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DESIGNING A TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR
SOUL CARE MINISTRIES TO WIDOWS

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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APPROVAL SHEET

DESIGNING A TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR
SOUL CARE MINISTRIES TO WIDOWS

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PREFACE

I would like to publicly thank our Lord for calling me in May 2006, to prepare for full-time Christian ministry. This ministry project and resultant Doctor of Educational Ministry degree is the culmination of God's clear guidance to minister to widows and "plead the widow's cause." This direction occurred the week after graduation from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in May 2009. I thank my widow friends of the Heart 2 Heart ministry of Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington, Kentucky, for sharing their hearts with me and teaching me invaluable lessons. Little did I know that God was using them to help prepare me for my becoming a widow in September 2014.

This project would not have been possible without the patient support and sacrifice of my late husband, Leon Erwin. How much he wanted to be with me for this moment in my life, but our Lord had another plan. Since his passing, our Lord has provided a dear and precious friend in Rev. Duane Moran, whose enthusiastic encouragement and coaching has helped me cross "the finish line"!

I will always be grateful to Dr. Michael Wilder and Dr. John David Trentham for their encouragement through challenging circumstances and guidance not to give up the pursuit of this degree. I am thankful for Dr. Wilder's words at orientation in August 2011: "Keep the mental picture of yourself walking across the stage to receive your doctoral hood and degree in your mind." He will never know how many times the recall of his advice kept me going!

I have experienced God's love and faithfulness over and over in countless ways on this journey and have come to love the following verse: "For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness" (Ps 26:3).

Cheryl Erwin

Harrodsburg, Kentucky

December 2015

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum with which to train the pastors and deacons of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists based in Lexington, Kentucky, in the provision of ongoing Soul Care ministries to widows after the week of their husband's funeral.

Goals

The first goal was to enlist the support and participation of the Director of Missions of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists in the training of pastors and deacons from ninety-one churches within the network to provide ongoing Soul Care ministries to a widow after the week of her husband's funeral. This goal was measured by the Director of Missions signing the Statement of Cooperation.¹ This goal was considered successfully met when the signed Statement of Cooperation was received from him.

The second goal was the development of a curriculum that was approved by a three-member expert panel consisting of an experienced pastor, an adult educator, and a grief counselor. A rubric was developed with which the panel could evaluate the curriculum.² The resources given to attendees for planning their six-week Soul Care ministry at their churches was also reviewed by the expert panel. This goal was considered successfully met when each component of the curriculum was approved by each member of the expert panel.

¹See appendix 1.

²See appendix 6.

The third goal was that church leaders from the network would participate in each training session utilizing the developed curriculum. The two training sessions were conducted at a central location in coordination with the Director of Missions. Identification of churches who have widows as members of their local congregations was performed by a survey that was attached to the e-mail and included my contact information. The survey³ asked them to indicate whether or not they would attend one of the training sessions. A second survey was attached to the same email sent to the pastors and deacons that helped them to begin to examine their feelings and thoughts about ministry to widows.⁴ The purpose of the survey was to stimulate the pastors and chairmen of deacons to be motivated to attend a training session. The goal was measured by their attendance at each training session. This goal was considered successfully met when both training sessions had attendees from member churches with which to conduct a pilot teaching of the developed curriculum.

The fourth goal was to educate the pastors and deacons at each training session about the biblical imperative for and composition of Soul Care ministries for widows as well as the nature of a widow's grief journey. This goal was measured by the administration of an initial survey of the pastors and deacons to determine their knowledge of both areas of information.⁵ Each participant received a copy of the approved curriculum. The same survey was given to the group at the conclusion of each training session. This goal was considered successfully met when the teaching to the church leaders of biblically based imperatives for the Soul Care of widows and a widow's grief journey made a positive statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of their knowledge.

³See appendix 3.

⁴See appendix 5.

⁵See appendix 7.

The fifth goal was that the pastors and deacons who attended a training session would have a positive evaluation of the curriculum utilized in the training sessions. This goal was measured by the administration of a Post-Training Evaluation.⁶ The goal was considered successfully met when the majority of respondents indicated a positive learning experience from the developed curriculum.

Ministry Context

Widows within the church and society are one of the fastest growing groups today. According to the United States Census Bureau, approximately 1 out of 10 women over the age of 17 is a widow.⁷ Carr provides more recent data regarding the number of widows. “More than 900,000 adults are widowed each year in the United States, and nearly three quarters of them are over age 65.”⁸ Although the number of widows in the member churches of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists is unknown, the demographics of the aging population, particularly in rural churches, would also reflect an increase in the number of widows.⁹

Widows are in an extremely vulnerable state spiritually, both at the time of and after the death of their husbands. When a woman becomes a widow, she can be made to feel “invisible” within both the church and the culture. *Everything* has changed in her life, including not being part of a couple. People may unknowingly treat her differently because of their own discomfort with the possibility of their losing their spouse. “Many,

⁶See appendix 10.

⁷R. Larry Overstreet, email to author, February 20, 2010. These statistics were recorded *before* September 11, 2001, and the resultant wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

⁸Deborah Carr, “Factors That Influence Late-Life Bereavement: Considering Data from the Changing Lives of Older Couples Study,” in *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention*, ed. Margaret S. Stroebe et al. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 417.

⁹The number of widows in the Elkhorn Association was communicated via e-mail from Don Reed, Director of Missions, October 2, 2013.

in fact, become invisible whether it was in ministry positions, small group participation, or social events. Of the approximately 50% who leave the church they attended with their spouse, some reconnect to a place that matches their needs.”¹⁰ The local church can be ready to provide the needed Soul Care ministries to stem and reverse this trend.

When a woman’s husband passes away, she usually receives an outpouring of support and love upon hearing the news of his passing. Family and friends come to her home bringing food, hugs, and tears. She may receive a number of cards expressing sympathy and intentions to keep her in their prayers. The funeral service is planned and her husband is laid to rest. She can have countless details to address that can occupy a great deal of her time and energy. Hopefully, family members can remain a few days, perhaps even a couple of weeks to help her take care of everything. Eventually, however, she must face the inevitable; she is alone in her home after everyone has gone back to their own lives. All of this activity has occurred while she has been in a state of shock. The work and difficult journey of grieving has only begun for her.

The widows to whom I have ministered report that their grief causes them to have difficulty remembering things and they felt “mixed up” for some time after their husbands’ death. They have shared that they feel that half of their very being is gone, exacerbated by the stark reality of having to learn how to live life without their husbands. Many times, they feel like a “third wheel” when they are around couples. Without exception, they have shared that fewer people call them, fewer cards are received, and people stop talking about their husband and/or their loss starting six weeks to two months after the funeral. James C. Petersen explains,

¹⁰Miriam Neff, *From One Widow to Another: Conversations on the New You*, (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 198. I contacted the author via personal e-mail communication on November 16, 2015, for the source of this statistic. She was unable to locate the article but remembered it was written by a pastor. She gave me permission to quote her: “I do remember the wording [a pastor wrote the article] stating that the widow was in her usual seat by her husband’s side, singing and worshipping. After his death, she moves further back so her tears will be less obvious. Then she moves out the door.”

In our culture an unwritten rule suggests that people feel okay discussing losses for about six and half weeks. After that, those who suffered the loss think that they shouldn't burden their friends by talking about it any longer. Their friends don't bring it up either, because they're afraid that doing so would re-open sore wounds.¹¹

Sadly, this “six and a half week” rule exists inside the church as much as it does outside of the church. Widows soon learn to say “fine” in response to questions from family and friends as to how they are doing in the weeks following their bereavement. Few people, including their family members, make them feel like they really want to listen to their problems.

In the fall of 2012, I was leading our church's ministry to widows and sought to reach out to other churches in the network to include their widows in our monthly meetings. It was my hope that not only would our widows have the opportunity to meet other widows, but such an invitation would raise awareness of the needs of widows at the other churches. Conversations were held by phone with pastors of four churches and the administrative assistant of a fifth. Information about the schedule and resources that would be used for the study were e-mailed to each one. All indicated interest and communicated a sincere intention to tell the widows of their respective churches about the meetings. Each church was asked to let me know how many would be attending from each church. However, no notification was received from any of the five churches that anyone would be attending, and thus no one came from any other churches to the support group meetings. The lack of response caused me to question the priority of ministry to widows in these and other churches.

In speaking with these pastors and the pastors and deacons of my local church, variances in understanding the grief of widows and the needed ministries were identified. It seems that there is a natural tendency to think of helping them with the maintenance and/or physical work of taking care of their homes and yards or other ministries to meet the *external* needs is the total extent of ministry to widows. The deacons' wives can only

¹¹James C. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better? Communicating and Connecting in Relationships* (Portland, OR: Petersen, 2007), 165.

help so much because they are not widows; they have not experienced the deep pain of their husbands' deaths. Thus, because men and women grieve differently, the pastors and deacons can be unaware of what is happening in the *internal* life of the widow, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. It is my experience while leading workshop discussions about the needs of widows that most male church leaders express appreciation for learning about what the widow is experiencing on her grief journey. Those pastors and deacons of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists that chose to participate in the training and provide the Soul Care ministry to the widows in their churches would be better equipped to minister to them on an ongoing basis.

Rationale

The primary rationale for this ministry project was that the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists do not have any resources for its members to utilize for ministry to widows. Very few resources about ministering to widows are available in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). When a search was completed, there was not an official publication from the SBC for all members to read regarding ministry to widows. One of the resources was the "Handbook for Deacon-Widow Ministry at First Baptist Church, Keller, Texas," written in July 2008. A list entitled "8 Tips for Ministry to Widows," written by a deacon, was included in the Handbook. There was a lack of awareness of the length of a widow's grief journey because readers are told to "create a support network of widows who can help women through the grief of losing a spouse during the first year following the death of a spouse."¹² Widows to whom I have ministered have stated without exception that the second year of bereavement was harder than the first. This has been stated in secular literature as well. Marion M. Danforth and J. Conrad Glass, Jr., write,

¹²Richard E. Dodge, "Handbook for Deacon-Widow Ministry," 8, North American Mission Board, accessed July 2, 2013, <http://www.namb.net/Widows/>.

In our experience as practitioners dealing with bereavement, women in midlife frequently continue to make contacts for assistance after the first year following loss of spouse, expressing discouragement in dealing with attitudes, feelings, and issues related to life transitions.¹³

The theological foundation of this rationale was deeply rooted in the Word of God. The reason that pastors, deacons, and members alike need to be trained and prepared to minister to widows after the week of the funeral is out of obedience to the teachings of both the Old and New Testaments. Widows are highly valued by God the Father and God the Son throughout the Bible, beginning with Exodus 22:22 and culminating with the words of Christ from the cross in John 19:25-27.

The dramatic growth of the church in its early days was empowered by the Holy Spirit and included an ever increasing number of widows as recorded in Acts 6. First Timothy 5:3-16 addresses the issue of supporting widows. Paul instructs Christians about the care that is to be given to widows who are truly without family and/or financial support. The local church needs to be aware of each widow's situation and prepared to assist her in any way possible. The visitation of widows is included in the definition of true religion as taught in James 1:27: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world." The church that takes its biblical responsibility for the care and support of widows seriously will, in obedience to the Lord, plan, prepare, and implement an ongoing ministry to them after their bereavement.

A second urgent major reason for this ministry project was due to the demographics of member churches of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists and the country as a whole today: "By the year 2030, there will be 72.1 million people in America

¹³Marion M. Danforth and J. Conrad Glass, Jr., "Listen To My Words, Give Meaning to My Sorrow: A Study in Cognitive Constructs in Middle-Age Bereaved Widows," *Death Studies* 25 (2001): 513.

over age 65.”¹⁴ The U.S. Census Bureau reports the following fact that makes the aging of America to be one of even greater immediate impact: “An American turns sixty every seven seconds.”¹⁵ Amy Hanson writes, “My fear is that unless the church wakes up to the aging population, we will once again fail to be ready for what is about to hit in full force. We simply cannot afford to ignore this issue.”¹⁶ Because women on the average live longer than men, the number of widows in America continues to rise: “Regardless of when life expectancy is measured (at birth or later ages), women outlive men.”¹⁷

Because of the unknown number of widows in the member churches of the association, this ministry project caused pastors and deacons who responded to the e-mails to learn the number of widows in their local churches. An increased awareness was the beginning of making ongoing ministry to widows a priority to the leadership of the network as well as the leadership and laity within the local churches. Those churches who chose to send pastors and deacons to a training gained a deeper understanding of the necessity and available resources for initiating Soul Care ministries to widows.

The church needs to be prepared to provide these ministries to help meet the needs of the widow within three basic categories: (1) spiritual, (2) social, and (3) practical. Through different avenues of ministry within the local church, these needs can be addressed. The leadership of these ministries needs to have a basic understanding of the grieving process and be prepared to provide training if necessary for those who will be

¹⁴US Department of Health and Human Services: Administration on Aging, “A Profile of Older Americans, 2008,” 3, accessed July 2, 2013, <http://www.mowaa.org/Document.Doc?id=69>.

¹⁵US Census Bureau, “Selected Characteristics of Baby Boomers 42 to 60 Years Old in 2006,” 20, accessed July 2, 2013, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/age/2006%20Baby%20Boomers.pdf>.

¹⁶Amy Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 16.

¹⁷Bridget K. Gorman and Jen’nan Ghazal Read, “Why Men Die Younger than Women,” *Geriatrics and Aging* 10, no. 3 (2007): 182.

providing the soul care. Harold Ivan Smith writes, “Every congregation needs a standing grief care task force to respond like a volunteer fire department summoned by an alarm.”¹⁸ All who interact with the widow must exhibit compassion and patience towards her, as she can be so very vulnerable spiritually and emotionally. The individuals providing the ministries need to practice the art of active listening, presence, and refrain from giving hurtful advice.

