expected to expand in numbers in the near future.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ U.S. Census Bureau Population Survey: Suburban Stats, Population Demographics for Jefferson City, Missouri in 2014 and 2015, Accessed November 7, 2015, <https://suburbanstats.org/population/missouri/how-many-people-live-in-jefferson-city>.

Sex Ratio by Age: 1990, 2000, and 2010

(For more information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/doc/sf1.pdf)



Note: Sex ratio is calculated as the number of males per 100 females.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census Summary File 2C, Census 2000 Summary File 1, and 2010 Census Summary File 1.

Table 6: Sex Ratio by Age 1990, 2000, and 2010⁸⁵

Widowhood

The state of losing a spouse to death is termed as widowhood. One moment you are enjoying the present life with your husband, the next minute he is gone, and you are immediately promoted to a “full-fledged widow.”⁸⁶ Widowhood requires no aptitude test, course of study or experience. The Hebraic word for widow “*almanab* in the Old Testament carries multiple meanings as translated in the Septuagint LXX as *chera*: any woman who is left without a

⁸⁵ United States Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, “The Older Population: 2010 Census Briefs,” (November 2011), <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-09.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Gwyneth Whilsmith, “On Being a Widow: Look Away Across the Sea, Where Mansions are Prepared for Thee,” *The Presbyterian Record* (May 1, 2006): 130-131.

provider for any reason; the state of loneliness; abandonment or helplessness.⁸⁷ In New Testament Greek, the word for widow is *cheras* from the base derivative of *chasma*, and generally refers to a woman who has lost her husband in any way, whether through death, divorce, desertion or imprisonment.”⁸⁸

In all circumstances, God has given a clear message of his ultimate love and concern surrounding the basic needs of widows, whether in the local church or in the community, young or old. A figurative meaning of the word widow is defined by Strong's Concordance as “a city stripped of inhabitants and riches.”⁸⁹ It is a probability that most women will most likely outlive men of their age group.

Isaiah described the status and care for widows in the following passage, “Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood anymore.”⁹⁰ Speaking to Israel in the image of a shamed woman, it is the fear and shame of Israel’s youth that ensued with their continued acts of idolatry, which resulted with the reproach of her state of widowhood and rejection. Israel’s fate was under Egyptian bondage or Assyrian’s affliction. Her state of widowhood was Israel’s exile. Widowhood then was considered a total disgrace, and is still in many parts of the world today. This reproach, according to theologians and biblical studies, has lasted approximately two-thousand years.

⁸⁷ Deborah Welsh Landers, “Focus on the Family: Defending the Defenseless,” *Christian Worldview*, Vol 3 (2007):12-13.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, 5503, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/chera.html> .

⁹⁰ Isaiah 54:4.

People in general look forward to aging with dignity and security. The latter is true especially among the elderly and widows. There are extenuating issues when dealing with widows without the spousal support of the late spouse in society. A woman with a husband makes her “contributions to society through her husband,” however, her status as a widow only made her as a liability to society.⁹¹ There are various age groups and a diversity of cultures across America that are affected with the state of widowhood. Most widows lose either all or at least half of the spouse’s income upon his death, depending on the widow’s financial situation prior to his passing some wives may have maintained employment, whereas for others, financial dependency was upon the spouse’s income.

Even as a beneficiary for some with life insurance monies, these funds can be a temporary benefit or a permanent fix. The spouse without insurance is another greater burden for the widow, especially if she is without further spousal support and no income. Before she decides where and how she is going to live, it is the unsympathetic bill collector who is calling or ringing the doorbell. It is advisable in this situation that the widow may need to consult an attorney or a legal aid for further advice. “The financial transitioning and decision making is certainly one of the most daunting and overwhelming parts of the healing journey.”⁹² A widow with ample support from thus, should not be the responsibility of the local church.

Notwithstanding social and economic contributions to society, the elderly population are vulnerable with everyday forms of discrimination. To end the cases of abuse, neglect and violence, governments, the general public, and churches must work together to end “destructive

⁹¹ John N. Oswalt, *The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 596.

⁹² Carole Brody Fleet, *Happily Even After: A Guide to Getting through (and beyond) the Grief of Widowhood* (Berkley, CA: Cleis Press, 2012), 120.

practices” of the elderly population by investing in their welfare.⁹³ Establishing and organizing a productive ministry is vital to churches through leadership. As church leaders and the churches work together in providing the necessary requirements in preparing the ministry for widows, this curriculum will continue to enhance the church’s overall devoted mission.

The impact of the loss of a spouse creates loneliness, grief, and depression. There are many areas the local church needs to be aware of in regards to their care. Issues such as a widow’s financial situation, transportation services, maintenances in the home, issues finance, and emotional or physical ailments, will be the discussion in the next chapter.

⁹³ United Nations News Centre, “UN Urges Countries to Address Needs of Ageing Population,” www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/.

CHAPTER THREE

DEVELOPING THE CURRICULUM

“Let thy widows trust in me.”

Jeremiah 49:11b

The passages in the Bible regarding widows' life experiences are there as examples and learning for widows today. The apostle Paul would echo, "...All these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."⁹⁴ Without a helpmate or family, the local church is accountable and is commissioned to rescue and minister to the widows. To ignore the command of God is to be in disobedient to the Word of God. There are numerous passages in the Bible with references concerning widows. God has a special concern for them, along with orphans and others in their challenging situations. In scriptures, it is evident of the love that our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates the nature of His adoration towards women. As already noted, women were supporters of the early church.

The Bible records women as the last to view Jesus at the cross, and the first at the empty tomb. They were a part of the early church, some as leaders "sprang up in the cities of the Roman Empire, such as Priscilla, Chloe, Lydia, Apphia, Nympha, the mother of John Mark, and possibly the elect lady of John's second epistle."⁹⁵ Since then, women have continued to be an integral part of the church today. Some have developed ministries within the local church.

Ministry does not always have to be in the confines of the church. The widow of Zarephath provided a personal ministry to the prophet Elijah in providing him with food and

⁹⁴ 1Corinthians 10:6.

⁹⁵ Catherine Kroeger, "The Neglected History of Women in the Early Church," *Christian History Institute* 17, (1988).

water.⁹⁶ For women, a source of ministry is imperative, and this need to be developed within local churches without such ministries. This all would entail educational training for the ministry and community resources. There is indication that the widowed find “religious and spiritual activities” as a help in compensating for their loss.⁹⁷ The results of the family commitment and the church’s involvement are the reinforcement care of the widow, church and ministry for widows. The local church’s involvement can produce constructive effects on the bereaved widow.

Widows Left-Behind

The status of widowhood is not merely a “problem to be solved or a circumstance that must somehow be overcome.”⁹⁸ Women who have lost a spouse are often in danger of being mistreated, taken advantage of or forgotten within the church community. Those who live alone are considered easy prey to others. As churches seem to be preoccupied with other functions of the church, little concern is given for the widowed wives of the church. There is a heightened awareness for not only a ministry program for these widows in the local church, but also concern for their welfare. Much concern is for widows of pastor’s wives that seem as if they are left behind. Their position in the congregation as the First Lady of the church is no longer their place as they are misplaced by another pastor’s wife: “Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.”⁹⁹ It is a difficult situation for widows who were the

⁹⁶ 1Kings 17:8-16.

⁹⁷ Lucinda Lee Roff, Daniel Durkin, Fei Sun, and David L. Klemmack, “Widows, Religiousness, and Self-Accessed Well-Being among Older Adults, *Journal of religion, Spirituality and Aging* (2008): 19:4, 43-59.

⁹⁸ Carol W. Cornish, *The Undistracted Widow: Living for God After Losing Your Husband* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 18.

⁹⁹ Job 22:9.

pastor's wife for many years and are not addressed as the First Lady of the church anymore. One of the greatest opportunities of the church is having a heart for all widows.

God cautions the mistreatment of widows. The recorded words of the New Century Bible says, "Do what is fair and right. Don't mistreat or hurt the foreigner, orphans or widows."¹⁰⁰ He further warns of curses in Deuteronomy 27:19 to those who distorts judgement due to widows, and blesses those who bless widows. It is common to hear a lot about the church's obligation to families, orphans, and widows, yet many overlooked the concern for the pastoral widows who are left behind. Where do you go after sitting on the front bench? Out-of-place is their position to the second or back bench. Misplacement has caused many to exit out the front or back door. They too are vulnerable to the hurts of grief, loneliness or depression, and all other ramifications that goes with the effects of widowhood.

The Art of Grieving

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance."

Jeremiah 22:3b

Grief makes it difficult to concentrate and to move forward. Although widows are subject to emotional distress, physical stress or disability, and financial strain due to the loss of a companion, it is imperative that they allow themselves to mourn the loss. The sentiment of "grief is not an enemy—it is the natural process of walking through hurt and growing because of the walk."¹⁰¹ Spiritual needs are not the only consequences of widows' loss; for instance, they may also have emotional needs.

¹⁰⁰ Jeremiah 22:3b.

¹⁰¹ Yorick Spiegel, *The Grief Process: Analysis and Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1977), 67.

It is by evident the suffering of painful loneliness she continues to feel that the widow never gets over the pain and loss of losing her husband. They just manage to cope with the loss. Although God proclaims the widow is never alone, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” there is still a magnitude of loneliness the widow experiences.¹⁰² Many die within years of losing their spouses, due to grief and loneliness.

Grief entails many influences: “family background, socioeconomic status, level of education, and culture.”¹⁰³ “Other important factors were revealed in a study with the Women's Health Initiative. The women ages 50-79 were associated with physical and mental health problems, and with poorer physical and mental health behaviors than married women.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the “emotional and social functioning enhanced, attesting to their resilience and capacity to reestablish relations after a three year survey, discovered the prevalence of depression and anxiety disorders was considerably elevated in widowed individuals, especially during the first year of losing a spouse.”¹⁰⁵ It was also discovered that “psychological stress leading to depression and anxiety is a normal response of bereavement; however, the increased vulnerability of widowed people to psychiatric illnesses may result in suffering and impairment of daily functioning.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Hebrews 13:5.

¹⁰³ Carol W. Cornish, *The Undistracted Widow: Living for God After Losing Your Husband* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 78.

¹⁰⁴ Jeanne M. Sorrell, “Widows and Widowers in Today's Society” *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* (2012): 14-18.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Researchers Simone Onrust and Pim Cuijpers “conducted a systematic review of mood and anxiety disorders in widowhood that included 11 studies of 3,481 widowed individuals.”¹⁰⁷ Since the problems in these individuals were not always evident in the early stages of bereavement, within two years after the loss of a spouse, health care professionals must be advised to monitor individuals for potential mental health problems.¹⁰⁸ Due to the small number of the 11 studies, the researchers advised caution in simplifying their conclusions.

As in regards to the care of widows, the words of the apostle Paul are so sternly recorded in his epistle to Timothy:

Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man. Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan.¹⁰⁹

It is custom that family, friends, and the church adequately provide needed comfort and services during the widow's time of grief and up to the time of the funeral. Shortly after the funeral services and burial, the focus of ministry care seems to fade away, leaving the widow

¹⁰⁷ Simone Onrust and Pim Cuijpers, “Predictors of Psychological Adjustment after Bereavement” *International Psychogeriatrics*, Department of Clinical Psychology, VU University Amsterdam (2007):921-34.

¹⁰⁸ Jeanne M. Sorrell, “Widows and Widowers in Today's Society” *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* (2012): 14-18.

¹⁰⁹ 1Timothy 5:3-16.

alone and in their grief. The church, as advocates for widows of the church, have abandoned the priority care for church widows. Care is essential, especially for those without income or less income, and for widows without children or grandchildren to attend to their well-being. This is the opportunity for the church to be actively engaged in displaying the love of God for widows and others.

Widows Indeed

“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but indeed and in truth.”