Pastors, deacons, and individual members of the local church cannot provide the needed Soul Care ministry to each widow until they have an understanding of a widow’s difficult grief journey to healing found in Jesus Christ. By attending a training session, the pastors and deacons can be ready to provide the needed Soul Care ministries to stem and reverse the trend of almost half of the widows leaving their churches.¹⁹ They gained a deeper understanding of the importance of widows to God. Those pastors and deacons who were so motivated will return to their local church to plan and implement a six-week Soul Care ministry. Those who chose not to do so risk delaying healing of the widows in their churches and spiritual growth of all. Thus, the pastors and deacons who were able to fully participate in this ministry project received the essential resources to provide needed Soul Care ministries to the widows in their respective churches.

Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Biblical counseling. The term is used to describe counseling that utilizes applicable scriptures from the Bible with which to lead the counselee to apply them to their life, resulting in positive change and spiritual growth as a Christian to the glory of God.²⁰

¹⁸Harold Ivan Smith, *When Your People Are Grieving: Leading in Times of Loss* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2001), 151.

¹⁹Neff, *From One Widow to Another*, 198.

²⁰Elyse M. Fitzpatrick and Dennis M. Johnson, *Counsel From the Cross: Connecting Broken People to the Love of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 92.

Central Kentucky Network of Baptists. Located in Lexington, Kentucky, the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists is comprised of 91 cooperating Southern Baptist churches and 14 missions/new works in Central Kentucky. The Association is a voluntary cooperating member of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. Founded in 1785, the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists is the oldest Baptist Association west of the Alleghenies, pre-dating the Southern Baptist Convention.²¹

Pastoral care. The term is used to describe all the help provided by pastors, elders, deacons, and all the other members of a local church who are in need of their help. It is characterized by compassion, motivated by love for God and a willingness to serve others.²²

Pastoral counseling. The term is used to describe a specific ministry of both pastoral care and counseling. It is a specialized relationship and offered at specific times where the pastor responds to a member of his congregation who is seeking Christian spiritual guidance for problems that require the person to grow in their relationship with God.²³

Soul Care. The term comes from *cura animarum*, “cure of souls,” with greater emphasis being given to care more so than cure. Historically, the four components have been healing, guiding, reconciling and sustaining. The over-arching goal is spiritual formation of the Christian’s inner life to grow to be more Christ-like while recognizing that the human beings are also physical beings made in the image of God.²⁴

²¹Elkhorn Baptist Association, “About Us,” accessed July 13, 2013, <http://www.elkhorn.org/about-us-1/>.

²²David G. Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling: A Short-Term Structured Model*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 19.

²³*Ibid.*, 28.

²⁴Wil Hernandez, “Care of Souls,” in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen C. Scorgie (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 335.

Soul Care ministries. These are ministries that enact the four components of Soul Care and are rooted in biblical truth and the compassion of Christ. They are ministries that (1) guide people in spiritual maturity, (2) heal people who have been wounded emotionally and spiritually with the hope of Christ, (3) reconcile people to God and others through forgiveness, and (4) sustain people in their seasons of pain with compassionate involvement and support.²⁵ The aim of these ministries is the building up or edification of the soul.²⁶

Widow. A woman who has been bereaved of her husband.²⁷

This project was dependent upon the response of pastors and deacons to the information about the training. Their decision to make it a priority to participate in order to be better prepared to minister to widows was one that was theirs alone to make. An associated limitation was the decision of those who did attend a training to be motivated to plan and implement a six-week Soul Care ministry in 2015.

Two delimitations of this project were identified. First, the trainings were offered only to the English-speaking churches, thus excluding two Hispanic churches because of the language barrier. Second, mission and new church starts who were members of the network were also not included due to the small numbers of members and even smaller number of widows in these groups.

Research Methodology

Five goals were identified and described to facilitate the successful implementation of this ministry project. The first goal was to obtain support and

²⁵Robert W. Kellemen, *Soul Physicians: A Theology of Soul Care and Spiritual Direction* (Taneytown, MD: RPM, 2005), 548.

²⁶Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 11.

²⁷Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG, 1992), s.v. "widow."

participation of the Director of Missions (DOM). Excellent communication between me, the leaders of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists, and especially the pastors and deacons of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists, was an absolute key to the success of this ministry project. Preliminary contact was made with the DOM who indicated enthusiastic and sincere support for the project.

During weeks 1 and 2 of the project, contact was made with the DOM. The purpose of the ministry project was explained and his support and participation was requested. The receipt of the signed Statement of Cooperation demonstrated the successful completion of the first goal.²⁸

During week 3, an e-mail was sent to the pastors and chairmen of the deacons of the ninety-one churches explaining the purpose of the two scheduled trainings and encouraging them to participate. The e-mail included my contact information as well as a survey to identify those member churches who have widows in their congregation.²⁹ The survey asked five questions including the number of widows in their church and the description of their ministry to them. Two main reasons that the internet was chosen as the survey method rather than it being sent by mail is because of the comparatively low cost and the much shorter data collection period.³⁰ The pastors were encouraged to complete the survey and e-mail it back to me by the end of week 4, to help me ascertain their intention to participate in a training session.

The second goal was the development and approval of the curriculum by the three-member expert panel. The curriculum consisted of three different sections:

(1) Theological Foundations of Soul Care, (2) Psychological and Social Impact of Various

²⁸See appendix 1.

²⁹See appendix 3.

³⁰Johnny Blair, Ronald F. Czaja, and Edward A. Blair, *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decision and Procedures* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014), 50. Mailed surveys can take up to 10 weeks to be collected in contrast to internet surveys, which can take only 1 to 3 weeks.

Grieving Styles, and (3) Composition and Provision of Soul Care Ministries. More time was allotted with each training session to emphasize the “how-to” of such ministries to widows. The attendees learned of the differences and basic information about various grieving styles or patterns. By gaining an increased understanding of how to lead their congregations to understand the needs of widows for ministry, the pastors and deacons were stimulated and empowered to implement a six-week Soul Care ministry after the completion of their training session.

The third goal was to communicate effectively with the pastors and chairmen of the deacons of each church to secure their commitment to attend one of the two scheduled training sessions. During weeks 5 to 8, contact by e-mail was made with each pastor and chairman of the deacons of each church in the network to tell them of the date and location of the training session. A second survey was attached to an e-mail requesting the pastors and deacons to make a commitment to attend a training session.³¹

The fourth goal was to educate the pastors and deacons at each training session about the biblical imperative for and composition of Soul Care ministries for widows as well as a widow’s grief journey. A review of the scriptural passages from both the Old and New Testaments was conducted to demonstrate the importance of widows and their Soul Care to God. The second section of the curriculum informed the attendees of the deep transformative impact the death of a woman’s husband has in every area of her life. Information was presented from both Christian and secular literature as to how the death of her husband causes the widow to have to eventually re-construct her identity and countless details of her life. A review of secular literature was discussed to inform the attendees about the grieving process, grieving styles, and the uniqueness of each widow’s grief, which is influenced by past losses and multiple other factors. The pastors and deacons were provided the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas as to how to

³¹See appendix 5.

provide Soul Care ministries to the widows in their individual churches. They were encouraged to share their experiences about the spiritual rewards and challenges of ministering to widows after the week of the funeral.

The training sessions were held on Thursday, May 28, and Saturday, May 30. At the beginning of each session, the pastors and deacons were given a survey to test their knowledge of the value of widows to God, the composition of Soul Care ministries and a widow's grief journey.³² The same survey was given to the group at the conclusion of the training session. Thus, the fourth goal was considered successfully met when the teaching to the church leaders of biblically-based imperatives for the Soul Care of widows and a widow's grief journey made a positive statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of their knowledge.³³

The fifth goal was that the pastors and deacons who attended a training session would have a positive evaluation of the curriculum utilized in the training sessions. This goal was measured by the administration of a Post-Training Evaluation.³⁴ The goal was considered successfully met when the majority of respondents indicated a positive learning experience from the developed curriculum.³⁵

³²See appendix 7.

³³Deborah J. Ramsey, *Statistics for Dummies*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2011), 61: "A variety of hypothesis tests are done in scientific research, including *t*-tests (comparing two populations means), paired *t*-tests (looking at before/after data), and tests of claims made about proportions or means for one or more populations." A *t*-test is a kind of hypothesis test that states that change will occur in two different groups and/or in the same group for reasons other than chance.

³⁴See appendix 10.

³⁵See appendix 23.

CHAPTER 2
THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR SOUL CARE
MINISTRIES OF WIDOWS

Soul Care ministries to widows need to be a high priority in the local church as an expression of obedience to God and his Word. An ever increasing number of married women in the church and community at large are becoming widows. According to the United States Census Bureau, approximately 1 out of 10 women over the age of 17 is a widow.¹ Carr provides specific data regarding the number of widows: “More than 900,000 adults are widowed each year in the United States, and nearly three quarters of them are over age 65.”² The Bible records the high value of widows to God the Father and Jesus Christ in both the Old and New Testaments. The church that takes its biblical responsibility for the care and support of widows seriously, in obedience to the Lord and love for people, will plan, prepare, and implement an ongoing ministry to them after their bereavement. The leadership, as well as individual church members, cannot provide the needed Soul Care ministry to each widow until there is an increased understanding of the work of grieving. God’s Word provides a solid theological foundation for gaining such an understanding and building such a ministry.

The Importance of the Widow to God

The Bible, beginning in Exodus, is very clear as to how precious every widow

¹R. Larry Overstreet, e-mail to author, February 20, 2010.

²Deborah Carr, “Factors that Influence Late-Life Bereavement: Considering Data from the Changing Lives of Older Couples Study,” in *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention*, ed. Margaret S. Stroebe et al. (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 417.

is to God. The Ten Commandments provided the foundation for the Sinai covenant. Such a covenant was truly unique in its historical and social context. R. K. Harrison writes, “The Hebrews were unique in the ancient world for their attempts to interpret the whole of national existence in terms of a solemn covenantal agreement with a single deity.”³ “At the heart of the covenantal text are two sections: (1) the “Ten Words” in chapter 20 and (2) the “Judgments” (or “laws”/“ordinances”) in chapters 21-23.”⁴ In reference to Exodus 20, Douglas Stuart explains, “What the chapter contains—in particular, the Ten “Words” (*debarim*)—is more like the content of a national constitution than merely the content of one section of codified law or another.”⁵ Chapters 21-23 provide the specificity of how to “live out” the foundational principles of the Ten Words. Where Exodus 21:1-22:17 contains case laws, moral laws are contained in Exodus 22: 18-23:19. Wenham further explains, “Unlike the case laws which are cast in the third person, ‘If a man does x’, and state a penalty, ‘he must do y,’ these are moral injunctions in the second person, ‘you shall not do z.’”⁶

Widows, like orphans and foreigners, did not have the protections that were afforded to other classes of the society as privileges. Stuart writes, “Widows lacked direct legal participatory rights (since women were represented by their husbands in legal

³R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 582.

⁴Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 305. Gentry and Wellum observe that Christians refer to these “Ten Words” as the Ten Commandments even though the biblical texts in Exod 34:28 and Deut 4:13 and 10:4 refer to them as the Ten Words. Ibid.

⁵Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 440.

⁶Gordon J. Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament*, vol.1, *A Guide to the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 71.

matters) and could not own land in their own man under many conditions.”⁷ God warned Israel that if they did not obey the commands regarding the care of widows, orphans, and foreigners, He would allow them to be destroyed as a people:

You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. (Exod 22:22-24)⁸

Stuart points out, “The expression ‘the sword’ is often used in the Old Testament and New Testament as a metonymy for ‘warfare’”⁹ God is reminding them that what happened to the Egyptians when they mistreated His people will happen to them if they choose to mistreat these disadvantaged groups within Israel.¹⁰ House comments, “Every law code must be judged by how it raised accepted standards. This law raises the emotions and loyalties of Israel above . . . mistreatment of the poor, the orphan, the alien, the widow or anyone else who has no advocate (22:21-27).”¹¹

The description of God himself includes his great protection of the widow: “For the Lord your God is the God of and Lord of Lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing” (Deut 10:17 -18). Merrill states, “As Lord over all he cannot be enticed or coerced into any kind of partiality through influence peddling (v.17) and, in fact, is the special advocate of defenseless

⁷Stuart, *Exodus*, 516.

⁸All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

⁹Stuart, *Exodus*, 517.

¹⁰Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 452.

¹¹Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 115.

persons who are so often victims of such unscrupulous behavior (v.18).”¹² Impartiality towards the powerless by those who claim to love God and man is emphasized as well in the New Testament. Christensen writes, “In 1:17 human judges were to possess the same quality. The same theme is taken up in the NT by Peter (Acts. 10:34) and Paul (Gal. 2:6).”¹³

The righteous treatment of the widow is so important to God that injustice done to a widow is included in the covenant curses: “Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. And all the people shall say ‘Amen’” (Deut 27: 19). Craigie observes, “Once again, the status in law of those offended against was such that they might fear to bring proceedings against the offender, but the curse nevertheless bring the offender under the judgment of God.”¹⁴ These commands were to be carried out by the priests, prophets, and later during the time of the kings: “As in the rest of the ancient Near East, the ideal was that the kings of Israel establish justice to care for the weak—including the widow in the land and in the future restoration.”¹⁵

A historical underpinning for the just treatment of widows was God’s deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt:

You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow’s garment in pledge, but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this. (Deut 24: 17-18)

¹²Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 204.

¹³Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6a, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 204.

¹⁴Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 333.

¹⁵M. Daniel Carroll, “Widow,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 892.

They were to remember the faithfulness and charity of God shown to their forefathers by demonstrating the same compassion to the less fortunate members of the Jewish community of their day.

There was a reason that God commanded such specificity in regard to the widow. The garment was a piece of clothing that was to be used as a blanket at night. In fact, Deuteronomy 24: 12-13 commands the borrower not to sleep with it and to return it at sundown.¹⁶ Christensen writes of God's concern that the widow who had her garment taken from her would "lead to unchastity or to rumors harmful to her reputation."¹⁷ By following this command and others in regard to how the community as a whole was to treat the individuals of the powerless classes, including the widow, the love of God was demonstrated to them as He intended.