1John 3:16-18

The church is called to serve and lay down his or her life for those in need. Paul expresses in the New Testament his instructions to the first-century Ephesian congregation in his First Epistle of Timothy, which parallels with the Old Testament decree of God's directives already set in place for the church's compliance. With wisdom and practical guidance in instituting the criteria for the widows in the church, Paul's address to the early church regards the support of widows. He is adamant about their care as he defines the provision for widows in two different groups: the community's duty to support the senior widows, who were sixty years of age and older, and the duty not to support the younger widows who are under sixty years of age.¹¹⁰ These principles Paul outlines in the fifth chapter of 1Timothy essentially address four categories concerning widowhood:

(1) Vs3-5 speak of widows who have no financial support of family or friends,

¹¹⁰ 1Timothy (senior widows) 5:3-10; (younger widows) 11-16.

- (2) Vs4 and 16 addresses the responsibility of the children and grandchildren of widows,
- (3) Vs11-15 speak of the younger widows under the age of 60, who have the opportunity to remarry,
- (4) Vs6 speaks of widows who live an ungodly lifestyle in contrast with those dedicated with godly precepts to God.

Paul defines widows as those indeed, as actually widows in need who were vulnerable, without family to care for them. Godly women trusted in God like Anna: “And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but was completely devoted to the service of God with fastings and prayers night and day.”¹¹¹ Anna, is the woman the Bible refers to the one who was in the temple beholding the beautiful eyes of our Savior Jesus Christ as an infant. She represents a godly woman who had the blessed opportunity of viewing the Savior. Considered a prophetess in those days, she represents one without a husband, family, or friends. Her confidence in God is noteworthy here in the Gospel of Luke, and is the perfect example that demonstrates spiritual faithfulness and motivation for widows today.

She was one who established herself in total reference to God as a prayer warrior, served in various capacities, and distinguished herself with a reputation of devoted service in the temple. Paul says that the church should “honor” such widows, like visiting the sick or assisting care of the orphans, and rendering hospitality of washing feet of the guest. This was common of those working in the temple due to the travels on sandy and dusty roads with the wearing of sandals.

¹¹¹ Luke 2:37.

Conferring to “The Apostolic Constitutions” fourth century work, there was an official order pertaining to the support of widows.”¹¹² It seems Paul was seeking guidance concerning their conditions in reference to needy widows who qualified for thus. Per requirements, they had to be actively devoted to the ministry in order to benefit for the financial support through the church.

With the loss of her spouse just seven years after their initial marriage, Anna was persistent with her daily prayers and fastings of faith. Without bitterness, no husband or child to tend to her in her senior years, the Bible says she never remarried, but remained faithful to the temple day and night. Since she had no children, widows of the church often had the opportunity to care for orphans. These children were often left unattended to die, wherein the unscrupulous would sometimes take them for slavery or prostitution.”¹¹³ Yet eighty-four years later, and most likely over the age of one-hundred, Anna has the gracious opportunity to view the Lord Jesus Christ as an infant, a desire she so longed to see, as she dedicated herself to the temple and to God.

Paul encourages Timothy, his son in the gospel, to “honor widows who are widows indeed” in the fifth chapter of his First Epistle of Timothy.¹¹⁴ Paul denotes that the church should financially assist widows indeed. He speaks of dedicated widows such as the example of Anna who defines the criteria of such:

- (1) No children or descendants (vs4)
- (2) Desolate and in need (vs5)

¹¹² John MacArthur, *Caring for Widows: I Timothy 5:3-16* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991).

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 1991), 30.

- (3) Trusting in God (vs5)
- (4) Living in daily prayer (vs5)
- (5) Is no pleasure seeker (vs6)
- (6) Blameless in life and conduct (vs7)
- (7) At least 60 years old (vs9)
- (8) Not often married or divorced (9)
- (9) Her reputation one of good works (10)
- (10) She has brought up children (10)
- (11) Been hospitable (vs10)
- (12) Served the saints (vs10)
- (13) Relieved suffering (vs10)
- (14) Followed every good work (vs10)¹¹⁵

The Greek word translated “honor” has several meanings: the idea of a “price” paid or received; to honor or esteem attached to something or someone due to their value or can refer both to material support and/or esteem.”¹¹⁶ In verse 3 of the present text, proper recognition in honor to those widows who are really in need, represents material and financial support.

Financial Loss

Struggles with financial loss is second to the greatest loss of a spouse. It is a society’s loss to many, and is an “ancient story that still plays out today in the sub-Saharan Africa, where 20.9 million widows struggle for survival” according to 2010 research from the UK-based

¹¹⁵ Finis Jennings Dake, *Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible* (Lawrenceville, GA: Dake, 2001), 415.

¹¹⁶ John MacArthur, *Caring for Widows: I Timothy 5:3-16* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991).

Loomba Foundation.¹¹⁷ Therefore, when the husband passes away, he expires with her means of survival. This was especially true with the widows of the Old Testament when the husband died. The wife was not entitled to her husband's inheritance if she did not have a male heir. It was the benefit of the husband's family to receive the brother's land and inheritance.

As there are many references to widows in the Bible, their integrity is to be honored, "Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day."¹¹⁸ The word desolate meant she had no husband or family to care to her necessities. There are numerous widows indeed sitting in congregations throughout America sixty years and older without financial assistance. Their dedication not only God, but are also a benefit of the church as well. Many however, are left penniless with the loss of their husband. Such is the story of the widow's mite, found in the Gospel of Luke 21:1-4. As Jesus often taught among the crowd wherever He went, on one occasion in teaching on the hypocrisy of the scribes, "He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And He said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."

Widows without means were considered poor. Customarily, women were not allowed places of employment in society, and if the spouse left them destitute and without revenue, they basically were considered poor. This widow was one poor woman who met the qualifications, without resources. As all sermons illustrate, she gave all she had. Regardless of the amount of a

¹¹⁷ Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "How Not to Care for Widows" *Christianity Today*, (2012), 56:17-19.

¹¹⁸ 1Timothy 5:5.

few cents, it was all she had, and all she gave. It was her generosity; not her form of demonstration, but a message of representation Jesus used as an illustration to the Pharisees.

As Jesus spoke to his disciples regarding the widow's mite, it was also contrast to the scribe's pretense of their religiosity views. They often stole from the poor. One with little offered all she had, two mites, which is worth a fraction of a penny. The death of a spouse is a crisis, multiplying challenges for the surviving widow, as it strains the family resources and likelihood of survival.

The Gospel of Luke has a touching story of a funeral procession of the widow of Nain, whose only son had died for no apparent reason, "And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her."¹¹⁹ Seeing the state of her great loss of her son, the Bible records Jesus being moved with a heart of compassion, revived her son's life. Wherever He went, He demonstrated the act of ministry. This widow with the loss of her husband and the loss of her son, would have been a misplacement in society for her, who most likely would not been allowed to reside on her property. This would had put her in a vulnerable desolate state, emotionally and financially without an heir to provide for her needs.

On the other hand if, the widow had an heir did not mean the land was entitled to her; it would still be to a male successor. Then, land to a widow "was tantamount to a life insurance policy today."¹²⁰ She stayed on the land, by reaping the benefit of her son's entitlement to the land. Most widows usually returned to their families or the family of their deceased spouse, such

¹¹⁹ Luke 7:11-12.

¹²⁰ Wesley M. Teterud, *Caring for Widows: You and Your Church Can Make a Difference* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 3.

as the mother-in-law as Ruth did with Naomi or as Tamar did with her father-in-law.¹²¹ The latter is a bittersweet relationship where Tamar bore twins by her father-in-law.

Despite errors in life, poverty or illness, the act of ministry is an important and relevant role to the bereaved. This is why it is vital for the local church, family and the community to allow themselves to be foreseen as an encouraging force to the widows all through their process of healing. As far back in the Old Testament, God always provided a way of protection and provision for the women of the Bible.

Levirate Marriage

Without a doubt, God instituted laws of remarriage as an order of protection and security of women and widows as far back in the Old Testament. Widows who had no heir were considered rights under the Jewish Law as what was considered a “Levirate Marriage” where the brother of the deceased brother, was obligated to marry the widow, pending he was not already married, and if she had no children or had surviving children. If the brother was already married, she could marry the next of kin, as Ruth did with Boaz, who was her deceased husband’s next of kin to raise up a godly seed. This would bring her under the care and protection of the spouse. Their marriage was not considered a Levirate Marriage, since Boaz was not Ruth’s deceased husband’s brother. Nevertheless, God had established the institution of “*Go’el*,” which meant to buy back or to protect as a kinsmen redeemer.¹²²

In Deuteronomy 25: 5-10, God instructed Israel the rites of marriage and provision:

If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and

¹²¹ “The Hebrew Name for God-The Redeemer,” Accessed November 7, 2015, Ruth 1:16; Genesis 38:1-11, http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Names_of_G-d/Redeemer/redeemer.html.

¹²² Wesley Teterud, *Caring for Widows: You and Your Church Can Make a Difference* (Reno, NV: Baker Books, 1993), 4.

take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

Since the time of Israel's inception, God has been known as the defender of widows.

When widows lose the security and care of their husbands through his death, God as their defender instituted laws as a protector's guide for them.¹²³ Women are his special object of provision and protection. For a loss of a spouse, is a loss of support, which is a concern to God. As scripture reveals women as the weaker vessel, and man as the stronger vessel, and as her protector, she is therefore under the protection of her husband.

Solomon Schechter and Joseph Jacobs clarifies the conditions of a Levirate Marriage, known as the Hebrew term "Yibbum" in the following article:

Marriage with a brother's widow. This custom is found among a large number of primitive peoples, a list of which is given by Westermarck ("History of Human Marriage," pp. 510-514). In some cases it is the duty of a man to marry his brother's widow even if she has had children by the deceased, but in most cases it occurs when there are no children, as among the Hindus ("Institutes of Manu," v. 59-63). Among the Hebrews marriage with a brother's widow was forbidden as a general rule (Lev18:16, 22:21), but was regarded as obligatory (Deut25:5-6) when there was no male issue, and when the two brothers had been dwelling on the same family estate. The surviving brother could evade the obligation by the ceremony of Halizah. The case of Ruth is not one of levirate marriage, being connected rather with the institution of the Go'el; but the relations of Tamar with her successive husbands and with Judah are an instance (Gen38). If the levirate union resulted in male issue, the child would succeed to the estates of the deceased brother. It would appear that later the levirate marriage came to be regarded as obligatory only when the widow had no children of either sex.¹²⁴

¹²³ Deuteronomy 10:18; Proverbs 15:25; Malachi 3:5.

¹²⁴ Solomon Schechter and Joseph Jacobs, "Levirate Marriage" (Hebr. "Yibbum") *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Accessed October 29, 2015, <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9859-levirate-marriage>.

The Halizah

The released of the brother-in-law's obligation to marry his brother's widow was conducted with a ceremony. This ceremony consisted of the "taking off of the brother-in-law's shoe."¹²⁵ During the ceremony, the widow "loosens the shoe of the brother-in-law in the presence of the elders of the town, spits upon the ground before him, and pronounces a certain prescribed formula."¹²⁶ After the process, the widow would be free to marry whomever she desired as described previously in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

The ceremonial process of the untying of the brother-in-law's shoe is called the Halizah. It is acknowledged that this removing of the shoe, symbolized the brother-in-law's rejection of responsibility. Many times it was accounted to his own selfishness. The shoe was made from two pieces of animal skin sewn together.¹²⁷ Spitting on the ground further instituted disgrace of his obligation as the brother of the deceased in dishonoring the sister-in-law. All was demonstrated as a public display of discredit of the family member's refusal to carry on the name of the deceased brother. With the eradication of polygamy, levirate marriage is basically extinct, although Halizah is still the accepted custom in many traditionally Jewish communities.¹²⁸

In most cases, it was the widow's relative of her deceased husband. If her husband had a surviving brother that was unmarried, it was then the brother-in-law. Freeing herself to remarry entailed a ritual process, unlike divorce agreements today.