God gave specific instructions regarding provision for the needs of the widow. At the end of the third year the people were to bring their tithe, a tenth of their produce, to the Levites, and the widow directly benefited from the Levites' obedience:

And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat, and shall be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. (Deut 14:29)

God implemented a system where the widow would be taken care of by his people. The vision expressed in Deuteronomy is an integral characteristic of the people of God in their capacity to share and care for one another. Peter T. Vogt explains,

For this reason, the Levites, aliens, orphans, and widows were not to be considered poor. . . . Sharing with these groups was not meritorious, but was expected behavior on the part of the community as a whole. Yahweh would richly bless his people,

¹⁶Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 308.

¹⁷Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 597, quoted from J. H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 228.

who would, out of devotion to him, share that bounty with everyone in the community.¹⁸

From this experience of giving and receiving, all could learn and be reminded of their dependence on God as the source of their provision. Craigie comments, “Year by year, they learned to know and remember that the source of their sustenance was God, and every third year they remembered particularly that not all others were blessed as they were.”¹⁹ An additional provision was the gleaning of the fields at harvest time. The widows could gather what was left behind to help feed their families. This provision for the widow provides the background for the infamous story of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. The Lord also instructed that the overlooked fruit of the olive tree and the grapes left on the vine be harvested as well by the widow and other less fortunate members of the Jewish society.

However, Bennett writes with a more negative view of the distribution of the commodities and of the Deuteronomic Code in general. He argues that the common characteristic that the widow, orphan, and stranger had in common was the absence of a strong male protector: “This absence limited the access of these persons to commodities in the biblical communities, and it undermined their chances for emancipation from debt slavery and for exculpation in litigation.”²⁰ A woman’s honor was found in having a husband and her shame was when she was without one. Dille writes, “The formerly married woman is in a position of social shame (Is 47:8-9; 54:4) because she is

¹⁸Peter T. Vogt, “Social Justice and The Vision of Deuteronomy,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 51, no. 1 (March 2008): 40.

¹⁹Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 234.

²⁰Harold V. Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal: Deuteronomic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers, and Orphans in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 54.

vulnerable and lacks access to the social position that a husband would provide.”²¹ G. Lenski is quoted by Bennett in the definition and description of socio-economic classes within these agrarian communities.²² At the bottom of the strata of the eight classes of people were the expendables: “This social subdivision of nonessential persons with physical and mental handicaps, women with children but who were without husbands, and other individuals that political and economic elites forced to live by charity.”²³ In contrast to the cultural and systematic devaluation of the widow stood Jehovah God’s command to *value* and care for the widow as He does.

The biblical texts record God’s concern for the widow to be proactive in nature rather than passive. Jehovah’s instructions to Judah in response to their hypocritical worship are clear: “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil. Learn to do what is good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause” (Isa 1:16-17). VanGemenen declares, “The requirements of ritual purity must be kept and sacrifices are to be offered from a pure heart. It is impossible to pray for relief from the enemy as long as no compassion is shown to the oppressed.”²⁴

The last three commands are to be the results of the change that takes place in the heart and minds of Judah and Israel. Beyer explains, “The last three imperatives in verse 17 describe specific actions the people could take to follow through on their

²¹Sarah J. Dille, “Women and Female Imagery,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 851.

²²Gerhard Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (Chapel Hill, NC: Westminster/John Knox, 1998), 189-96, quoted in Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal*, 59.

²³Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal*, 63.

²⁴William A. VanGemenen, *Isaiah*, Baker Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 477.

decisions to refuse evil and choose good.”²⁵ Oswalt comments, “Thus, injustice and oppression are wrong because they are in defiance of the nature of creation. Similarly, to do good is to learn to value persons as the Creator does.”²⁶ The meaning and intention of the Hebrew word “*rib*” for “plead” is to “contend for” or “argue” and is used mainly in a legal or judicial context. “The underlying sense of the verb involves a resolution or vindication of a conflict from both a divine and human perspective.”²⁷ Thus, a successful king of Israel would defend the widow to reflect the nature of God, the King of Creation, and not leave justice to the gods of the cosmos as their neighboring countries believed. Walton writes, “Mesopotamians would have viewed the washing in physical terms accomplished through ritual. Israelites were to accomplish it in spiritual terms through repentance and reformation.”²⁸

David declares, “Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation” (Ps 68:5). Tate writes, “Orphans, widows and those without family were subject to oppression in the societies of the ancient world (as they still are).”²⁹ The society of that day was dominated by the male who represented the family and provided the resources. “Those who had no male representative—especially orphans (NIV “the fatherless”) and widows, as here were at a disadvantage, have no one to secure their

²⁵Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 42.

²⁶John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 99.

²⁷Stephen D. Renn, ed., *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), s.v. “*rib*.”

²⁸John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 585.

²⁹Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51 -100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 176.

rights or basic needs.”³⁰ Regulations to help the helpless members of the nation of Israel were written into the Law.³¹ The Hebrew word for defender, translated “*dayyan*,” is used by the psalmist “to describe God as the defender or judge of the widows.”³² The mental picture depicted by the word “defender” is that of “Defender-in-Chief.” It is evident by this verse and others throughout the Bible that widows are “near and dear” to the heart of God. Goldingay writes of Psalm 68:4-5, “The one who rides on the steppes or clouds does so as the one whose holy dwelling is in the heavens; the clouds bring Yah to earth. And Yah [Yahweh] comes to earth to act there, as one cares for vulnerable people such as orphans and widows.”³³

With the passage of time, the people of Israel and their religious system continued to be corrupted by sin. Jesus Christ was teaching in the temple and warned his disciples about the scribes. His warning concerning their prideful desire for recognition from people was contrasted with the widow’s humble service to God. Both Mark and Luke record this contrast:

He also said in his teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and who like greetings in the marketplaces, and have the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for a

³⁰Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, The NIV Application Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 936.

³¹Ibid. Compare to Deut 14:29, 16:11, 24:17-21, 26: 12, 13; 27:19. The fact that the preponderance of this legislation is found in Deut, which came to its final form and position in the Pentateuch in the Exile, suggests this problem of the rights and needs of the “fatherless and widows” is particularly acute in the late monarchial and early exilic period. This is borne out as well by the number of prophetic allusions to injustice and indignity visited on these marginalized people during this same period (compare to cf. Isa 1:17, 23, 9:17, 10:2, Jer 7:6, 22:3, Ezek 22:7, Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5) Any increase in the “fatherless and widows” during this period may well have been the result of the deaths or physical displacement of many males in the military engagements and resulting captivity of the Exile.

³²Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG, 2003), 235.

³³John Goldingay, *Psalms 42 -89*, The Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 316.

pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.” (Mark 12:38-40)

The original Greek text demonstrates how much Jesus wanted His disciples to learn from the scribes as to what *not* to do. “The Greek words *blepete apo ton grammateon* ‘you see from the scribes’ interpreted: ‘you see with understanding by the way they dress, want to be noticed, how self-centered, and self-important the scribes are.’”³⁴ He was telling them to “turn away” from the scribes’ brand of religion. He wanted to be certain that his disciples knew that the scribes’ object of worship was religious practices and not Jehovah God. Brooks writes, “The greetings in the marketplace were not ordinary greetings but expressions of deference to a religious authority.”³⁵ He furthermore wanted them to understand that their outward appearance of piety and righteousness could not hide their sinful treatment of widows from the eyes of Jehovah.

What did Jesus mean when he said that the scribes devour widows’ houses? The Greek word for “devour” in this context is “*katesthio*,” which has as one of its’ meanings to “metaphorically to eat or swallow the houses of widows.”³⁶ The widows could easily have been talked into willing their homes to the scribes and Pharisees instead of their being “willed” to their families as directed in the Old Testament. Collins writes,

The Pharisees knew God’s law about inheritances, but they apparently had devised legal mechanisms to circumvent the scriptures. This would be one more example of how the Pharisees invented ‘traditions’ which contradicted God’s laws. (Matthew 15:1-3).³⁷

³⁴James Matheny, “They Devour Widow’s Houses,” accessed February 13, 2010, <http://bible.org/article/they-devour-widows-houses>.

³⁵James Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: B & H, 1991), 202.

³⁶Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG, 1992), s.v. “*katesthio*.”

³⁷Steven M. Collins, “Devouring Widow’s Houses,” accessed February 13, 2010, http://stevenmcollins.com/html/widows_houses.html.

Witherington explains further, “The phrase ‘to devour a house’ is a technical one in extrabiblical Greek, referring to the bilking of someone’s property or funds.”³⁸

Other possibilities could have been happening to which Jesus was referring when he used the verb “devour.” Evans writes of the specific variations in the meaning of the term. The religious leaders could have

1. took pay to provide legal aid to widows which was forbidden;
2. appointed as guardians to care for them, the scribes cheated the widows;
3. took unfair advantage of widows’ hospitality until they were driven to poverty;
4. mismanaged their property;
5. took payment for prolonged prayers for the widows;
- and 6. took widows’ houses as payment for debts which could not be paid.³⁹

The scribes and Pharisees did not honor Jehovah or practice the teachings of the Torah regarding their treatment of the widows among them. Keener explains, “Whatever their specific crime, the charge of ‘devouring widows’ houses’ portrays them as worse than tax gatherers.”⁴⁰ They did not see the widows as God saw them, but saw only how they could take advantage of this low class of vulnerable women. Jesus obviously wanted his disciples to see the hypocrisy of the scribes’ religion and the callousness of the Pharisees’ hearts that caused them to take advantage of widows.

Christ’s Command Concerning the Care of the Widow

The most compelling example of God’s love and concern for the widow, as for all people, comes from Christ himself as he hung on the cross. One cannot imagine the pain of his crucifixion; it is amazing that he was able to speak at all. Christ chose to do so despite the difficulty. John records,

But standing by the cross of Jesus was his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold your son!”

³⁸Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 334.

³⁹Craig Evans, *Mark*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 34b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 279.

⁴⁰Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 169.

Then he said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour, the disciple took her into his own home. (John 19:25-27)

Discussion has occurred regarding the variance among the Synoptic record of the identity of the women present at the crucifixion of Christ. Mary Magdalene is named in John, Mark, and Matthew but not in Luke as he does not record the names of any of the women who were present. Mark also names “Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph and Salome” (Mark 15:40). Matthew records “Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee” (Matt 7:56). In all of these records, the presence of unnamed women were mentioned by each author and described as being those who had followed Jesus throughout Galilee and then to Jerusalem. Beasley-Murray writes, “It should be noted that the persons named by Mark and Matthew are ‘among’ those standing afar; there is no compulsion then to restrict those who drew near to Jesus to the persons named by Mark and Matthew.”⁴¹ There have been attempts to discredit the variance in the location of the women as recorded in the Synoptic gospels from Jesus dying on the cross. In response, Keener writes, “In either case, the soldiers supervising the execution would have looked the other way in practice if they had no reason to forbid it; the prerogatives of motherhood were highly respected in the ancient world.”⁴²

The question arises as to why Jesus would entrust the care of his mother to John instead of Joseph or his half-brothers. The presumption can be made that Joseph had died by this time, making Mary a widow. Kostenberger explains, “In Jesus’ first three words from the cross recorded by John, Jesus gave the ‘disciple he loved’ charge of his mother, perhaps because his own brothers still did not believe in him.”⁴³ In John’s account, Mary and her sister are named as witnesses at the crucifixion. John did not name

⁴¹George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 348.

⁴²Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 313.

⁴³Andreas L. Kostenberger, *Encountering John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 181.

Mary's sister, but Mark says that Salome was among the women present. Salome was the mother of Zebedee's sons, James and John. "This last suggestion . . . makes James and John, the sons of Zebedee, the cousins of Jesus. This traditional identification of John the son of Zebedee with the Beloved Disciple helps to explain his close relationship with Jesus in the ministry."⁴⁴

Jesus Christ did much during his earthly ministry to elevate the place of women in Jewish culture. He knew what could happen to his mother if provision was not made for her care. Thurston writes,

In Hebrew tradition, widowhood was a misfortune and even disgraceful (Ruth 1: 20-21). A widow could return to her family only if her bride price was repaid. She was expected to await levirate marriage or public refusal (Deut 25:5-10). Women's status was lower than men's and widows were the lowest.⁴⁵

He wanted to convey his love to his mother by arranging for her care in his final moments as a human being on earth. Keener explains,

Jesus makes an oral testament in front of witnesses, which makes it binding, and formally places his mother under his disciple's protection, providing for her after his death. Dying fathers could exhort sons to take care of surviving mothers . . . for a disciple to be accorded a role in his teacher's family was a great honor to the disciple . . . (disciples sometimes called their teachers, "father").⁴⁶

The words, "Behold your mother!" are recorded only in the Gospel of John and not in the Synoptic Gospels. John, no doubt, felt a sense of honor and duty to be asked by Christ to take care of Mary as he immediately took her into his home. Carson writes, "It is wonderful to remember that even as he hung dying on a Roman cross, suffering as the Lamb of God, he took thought of and made provision for his mother."⁴⁷

⁴⁴Beasley-Murray, *John*, 349.

⁴⁵Bonnie Bowman Thurston, "Widows," in *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol Kroeger and Mary J. Evans (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 745.

⁴⁶Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 313.

⁴⁷D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 616.

What Jesus Christ did for his mother is so characteristic of his love. Pink writes,

He was performing the mightiest work of all history; He was engaged in doing that which in comparison makes the creating of a world fade into utter insignificance, yet He forgets not to make provision for His mother—much as He might have done had they been together in the home at Nazareth.⁴⁸

Christ's command from the cross regarding the care of his mother, the widow, remains compelling to this day. Scriptures in the New Testament provide specific teachings regarding the care of widows that are to be done in obedience to His command.