¹²⁵ Julius H. Greenstone, "HALIZAH ("taking off," "untying")" *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Accessed October 29, 2015, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/7105-halizah>.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Levirate Marriage and Halizah, *Jewish Heritage Online Magazine*, Accessed November 12, 2015, <http://jhom.com/lifecycle/marriage/halitza.htm>.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Freeing herself was the first step, because widows without a spouse needed to be protected if unmarried. The ideal future for a widow is remarriage. Under the care of the security of the Old Testament, the widow remained under the care of God. Encouragement to find shelter with family or in another marriage was permitted as not only for her protection, but also for financial reasons as well. Ministering the aid to the poor widows fell upon the responsibility of the synagogues and the people of God in assisting with the poverty relief of the widows. Customarily, a collection group would go out, collect goods and funds, and distribute it to the widows Friday evening prior to the Sabbath.¹²⁹ The Old Testament allowed the opportunity for the widowed the right to remarry. The stipulation of the aforementioned, as long as the remarriage was a Christian marriage; it was preferable the spouse was a Christian.

The New Testament also permits widows to remarry, as was Paul's focus on marriage and his intentions of faithfulness in his address to the church of Corinth, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God."¹³⁰

As special conditions were established for the widows in the Old and the New Testament, God as well instituted laws of clemency for widow's necessary needs through what was considered a special tithe:

At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are

¹²⁹ John MacArthur, "Widows in the Church: Grace to You: 1Timothy 5:3-4," (1986, 36-54). <http://www.gty.org/resources/study-guides/40-5209/caring-for-widows>.

¹³⁰ I Corinthians 7:39-40.

within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.¹³¹

“Widows and orphans lacked the economic, legal, and physical protection a man provided in that society.”¹³²

When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, before the Lord I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them.¹³³

The strategy of gleaning during the harvest would allow those such as the widows, to gather the leftovers:

When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.¹³⁴

Being a widow, barren and childless was a double hardship, and the strain of survival is a continuous situation today, especially a serious condition for widows who were strictly

¹³¹ Deuteronomy 14:28-29.

¹³² Chad Brand, Charles Draper and Archie England eds. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Publisher, 2003), 1621.

¹³³ Deuteronomy 26:12-13.

¹³⁴ Deuteronomy 24:19-21.

housewives, without an income or education for substantial employment. Many are hurting within, and not always crying for any assistant.

In the early church, recorded in the Book of Acts, there was a conflict over the care of its widows in the distribution of food to the widows.¹³⁵ The issue resulted in a language barrier of the Grecians and Hebrew Christians. The Greeks became suspicious of the Hebrews (Jews of Palestine), and their treatment of the widows. Many, however, resided in areas where the Grecian and Aramaic languages were spoken and understood, due to Christian conversion. The Jews learned and spoke Grecian, and the Greeks conversely understood the Aramaic language. To decipher the conflict, a selected group of men from the apostles were chosen, including Stephen to oversee the ministry of giving to the widows who were being neglected of their daily sustenance. Stephen was later martyred because of his faith of the gospel, which is recorded in the seventh and eighth chapters of the Book of Acts. Theologians note these men were most likely the first deacons of the early church. Yet, the Bible confirms them as honest men who were full of wisdom and the Holy Ghost.¹³⁶ To the twenty-first century reader, they are foreseen as godly representatives signifying ministry in the early church, serving widows without spouses and income.

Many of the elderly today live on a fixed income, either Retirement, Social Security or both. Some may own a home or reside on their pension or spouse's in a retirement community. Approximately 5% of family households with the elderly had incomes "less than \$15,000 and

¹³⁵ Acts 6:1-6.

¹³⁶ Acts 6:3.

67% had incomes of \$35,000 or more.”¹³⁷ More than “3.6 million elderly persons (8.7%) were below the poverty level in 2011, where older women had a higher poverty rate (10.7%) than older men (6.2%) in 2011.”¹³⁸ Older persons living alone were much more likely to be poor “(16.5%) than were older persons living with families (5%).”¹³⁹ With the loss of the spouse, the widow’s income many times is cut in half, as she tries very hard to survive on her husband’s portion of Social Security, Retirement or Medicare that is awarded. Unfortunately, “many are unaware of their eligibility for benefits and services that could substantially improve their economic well-being.”¹⁴⁰

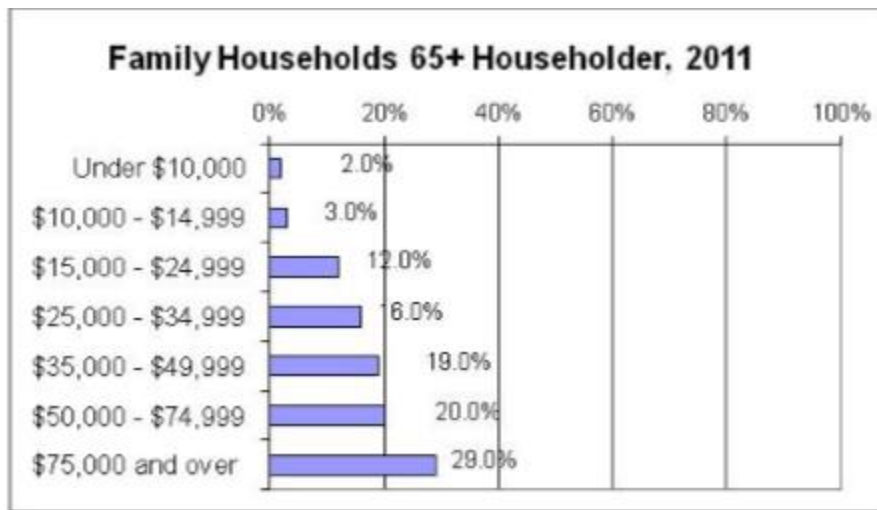


Table 7: Householder 65 ¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, AOA, “Profile of Older Americans: 2012,” (Washington, DC), Accessed August 23, 2015, http://www.aoa.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2012/docs/2012profile.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Lucinda Lee Roff, Daniel Durkin, Fei Sun, and David L. Klemmack, “Widows, Religiousness, and Self-Accessed Well-Being among Older Adults, *Journal of religion, Spirituality and Aging* (2008):19:4, 43-59.

¹⁴¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living,, AOA, “Profile of Older Americans: 2012,” (Washington, DC), Accessed August 23, 2015, http://www.aoa.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2012/docs/2012profile.

Due to the high cost of living and economical cuts, Social Security Administration recently announced no annual cost-of-living increase for 2016 benefits, with a nevertheless possible increase in Medicare cost.¹⁴² Affected by the bad news are not only widows and the elderly, but disabled workers, veterans, and children. The drop of fuel prices, increase of medical care, recreation and education are based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers are calculated through the Labor Statistics.”¹⁴³ Social security, rather pensions or retirement is the main source of income for many seniors. This creates a lack of monthly and annually funds for the elderly generation that many local churches are unaware.

The flipside are the children in foster care without parents, which often leaves the added responsibility of grandparents as the children’s sole provider. Whether it is through death or the parent is incarcerated, it is usually the single elderly grandmother who engages this role of guardianship, creating an extreme hardship for an elderly grandparent as a caregiver with very little resources availability. This to the elderly grandparent and children, is a life of mere survival.

Though they have economic circumstances that are difficult, widows do not often complain of their financial loss, but still continues to support the church with their tithes and offerings. Contrary to belief, the church many times assumes the widow’s needs are being met. Nor do they humbly ask for help or complain to the church regarding their financial struggles. Nevertheless, they are seen as a dedicated widow of the local church, without a husband, and presses on without complaint.

One remarkable author and widow, Patti McCarthy Broderick denotes the resiliency of

¹⁴² Millie Dent, “Social Security’s COLA and Your Benefits, Explained,” The Fiscal Times (October 16, 2015), <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/social-security-cola-benefits-explained>.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

the pressures and struggles of the loss of a spouse. She so eloquently wrote the following words of wisdom in her book, *He Said "Press": Hearing God through Grief* as an encouragement to other widow's triumph:

"Lord, I admit it is hard to press on
When it seems what I desire most is behind me
I long for a man you have taken home
A man you gave me, and then taken away all too soon
"Press" is the last words he would ever say to me
Often the road before me seems rough, even impassable
And I'm not always sure you have chosen this path
Yet, you are there, gently speaking words of encouragement
So I press ahead, with my ears listening for your voice."¹⁴⁴

Not for Seniors Only

Widowhood is not always for the elderly generation. As Paul speaks of the support of widows in his epistle of 1 Timothy, his concern is basically for the senior widows of the local church. His focus is on verses 11-16, and therefore encourages the church not to make it a habit of supporting the younger widows who were young enough to provide for themselves, and/or eligible for remarriage. As the older widows made their pledge to God and the church, likewise did the younger widows. Desiring to marry again, she would renege on her pledge, "incurring the censure of the church." and though Paul encourages them to remarry, his concern was the

¹⁴⁴ Patti McCarthy Broderick, *He Said "Press": Hearing God through Grief* (Bloomington, MN: Zondervan, 2004), 143.

breaking of a pledge.¹⁴⁵ Paul insinuates the younger widows were not totally rendered to the cause of Jesus Christ, but only until they were remarried.

Everyday worldwide, women under the age of forty-five lose their spouses at a young age. Paul's directives for the younger widows is in contrast to the older widows. It is better to marry he says, as he encourages his wisdom to the younger widows to remarry, and have children. They additionally were encourage to continue in the faith by marrying a believer, and not becoming an insolent against Christ. An existing issue Paul foresaw in their desire for remarriage tend to be greater than their faith in Christ, many times led to a marriage with an unbeliever. Conditions and temptations the younger widows fell to in the Ephesian congregation was breaking their vows of faith through unfavorable remarriage of those who were benefiting from the support of the church.

It was not the church's intentions to support the widows financially on a continuous basis. The church was not then, and is not now considered a welfare agency. Nor did Paul want them to be condition to the support of the church. In order to benefit from the church, the young widows had to support the church in being faithful in duties, until they remarried. The aforementioned was really Paul's basis for the non-support for the younger widows. Paul's advice for the young widows of the local church, is be encouraged to seek wisdom from the elder members of the church, and in seeking God's directions in remarriage. Loneliness succumbs to a wrong choice of marriage, resulting in hurts and many disappointments.

A widow without a spouse was a woman left without means of financial support for herself or her children. Marriage was their means of stability. Being a wife and mother was their immediate career. Very few women in the Bible sustain occupations outside the home such as

¹⁴⁵ John MacArthur, *Caring for Widows: 1 Timothy 5:3-16* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991).

Lydia, a devout business woman, the seller of purple, and Phoebe a deaconess, and servant of the early church.¹⁴⁶ Women did not work outside the home, though both were mostly likely wealthy business women, who Paul speaks greatly of regarding their work in the church, and who supported him in the ministry. In society today, women young and old maintain employment, but for widows without an income or unable to maintain employment, a loss of a spouse is a tragic loss of income, especially since it requires two incomes in the twenty-first century to maintain a household.

Many are or are not employed prior to their elevation to widowhood. Spouses die of many causes whether due to illness or expire in an untimely death, such as homicides. For instance, the state of Missouri presently is within the top ten criminal rate in the country. The highest homicide rate for this year alone is climbing every day, and has caused many young married women to become a widow at a very young age.

Age not only becoming a young widow, but with small children to support and raise. It is devastating news in avenues of survival for the young mother with children and without an income. There are, however, various government assistance programs available through the Department of Welfare and Social Security Administration, and she will most likely have to sit through various chains of events in obtaining financial support for her and her children in accommodating the family.

If the spouse was on disability prior to his death, per documents and support, it has nothing to do with the widow receiving survivor's benefits for her and the children.¹⁴⁷ Leaders

¹⁴⁶ Acts 16:13-15; Romans 16:1-2.

¹⁴⁷ Carole Brody Fleet, "Happily Even After: A Guide to Getting through (and beyond) the Grief of Widowhood," (Berkley, CA: Cleis Press, 2012), 113, <https://www.socialsecurity.gov/survivors/>.

and local churches to should take heed to the care of widows sitting and hurting within their congregation. A ministry for widows of all ages is of the mandate and the heart of God, and should be an implement for the local church. The need is considerate when ministering the widow's loss and care.

CHAPTER FOUR

RECOMMENDATIONS: ESSENTIALS

*“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another;
as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”*

John 13:33-34

Leadership

In many ways, the church has rejected the mandate to bear one another's burdens. Much was previously elaborated on regarding the responsibility of the church; the church is under the leadership of the pastors who are called by God to lead His flock. While the church belongs to God, there must be leadership to establish and organize a productive ministry care for widows, for God has appointed individuals for various positions in the church: “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”¹⁴⁸ The pastors are the leaders of the church.

The pastor is a shepherd who tends to God's people with biblical guidance, one who preaches the good news of Jesus Christ that produces change through conversion, edification, and teachings to the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁹ The ultimate example for pastors was Jesus' ministry that primarily consisted of preaching, teaching, and healing: “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease among the people”¹⁵⁰ Pastors are to teach the biblical

¹⁴⁸ Ephesians 4:11-12.

¹⁴⁹ Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from all the Scriptures* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2007), 27.

¹⁵⁰ Matthew 9:35.

principles of the Word of God, to lead by example, and to challenge the church to follow God's principles. Paul advised Timothy to preach the Word of God: "Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."¹⁵¹ As the members of the body of Christ are connected and built up in spiritual maturity, the pastor exercises great influence over them, as one who leads others. It has been said if a church has no leaders, it has no discipleship because the guidance of leaders develops spiritual maturity in the members, and produces disciples set to conquer the world.

One role of the pastor/leader is to orchestrate the mission of the church, which is to commit acts of love. The mission may be gathered from Ephesians 4:12: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." This is done through worshipping God in songs and through prayer. The saints of the church are perfected through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, according to 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Leaders are called to be a communion of the body of Christ, reminding the church members of their mission to nurture, manifest, and communicate acts of love. The word love is an action word that is demonstrated by the way leaders should live daily and must be the motivating factor for preparation of a church leader. It is important that the needs of the church be ministered to in love.¹⁵² John 21:15 teaches that it is the responsibility of church leaders to nourish the people in spiritual things.

Jesus' ministry exhibited the love of humanity, without any barriers. In the parable of the Vine and Branches, Jesus attests, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and

¹⁵¹ 2Timothy 4:2.

¹⁵² 1Corinthians 13; Ephesians 4:16.

I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”¹⁵³ In order for believers to benefit from the vine and bring forth fruit, the body of Christ must stay together so that the branches can flourish and be productive. If the branch is severed from the vine stock, it withers and dies. Therein is the representation of the church as a whole, in their failure to acknowledge fellow members of their own congregation. A pastor’s leadership ability is a visionary process in helping others to develop godly concepts and purpose in their lives, as they align with the precepts of the Word of God.

Leadership encompasses a person who is committed, prayerful, and steadfast, does not waver in his or her faith, and is an excellent communicator and listener. These qualities are imperative in helping the church to display kindness toward all members and nonmembers, including the elderly widows of the local church. Author Joseph Stowell, in *Redefining Leadership*, confirms that leadership is a “gift” built upon three concepts that requires the leader to be accountable of his or her own character: willingness to choose character as a defining priority of leadership; willingness to choose follower as leadership identity; willingness to lead with the counterintuitive competencies of the kingdom of Christ or with normative leadership advice.¹⁵⁴ Being a great follower of Christ requires practicing all three concepts.

Having a healthy productive church life benefits the local church and the individual leader, and having a union and spiritual relationship with God benefits the body of Christ; all need the church’s compassion. Leaders should be closely connected with the church; hence, the church should be attuned to the leader and his or her vision. As leaders and churches work

¹⁵³ John 15:5.

¹⁵⁴ Joseph M. Stowell, 2014. *Redefining Leadership: Character-Driven Habits of Effective Leaders*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 24.

together in providing the necessary requirements in preparing the ministry for widows, the intentions of this curriculum to enhance the church's overall mission.

Church

It is vital that the capacity of love for the widows have a place in the local church wherein they are honored. The virtue of love should allow the believers to live in the unity of peace while working together in the body of Christ. In the Gospel of John, Jesus encouraged His disciples to love one another as He loved them. Facilitating the act of love and support opens up participation for everyone that represents enrichment for the local church. As previously notated of the first deacons' early church work in the Book of Acts, the feeding of the deprived widows and their work with orphans are still effective in present day ministry.¹⁵⁵ In many local congregations today, it is the elderly mothers, elders or deacons under the advisement of the pastors who are the overseers of the families and widows of the church. Families on the other hand vary from the norm, where many are residing in single family homes or in a blended family environment. The latter sometimes comes in the form of rebellion when the biological father or mother is out of the home and/or a stepparent resides in the home. Sometimes in a remarriage, children foresee the deceased parent being replaced with a stepparent.

It is important to remember that within the family unit there are several lives involved, "life as a couple, life as a family, and the life of both parents individually," whose commitment is to spend some quality time with the children.¹⁵⁶ The interdependent link of church and home acts as a conditional source where mothers or widows, elders and deacons along with the parents,

¹⁵⁵ Acts 6:1-6.

¹⁵⁶ Carole Brody Fleet, *Happily Even After: A Guide to Getting Through (and beyond) the Grief of Widowhood* (Berkeley, CA: Cleis, 2012), 240.

mediate, as a role model for the children or teens in the home. For all parties, it is a strong reinforcement for the welfare of the child and, for the most part, fostering a ministry developed for the elderly mothers and widows of the church.

Though churches vary in sizes and resources, it is important that leaders overseeing the church with many or few widows in the congregation impart ministries in the church. Appointing a widow as a group leader in one of the church ministries would benefit the church. A widow comforting another widow is often heartwarming, for she understands the heart of grief and loneliness, and the long midnight hour of pain.¹⁵⁷ It is as intensely physical as it is emotional. Within the confines of the church are women who are either working in the corporate world or retired with knowledge that can generate positive influences in the church. As leaders, women hold invaluable roles in all societies, “were seen as founts of wisdom” in religion and secular teachers.¹⁵⁸ Many became successful attorneys, physicians, caregivers or served as volunteers.

The apostle Paul agrees in his Epistle to Titus, with directives regarding the women to teach the younger women, “To be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Be teachers of good things, to teach the younger women, to love their husband and their children, be housekeepers at home, obedient to their own husband.”¹⁵⁹ Mentoring to the young, would most likely encouraged the younger women to be mentor, as woman usually learn to encourage and uplift one another.

¹⁵⁷ Miriam Neff, “The Widow’s Might,” *Christianity Today* (January 2008): 43-47.

¹⁵⁸ Barbara Wendland, “The Reluctant Senior Citizen,” *Christian Social Action* (January 1999): 25-26. Accessed Liberty EZ Proxy October 7, 2015.

¹⁵⁹ Titus 2:4-5.

Some pastors have a tendency to not always teach on the connection of care regarding widows, or the mention of developing a ministry for them. They seem to be more impressed with the other elements of the church ordinances. Nevertheless, the church should be about edifying one another and participating in all entities of the church. The local church is the only place in society where all bodies are consistently gathered weekly in unison. The church's commission is to assist widows with emotional, spiritual, and physical support. The church provides assistance to them as the weaker vessel that is surrounded with love and affection. This is contrary to the world's perception that the people in general are wholly responsible for their own independent well-being. Jeremiah describes Jerusalem's state of widowhood similar to the widow's present state: abandoned, deprived of home and inheritance, weary, defenseless, without peace, joy or daily necessities.¹⁶⁰ The end result can be hardship of many degrees.

Though the Bible mandates the church's call to minister to the widows, it is not the only avenue available in support of the widows. Adequate means of support include the areas of service resources, such as financial assistance, welfare and health services, medical, counseling, grief management, housing, transportation, visitation, and any other needed essentials of convenience to their needs. If the local church representatives can pull together, then the church can make a difference in its community as well.

Community

Communities with extensive resources have a responsibility for the welfare and care of widows in the community. The life of the Christian community must be organized in such a way as to encourage people in development of spiritual and community participation. Public

¹⁶⁰ Deborah Welsh Landers, "Focus on the Family: Defending the Defenseless," *Christian Worldview* 3, (2007): 12-13.

programs and development can provide housing, counseling, employment and training.

Resources can assist in gaining public assistance, Social Security, Medicare, Disability and Military Benefits.

Creating community support gives the widows opportunities for personal development with forms of resources available such as social services and healthcare consistent with their needs. Many women are not aware of the services available to them. This is where the church and the community working together can determine the social services necessities for the widow. Many women experience adjusting to widowhood difficult, including their physical state and mental status that generate changes. Considering the age of the bereaved, the widow's status may increase or decrease physically or mentally.

In bringing leaders and the community together, there is a similarity between both wherein the "art of medicine and the art of ministry" are designed to help people, and because of this awareness "The American Medical Association has developed a department of religion and medicine to enroll the help of pastors in providing total care with the patient."¹⁶¹ This is where cooperation is needed in assessing the widow's needs spiritually and physically, especially if the widow's health is ailing. As the physician attends to the medical condition of the patient, the pastor can be a person of confidence and spiritual influence in ministering to the church member.

Ministering to those who are ill provides a rich opportunity for the church, as the pastor advises the congregation of illness and hospitalizations of church members. The church may also observe some concerns that the initial physician may not be aware of as they have the opportunity for ministry through telephone calls or visiting the widow in her environment.

¹⁶¹ J. Ernest Breed, "Ministering to Our Ailing Senior Citizens: A Medical-Pastoral Approach," *The Christian Ministry* (March 1971): 29-30. Accessed from Liberty EZ Proxy November 6, 2015.

Physicians do not usually visit patients in their home. Yet, outlining widows' needs and patient guidelines is vital for their health, family and the church's future betterment for all widows' health resources.

If leadership, church and community are involved together, it will strengthen a correlated relationship with each other. This will entail training that is practical teaching and shared techniques so churches can be equipped with the necessary resources to engage churches in spiritual training and growth. Connected together is the opportunity God allows each to bond, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."¹⁶²

The Elements of a Loss

Grief is not on a time limit; rather it is a process. A different process that is not the same for everyone, rather an internal response to loss that is "unpredictable, uncertain, unnerving, and ever-changing."¹⁶³ Through the course of a loss, the widow will experience elements of losing a spouse. Whether the death is a partner, child, or a parent, people have difficulty responding to the effects of grief. Mourning is a part of the grieving process that is expressed outwardly with the loss and grief of a loved one. The widow must be allowed time to grieve her loss.

Alan Wolfelt, the author of *Understanding Your Grief*, says there are "Six Needs of Mourning" that resonate with every widow. The first is accepting the reality of the death. The second is allowing yourself to feel the pain of the loss. The third is remembering the individual. The fourth is developing a new self-identity. The fifth is searching for meaning, and sixth is

¹⁶² Matthew 25:40.

¹⁶³ Tom Zuba, *Permission to Mourn: A New Way to do Grief* (Rockford, IL: Bish Press, 2014), 28.

always allowing someone to assist with your loss.¹⁶⁴ The art of grieving is the beginning of the elements of a loss physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

Within the elements of a loss are the stages of grief. The passing of a spouse is a major life adjustment with changes that comes as a shock, with reality, reaction, and recovery stages. Shock tends to have “a built-protective device that takes over in tragedy”; reality is foreseen as the most difficult stage that can vent into the state of “depression” and dependence on others while the stage of reaction usually causes anger or guilt.¹⁶⁵ These are just some of the stages of grief, yet through whatever extremities of grief the widow goes through, there is hope at the end of the grief process to look forward to, and that is the stage of recovery. More important through all the stages, it is important for others to demonstrate the acts of listening with patience and love because the development is not a time limit achievement. The healing course of grief can take years.