The Care of Widows in the New Testament

In Acts 6: 1-6 Luke describes how the growing church in Jerusalem addressed the problem of the Hellenists' complaint that their widows were not being fed adequately:

Now in those days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6)

"Hellenist" is a term used to describe a person whose first language is Greek. However, in this context, "Luke uses the term 'Hellenist' to refer to Diaspora Jews living in or around Jerusalem for whom Greek is their spoken language and who attended synagogues where Greek was the language of worship."⁴⁹ Stephen is a prominent example of such a Jew who became a Christian.

Sociological reasons existed for the number of widows in the relatively new church. Jewish women traditionally married while in their teens and Jewish men married

⁴⁸Arthur W. Pink, *The Seven Sayings of the Saviour on the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 69.

⁴⁹Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 242.

in their thirties. As would be expected, many of these husbands would die before their wives. Thus, a large number of widows were present in the community and church alike. Winter writes, “It has been estimated that forty percent of women between the ages of forty and fifty were widows and that, as a group, they comprised some thirty percent of the women in the ancient world.”⁵⁰ The Jews present in the Christian community included not only those born in Palestine but also those who were Diaspora Jews that returned to Jerusalem. Keener comments,

Thus, a disproportionate number of foreign Jewish widows lived in Jerusalem which did not have enough Jewish synagogues for their distributors of charity to supply all the widows adequately. The urban social problem of Jerusalem spilled over into the church.⁵¹

Theological reasons also existed for the return of Diaspora Jews to Jerusalem. It was considered virtuous among Jewish couples to die in Israel and be buried there, in the majority of cases leaving the wives behind as widows. A most bizarre teaching was conducted by rabbis in Palestine. “According to one common tradition, the dead would be resurrected only in Israel, so the righteous dead of other lands would have to roll the whole way back to Israel underground, and this was thought to be a very unpleasant experience.”⁵²

The daily distribution of food became a problem when the Hellenistic widows were not being fed to the extent of that of the Hebrew widows. Bruce writes, “As daily allocations were made to poorer members of the community from the common fund to which the wealthier members had contributed their property, complaints began to arise that one group was favored in the expense of the other.”⁵³ The disciples exhibited both

⁵⁰Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 124.

⁵¹Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 338.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 120.

brilliant practical and spiritual wisdom in setting their limits of what they could do so as not to jeopardize their own ministry. Instead of choosing the men to oversee the solution for the group, they guided the group to choose the seven men. It is extremely important to note that in the guidelines they gave to the group, “the twelve” did not emphasize the needed talents, but rather the required *character* of the chosen seven. Witherington writes,

The list of seven in v. 5 includes only men with Greek names, which is surely no accident. This seems to suggest that the community as a whole, in order to avoid even the appearance of favoritism, names mostly if not exclusively Greek-speaking Jewish Christians.⁵⁴

Paul’s first letter to Timothy includes the longest text in the New Testament addressing the necessity of the church to minister to widows. However, in this portion of the letter he also delineates who is a “real widow,” the kind of widow *not* to be enrolled, and the godly requirements of a widow who could be enrolled by the church.

Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Let a widow be enrolled if she not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions turn them away from Christ, they desire to marry and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. For some have already strayed after Satan. If any believing widow has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows. (1 Tim 5:3-16)

The care of widows was an intrinsic part of the Jewish community which then carried over to the Christian body of believers. To do so was to keep covenant with God who had

⁵⁴Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 250.

commanded that widows were to be defended and treated kindly to reflect his love and care for them. Towner explains, “In Jewish communities, the synagogue and wider community leadership provided an institutionally structured mechanism for ensuring that daily and longer-term requirements of the needy were met.”⁵⁵

To take care of one’s widowed mother was to be obedient to the commandment to “honor your father and your mother” (Exod 20:12a). In the context of both the Old Testament and the cited passage from 1 Timothy, the meaning of honor did not mean payment: “It is incorrect to interpret the verb as commanding ‘payment’ to a qualified widow, ‘honor’ should be understood to mean something like ‘provide the support that honor demands.’”⁵⁶ Paul wants to be certain that all who read his letter understand how important the care of the widow is to God with an emphasis on how it pleases him. He makes this point again at the end of the subject by stating again that those widows who have relatives need to be cared for by them, instead of the church. “One cannot be truly religious and please God when ignoring the needs of human beings, especially in one’s own family.”⁵⁷

Paul writes of the sharp contrast between the “godly” widow and the “worldly,” young widow. He described the godly widow as having an ongoing, intimate relationship with her heavenly Father. Her hope is in him and not of the things of the world. The latter was indicative of a new kind of woman emerging in the culture at large. Winter explains, “Ancient historians have observed that around 44 BC evidence of a ‘new type’ of woman emerged in certain circles of Rome . . . a woman in high position, who nevertheless

⁵⁵Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 334.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 337.

⁵⁷Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, The NIV Application Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 178.

claims for herself the indulgence in sexuality of a woman of pleasure.”⁵⁸ Leaders of the secular culture were also alarmed by the change in behavior of many of their widows. “Secular literature, including that from legal sources, described widows in the same way as did Paul in 1 Timothy 5: 11-15”⁵⁹ Paul’s concern that the behavior of these young widows not ruin the reputation and witness of the church to the surrounding community is evident. Towner writes,

The bottom line is that in this case, too, behavior adopted in the church or sanctioned by the church ultimately affects how those on the outside regard the church. . . . Imperial culture stood ready to evaluate the responsibility of what would be perceived as Christian behavior.⁶⁰

James’ definition of pure religion is one that has resonated in the church from his time to the present: “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (Jas 1:27). “The intensity of the Hebrew idea is foreign to us and needs to be given voice if we are to properly understand James.”⁶¹ McCartney explains further,

The term used here for religion (*threskeia*) means not one’s overall faith commitment but religious practices, acts of piety, or cultic activity. By “true religion,” therefore, James does not mean “the essence of true Christian faith;” but the “essence of true Christian religious activity.”⁶²

James’ strong emphasis on outward expressions of an inner life consecrated to God is definitely influenced by Jesus and his teachings, particularly the Sermon on the Mount.

⁵⁸Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows*, 21. The author notes that this change was happening at the time of Cicero and Caesar. During their reign, promiscuous behavior of rich married women was promoted by Roman poets and in Roman Comedy as described in detail on pp. 24 -31 of this text.

⁵⁹Ibid., 123.

⁶⁰Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 359.

⁶¹David P. Nystrom, *James*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 101.

⁶²Dan G. McCartney, “Suffering in the Teaching of the Apostles,” in *Suffering and the Goodness of God*, ed. Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 33.

Morgan writes, “There is not one section of the Sermon on the Mount that James does not reflect, and there is not one section of James that does not reflect the teachings of Jesus.”⁶³

Other English translations of this scripture use the word “distress” instead of affliction. To what kind of distress was James referring? Some scholars have suggested that James had the final days in mind, but this view does not fit into the context of what James wrote. “It seems most likely, then, that with ‘in their distress’ James is describing the socio-economic and emotional condition of the widows and orphans rather than the eschatological location of these sufferings.”⁶⁴ A correct understanding of “distress” is necessary to effectively practice what James emphatically taught and practiced. “Orphans and widows may be outcasts to the world, but they must be enfolded into the relationships of believers. And this ministry begins by identifying those who are in distress.”⁶⁵

Christ consistently modeled and taught to minister to the suffering. McKnight explains,

Widows too, were a special concern of Jesus and of the early messianic community, and this concern extended into the first few centuries. . . . Anyone who practices the Jesus Creed of James 2:8-11 will see the needs of the orphans and widows and will respond with compassion.⁶⁶

The crux of that creed is to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Thus, when the church walks alongside the widow on her grief journey from the deep pain of a broken heart to the healing found in Jesus Christ, this command is being obeyed.

Conclusion

When the biblical imperative for Soul Care of widows is obeyed through Soul

⁶³Christopher Morgan, *A Theology of James: Wisdom for God’s People* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 37.

⁶⁴Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, *The International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 171.

⁶⁵Kurt Richardson, *James*, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 36 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 103.

⁶⁶McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 170.

Care ministries, God is glorified and the church is strengthened. The value of widows to the triune God is without question. As the various offices of leadership within the church gain a deeper understanding of the importance of widows to God, spiritual transformation will occur in the leadership. Soul Care ministries will be developed and provided to widows beyond the week of the funeral at the denominational level as well as in the local church. To do less is to directly disobey the command of God himself and delay spiritual growth in the church and healing in the lives of the widows.

The need for such ministries is urgently needed now and will only increase in number as the church and the culture continue to age. Every effort must be made by the church leadership to gain an increase in the understanding of the theological foundation for Soul Care and its implications to ministry, witness, and evangelistic opportunities to the spiritually lost family members of the widows. Through the undergirding power of prayer, these goals can be realized for the good of the widows, their families, and to the glory of God.

CHAPTER 3

SOUL CARE MINISTRIES FOR WIDOWS AFTER THE WEEK OF THE FUNERAL

The leadership, as well as individual members of the church, cannot provide the needed Soul Care ministry to each widow until they have an increased understanding of the work of grieving. Widows are in a spiritually vulnerable state both at the time of and after the death of their husbands. As a result, about half of the widows leave the church they attended with their husbands (the local church can be ready to provide the needed Soul Care ministries to stem and reverse this trend).

As the local church seeks to meet the unique and various needs of individual widows, there is an increased opportunity for their spiritual transformation and retention as an active, contributing member. Various ministries need to be developed and supported that meet their practical, spiritual, and social needs during and after the week of their husband's death and funeral. The church's positive witness to the family and friends of the widow is increased through the demonstration of Christian love to their widowed mother, sister, daughter, and friend. Thus, spiritual transformation can occur within families, communities, and the church itself because of the Christian Soul Care given to widows.

When a woman's husband passes away, she usually receives an outpouring of support and love upon hearing the news of his passing. Family and friends come to her home bringing food, hugs, and tears. She may receive a number of cards expressing sympathy and intentions to keep her in their prayers. The funeral or graveside service is planned and her husband is laid to rest. She can have countless details to address that can occupy a great deal of time and energy. Hopefully, family members can remain a few days, perhaps even a couple of weeks to help her take care of everything. Eventually,

however, she must face the inevitable; she is alone in her home after everyone has gone back to his or her own lives. All of this activity has occurred while she has been in a state of shock. The work and difficult journey of grieving has only begun for her.

The presence of loving and supportive friends and family offers one of the most important things a widow continues to need after the funeral. When the immediate need for help with practical matters ends, the widow must not be forgotten. Miriam Neff writes, “Loneliness and solitude are not descriptive enough of the space that becomes the cocoon of the widow.”¹ She needs the presence of people who are comfortable enough within themselves about the reality of death. As the leadership and members of the local church gain a greater understanding of various grief patterns or styles, they can really be of assistance to her on her journey of grief. Thus, pastors and deacons will be better prepared to recognize the widow’s preferred style of grieving and recognize which Soul Care ministry would best of help to her.

Patterns or Styles of Grieving

Simply stated, “Grief is energy—an emotional reaction to loss.”² In general, grief involves both the inner life of thoughts and feelings and the outward expression of those thoughts and feelings in response to the death of a loved one. Two models of grief are reviewed here to increase understanding of the complexity of grief. Emotions are more than feelings and are defined by Doka and Martin as “biologically based adaptive

¹Miriam Neff, “The Widow’s Might,” *Christianity Today* 52 (January 2008): 44.

²Kenneth J. Doka and Terry L. Martin, *Grieving beyond Gender: Understanding the Ways Men and Women Mourn*, Death, Dying, and Bereavement Series, rev. ed., ed. Robert Neimeyer (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2007), 37. Doka is a professor of gerontology and Martin is a psychologist and professor of thanatology that together have done relatively new research in the field of grief studies. Their explanation of differences in grieving styles is practical and readily comprehensible. The variance in grief patterns shatters the stereotype of *how* a person should grieve solely based on gender.

reactions involving changes in the physical, affective, cognitive, spiritual, and behavioral systems in response to perceived environmental events of significance to the individual.”³

These same authors use a model developed by Gross and Munoz in 1995 that illustrates the composition of emotions. Their model states that adaptation programs and various responses comprise emotions, particularly in light of the death of a loved one. The authors continue, “Whereas the adaptational program is genetically and biologically determined, response tendencies result from previous and ongoing interactions with the environment.”⁴ Response tendencies will be informed by personality and influence of one’s individual and familial cultures as well as one’s gender and its development.

Emotions are comprised of two processes: appraisal and modification.

Grief is very personal and each grief journey is unique to that person alone.

Doka and Martin explain,

Some individuals will show few intrusive manifestations of grief, quickly resuming their regular activities. Bonanno, Wortman, and Nesse (2004), for example, found that 45.9% of their sample of widows fit that pattern, a pattern they labeled *resilient*.⁵

It should be noted that in this particular study, this finding is *less than half* of the sample of widows. The authors write,

Appraisal is the cognitive-based, semiconscious process, which activates the adaptational program and continues to shape the eventual response. The second process is modification, a conscious effort on the part of the individual to determine the final emotional outcome.⁶

Through this appraisal process the grieved person gives meaning to the loss of the loved one. The interaction between the characteristics of the components and processes of emotion determine whether the dominant grief pattern is intuitive, instrumental, or

³Doka and Martin, *Grieving Beyond Gender*, 38.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 26.

⁶Ibid., 39.

somewhere in between, thus comprising the first model of a grieving pattern discussed here.

The predominant characteristic of the intuitive grief pattern is feelings and the expression of them. Doka and Martin state,

Emotions vary, ranging from shock and disbelief to overwhelming sorrow and a sense of loss of self-control. The intuitive griever may experience grief as a series or waves of acutely painful feelings. . . . Anguish and tears almost constant companions.⁷

Intuitive grievers *need* to share their feelings with other grievers, either in a large group or with certain confidantes. This pattern of grieving is most often associated with women, but men can also experience and express grief in this manner. Within the culture and the church, the intuitive grief pattern is most commonly associated with a grieving person.

Doka and Martin summarize the intuitive grief pattern:

1. Feelings are intensely experienced.
2. Expressions such as crying and lamenting mirror inner experience.
3. Successful adaptive strategies facilitate the experience and expression of feelings.
4. There are prolonged periods of confusion, inability to concentrate, disorganization and disorientation.
5. Physical exhaustion and/or anxiety may result.⁸

The predominant characteristic of the instrumental grief pattern is cognition.

The authors explain, “Instrumental grievers are often identified by the absence of behaviors- notably crying and help seeking- rather than their actions. In a sense, the instrumental griever is most often defined by a lack of expression.”⁹ Such a griever has feelings associated with grief, however, these feelings are not as intense as experienced by the intuitive griever. The following characteristics have been summarized by Doka and Martin as those associated with the intuitive grief pattern:

⁷Doka and Martin, *Grieving Beyond Gender*, 57.

⁸Ibid., 63.

⁹Ibid., 70.

1. Thinking is predominant to feeling as an experience: feels are less intense.
2. There is general reluctance to talk about feelings.
3. Mastery of oneself and the environment are most important.
4. Problem solving as a strategy enables mastery of feelings and control of the environment.
5. Brief periods of cognitive dysfunction are common.
6. Energy levels are enhanced, but symptoms of general arousal go unnoticed.¹⁰

Even though these two distinct grief patterns have been identified and described by sociologists, the existence of either pattern in its distinct pure form among griever is rare. What is much more likely to exist are “blended” grief patterns that contain some characteristics of both the intuitive and the instrumental grief patterns. Just as rare, is the existence of a perfectly “pure” blended pattern of grief. Doka and Martin write,

Since these grievers straddle both instrumental and intuitive experiences they may already possess a larger repertoire of strategies. Of course the opposite might also be true: the blended griever whose experiences are widely varied and whose storehouse of adaptive strategies is severely limited.¹¹

These patterns of grief seek to define and describe the reactions to the death of a loved one immediately after the death and in the relative short term. In addition to the above mentioned factors that will affect a widow’s response to the death of her husband, the following must be taken into consideration as well:

1. Circumstances surrounding the loss (e.g. was it sudden or long term, preventability, timing, presence or absence of additional stressors, etc.)
2. Extent and responses to prior losses
3. Social variables (e.g., age and gender, cultural beliefs and practices, social class, presence and strength of spiritual systems, external and internal support systems, etc.),
4. Personal variables (e.g. health, lifestyle management, etc.).¹²

Thus, the specifics of a widow’s initial reaction to the death of her husband

¹⁰Doka and Martin, *Grieving Beyond Gender*, 85.

¹¹Ibid., 83.

¹²Ibid., 26.

will be as unique for her as her uniqueness as an individual. Various studies performed by sociologists to determine which factors would be most predictive of positive bereavement outcomes have given inconsistent results. Doka and Martin explain that “the most predictive factors were positive self-esteem and personal competencies in managing the tasks of daily living.”¹³ Each widow will experience some or all of the following general reactions that are categorized as follows:

1. Feelings about the loss (e.g. guilt, anger, sorrow, etc.)
2. Reactions to the effects of the loss (e.g. shock, physical symptoms, cognitive confusion and disorganization, spiritual intensity or alienation, etc.)
3. Behaviors from or adaptive to the loss (e.g., acting out, crying, withdrawal).¹⁴

However, if the widow is not able to control her negative emotions, she can become paralyzed or “stuck” in her grief, unable to make the necessary changes to begin to adapt to her new lifestyle as a widow. “Unsuccessful regulation of negative emotions is expressed in terms of extreme emotional reactions (heightened reactivity) and emotions that persist (prolonged recovery) for an extended period of time.”¹⁵ Such emotions can be fatiguing and deplete the widow’s ability to make decisions and even affect her ability to perform the tasks of daily living. Various studies have demonstrated that unchecked negative emotions can worsen the emotional distress experienced by the widow in her grief.

Perhaps the most infamous biblical example of a widow experiencing extreme negative emotions at her time of loss is Naomi as recorded in the book of Ruth. Because of a famine in Bethlehem, Naomi, her husband Elimelech, and their two sons moved to Moab. Her sons grew up and married Moabite women; however, after ten years of living

¹³Doka and Martin, *Grieving Beyond Gender*, 26.

¹⁴Ibid., 28

¹⁵Sherman A. Lee, Laurin B. Roberts, and Jeffrey A. Gibbons, “When Religion Makes Grief Worse: Negative Religious Coping as Associated with Maladaptive Emotional Responding Patterns,” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 16, no. 16 (2013): 292.

in Moab, both of her sons died. Naomi emotionally encouraged her daughter-in-laws to go back to their families and let her return to Bethlehem alone. The depth and breadth of her grief is recorded in Ruth 2: 11-14.

But Naomi said, ‘Turn back my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me. Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

When Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem, evidently Naomi’s countenance and personality had changed so much that the people questioned her identity. “She said to them, ‘Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.’” Ulrich observes in Ruth 1:20 that her grief caused her to develop a hardened view of God’s sovereignty: “Naomi measured God’s goodness by what was happening to her and how many of her desires were met.”¹⁶ Through Ruth’s love and faithfulness, God restored Naomi’s life to her through the marriage of Boaz and Ruth and the birth of Obed. Thus, God’s personal love and faithfulness to widows today can cause them to move positively out of the grip of such negative emotions and into the next chapter of their life that God has planned for them.

Dual-Process Model

The second model of grief is the Dual-Process Model described by Wolfgang Stroebe and Henk Schut.¹⁷ The bereaved person utilizes two processes simultaneously in order to learn to live with the loss. The first process is loss-oriented, where individuals

¹⁶Dean R. Ulrich, “Naomi,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 491.

¹⁷Doka and Martin, *Grieving beyond Gender*, 30. In this section, Doka and Martin are referring to the information presented by Wolfgang Stroebe and Henk Schut, “The Dual Process Model of Coping with Loss” (paper presented to the International Work Group, Oxford, June 29, 1995).

cope with the changes and details, both great and small, resulting from their loss. The second process is what individuals have to do to readjust to the new demands of their changed lives. “Restoration” does not mean a return to the way life was before the loss, for that no longer exists. Rather, it means individuals are challenged to develop new ways of thinking and behaving as they adjust to the losses. Stroebe and Schut postulate that individuals are constantly living in these co-existing processes.¹⁸

Since its identification and description twenty years ago, the Dual Process Model (DPM) has been studied by sociological researchers. Differences exist in the adjustment to widowhood depending on which component of DPM the widow used to cope with her grief. Those four components are Intrusion of Grief, New Roles/Identities/Relationships, Denial/Avoidance of Restoration Changes, and Distraction from Grief.¹⁹ The first two components are associated with good adjustment and the last two with poor adjustment. Bennett, Gibbons, and Mackenzie-Smith recommend changing the name of Intrusion of Grief to Continuing Bonds to more accurately reflect the positive effects of the widow’s “talking” to the deceased, memorials, and talking about their deceased husband.

The codes “life at an end, no change, and kept self-to-self”²⁰ used in the study affiliated with Denial/Avoidance of Restoration Changes reflect behavior resulting in poor adjustment to widowhood. Bennett, Gibbons, and Smith write, “People who report these are clinging onto their previous marital state and are maintaining an isolation both

¹⁸Doka and Martin, *Grieving beyond Gender*, 30.

¹⁹Kate M. Bennett, Kerry Gibbons, and Suzanne Mackenzie-Smith, “Loss and Restoration in Later Life: An Examination of Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement,” *OMEGA* 61, no. 4 (2010): 327.

²⁰*Ibid.* The code “kept self-to-self” is confusing at best. A better code label would have been “social isolation” to better communicate the lack of desire to be socially involved with others.

from their new status and from social world at an emotional level.”²¹ Thus, it appears those who are able to accept their loss and make the necessary changes rather than avoid or deny their grief are better equipped *to do* the necessary things to make a new life for themselves.

Grief specialists have identified and described a fourth general pattern of grief that can occur in a widow’s grief journey. “The term *dissonant* is used to describe a persistent way of expressing grief that is at odds with the griever’s primary internal experience.”²² One example of this pattern would be an instrumental griever remaining emotionally expressive for some time after the death of a loved one instead of utilizing his or her dominant cognitive domain. Doka and Martin explain, “Instrumental grievers are often at a disadvantage since their strengths usually do not include being comfortable with an uninhibited expression of feelings.”²³ Another illustration would be that of an intuitive griever remaining stoic and not expressing his or her grief. Doka and Martin continue, “On the other hand, intuitive grievers are usually not as adept at managing their cognitions; thus, they expend more energy reigning their feelings.”²⁴

Some clinical approaches to help widows and other grievers have been rooted in psychoanalytical theories that contradict one another, practiced without having been thoroughly researched.²⁵ Carr, Nesse, and Wortman write,

²¹Bennett, Gibbons, and Mackenzie-Smith, “Loss and Restoration,” 327.

²²Doka and Martin, *Grieving beyond Gender*, 91.

²³*Ibid.*, 94.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 92.

²⁵Deborah Carr, Randolph M. Nesse and Camille B. Wortman, “Understanding Late Life Widowhood,” in *Spousal Bereavement in Late Life*, ed. Deborah Carr, Randolph M. Nesse and Camille B. Wortman, (New York: Springer, 2006), 5. The authors refer to the theories extolled by Adler, 1943; Freud, 1917/1957; Lindemann, 1944. The research done by Bonanno & Kaltman, 1999; Stroebe, 1992-1993; Wortman & Silver, 1989, 1991 have challenged these earlier theories that dominated grief literature for most of the 20th century.

Failure to experience grief was traditionally viewed as a sign of one's denial, lack of attachment, or emotional immaturity. Conversely, persons who experience the most difficult or "chronic" grief were believed to have had an ambivalent or conflictual relationship with the deceased.²⁶

However, studies based on the Changing Lives of Older Couples (CLOC) study reveal the opposite findings:

Persons who had negative or ambivalent relationships with their late spouse experience less rather than more severe grief symptoms (Carr et al., 2000), and that "absent" grief is a normative rather than a pathological response to loss (Bonanno et al., 2002).²⁷

The metaphor of a roller coaster is applicable to a widow's grief journey in the weeks and months following her husband's death as she responds to all the adaptations she has to make. However, as the intensity of the loss and adaptation to the changes that have occurred subside in the relative short term, she enters into a longer term process called mourning that involves living the rest of her life with the loss.

Mourning

Sociologists have identified various models of grieving through the years. Two different models of mourning are currently thought to be a more accurate reflection of the reality of the bereaved one's grief. Rando described mourning as three separate operations, as delineated:

1. Reorienting one's relationship to the deceased and stimulates the period of acute grief as one acknowledges that current ties can no longer be maintained.
2. Redefining oneself and one's own identity after the loss.
3. Modifications that occur as survivors seek to redefine their world and adjust to the many changes necessitated by the loss.²⁸

Rando then wrote more of the specifics of this model by merging three phases of grieving with six distinct mourning processes:

²⁶Carr, Nesse and Wortman, "Understanding Late Life Widowhood," 5.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Therese Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning* (Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1993), as summarized in Doka and Martin, *Grieving beyond Gender*, 29.

Avoidance Phase

1. Recognizing the loss (e.g. acknowledging and understanding the death)

Confrontation Phase

2. Reacting to the separation (which includes experiencing the pain, expressing the psychological reactions to the loss, and identifying and mourning secondary losses)
3. Recollecting and re-experiencing the deceased and the relationship (which includes cognitive and affective dimensions)
4. Relinquishing the old attachments to the deceased and the old assumptive world

Accommodation Phase

5. Readjusting to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the old.
6. Reinvesting in new relationships.²⁹

When a woman's husband dies when she is elderly, her grief and mourning are complicated by the challenges of being in a stage of life when she suffers such a deep, personal loss. Carr, Wortman, and Neese continue, "First, we argue that late life (age 65+) widowhood is the most common form of spousal loss, yet most theories of bereavement do not take into consideration the special risk factors and resources of the elderly."³⁰ Many women lose their husband after a long, extended illness in which they provided a great deal of the caregiving. The way in which the couple divided household and financial responsibilities will affect a widow's daily life immediately after the death of her husband. Other tasks, responsibilities, plans, and activities are also forever altered when a married woman becomes a widow.

The Effects of Grief

When a woman's husband dies, *everything* in her world is changed with one of the most stressful events in her life. Lovegren states, "Married people suffer exceedingly after the loss of a spouse. Not only do they lose a confident, companion, lover, friend,

²⁹Doka and Martin, *Grieving beyond Gender*, 29.

³⁰Ibid.

and financial partner; they also lose their identity as married persons and must establish new roles for themselves.”³¹ The myriad of emotions experienced by the widow range from shock to anger and everything in between. Grief affects the widow’s thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and physical body in various specific ways.³²

Dutton and Zisook write,

Acutely, bereavement is characterized by pervasive and intense negative emotions including sadness, loneliness, anguish, disbelief, hopelessness, guilt, anxiety, fear, and anger. Feelings of distress are common for at least several months after the loved one’s death.³³

A common assumption is that a widow will go into a state of depression and remain in that state of mind for a long time. However, sociological research completed in the past forty years does not support that assumption. Dutton and Zisook continue,

Although research shows that a substantial number (19-58%) of bereaved individuals are depressed at 1 month post-loss (Bornstein, Clayton, Halicas, Maurice, & Robins, 1973; Harlow, Goldberg, & Comstock, 1991; Lund, Caserta, & Diamond, 1986), it is important to keep in mind that the majority of bereaved spouses does not become clinically depressed following the loss.³⁴

Most sociological research has focused on the negative emotions and outcomes of a woman becoming widowed and ignored studying any positive emotions or outcomes. “At 2 months after losing a spouse almost a third of widows and widowers report experiencing a sense of relief in knowing that their loved ones are no longer in pain (Shuchter & Zisook, 1993).”³⁵ This emotion was particularly true for those who had

³¹Mary Lovegren, “Widows and Widowers: Life Satisfaction and Social Support Networks,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 50, no. 3 (1996): 67.

³²See appendix 1.