While widows “excel at grieving,” many will agree they are not the most pleasant group to always be around.¹⁶⁶ Grievance is a reminder to what God comforts in His Word, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”¹⁶⁷ God does not guarantee one from a life free of grief of a loss, but does promise to be a refuge in the midst of every storm. His son Jesus Christ endured the pain and agony of suffering, as He put it all on the cross for everyone’s angered pain.

¹⁶⁴ Alan D. Wolfelt, *Understanding Your Grief* (Fort Collins, CO: Companion, 2003), 88.

¹⁶⁵ Spiegel Yorick, *The Grief Process: Analysis and Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1977), 69-72.

¹⁶⁶ Catherine Tidd, *Confessions of a Mediocre Widow* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2014), 238.

¹⁶⁷ Isaiah 53:4.

The Pain of Anger

The anatomy of anger is an emotional state that can enrage many with hate, rage, or resentments. Many can become livid, with a tendency to blame God for the death of a spouse who was not healed, since God is the healer. Though considered a Christian, the believer knows all are not healed on this earth. The most difficult situation to digest makes death feel like the ultimate betrayal by the spouse for leaving her with a mortgage, bills, children, and no job. How can God consider this at this time? So many questions, and few answers. Yet God does not make mistakes. The widow ponders questions through the days of darkness, as if her husband left intentionally or as if this is some form of punishment from God. Sometimes the onset of anger presses some to the thoughts of negativity, not always remembering the traditional vows, “In sickness and in health, til death do us part.”

The key that opens the door to healing is acknowledging the inevitability of the pain, and willingly to embrace and honor the pain.¹⁶⁸ No one wants to go through the grieving process of death, whether it is a short or long term illness. Unfortunately for the widows and their families, there is no preparation or easy process, but admitting to the anger, and not allowing it to be in control is the beginning of isolating the rage within.¹⁶⁹ The feeling of letting go, and the thought of being without a life companion when much has been invested for a significant length of time, is not easy to digest. All of these thoughts sometimes puts one in a state of depression.

¹⁶⁸ Alan D. Wolfelt, *Understanding Your Grief* (Fort Collins, CO: Companion, 2003), 11.

¹⁶⁹ Carole Brody Fleet, *Happily Even After: A Guide to Getting Through (and beyond) the Grief of Widowhood* (Berkeley, CA: Cleis, 2012), 69.

Depression

Depression is a form of disengagement of something, and it is a normal reaction to a loss or traumatic crisis. Grief shares many symptoms with depression, “including sleep disturbances, appetite changes, decreased energy, withdrawal, guilt, dependency, lack of concentration, and a sense of loss of control.”¹⁷⁰ Though grief counseling is beneficial for the widow, however, there are situations wherein the overwhelming sorrows and its circumstances of grief may be qualified as “clinical depression.” Change is not easy, and the effects of grief creep into a form of depression, due to accumulations of the process of the loss of a loved one.

Many times with clinical depression the individual refuses to accept support, where they are unable to function with daily activities, and often times causes their symptoms to persist longer than usual. But as one embraces the comfort of family, friends, and professional aids, talking to them about the death helps in the healing process; “Talk it out, write it out or sing it out to relieve the pain of depression.”¹⁷¹ Whether your spouse died suddenly or slowly, emotions can be experienced like a “sickening roller-coaster ride.”¹⁷² While the widow deals with all the aspects of grief, the perception of fear usually generates. But God is the healer and the one to lean on, who enables the believer to endure the trial of losing a spouse.

¹⁷⁰ Alan D. Wolfelt, *Understanding Your Grief* (Fort Collins, CO: Companion, 2003), 63.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 66.

¹⁷² Carol W. Cornish, *The Undistracted Widow: Living for God After Losing Your Husband* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 91.

Fear

“I will fear no evil, for thou are with me.”

Psalm 23:4

Feelings of anxiety and fear can trigger certain events of the grieving process. C.S. Lewis once said, “No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear.” Jesus speaks of fear eighty times in scriptures, and those usually referred to not being fearful. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, their first reaction was fear; “It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.”¹⁷³

The Bible does not teach that you can be without fear. Instead, you cannot be fear-free. There are notable known acronyms used for fear. One often recited is fear is “False Evidence Appearing Real.” True as it may be, but the writer found others in her notes collected over the years, and discovered more than sixty acronyms, many associated with other meanings; however, the following are in relation to a spiritual connotation of the believer’s use.

FEAR is:

1. Forfeiture Endangers American Rights
2. False Expectations Appearing Real
3. Face Everything And Recover
4. Forget Everything And Run
5. False Emotions Appearing Real
6. Failure Expected And Received
7. Future Events Appearing Real
8. Forgetting Everything is All Right
9. Finding Excuses And Reasons

¹⁷³ Matthew 14:26.

10. False Expectations About Reality

11. Future Events Appear Real

12. Frantic Effort to Avoid Reality

Each of the different meanings of fear can uplift one out of the state of fear intended for any particular day. In essence, fear should be nothing to fear. But that is not always an easy concept to accept, even with the Christian faith, nor should fear be allowed to control individuals. For many of the elderly or widows, fear is not something they always dread. They may have an overwhelming fear of rejection or fear of being isolated, or the fear of the future and continuing life without their companion. Many widows think about the concept of running out of money and getting sick and having no one to tend to their care. The Heavenly Father encourages inspiring words for the widow to meditate on: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”¹⁷⁴

Fear in reverence to God is an overcoming factor that can be an encouraging element for all to embrace. What is comforting is that the opposite of fear is peace. On the other hand, if the fears create much anxieties and periods of panic, then talking to someone who is more supportive like a counselor is recommended. It is vital to remember that the Word of God is imbedded in the heart of humanity, for God has not given the believer the “...spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Isaiah 41:10.

¹⁷⁵ 2Timothy 1:7.

Counseling

Widows can find a support system with their immediate relatives and friends or her pastor. Pastors function frequently as counselors, yet most of the time, the pastor of the immediate church may not be available and cannot always handle every counseling session. His or her unavailability is considered as they exercises administrative and preaching obligations as a church pastor. Depending on the capacity of the congregation, there may be a counselor apart from the pastoral staff; if not, the pastor often will refer an outside Christian counselor. Sometimes the widow needs the higher level of support in seeking a professional counselor that is more beneficial in addressing her needs during her period of grief to facilitate her mourning process.

“Counseling, like preaching, is communication that is meaning that changes things.”¹⁷⁶ That is why it is important to choose a counselor who specializes in grief counseling, so that the needs are addressed and met. Furthermore, is it advised that the widow who chooses a counselor on her own, chooses a Christian counselor that can guide her spiritually and “constructively channel her emotions.”¹⁷⁷

Another avenue of support many can benefit from is a support group. In a group environment, the widow can connect with other widows who can relate in regards to her emotional state and thoughts. Jesus invested in a support group; He had His inner circle always with Him. Peter, James, and John were considered Jesus’ inner-circle, who walked and remained close with Him. They were with Him at the mountain of transfiguration, kept watch with closed

¹⁷⁶ Dwight Rice, Pastoral Counseling, 825, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, November, 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Alan D. Wolfelt, *Understanding Your Grief* (Fort Collins, CO: Companion, 2003), 127.

eyes while Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, and they were chosen to go with Him as He prayed for the rich ruler's daughter.¹⁷⁸

The Widow's Environment

The loss of a spouse is a traumatic experience that turns one's world upside down from the initial feelings of disbelief, to the diverse emotional state of denial. Yet, among the elderly, most widows prefer to live alone. Social Security allows more elderly widows to live alone, which raises a risk of them being injured at home. Nearly 8 in 10 Americans (77%) are worried about the safety of their parent and/or grandparent living alone, and despite these concerns, the elderly's home are not always equipped with safety features in the shower, raised toilet seats, an emergency response system and/or an entrance ramp.¹⁷⁹

Annual numbers of reported injuries to the elderly reinforce the concerns of widows living alone. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "2.5 million adults sixty-five years and older are treated for injuries each year, over 700,000 are hospitalized because of a fall injury."¹⁸⁰ Many fall without telling family members, friends or their doctors, due to the threat of going into an assisted living facility or with family. They do not realize that not reporting these falls may mean foregoing treatment for serious injuries including head injuries and broken bones.

¹⁷⁸ Matthew 17:1; Matthew 26:37; Mark 5:37

¹⁷⁹ "Princeton Survey Research," Accessed December 8, 2015, <https://www.caring.com/infographics/senior-fall-prevention-by-the-numbers>.

¹⁸⁰ "Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," Accessed December 8, 2015, <http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalsafety/falls/adultfalls.html>.

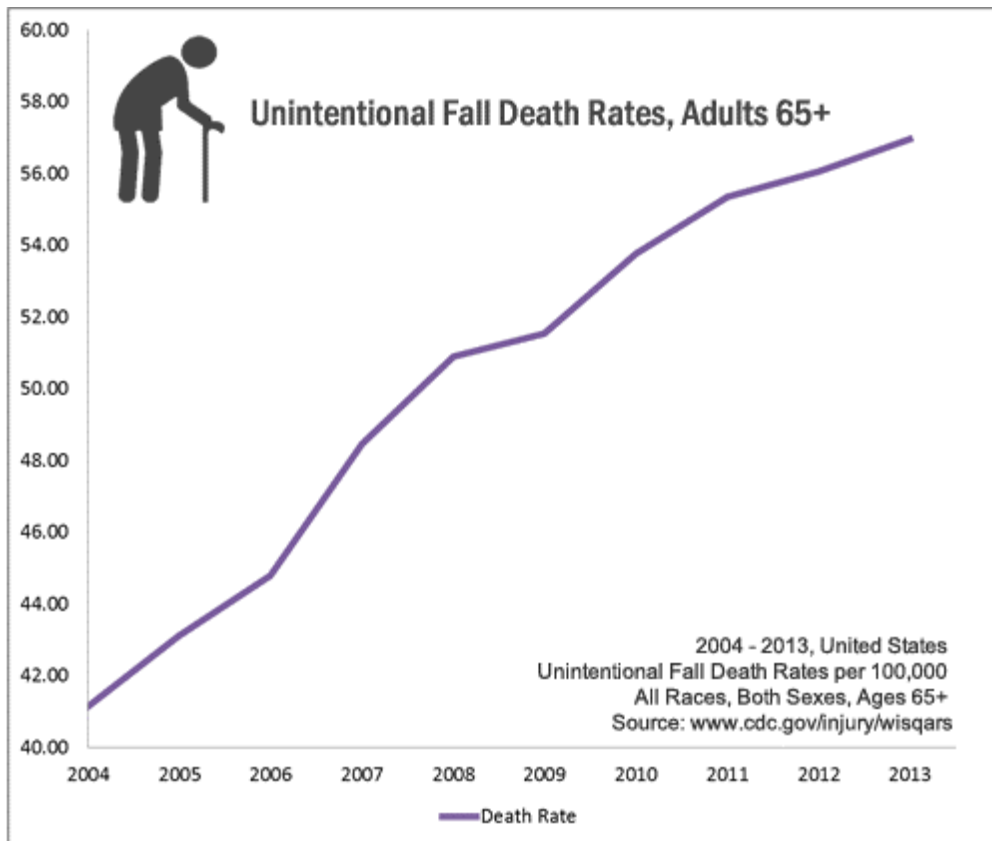


Table 8: Fall Death Rates of Adults 65 and Older¹⁸¹

Many of the elderly or widows fall in the home, without being able to contact family or friends, which is a concern for their safety. They sometimes have difficulty recovering, extensive hospitalization or unfortunate death. When it comes to the elderly widows' state of safety, it is their sense of security and stability others fear with their insistence of living independently in their own atmosphere.