³³Yulia Chentsova Dutton and Sidney Zisook, “Adaptation to Bereavement,” *Death Studies* 29 (2005): 881.

³⁴Ibid. The wide range in percentage would be due to the inclusion of both men and women in the study groups as well as the variance in research techniques. With an eighteen-year difference in the time frames of the studies, the bereaved could very well have been from two different generations.

³⁵Dutton and Zisook, “Adaptation to Bereavement,” 882.

cared for their spouse over a long period of time and/or while they were dying.

When a married woman becomes a widow, her life is thrown into a crisis mode, possibly the greatest one she has faced thus far in her life. In addition to the innumerable changes that have occurred in her daily life, she must also “handle” her grief. A qualitative research study was completed in 2000 of widows in their mid-50s after they had been a widow for a year. Their grief journey included a need to make meaning of their husband’s death and to experience a sense of healing from their grief. Danforth and Glass identify six significant themes as a result of their interviews with the widowed participants:

1. Emotional dissonance with the reality of being widowed
2. Assumptions about self, relationships, and life which no longer fit reality
3. Reflections on current life experiences
4. Sense of acceptance of reality and recognition of self as survivor
5. Changes in sense of self and ways of knowing
6. Meaning-making experienced through change in perspective.³⁶

The term “meaning-making” is going to be interpreted differently by a Christian widow as compared to that of a non-Christian. The Christian widow believes God to be in control of her life and thus her loss will come to be viewed by faith in God’s purpose and plan for her life. For the non-Christian widow, “meaning-making” is viewed in total reliance on her own strength of what is good for her “self.” The difference in perspectives is the presence or absence of a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is essential for those wanting to help a grieving widow to understand the impact of *past* losses on her grieving process. In other words, the work of grieving or lack of grief work that has been done in regard to past losses will affect how she responds to

³⁶Marion M. Danforth and J. Conrad Glass, Jr., “Listen to My Words, Give Meaning to My Sorrow: A Study In Cognitive Constructs in Middle-Age Bereaved Widows,” *Death Studies* 25 (2001): 519.

the death of her husband. Issues that had been “stuffed away” may very well rise to the surface and contribute to her emotional, mental, and spiritual turmoil. She may even be unaware that these are affecting her grieving. She may need the guidance of a caring Christian counselor to help identify and deal with the root causes of unresolved issues that, in turn, will help her grief journey after the death of her husband. Shaw writes, “Many people assume that the best way to be healed from hurts is to ignore them. This is not true. It cannot be true when the Spirit of Truth reveals and brings everything into the light. To ignore the past is to ignore reality, which is to ignore truth.”³⁷ A widow has so much to deal with on so many levels for much longer than even her own family may realize. There is hope in Christ for healing from past grief as well as for present grief.

The widows to whom I have ministered report that their grief causes them to have difficulty remembering things and feeling “mixed up” for some time after their husbands’ death. They shared that they feel “half of me” is gone, having to learn how to live life without their husbands. Many times, they feel like a “third wheel” when around couples. Without exception, they shared that fewer people call them, fewer cards are received, and people stop talking about their husband and/or their loss starting six weeks to two months after the funeral. James C. Petersen explains,

In our culture an unwritten rule suggests that people feel okay discussing losses for about six and half weeks. After that, those who suffered the loss think that they shouldn’t burden their friends by talking about it any longer. Their friends don’t bring it up either, because they’re afraid that doing so would re-open sore wounds.³⁸

Sadly, this “six and a half week” rule seems to exist inside the church as much as it does outside of the church because of what the widows to whom I have ministered have shared with me. In some cases, the widows shared with me that the number of phone calls especially decreased two weeks after the death of their husband.

³⁷Nathan Shaw, *Unto the Least of These: Expressing God’s Love to Widows and the Fatherless* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 89.

³⁸James C. Petersen, *Why Don’t We Listen Better? Communicating and Connecting in Relationships* (Portland, OR: Petersen, 2007), 165.

Many times the widow receives some degree of support during the shock stage, but as stated previously, begins to experience much less as the weeks pass. As the shock begins to wear off and she begins to face reality, her need for love and support is the greatest! The death of a woman's husband can cause her to call into question her spiritual and religious beliefs. Damianakis and Marziali write,

Results of several studies show that patterns of adjustment to bereavement are influenced by therapy in terms of understanding the dynamics of spiritual belief systems, self-identity transformations and re-engagement in life activities following older adults' loss of a spouse.³⁹

Widows who utilize their belief system as they grieve and mourn are better able to accept and make the necessary adjustments to their new life. Religious and spiritual rituals can be very helpful in expressing emotions, thus helping to reduce physical symptoms of grieving. Damianakis and Marziali explain, "Spiritual and/or religious practices and rituals enhanced the grieving process because they felt in a supportive environment they were able to express their emotions, such as anger and sadness."⁴⁰

For the Christian widow, her comfort is not found in "religious practices and rituals," but rather in the person of Jesus Christ who gives her hope. Andrew Lester writes,

A basic reason we have neglected the subject of hope is that pastoral care and counseling is taught and practiced on the basis of perceptions about the nature of human existence rooted in the anthropological worldviews of the social and behavioral sciences.⁴¹

Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no

³⁹Thecla Damianakis and Elsa Marziali, "Older Adults' Response to the Loss of a Spouse: The Function of Spirituality in Understanding the Grieving Process," *Aging & Mental Health* 16, no. 1 (2012): 59.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 64.

⁴¹Andrew D. Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 3.

hope” (1 Thess 4:16). This verse does not mean that widows should not grieve. Morris explains,

His contrast is not between one degree of sorrow and another, but between Christian hope and pagan despair. *The rest of men, who have no hope* is a general term for the whole non-Christian world, and the characterization is apt, for pagan literature reveals a hopelessness in the face of death which is matched by the inscriptions on tombs.⁴²

This living hope is present because of Christ’s defeat of death through his sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection. Eric L. Johnson declares, “In the Scriptures, the local church is envisioned as a site of significant social support, shaped by the example and power of God in Christ.”⁴³ The local church must and can be prepared to provide the Christian Soul Care a widow so desperately needs to recover, heal, and to experience the hope that is present in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Definition and Description of Soul Care

The term “Soul Care” has recently re-emerged in the language of Christian spiritual formation. Soul Care has been occurring for centuries and recognized by other terms. Pastoral care and Christian counseling are types of care given within the church familiar to clergy and laity alike. Soul Care comes from the Latin *cura animarum*. David Benner writes,

While *cura* is most commonly translated “care,” it actually contains the idea of both care and cure. Care refers to actions designed to support the well-being of something or someone. Cure refers to actions designed to restore well-being that has been lost.⁴⁴

The soul is not a certain part of a person, but rather it is the spiritual whole. Soul Care is then concerned about supporting and restoring every aspect of a person’s wellbeing with

⁴²Leon Morris, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 13 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984), 89.

⁴³Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 47.

⁴⁴David G. Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling: A Short-Term Structured Model* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 14.

particular attention given to the person's inner life.

The study of the history of Christian soul care reveals four common elements: healing, guiding, reconciling, and sustaining. Three of these elements are needed specifically in the Soul Care of the widow. Benner explains,

Sustaining refers to acts of caring designed to help a hurting person endure and transcend a circumstance in which restoration or recuperation is either impossible or improbable. *Guiding* refers to helping a person make wise choices and thereby grow in spiritual maturity. *Healing* involves efforts to help someone overcome an impairment and move toward wholeness.⁴⁵

Kellemen has described specific stages of "sustaining in suffering" and "healing in suffering" within the context of grief and acceptance. He identifies the four stages of hurt in the grief response: (1) denial/isolation, (2) anger/resentment, (3) bargaining/works, (4) depressing/alienation. The stages of hope in the acceptance response are (5) regrouping, (6) deadening, (7) despairing/doubting, and (8) digging cisterns.⁴⁶

For Soul Care to be effective in the local church, five components must be present: (1) Christian friendship, (2) pastoral ministry, (3) pastoral care, (4) pastoral counseling, and (5) spiritual direction.⁴⁷ These characteristics involve the most people moving to the care of the soul, involving the individual person and the Holy Spirit. The main goal of Soul Care is spiritual transformation, to help each Christian grow to become more like Christ through the challenges and circumstances of life.

Christian friendship among the members of a local church consists of listening to, encouraging, and praying for one another. It runs deeper than members just sharing about superficial aspects of their lives, but rather really loving and trusting one another

⁴⁵Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 15, emphasis original.

⁴⁶Robert W. Kellemen, *God's Healing for Life's Losses: How to Find Hope When You're Hurting* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 2010), 10.

⁴⁷Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 16

enough to share what is *really* happening in their inner lives and relationships. This kind of Christian love needs to occur within family relationships as well. Benner writes, “If we could more regularly be in relationships in which friends and family cared for us in our totality with particular attention to the inner self, the need for more formal and specialized expressions of Soul Care would be greatly reduced.”⁴⁸

The pastoral ministry is broad in nature and, of course, is vital to the Soul Care of the local church community. Preaching, teaching, leading of worship, pastoral care, and pastoral counseling by the pastor directly affect the Soul Care of so many, both corporately and individually. This awesome responsibility and privilege cannot be carried out without the guidance, obedience to, and strengthening of the Holy Spirit.

Pastoral care can be a misleading label in that it may cause Christians to think that care is to be provided by only the pastor. This certainly is not the case. Not only do the pastors, elders, and deacon provide pastoral care, but also do the members of the church community to one another. Pastoral care is a ministry rooted in compassion with the motivation being to demonstrate the love of Christ to people, regardless of their circumstances.⁴⁹ Such a ministry can be simple acts of kindness and/or loving actions that require a long-term commitment. Comforting a widow at the time of her loss and continuing to provide the support she needs after the funeral is one example of pastoral care. Benner observes, “Congregations that include an ever-increasing number of members and adherents who are concerned about the welfare of others within the fellowship are congregations that place Soul Care at the heart of ministry.”⁵⁰ The hallmark of pastoral care is that it is given to people without *expecting* anything in return.

Pastoral counseling is a specific type of pastoral care and is sought by

⁴⁸Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 17.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 20.

individual members of the church community. The individual seeks out the counselor because of problems experienced in his/her life. It involves confidentiality and a commitment of time on the part of the pastoral counselor. Benner comments,

While pastoral care may be delivered in the face of difficult life experiences, these are usually seen not so much as problems that need to be solved as experiences that need to be understood theologically and faced with the awareness of the presence of God.⁵¹

It is imperative that individuals who are committed Christians, trained in Christian counseling, and sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the ultimate Counselor, provide pastoral counseling.

The pastor or other mature Christians who help another to grow spiritually provide spiritual direction through a mentoring relationship involving Bible study and discipleship. The purpose of this kind of Soul Care is to help one grow in her/his faith and have an increased desire to become more like Christ. It involves a commitment of time and effort to be willing to help another Christian become what God would have her/him to be. Of course, this relationship has to be a healthy and ethical one involving trust and obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, all five major categories of Soul Care are needed in the life of a church whose desire corporately and individually is to grow to become more like Christ. Each one complements the other four to progress toward this goal with the result being the glorification of Christ through compassionate Christian Soul Care.

How to Provide Soul Care Ministries for the Widow

Three basic categories of needs were identified as I founded and led in the development of a widow ministry in my local church: (1) spiritual, (2) social, and (3) practical. These needs can be addressed through different avenues of ministry within the local church. The leadership of these ministries need to have a basic understanding of

⁵¹Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 20.

the grieving process and be prepared to provide training for those who will be providing the Soul Care. Harold Ivan Smith writes, “Every congregation needs a standing grief care task force to respond like a volunteer fire department summoned by an alarm.”⁵² All who interact with the widow must exhibit compassion and patience toward her, as she can be spiritually and emotionally vulnerable. The individuals providing the ministries need to practice the art of active listening and presence and refrain from giving hurtful advice.

Leadership in Soul Care ministries begins with the pastoral staff. One of the pastors needs to be available for at least one visit to the widow’s home several weeks after the death of her husband to begin to determine how she is doing spiritually. Schade and Schade write, “Following the funeral, for the next six months, women preferred the pastor to visit about once a month, while men were not as concerned about follow-up visits.”⁵³ The presence of the pastor can provide tremendous spiritual support as she begins the long grief journey. Smith teaches, “Grievers want three things from a pastor: competence, presence, and sensitivity.”⁵⁴ He can listen, offer prayer, and help her find answers to questions about death and life after death that may have arisen. He can identify her social and spiritual needs and alert leaders within the local church for her need of receiving specific ministries and/or inclusion in specific activities. Schade and Schade explain, “Women welcome contact from both pastors and laity, immediately following the death and throughout the first six months, both in person and by telephone, and find comfort through various means of ministry.”⁵⁵

⁵²Harold Ivan Smith, *When Your People Are Grieving: Leading in Times of Loss* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2001), 151.

⁵³J. Jay Schade and Kathy Allison Schade, “Parishioners’ Expectations Following a Death,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 50, no. 3 (1996): 279.

⁵⁴Smith, *When Your People Are Grieving*, 28.

⁵⁵Schade and Schade, “Parishioners’ Expectations,” 279.

Each deacon within the local church can be assigned three to four widows to assist with practical needs, such as taking care of her house or car. The remembrance of the widow on the anniversary of her husband's death and other significant dates in her life by the deacon and his wife is especially meaningful to her. The widow who has health issues needs to be contacted and encouraged regularly by the deacon couple. An annual banquet can be held in honor of the widows with the deacons and their wives providing the service.

A support group can be helpful to widows, regardless of how long they have been a widow, to encourage them on their grief journey. No one can understand what it is like to be a widow except another widow. The mutual encouragement and support they can provide one another is invaluable. The facilitator can guide the group in such a manner to help each widow identify issues that she did not realize needed to be addressed. Members can provide helpful advice to one another regarding their own experiences in adjusting to life as a widow. In lieu of a support group style setting, a weekly Bible study for a limited time twice a year centered on widow's issues, can also be a great help. Bonding within the group seems to be strengthened if such meetings are held in the widows' homes. Monthly socials at various locales throughout the community and elsewhere can help to meet the need for social interaction and reduce loneliness.