Statistics of the elderly specify that women live longer, often face challenges of having "health problems, and are more likely to live alone including women over seventy-five years (36

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

percent of women over sixty-five, versus 19 percent of men).”¹⁸² Poverty among older women living alone increased to 18.4 percent in 2011, up from 17 percent the previous year, according to the review of the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (Annual and Economic Supplement, 2003-2011).¹⁸³ Furthermore, elderly women who live alone face significant increases in poverty as they age.

Abuse is another concern with the elderly living independently. The abuse can be physical, emotional, financial or sexual. The elderly with physical disabilities or mental illness, often suffer with depression and are vulnerable to some form of abuse. According to the American Psychological Association annual report, “an estimated four million older Americans are victims of physical, psychological or other forms of abuse and neglect, tend to die earlier than those who have not been abused.”¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, with the absence of chronic illnesses or life-threatening disease, abuse is a continuation of established patterns of violence, physical, emotional or financial abuse within the family.¹⁸⁵ More commonly, abuse is related to changes in living situations and relationships brought about by the elderly’s growing infirmity.

Unfortunately, few people are aware of the abuse, neglect or violence the elderly experience at the hands of predators. Abuse can occur in the home with family, in a nursing/retirement home or walking to and from their home at the hands of criminals. Heed must be taken in reference to their care and security. Furthermore, the appropriate authorities must be

¹⁸² Stacy Torres, “Aging Women, Living Poorer” (2014), Accessed September 15, 2015, <http://contexts.org/articles/aging-women-living-poorer/>.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ “American Psychological Association (2012),” Accessed December 17, 2015, <http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/resources/guides/elder-abuse>.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

advised in all abuse situations. As for the church's responsibility, abuse is in another form that author John MacArthur, in his book *Caring for Widows*, identifies as apathy.¹⁸⁶ This he resonates with the Bible, and to Paul's message regarding widows in the fifth chapter of 1 Timothy as God's concern for the widows of the church, and the expectations of his people. Abuse of any form is unacceptable, inside or outside the walls of the congregation. The church, however, is the widow's advocate in reference to any abuse, violence or discrimination.

Elderly widows who are used to being within their own home should be given the chance to remain within their own environment if they are financially capable. In other words resorting to other living arrangements is their option. An added concern is their cooperation with all doctor's appointments, and with other means of support like family. Options of support can be social services like senior citizen centers, assistance with in-home meal delivery, and home health aides. Family members should keep regular contacts with the elderly.

Curriculum Training

Widows have a tendency not to ask for help, so visitation is an opportunity to minister to their needs. It is a great opportunity in seeing if something needs repaired in the home or an automobile. Some older women cannot drive. They would need help getting around, like going to the store for groceries or keeping doctors' appointments. For those who drive, transportation may still be a problem if their automobile needs repairs. Without a spouse, this hinders them from getting to church and running their errands. Without a car, they are in need of transportation to church and to complete other services. Pastoral care often entails giving legal advice, safeguarding security and safety measures, including get-togethers for dinners.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ John MacArthur, *Caring for Widows: 1 Timothy 5:3-16* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991).

¹⁸⁷ Sam E. Stone, "Don't Overlook the Widows!" *Christian Standard*, (January 28, 1996):3.

Training is not an option, rather is mandatory in order for the curriculum to be productive. Preparation in getting to know the widows can help the church to become familiar with the widows and their needs, such as home maintenance. This educates the church to grasp a better understanding of widows in the church, and also builds one's confidence that resonates with God's divine purpose, which the Bible see as equipping the body of Christ to embrace the elderly widows of the church.

In order for the widows curriculum ministry to be productive, leaders, elders, deacons, and senior mothers, must be trained and educated, including staff and volunteers working and walking together in unity, love and peace.¹⁸⁸ The church should be organized, taught, and trained to develop this ministry for the widows. It is vital that the local church be taught the biblical doctrines and principles concerning widows care of the church. Despite the philosophy or methodology of the church, every local church should be involved in developing a ministry that entails training, which is learning the widows' needs, and how to evaluate solutions. If the church provides educational training, and if the community that strengthens relationships with one another, then it will involve all partaking of the welfare of the widow.

If there is a lack of incentive spiritual leaders, then there is a lack to inspire staff and volunteers to care or minister to the widows. Until church relationships are established in developing compassion and ministry for the widows, the church will struggle to support their needs and continue to miss the big picture.¹⁸⁹ This lack of concern calls out for a need to have a strong widow's program in place in the church that will benefit and cultivate godly interactions. This would result in the local church continuously training, equipping, and reassuring one

¹⁸⁸ Colossians 3:12-17.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

another to be great supporters as leaders and followers for the next generation to foresee. It is easy to neglect the widows, but implementing the young people into their care is not only good experience for them, but is productive ministry as it develops a model for intergenerational relationships and the local church as a whole.

Implementing Ministry for Widows

The ministry of aiding widows through their bereavement period is perhaps one of the most significant ministries that congregations can provide for local churches. In most congregations, it is the responsibility of the deacons as the servant leaders in tending to the needs of the families, the fatherless, and the widows. For some churches it takes a village of leaders, senior mothers, deacons and volunteers to tend to the needs of widows. Certain matters the pastor or his or her staff can assist the widow in, such as health or life insurance information. The village of leaders can assist the widow in other concerns, like their security of safety in the home or spiritual aspects of ministry.

Church members of the local church should also visit widows regularly. Without visits, one will not know the extent of the widow's needs; however, the visit is more than a simple social call. The member of the widow's church are personally involved in the lives of the widow in practical ways in meeting her needs. The visitation should always consist of ministry to the widow as well as; reading and discussion of Bible passages. The visitation should end with a prayer of encouragement for the widow and any other concerns that she requests.

The purpose of this ministry is to develop a program for widows of the local church, and to employ security measures within their home environment. This project will entail establishing guidelines, policies, and training implemented under the approved leadership of the pastor and

his or her pastoral staff. The following should be the recommended ministry guidelines for services for widows that should be embraced with grace and a humble heart:

1. Establish strategic plan with a vision of ministry for widows, and the mission statement of the biblical mandate:
 - a. Genesis 38: 11, 14, 19
 - b. Exodus 22:22-24
 - c. Luke 20:47
 - d. Zechariah 7:10
 - e. Job 22:9
 - f. Psalms 68:5
 - g. Proverbs 15:25
 - h. Isaiah 10:2
 - i. Isaiah 1:17
 - j. Ezekiel 22:7
 - k. Mark 12:40-44
 - l. Luke 7:11-15
 - m. Luke 21:2
2. Ministry should consist of the pastor as the overseer, the elders, senior mothers, deacons, and volunteers.
3. Pastor and pastoral staff will make all decisions regarding training and ministry.
 - a. Staff will be assigned and attend to the care of widows, depending on how many widows are in the church.
 - b. Establish guidelines and policies.

4. Secretary designated as a part of the board members to notate notes and document the strategic planning process.
 - a. Services/Transportation/Counseling.
 - b. Visitation/Hospitalizations.
 - c. Medical/ Finances.
 - d. Deaths/Grief Management.
 - e. Other needs.
5. Suggest training for staff and volunteers under the leadership of the pastor. All must be faithfully and committed to participate in training.
 - a. Training is Bible-based.
 - b. Work and service in the local church and within the community.
 - c. Maintaining a safe environment in the church and home.
6. Designate duties per week or month; telephone calls, visitation, transportation.
 - a. The secretary will document staff and volunteers services to widows.
7. Monthly assessment and follow-up progress with the pastor or his staff.
 - a. To assure no widow is left behind in the local church.
8. It is important that the widow is contacted by the church at least once a month, and on special days, such as a card on holidays, birthdays, and the anniversary of her husband's death.
 - a. Vital to the widow during the healing process.
9. Ledger for special days; maybe taking the widow out for lunch, dinner, or preparing a dinner for the widow.
 - a. Makes them feel special, loved, and not forgotten in the church community.

10. Develop a grief-support group.

- a. Widows cannot do it alone without the local church, friends, family, and much encouragement.

11. Establish a benevolence fund.

- a. Even though the widows have been through the death process before, she may not have a backup plan for herself.
- b. Widows needs the assistance regarding Social Security, Military Benefits, Medicare or Retirement. Concerns she may be aware of and/or may not. Grief distorts the mind.

The primary focus is the elderly widows of the local church, therefore, the pastoral staff, and volunteers must be faithfully committed in support of this project, while serving with compassion for the elderly widows of the local church. In training individuals to minister to the widows, they must be equipped with strategies to work and minister to the widows. With measures implemented, staff, and volunteers will feel secure in developing a ministry for the widows, and widows will feel loved.

Effects of Appreciation

Since widows represent a significant ministry need in the local church, it is vital to the ministry that everyone that is involved, church and family be efficiently trained and work as a body of Christ, as they service the elderly widows of the church. The widow appreciates the love and care, but may not always say it. The ministry of training was an important part of Jesus'

ministry, especially with his disciples: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” was His call to the chosen.¹⁹⁰

The church is usually the first called upon to aid the widow and the family during the time of a loved one’s illness. In the course of death, most families will make arrangements prior to the death of the loved one; however, the church can respond to the widow’s needs by aiding in the planning process of the final services. The local church should be seen as a congregation of character and integrity in support of the widow and others in the church during their grief process. It is the position of the pastor and his or her staff to encourage the family members during their time of grief: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”¹⁹¹

Faith Centered

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

The widow and the church family is always a priority, but one without immediate or extended family must rely utterly on the church. It is not always what the church can give them, but the spiritual values of the Word of God, as church leaders align the church within the precepts that God has implemented in His Word. In mentoring to the widows, the responsibility of the church is to adhere to the instructions of church leaders whose directions are received from God. The church must therefore understand the importance of dispensing biblical principles to the elderly widows as received from leaders, whose appointed duty is to nourish the people of God in the local church of spiritual direction.

¹⁹⁰ Matthew 4:19.

¹⁹¹ Hebrews 4:16.

The widows of this project who are within the local church, are representatives established in the faith, and meet the criteria of faithful servants who are grounded in the foundational Word of God. These are the widows whom the Bible refers to and in reference to others in order to honor and follow in the local church; having a faith-centered life means more than simply attending church services. In order for one to have solid, sound faith, the church must first understand that the essence of faith has a foundation – just as anything else does. Everything that is great, that is substantial or that is worthwhile has a foundation. Foundation is the beginning of a mechanism that is completed first like a portion of a building or a home; both are based upon an appraisal that determines the value. There are six fundamentals that form a foundation for great faith, and is the reason some people's faith is not solid if they have no foundation:

- (1) Repentance
- (2) Faith in God
- (3) Baptism
- (4) Laying on of hands
- (5) Resurrection of the dead
- (6) Eternal Judgment

The Apostle Paul declares in the book of Romans 10:17: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith comes by hearing God's words, and unless people hear the word, they have nothing to base their faith on, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"¹⁹²

¹⁹² Romans 10:14.

The surrounding areas of Saint Louis, Missouri, have an extended list of denominations. The chart below is a very condense but impressive synoptic view of prospects for local churches. Abraham Lincoln believed “The more sects we have the better. They are all getting somebody in (to the church) that the others could not and even with the numerous divisions we are all doing tolerably well.” – It is amazing that the president even in his era, acknowledged the assembling of persons in the church in contrast to other compartments.

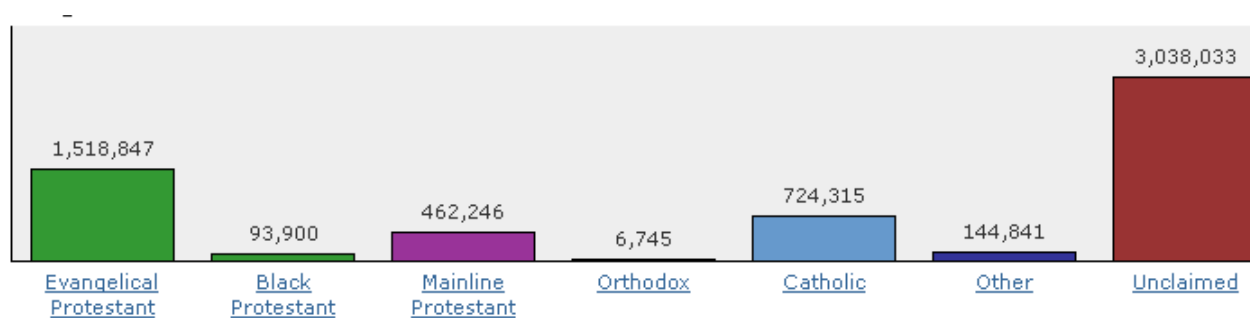


Table 9: Religions Congregations and Membership Study, 2010¹⁹³

The study regards not just widows in general, but widows of the local church. Although it is expected that the local church honors their widows, however, the surveys submitted in this project failed to detect the regard of widows. An examination within the regional area was a survey not reflected only within the fellowship of this writer, but conducted with other denominations. Churches surveyed were the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the African Methodist Episcopal, the Church of God in Christ, and the Church of Christ churches, and including nondenominational churches and parishes that were surveyed within the regional area. The majority of responses were productive from the pastors from the Baptist faith ministries.

¹⁹³ Religions Congregations and Membership Study: The Association of Religion Data Archives. Accessed November 6, 2015. www.TheARDA.com

Surveys

Of the two-hundred surveys that were sent out to pastors, members and widows over sixty. In lieu of receiving twenty-five respondents, twenty were received. The survey responses demonstrated how church members observed the widows in their local churches. Many of the pastors respectfully declined per email to participate in the survey study for one reason or another, while others failed to respond at all. Dwight L. Moody, “There are many of us willing to do great things for the Lord, but few of us are willing to do little things.” Surely there should have been more responses, considering the circumference of Missouri where the writer has visibly observed countless churches on just about every corner and city blocks within the regional and surrounding areas. These results became an illustration for, and gave direction to the writer for her continued study of participation of support of widows in the local church.

As churches seem to be preoccupied with other ministries in the church, little concern is given for the senior members of the church. Within this group are the widowed members who are being overlooked. It has become very popular among local churches to have several ministries to the benefit of the church, like a children ministry, a youth ministry, an adult or men’s group ministry. Many churches have seemed to ignore the needs of the senior generation whereas many widows are within in the local church, in contrary to the younger generation. The latter are often foreseen as the “future of the church” or church of the future.¹⁹⁴ Widows among the elderly age group, are a part of that intergeneration, and are also considered the future of the local church. Not negating ministries needed and necessary for the younger age group, although those ministries are grounded on the Word of God, the intent was not to examine churches regarding children or youth ministry.

¹⁹⁴ John Calahan, “Does Your Church Value Seniors” (July 2009), www.neverthirsty.org.

The emphasis thus far is based on the biblical principles that are identified in developing a ministry in the local church for widows. The principal of this study through surveys was intended to collect the views on how churches treated the widows, the programs needed, available or established for them in the local church of the regional area of Missouri. There is apparently a lack of attention concerning the elderly in the local church period. Not to mention widows who are without a value support system for their well-being. The responses to the surveys intentions were to determine how pastors, the church and the widows viewed the biblical mandate of the church, concerning widows.

In order to gain insight into the regional area of churches in Missouri, three different surveys were constructed; one for the pastors, one for the widows, and one for the congregants. More responses were received from the pastors than widows and congregants; one widow and one congregant responded to the survey. Only ten questions were submitted to each survey, regarding the principles in developing a curriculum ministry in accord to the biblical command of the care for widows in the local church. The pastors and congregants surveyed had similar multiple choice questions, wherein the widow's questionnaire was relevant to their status of widowhood.

The survey of the pastors, the widows and the congregants, revealed that most church congregations do not specify programs in place that is geared toward a ministerial program for widows. Nor do they have an inkling of implementing a program according to their responses. Most respondents suggested coming to church, participating in fellowship that imputes spiritual support or staying in contact with pastors, and being involved in a grief support group. This, pastors felt was important so that they are aware of the widows' present situation. There was no mention from the pastors of a ministry or programs for widows in their churches. Basically, it

was suggested by one pastor that the widows should come to the pastor or church in reference for help, rather the pastors checking in on the widows. However, the majority of pastors were in unison that their churches were handicap equipped.¹⁹⁵

Regardless of the church model illustrated by the first deacons of the church, many churches do not seem to be a model for churches to follow, except one pastor.¹⁹⁶ He verified that his church has a support group that was considered a “widows’ connection.” He also indicated that in his church, it was the deacon’s primary responsibility who tended to the care of widows, and designated assigned individuals to their care.

The one question that would detect a ministry program was, “What are some of the needs of the widows in your church, and areas the church can assist in serving the widows?”¹⁹⁷ Every pastor who responded to this question felt that visitation was the most important services to widows, next to medical and financial assistance. The survey in relevant to widows living conditions, nearly 40% of widows live alone, approximately 60% reside with a relative, and more than 70% live in a nursing/retirement home environment. Whether the widow resides in a nursing home or retirement community, the church is still accountable to her welfare.

Pastoral care of visiting the sick and shut-in, the pastors indicated they usually visit regularly. When it comes to contacting widows on those special days, however, the pastors and the church seem to neglect the compassion in recognition of those special days. Most of the pastors and the church members, agree they are doing a good job in tending to the care of the widow, as they tend to spend at least two hours monthly visiting the widows in their living

¹⁹⁵ Appendix: C.

¹⁹⁶ Acts 6:1-7.

¹⁹⁷ Appendix: C.

environment. This is short of the accurate and faithful services the pastor or the church can render per month for the sake of the widow.

As previously indicated, only one person responded to the widow's questionnaire, considering there is an array of widows sitting in many congregations throughout the state of Missouri. The widow's experience of widowhood has been approximately ten years, wherein she verifies residing alone in her own home. As a believer, this widow is 100% in agreement of the biblical mandate, and of the church's responsibility to be acknowledgeable of the widows in her local church. She authenticates that the pastor and the church members usually maintained contact with her weekly, either through the form of a telephone contact or visitation.

Although there is love and concern regarding the widows of her local church in regard to their welfare, however, the church seems to neglect those special days, such as holidays, her husband's birthday, or his anniversary death. She also confirms that grief management is vital for all widows during their time of bereavement; and furthermore, cautions one not to get "stuck" in the grief or depression mind state. Instead, keeping an open communication with others by engaging in diversional activities in order to maintain spiritual strength and encouragement. Being consistent in prayer, Bible study, and fellowship, are the essential reliefs in the grief healing process she adamantly expresses.

The one church member who responded to the survey, only answered four of the ten questions. She confirmed visiting with a widow of the local church usually five-ten hours or more monthly, but could not confirm that other members of the local church do the same. Grief management she indicates is a high priority. Not sure if that is personally or not, however, the member does verify handicap accessible in the church attended.

The focus of this project was to provide a biblical framework that takes into account the mandate of churches in the regional and surrounding areas of Saint Louis, Missouri. Being committed to the biblical inerrancy of the scriptures, the principles were identified in scriptures for widows of the local church and their families. Present literature defines a local church as a religious atmosphere of fellowship with congregational members. It is imperative that the local church generate relationships where people of all ages come together in similar fashion as families that encourage love, respect, and humility.”¹⁹⁸

It was not the intended purpose of this study to examine the extensive interaction of the church, rather how local churches better understand and interact with the widows of the church. The information presented was vital to a comparison and contrast of the local churches in the Saint Louis, Missouri, regional area; however, many of the churches may not be aware of the need to equip a strategic ministry program for widows. The respected study concerns the local church that must be held accountable and commission to rescue and minister to the widows, which is a mandate of the scriptures, and to ignore this decree is a disgrace to God’s Word.

¹⁹⁸ Ross Parsley, *Messy Church: A Multigenerational Mission for God's Family* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2012), 93.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

Widows in the church denote a growing percentage in many churches. The writer is passionate about a ministry for the widows of the local church because she resonates with widowhood. The care for widows was a real concern in the early church, which still signifies a ministry need for widows in the local church today. The objective of this study was to introduce a practical guide in administering a productive ministry for the widow. This entailed revitalization of the care of widows, by implementing and developing a strategic ministry to the widows in the local church.

The time has come to begin working towards an effective change in fellowship towards the widows of the church. It is imperative that the church as a whole take heed to the biblical command in ministering to their care. To accompany the widows, and to enter into a spiritual and caring relationship, is the duty of the local church. This, the church must recognize.

Many churches with widows sitting in their congregation are doing an inadequate job in mentoring their widows, not realizing the grieving widows in the congregation may be afflicted with spiritual or emotional needs or financial issues. She may be in need of other situations such as home and automobile repairs or yard maintenance. Keeping in mind that many widows will not ask for help, and the church may not notice their concern unless observed on regular conducted home visits; James advises believers to “....visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ James 1:27.

It is vital to cherish the memory of the beloved spouse. Widows are going to grieve, and must allow themselves to resonate with the memories of their deceased spouse.²⁰⁰ It is healthy to grieve, as one widow shares:

I am a Widow: I'm allowed to be happy, sad, right, wrong, in love, alone, laughing, crying, thoughtful, clueless, understanding, brittle, friendly, withdrawn, compassionate, isolated, with-it, and without it...all at the same time.²⁰¹

Dealing with a loss generates a wide range of diverse emotions, from the feelings of disbelief, deep melancholy, to denial. After years of living with a companion, to suddenly being alone is never easy. To a certain degree, the widow will always have a spot in her heart of missing and grieving for her spouse. Surrounding widows with individuals who are their greatest supporters is a positive reinforcement for the widow. Widows may be alone, but very much alive. Becoming a widow does not end one's life; it begins a new phase as one widow will confirm.²⁰²

Surveys were submitted to pastors, widows and church members. This study clearly introduced the reader to the research and development and materials required to develop a curriculum ministry for widows of the local church. The research completed demonstrated how churches can be productive in developing programs and services for widows that can benefit the widows and the church. The findings from this study should encourage and promote a strong

²⁰⁰ Doug Manning, *Don't Take My Grief Away: What to do when you lose a Loved One*, 3rd (New York, NY: First Harper and Row, 1984), 66.

²⁰¹ <https://goo.gl/WuOxPG>.

²⁰² Janet Shafer Boyanton, "When the World Turned Upside Down: The Day You Became a Widow" (2011), <http://aloneandalive.com>.

ministry for the widows in local churches. Hopefully this curriculum will awaken others and inspire congregations as pastors equip their local churches for this incredible ministry in serving widows of the local church. Starting with a motivating factor for the church, as through the words of the Lord recorded in Zechariah, “And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor, and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.”²⁰³ The work and motivation to establish ministries for widows, is at the discretion of the pastors of the churches.

²⁰³ Zechariah 7:10.

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APPENDIX A
PASTORAL CONSENT FORM
PG 110-111

PASTORAL CONSENT FORM

Developing A Curriculum Ministry for Widows in the Local Church

Principal Investigator-Gail Nanez
Liberty University
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
Doctor of Ministry

You are invited to be in a research study of widows in the local church: Developing a Curriculum Ministry for Widows in the Local Church thesis project.