Involving the widow in ministry is one of the best ways that Soul Care of the widow can be provided in the church community. The widow can do many things in addition to their being prayer warriors, as written in Paul's instruction in 1 Timothy. Those who are younger yet have their families raised can be of especially effective service. They have skills and experience that can be of help in various ministries. The leaders within the local church may need to help the widow identify her strengths and encourage her to become involved. Leaders of the various ministries can contact the widow and invite her to participate. Being involved will help with a basic need of "being needed."

Delma Tronson has heard of this basic need from many women, especially those who have become widows in their late fifties. One important issue she has identified is a desperate lack of being needed. In discussion with many women, she has tried to identify exactly what this means. She writes, “One widow, who lost her husband when she was in her late fifties, which was many years ago, mentioned quite recently that this sense of ‘no longer being needed’ still has the greatest effect on her.”⁵⁶

Brown, House, and Smith identify and describe what widowed persons *do*, both in terms of relating to others and changing their religious behaviors or religious beliefs. Their studies document the ways bereaved older adults rearrange their social and spiritual worlds in order to meet their new needs as bereaved individuals. The results of their research revealed “that increasing one's reliance on religious coping and increasing one's level of social integration by giving support to others are two independent ways of coping with loss.”⁵⁷ Brown, House, and Smith find that bereaved persons who become more involved in living out their religious beliefs are more psychologically resilient and bounce back from depression more quickly than those who do not. In addition, these researchers find that giving social support to others, rather than receiving support, is a critical important step on the path to resilience:

For example, they find that the linkage between early grief symptoms and later depressive symptoms weakens as widows and widowers increase the amount of social support they give to others. These findings challenge and call for re-conceptualizations in how bereaved persons are treated by family members and social service providers. . . . Brown and colleagues show persuasively that widowed persons also benefit from giving to others. By taking control over their spiritual and

⁵⁶Delma Tronson, “Ministry to Widows in Their Late 50’s,” accessed February 25, 2010, <http://au.christiantoday.com/article/ministry-to-widows-in-their-late-50s/7714.htm>

⁵⁷Carr, Wortman, and Neese, “Understanding Late Life Widowhood,” 10. In this quote, the editors are introducing information written by Stephanie L. Brown, James S. House and Dylan M. Smith in “Interpersonal and Spiritual Connections among Bereaved Older Adults,” another chapter found in the same text.

interpersonal lives, they may feel energized and empowered to manage the myriad other challenges posed by spousal loss.⁵⁸

These findings merely affirm the teachings of Christ and his church as recorded in the Bible: “In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35). This quotation is not found in the Gospels, but that is not to say that Jesus taught this as he himself was taught.

The sapiential form of the saying and the fact that the idea here echoes what we find in a text like Sir. 4:31 may also point to its origins in the teaching of Jesus, for Jesus’ teaching often took such a form and was indebted to early Jewish sapiential traditions.⁵⁹

Paul spoke these words when he was leaving Ephesus for the last time. He wanted the leaders, to whom his speech was addressed, to understand the necessity of giving without expecting anything in return. “The Greco-Roman world was honeycombed by social networks grounded in the principle of reciprocity, of ‘giving and receiving.’”⁶⁰ The Bible records that his departure caused all who were present great grief: “And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship” (Acts 20:36). The Greek word for “accompanied” can mean giving the person who is leaving food and other items necessary for the trip.⁶¹ The leaders were practicing what Paul had preached to them despite their grief. In the same way, widows can and should give to others, in spite of their bereavement, which it turn will help them heal.

Miriam Neff, the widow of the late Bob Neff, an executive with Moody

⁵⁸Carr, Wortman, and Neese, “Understanding Late Life Widowhood,” 10.

⁵⁹Ben Witherington III, *The Acts Of The Apostles: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 626.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., 627.

Broadcasting, has written extensively about the needs of widows. She also has developed a website to help churches begin ministries to widows. In the January 2008 issue of *Christianity Today*, she provides a helpful list of “Dos and Don’ts” that can be helpful to individuals, as well as the local church, when ministering to widows.⁶²

Among the things a widow does not need to hear is the platitude that “God is now your husband.” Nathan Shaw exhorts,

What could sound more consoling, more meaningful, and more wonderful than to tell a lonely widow that God is her husband! Since this statement is based on Scripture, Christians feel solidly biblical about offering it. “For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth” (Isaiah 54:5). Sounds good, right? No, generally wrong.⁶³

The widow might feel as if her feelings of grief and loneliness are being minimized with such a statement. She might feel conflicted in her feelings toward God following the death of her husband, especially if she is blaming him for her husband’s death. She might be offended and perceive it as being insensitive to her need for affection from a human husband.

To quote this Scripture to a widow would be to do so totally out of context. This Scripture is speaking of the relationship between Israel and God. Israel is referred to as a widow because of its people being in exile in Babylon. God is referred to as Israel’s husband because of His being their Redeemer. This verse is one in the section that speaks of the coming joy for Israel in Isaiah 54:1 -55:13. J. Gordon McConville writes,

This joyous section crowns the whole argument in chapters 40-55. Especially, however, it grows out of the fourth Servant Song, which has just gone before. The “many” children of the barren woman (54:1) recall the “many” of whom the servant will make righteous (53:11).⁶⁴

Sensitivity to the widow’s feelings is essential so that one does not say

⁶²Neff, “The Widow’s Might,” 43-48.

⁶³Shaw, *Unto the Least of These*, 83.

⁶⁴J. Gordon McConville, *Exploring the Old Testament*, vol. 4, *A Guide to the Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 29.

something that can make her feel even worse. It is necessary when ministering to a grieving person to let them lead. In other words, what might be a comfortable expression of sympathy to the one expressing it may not be especially comforting to the widow. One must also try to be aware of whether a widow who may not be part of a church community is a Christian. The compassionate care given by members of the local church to a widow who is not a believer can be used by the Holy Spirit to draw her and/or family to belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sensitivity to the leadership of the Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity in effectively ministering to any widow, regardless of their spiritual state.

Conclusion

Christian Soul Care of widows both within and without the church is an ever-present growing need. Breen and O'Connor write, "One of the potentially great barriers to effective grief intervention is the general lack of understanding of grief in the service professions, which is at least partly explained by the discord between grief researchers and service providers."⁶⁵ By providing the needed Soul Care ministries in a compassionate and effective manner, the church can be an ongoing source of grief education and comfort to grievers in the church as well as in the community. The spiritual transformation that can occur within the church in obedience to the Lord for the provision of this ministry is without measure. The Bible clearly states that widows are to be cared for, and it is the church's responsibility to provide that care to whatever extent is needed. To do less is to *be* less than what the Lord Jesus Christ would have his church to be. May the widows within communities never have reason to be made to feel invisible or invaluable as the unique persons that they are to the church family.

⁶⁵Lauren J. Breen and Moira O'Connor, "The Fundamental Paradox in the Grief Literature: A Critical Reflection," *OMEGA* 55, no. 3 (2007): 204.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The first step of the ministry project was to meet with the Director of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists to secure his support of the project and decide together when and where the trainings would be offered. The second step was to develop the curriculum and seek the approval of a three-member expert panel. The third step was to inform individual pastors and chairmen of deacons in an appropriate time frame prior to the trainings so they would be interested enough to put it on their calendar and plan to attend. The fourth step was to conduct the trainings. The fifth step was to provide the attendees with the opportunity to evaluate the trainings and commit to planning a six-week Soul Care ministry in their respective local churches.

Planning of the Trainings

It was essential to meet with the Director of Missions of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists to explain the purpose of the ministry project and schedule the subsequent trainings to accommodate the Network's schedule of activities for the spring of 2015. I met with the director, David Stokes, in December 2014. We discussed at length the dates to have the trainings in 2015 and how best to promote them. He recommended that the trainings be held at Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington. He also encouraged me to ask the senior pastor of Porter, William D. Henard, to write a letter of endorsement for the trainings.¹ Stokes also invited me to speak at the April 14 Executive Board meeting of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists in order to present the

¹See appendix 12. Henard's letter of recommendation was received via e-mail on May 6 and e-mailed out to all the pastors of the Association for whom I had e-mail addresses.

information about the trainings and encourage the attendees to plan to attend one of the trainings.

Stokes shared from his experience that six weeks before an event is the best timeframe in which to introduce and promote an event it. It was decided that Thursday, May 28 from 6-9 p.m., and Saturday, May 30 from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. would be the best dates for the training, which was after the Memorial Day weekend holiday and before the Southern Baptist Convention in mid-June. Thus, the meeting in mid-April was an ideal time to inform the Executive Board and other attendees about the trainings. In my presentation on April 14, I included basic information about the demographics of our country and churches, including an increasing number of widows due to the aging population.² I also stressed that resources are not plentiful. Each attendee received a handout in order to share information about the trainings with fellow pastors and the deacons at their respective churches.³

Communication with Pastors

It was necessary to send out e-mails to the pastors of each church in the Network. I obtained a list of all the churches in the Network, which included the names of the pastors, their e-mail addresses, and phone numbers. I began by e-mailing the pastors who attended the April 14, 2015, meeting. I had obtained their e-mail addresses with a sign-up sheet. It was not possible to know if every pastor who attended the meeting had provided their e-mail address on the sign-up sheet. The pastors of the following churches were e-mailed on April 29: (1) Nicholasville Baptist, (2) Crosswoods Baptists, (3) Anchor Baptist, (4) Edgewood Baptist, (5) Safe Harbor Baptist, (6) Thoroughbred, (7) Cornerstone Baptist (Nicholasville), (8) Mt. Pleasant and (9) Safe Harbor Baptist Fellowship.

²See appendix 13.

³See appendix 14.

The rest of the e-mail addresses were obtained from the master list. Either the senior pastor or all the pastors of the following churches were e-mailed from the end of April to the middle of May. The following documents were attached to the e-mails: (1) Introduction to Survey 1, (2) Survey of Central Kentucky Network of Baptist Churches, (3) Introduction to Survey 2, (4) Survey of Participation, and a (5) Letter of Recommendation from William Henard.⁴ Hard copies of the e-mail and all the attachments were mailed to those pastors who did not have e-mail addresses listed on the Network Directory. In the case of those churches who did not have a pastor, the same information was mailed to the chairmen of the deacons. Fourteen e-mails came back undeliverable. Assistance was sought from the Network office to try to identify their current e-mail addresses. All were to e-mail their completed surveys back to me or call me to let me know of their intention to attend a training session.

Planning of the Training Sessions

In June 2014, I met with William Henard, Senior Pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington, Kentucky, to discuss the development of the curriculum and the nature of the trainings. The initial discussion focused on the theological section of the trainings. I shared what I had written a few years prior for a presentation at a meeting of the Southeastern Chapter of the Evangelical Theological Society. I also shared with him a number of Old Testament passages about God's care for widows and His command for His people to care for them. Because of the biblical teaching that women should not teach men about the Bible (1 Tim 2:12), he emphasized that it would be necessary for a pastor to teach this section of the training. He recommended Jerry Ball, the Pastor to seniors at Porter to do teach this section, and he encouraged me to ask him.

We then discussed at length the three sections that comprised the trainings. In addition to the theological section, there was a second section on the social sciences aspect

⁴See appendices 2, 3, 4, 5, and 12.

of grief. A general overview of the variance in grieving styles or patterns was provided to help the attendees more clearly understand how to minister to the widow in the weeks and months following her husband's death. Even though these patterns have been identified and described, it did not minimize or change the fact that every widow's grief journey is unique to them as it is to every griever. The third section was on *how* to provide Soul Care ministries to widows in the local church setting. Soul Care was defined and these ministries described in order to provide the attendees with practical information. Henard was helpful in assisting to understand the pastor's perspective and the need for practical information which the pastors could take back to their respective local churches. He recommended that the curriculum be very detailed and that each attendee be given a copy because of the amount information contained in each of the three sections. We agreed it would be difficult to present all the details in the allotted time.

Development of the Curriculum Content

Objectives for the trainings reflected the goals of the ministry project.⁵ An exhaustive search was completed of both the Old and New Testaments to locate as many verses possible containing the word "widow." If passages were duplicate or very nearly so, the most recognizable one was chosen. The Scriptures identified and included are listed next

You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. (Exod 22:22-24)

For the Lord your God is the God of and Lord of Lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. (Deut 10:17-18)

Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. And all the people shall say "Amen." (Deut 27: 19)

⁵See appendix 16.

And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat, and shall be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. (Deut 14:29)

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. (Deut 24: 19-20)

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil. Learn to do what is good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. (Isa 1:16-17)

Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. (Ps 68:5)

He also said in his teaching, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and who like greetings in the marketplaces, and have the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." (Mark 12:38-40)

But standing by the cross of Jesus was his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour, the disciple took her into his own home. (John 19:25-27)

Now in those days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6)

Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Let a widow be enrolled if she not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw

them away from Christ, they desire to marry and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. For some have already strayed after Satan. If any believing widow has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows. (1 Tim 5:3-16)

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” (Jas 1:27)

A thorough exegesis was researched and developed for each verse. Care was taken to not become as exhaustive as to “overburden” this section of the curriculum to an unmanageable amount of material to be presented and learned by the attendee in the allotted training time. Henard and Ball expressed appreciation to learn of the number of verses emphasizing the value of widows to God in the Old Testament and His commands to care for them. The responses to the Pre-Training Survey confirmed that most attendees were more familiar with one or two of the New Testament verses and unaware of the Old Testament references.