You were selected as a possible participant because you have been identified as a leader who has pastored a church with more than 50 members for more than five years. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is being conducted by Gail Nanez M.A.R., M.Div., and a Doctor of Ministry student at Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore principles in developing a curriculum ministry in regards to the biblical command of ministering to the care of widows in the local church. The study is to better understand the care, and programs for the widows in the local church. The survey is being conducted of pastors, church members, and widows of the church. An examination of widows in the local church denote a growing percentage of many churches today, signifying a significant ministry need for widows. The widows of the local church is the primary mandate instituted by God in caring for them in accord to James 1:27. The information from the survey will corroborate statistics of the local church's obligation to ministering widows in the church. This information is vital because a comparison and contrast of the local churches may or may not be aware of the need of equipping a strategic ministry program for widows. The objective of this study is to introduce a practical guide in administrating a productive ministry for the widow. This will entail revitalization of the care of widows, by implementing and developing a strategic ministry to the widows in the local church.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. The survey will take approximately ten minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risk, which is not more than one would encounter in everyday life. The benefits to participation are predominantly to the benefit of the local church's focus on ensuring biblical principals in regards to widows of the church. The researcher is hoping that the discovery of this research may serve to enrich church participation of the local church. Participants will not receive any personal benefits.

Compensation:

You will receive no payment for your voluntary participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. The names of individuals and churches will not be used in the thesis project, but only the information and data revealed through the study will be utilized and referenced. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Upon completion a thank you message will be sent to your email address. That will conclude your participation in the study. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Records will be stored in a filing cabinet for three years until the completion of the study, then shredded thereafter.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect current or future relation with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Gail Nanez. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact the researcher at gnanez@liberty.edu or (314) 707-0873. In addition the mentor of this project is Dr. Jeffrey Ward and he can be reached at (281)979-0271 or email at jdward2@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu

APPENDIX B

WIDOW/CONGREGANT CONSENT FORM

PG 113-114

WIDOWS AND CONGREGANTS CONSENT FORM

Developing A Curriculum Ministry for Widows in the Local Church

Principal Investigator-Gail Nanez
Liberty University
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
Doctor of Ministry

You are invited to be in a research study of widows in the local church entitled Developing a Curriculum Ministry for Widows in the Local Church. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a widow or an active member of a church. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is being conducted by Gail Nanez M.A.R., M.Div., and a Doctor of Ministry student at Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore principles in developing a curriculum ministry in regards to the biblical command of ministering to the care of widows in the local church. The study is to better understand the care, and programs for the widows in the local church. The survey is being conducted of pastors, church members, and widows of the church. An examination of widows in the local church denote a growing percentage of many churches today, signifying a significant ministry need for widows. The widows of the local church is the primary mandate instituted by God in caring for them in accord to James 1:27. The information from the survey will corroborate statistics of the local church's obligation to ministering widows in the church. This information is vital because a comparison and contrast of the local churches may or may not be aware of the need of equipping a strategic ministry program for widows. The objective of this study is to introduce a practical guide in administrating a productive ministry for the widow. This will entail revitalization of the care of widows, by implementing and developing a strategic ministry to the widows in the local church.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. The survey will take approximately ten minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risk, which is not more than one would encounter in everyday life. The benefits to participation are predominantly to the benefit of the local church's focus on ensuring biblical principals in regards to widows of the church. The researcher is hoping that the discovery of this research may serve to enrich church participation of the local church. Participants will not receive any personal benefits.

Compensation:

You will receive no payment for your voluntary participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. The names of individuals and churches will not be used in the thesis project, but only the information and data revealed through the study will be utilized and referenced. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Upon completion a thank you message will be sent to your email address. That will conclude your participation in the study. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Records will be stored in a filing cabinet for three years until the completion of the study, then shredded thereafter.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect current or future relation with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Gail Nanez. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact the researcher at gnanez@liberty.edu or (314) 707-0873. In addition the mentor of this project is Dr. Jeffrey Ward and he can be reached at (281)979-0271 or email at jdward2@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers.

APPENDIX C
SURVEY FOR PASTORS

PG 116-117

Developing A Curriculum Ministry for Widows in the Local Church

Survey Questions (Pastoral)

1. How much time do you spend monthly in the homes of elderly, widowed members?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-2 hours
- ☐ 3-5 hours
- ☐ 5-10 hours or more

2 Approximately how many widowed members live alone?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ More

3 How many widows in the church live with relatives?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ More

4 How many widows in the church reside in a nursing/retirement home?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ More

5 How frequently does your church visit the sick and shut-in/widows?

- ☐ Once a year
- ☐ Twice a year
- ☐ 3 times a year
- ☐ More

6 How do you feel your church is doing in assisting the care of the widows?

- ☐ Poorly
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ N/A (The church does not have any widows.)
- ☐ Good

- ☐ Excellent
- 7 Are the widows contacted by the church regularly, on holidays, and on the anniversary of their husbands' deaths?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- 8 What are some of the needs of the widows in your church, and areas the church can assist in serving the widows?
- ☐ Service Resources
 - ☐ Personal/Family
 - ☐ Visitation
 - ☐ Medical/Financial
 - ☐ Protection
 - ☐ Death/Grief Management
 - ☐ Counseling
 - ☐ Transportation
 - ☐ Other
- 9 Is your church facility equipped for the elderly/handicapped?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- 10 What recommendations would you suggest for the widows of the local church?

APPENDIX D
SURVEY FOR WIDOWS

PG 119-120

Developing A Curriculum Ministry for Widows in the Local Church

Survey Questions (Widow)

1. Have long have you been a widow?
 - ☐ 1-5 years
 - ☐ 6-10
 - ☐ 10-15
 - ☐ More
2. Do you live by yourself?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
3. Where do you reside?
 - ☐ With Relatives
 - ☐ Apartment
 - ☐ Home
 - ☐ Nursing /Retirement Home
4. Do you feel it is the church's obligation to assist widows?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Sometimes
5. How often does the pastor visit or call?
 - ☐ Weekly
 - ☐ Monthly
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ Never
6. How often do church members visit or call?
 - ☐ Weekly
 - ☐ Monthly
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ Never
7. Do you sense a lack of concern from the church regarding your welfare?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Sometimes

8. In what areas can the church assist in serving the widows?

- ☐ Service Resources/transportation
- ☐ Personal/Family
- ☐ Visitation
- ☐ Financial
- ☐ Protection
- ☐ Grief Management
- ☐ Funerals/Death
- ☐ Counseling
- ☐ Other

9. What are some of the needs of the widows in your church?

- ☐ Financial
- ☐ Medical
- ☐ Helps/Services/Assistance
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Other

10. Is your church facility equipped for the elderly/handicapped?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11. Are the widows contacted by the church regularly, on holidays, and on the anniversary of their husband's deaths?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. What recommendation would you suggest for the widows of the local church?

APPENDIX E
SURVEY FOR CONGREGANTS
PG 122-123

Developing A Curriculum Ministry for Widows in the Local Church
Survey Questions
(Congregant)

1. How much time do you spend in the homes of elderly widowed members?
 - ☐ None
 - ☐ 1-2 hours
 - ☐ 3-5 hours
 - ☐ 5-10 hours or more

2. Approximately how many of the widowed members that you know live alone?
 - ☐ None
 - ☐ 1-5
 - ☐ 6-10
 - ☐ More

3. How frequently does your church visit the sick and shut-in/widows?
 - ☐ Once a year
 - ☐ Twice a year
 - ☐ 3 times a year
 - ☐ More

4. How do you feel your church is doing in assisting in the care of the widows?
 - ☐ Poorly
 - ☐ Fair
 - ☐ Good
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Excellent

5. How frequently does the church members seek opportunities to commune with and/or serve the widows in the church?
 - ☐ Never
 - ☐ Rarely
 - ☐ Little Effort
 - ☐ Often
 - ☐ Always

6. What areas can the church assist in serving the widows?
 - ☐ Service Resources

- ☐ Personal/Family
 - ☐ Visitation
 - ☐ Financial
 - ☐ Protection
 - ☐ Grief Management
 - ☐ Funerals/Death
 - ☐ Counseling
 - ☐ Other
7. What are some of the needs of the widows in your church?
- ☐ Financial
 - ☐ Medical
 - ☐ Helps/Services/Assistance
 - ☐ Transportation
 - ☐ Other
8. Is your church facility equipped for the elderly/handicap?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
9. Are the widows contacted by the church regularly, on holidays and on the anniversary of their husband's death?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
10. What recommendations would you suggest for the widows of the local church?

APPENDIX F

FLYER

PG 125

Survey For:

Pastors

Church Members

Leaders

Gail Nanez, a doctor of ministry student in Liberty University's School of Divinity, is conducting a research study to better understand the care and programs for widows in the local church, and she would like to invite you to participate. Your participation would involve filling out an anonymous, short (10 minutes or less) online survey, and no personal, identifying information will be required. Thank you for your prompt attention and participation.

Feel free to contact Gail at gnanez@liberty.edu should you have any questions regarding this survey.



SurveyMonkey®

Go To: www.surveymonkey.com + the rest of the url.

APPENDIX G

REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION LETTER

PG 127

Letter from US Census Bureau granting the author permission to use data and charts in chapter two of this thesis project.

Copyright protection is not available for any work of the United States Government (Title 17 U.S.C., Section 105). Thus you are free to reproduce census materials as you see fit. We would ask, however, that you [cite](#) the Census Bureau as the source. Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, 2016.

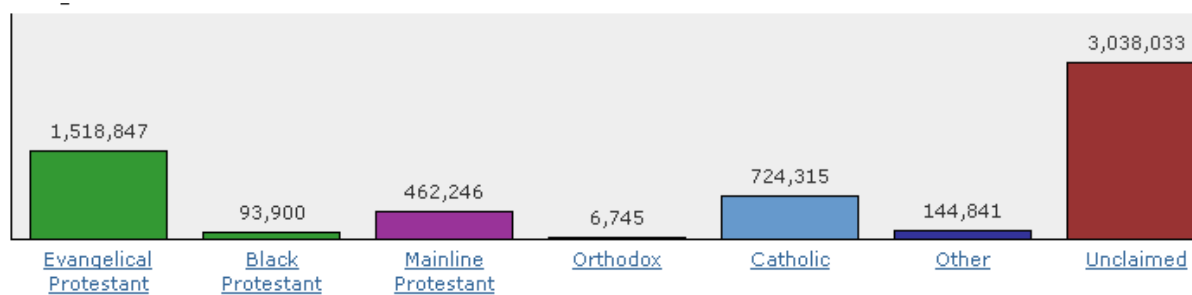
Demographic Population Of Homes With People 60 Year Olds And Over	
Households In Independence Containing People Over 60	
Total Population:	48,742
Population of homes with one or more people 60 years and over:	17,703
1-person household:	7,110
2-or-more-person household:	10,593
Family households:	10,006
Nonfamily households:	587
Population of homes with no people 60 years and over:	31,039
1-person household:	8,325
2-or-more-person household:	22,714
Family homes:	20,159
Nonfamily homes:	2,555

Population By Races And Gender			
	Male	Female	Total
Total Population	2,933,477	3,055,450	5,988,927
White	2,436,316	2,522,454	4,958,770
Black or African American	329,174	364,217	693,391
Hispanic or Latino	110,740	101,730	212,470
Two or More Races	61,531	63,058	124,589
Asian	46,093	51,990	98,083
Some Other Race	43,461	36,996	80,457
American Indian	13,786	13,590	27,376
Three or more races	3,838	4,295	8,133
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	3,116	3,145	6,261
Native Hawaiian	457	501	958
Alaska Native tribes	120	142	262

APPENDIX H

REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION LETTER

PG 129



Letter from the Religions Congregations and Membership Study granting the author permission to use data and charts in chapter four of this thesis project.

Hi Gail,

You are welcome to use this chart\data in your thesis. We just ask that you cite the original data source (in this case, the Religions Congregations and Membership Study) and that you acquired the data at The Association of Religion Data Archives.

Chris Scheitle
Research Associate

APPENDIX I
IRB APPROVAL

PG 131

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 14, 2015

Gail Nanez

IRB Exemption 2212.081415: Developing a Curriculum Ministry for Widows in the Local Church

Dear Gail,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.
Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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UNIVERSITY.