As has been stated previously, the resources for understanding grief and the grieving process from inside the church are limited. Thus, it was necessary to research from within the social science literature the necessary information with which to help the attendees have an increased understanding of different grieving styles or patterns. By gaining an increased understanding of the multiple factors that cause the grieving style to be unique to each griever, the pastors and deacons would be prepared to understand the various behaviors that widows exhibit immediately following the death of their husbands as well as in the weeks and months that follow. Because of the prevalence of the Kubler-Ross model of grieving that permeates culture, it was necessary to inform the attendees that this model of the grieving process was based on the *dying* person’s viewpoint and not the survivor’s viewpoint.⁶ Grief does not progress in an orderly fashion through the five

⁶Fred Craddock, Dale Goldsmith, and Joy V. Goldsmith, *Speaking of Dying: Recovering the Church’s Voice in the Face of Death* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012), 44.

specific stages, but rather is usually a time of *disorder* and confusion.

The decision was made after reviewing the literature to provide the attendees information about two rather recent models of grief to help them change their thinking about expected grief behavior. The first is the grief continuum, with “intuitive grief” on one end and “instrumental grief” on the other end with many blended patterns in between. The driving force comprising intuitive grief is the need to express the *feelings* associated with the deep emotional pain and grief caused by the loss. In contrast, the driving force comprising instrumental grief is the need to *do* something to help memorialize the person and his/her life. Grieving styles associated with the former are more readily recognizable and understood in culture, and particularly in the Christian church culture. Grieving styles associated with the latter are not as easily interpreted to be expressions of grief. Most grievers, specifically widows, have any one of a variety of grieving styles that are a combination of both.

Many factors contribute to the uniqueness of the widow’s grief. It was essential for the attendees to understand that the death of the husband was not the only source of grief. Previous losses, especially those that are unresolved, will have a tremendous effect on how the widow copes with the loss of her husband. Her spiritual belief system, health, financial situation, and the support and/or lack of it from her family and friends will have a direct impact on the course of her grief journey.

Even though many models of grieving are discussed in the social science literature, the decision was made to present two of the more recent models that reflect an accurate understanding of the grieving process. The first chosen for presentation was the description of Rando’s Model of Mourning and Grieving. Rando writes of three separate operations of mourning merged with six phases of grieving. The second model chosen was that described by Stroebe and Stroebe as the Dual-Process Model. In general, this

The Kubler-Ross Grief Model describes grief as a process consisting of five stages: (1) depression, (2) anger, (3) bargaining, (4) depression, and (5) acceptance.

model states that the griever, or in this case the widow, is experiencing two processes simultaneously: the process of coping with the loss of her husband and adapting to all the changes in her life, both internally and externally that occur as the result of the death of her husband.

It was an absolute necessity to present this information to the attendees so that the pastors and deacons would gain an increased understanding of what is happening to the widow after the week of the funeral. Many of them have had experience ministering to widows before the death of her husband if her husband has been terminally ill. The church is led by them to minister to the widow and her family at the time of her husband's death, but usually little interaction occurs with her after the week of the funeral. The purpose of the information that would be presented is for the attendees to have a more holistic view of what is happening to the widow in her grief journey.

The third section of the training was viewed as the one that would need to be emphasized the most. It would also be the portion of the training in which the participation and input of the attendees would be highly valued. They needed to learn *how* to provide Soul Care ministries to the widows in their individual churches. As stated in the objectives, it was extremely important that the pastors and deacons leave the training with an increased understanding of Soul Care and its associated ministries. It was essential to give them examples of ministry efforts that had worked well, in addition to ministries that had not been as well received by widows. However, a “cookie-cutter” approach to Soul Care ministry of widows is one that will not be successful. The pastors and deacons were encouraged to identify leaders within their respective widow communities inside their local churches with whom they could coordinate Soul Care ministry efforts. They were encouraged to survey the widows to learn of their needs and then use what they learned from their respective widows to minister to them in the most effective way.

It was key that the attendees learn the true meaning of Soul Care and the ministries of Soul Care because there are few resources in the ministry to widows. Some

of the attendees shared how the culture within their local church seems to be *very inclusive* of widows in both fellowship and ministry to others. Other attendees admitted that there was not enough being done in their local churches, even by the deacon body, to have an ongoing resource of Soul Care for their widows. Others shared what they were doing, but in light of the information shared during the training, they realized that more needed to be done to help the widows in their grief journey.

A three-member expert panel was formed to review and approve the curriculum,⁷ which included (1) William D. Henard, Senior Pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington, Kentucky (2) James Estep, Dean of the School of Undergraduate Studies, Lincoln Christian University, Lincoln, Illinois, and (3) Harold Ivan Smith, Grief specialist on the teaching faculties of Saint Luke's Hospital, Kansas City, Missouri, and the Carondelet Medical Institute in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Smith is also recognized as a Fellow in Thanatology by the Association for Death Education and Counseling. Each member received and completed a curriculum rubric.⁸ As a result of their critiques, a few minor changes were made in the wording of the curriculum text.

Training Session for Thursday, May 28

Jerry Ball had graciously agreed to teach the theological section of each of the trainings. In advance of the first training, we discussed both the training agenda and the best educational format to use, particularly with the theological section. We both agreed that learning the Scriptures verses would be less likely to occur with a lecture-style format. Instead, we divided the attendees into small groups where they could work together to study the assigned verses. Each small group reported back to the larger group what they had learned. Through interacting with their assigned Scriptures and then presenting information about their assigned Scriptures to the larger group, the attendees became

⁷See appendix 17.

⁸See appendix 5.

involved in “teaching,” which caused them to be more likely to retain some knowledge of the material. We thought this was particularly helpful, especially with the Old Testament passages.

For the Thursday evening training, there were twelve attendees, including 2 pastors, 1 associational director (from another association), 2 deacon wives, and 7 deacons. Upon arrival, each attendee received a copy of the (1) objectives, (2) curriculum, (3) a list of grief resource books,⁹ (4-5) “Grief Affects Behaviors, Feelings, Thoughts (Including Memory) and Body,” and (6) “Grief Facilitation during the First Week after Death of a Loved One.”¹⁰ Ball welcomed the group to Porter, thanked them for their attendance and led in prayer. He then introduced me, after which I gave a brief presentation about God’s calling on my life in 2009 to minister to widows and the purpose of the training. Each attendee was given a copy of the Pre- and Post-Training Survey.¹¹

The group was divided into four groups, each comprised of three attendees. Each group was assigned three verses and given approximately fifteen minutes to discuss together the meaning of each of their assigned verses. Then each small group was called upon to report back to the entire group what God was teaching in their assigned verses about the value of widows to Him and the importance of caring for them. Each group made a valuable contribution to the discussion in their presentation of their respective scriptures. More than one attendee remarked that they did not know the Old Testament had so much to say about the importance of widows and their care to God.

I led the discussion of the second and third sections of the training. I gave them an overview of the information presented in the remaining part of the curriculum. I emphasized the differences between “intuitive” and “instrumental” grief and reviewed

⁹See appendix 18.

¹⁰Beverly Carnes and Jo Ponder, “Grief Facilitation during the First Week after Death of a Loved One,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 50, no. 3 (1996): 281-88.

¹¹See appendix 7.

with them Rando's Models of Mourning. Attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions and share from their experiences of widow ministry in their local churches. I directed their attention to the specific examples of Soul Care ministry listed in the curriculum. Much of the resources available to deacons speak of practical things that can be *done* for the widow, such as raking leaves, washing windows, and other maintenance tasks. However, few address with any specificity what is occurring in the inner life of the widow. With an increased understanding of the profound *internal* effects of her husband's death, the pastors and deacons could begin to understand why 50 percent of widows do not return to the church that they attended with their husband.

A widow, who was there as my special guest, shared about her grief journey. She is a woman in her 70s and has been a widow of two plus years. Throughout the training I called upon her to talk about her experience as a widow. She shared that even though she attended the same church that she did with her late husband, it was still *very difficult* to participate in church activities on Sunday. She emphasized that her feelings were not caused by anyone in the church, but rather it was of her being alone and her husband being deceased. A deacon's wife who was in attendance expressed difficulty in understanding why my widow friend would continue to go to her church and told her "just to change churches." My widow friend responded by saying it would not make any difference. Her difficult feelings about going to church would "still be there." My widow friend and I shared later privately that it was not fully possible for the deacon's wife to understand the life and the feelings of being a widow. During the discussion that ensued during the training, I shared some of my personal experiences as a new widow when applicable to the subject matter of the various components of the curriculum. A number of books from the grief resources list were on display for their perusal during the two breaks given during the training.

Some of the attendees shared how the culture within their local church seems to be *very inclusive* of widows in both fellowship and ministry to others. Other attendees

admitted that there wasn't enough being done in their local churches, even by the deacon body, to be an ongoing resource of Soul Care for their widows. Others shared what they were doing currently as ministry to widows in their churches. However, in light of the information shared during the training, they came to realize that more needed to be done to help the widows in their grief journey. The group was told that they would receive an e-mail containing a Post-Training Evaluation and a Template for a six-week Soul Care ministry. They were thanked for their attendance and participation and dismissed at the end of the session as scheduled at 9 p.m.

Training Session for Saturday, May 30

Two attendees came for the Saturday morning training. They were both deacons from the same church. Upon arrival, each attendee received a copy of the (1) objectives, (2) curriculum, (3) a list of grief resource books, (4-5) "Grief Affects Behaviors, Feelings, Thoughts (Including Memory) and Body," and (6) "Grief Facilitation during the First Week after Death of a Loved One."¹²

Jerry Ball welcomed them to the training, thanked them for their attendance and began the session with a word of prayer. I gave a brief introductory statement about my calling to minister to widows as well as an explanation about the purpose of the training. They were each given a copy of the Pre- and Post-Training Survey.

Jerry Ball led the overview and discussion of the theological section. Both of the attendees were fully engaged in contributing to the discussion of this section as well as the next two sections of the curriculum. Each one shared about their personal experience with deep grief, with one having his father die several years ago and his mother re-marrying a short time later. The other attendee experienced the death of both of his parents by the time he was in his early 20s. My guest widow friend again shared with these attendees her feelings about attending her church after becoming a widow. I also shared

¹²Carnes and Ponder, "Grief Facilitation," 281-88.

some of my experiences since becoming a widow in September of 2014. Because of the smallness of the group, everyone seemed to be comfortable with sharing some personal information with one another. A number of books from the grief resources list were on display for their perusal during the two breaks given during the training session.

The deacons shared about the challenge of ministering to the ever-growing number of widows in their church, with just a deacon body of twelve. I encouraged them to identify some leaders within the group of widows and learn from them what they think would be most helpful in Soul Care ministry to the widows. A good discussion ensued about the various ways Soul Care ministries can be done and that there is not to be a “cookie cutter” approach. The two deacons were then given the Pre- and Post-Training Survey. After completing the survey, the deacons were thanked again for their attendance, excellent participation, and then dismissed.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of the evaluation of this ministry project is to learn what could have been done better in the development of this curriculum for future use in training church leaders in the provision of Soul Care ministries to widows. Through this evaluative process, it is my hope and prayer that future Southern Seminary students will join me in pleading the widow's cause. The specifics of the evaluation will include an evaluation of the purpose, goals, and strengths and weaknesses of the project, along with changes that could be made to improve the outcome. Theological reflections as well as personal reflections will also be shared.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train pastors and deacons of the churches comprising the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists on how to provide Soul Care ministries to the widows in their churches after the week of their husband's funerals. Three challenges were present in the implementation of this project and fulfillment of the purpose. The initial challenge was to provide enough information so that the pastors and deacons would be motivated to make time in their busy schedules to attend one of the planned trainings. The second challenge was to present the information at the training in such a way that the attendees' understanding of the composition of Soul Care ministries would be increased. The third challenge was to create a stimulating experience that the pastors and deacons would be motivated to return to their local churches and plan to have a six-week Soul Care ministry for the widows.

As stated in chapter 1, there are no known resources from the network and state convention addressing how to minister to widows. When I began researching and

writing about ministry to widows over five and a half years ago, the resources at the Southern Baptist Convention were limited. The resources available now are much improved, however, there does not seem to be much promotion of the availability of this information and there is the glaring omission of widowhood from a widow's perspective. The accelerating trend of more widows in the church is not going to slow down in the foreseeable future because of the aging of society, i.e. the Baby Boomers. The leadership of local churches must have the resources to effectively minister to widows (and other grievers) and be encouraged by associational, state, and national leadership to be equipped and prepared for what is happening and coming in the future. Those who attended the trainings genuinely expressed a desire to go back to their local churches and do more in their respective widow ministries. This motivation was a direct result of their being informed about the grief journeys of widows with both general information about grieving and specific examples of what was occurring in the inner lives of widows.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Five goals of this project need to be evaluated to determine the success of this project. The first goal was to gain the support of the Director of Missions of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists. This goal was measured by securing a signed Statement of Cooperation¹ and was successfully met. David Stokes could not have been more gracious in making time to meet me on two separate occasions, early in 2014 and then again in early December of 2014. He directed his administrative assistant to put the training dates on the network calendar and to give me any assistance I might need. His assistant was a great help in providing a hard copy of the Network directory from which I could access the contact information for the pastors of the churches. He also responded promptly to any requests I made by phone call and/or e-mail. He emailed all the churches

¹See appendix 1.

encouraging them to put the training dates on their calendars and to return the surveys I had emailed to them.²

The second goal was the development and approval of the curriculum by a three-member expert panel. This goal was measured by the completion of a curriculum rubric demonstrating approval of the curriculum. This goal was successfully met with completion of the curriculum rubric by each member of the panel demonstrating approval.³ It was highly important to me that the curriculum be critiqued from three different perspectives: (1) pastoral, (2) educator, and (3) grief counselor. Each member of the panel has years of experience and expertise in their chosen professions. Thus, with their review and approval, I believed the curriculum would best meet the goal of educating the pastors and deacons about Soul Care ministries for widows.

The third goal was that church leaders from the network would participate in each training session utilizing the developed curriculum. The number of returned surveys was very low. It was uncertain then if there would be church leaders present at each training session. However, the goal was successfully met because church leaders attended each training session; thus, the pilot study of the developed curriculum could be conducted.

The fourth goal was the education of the pastors and deacons at each training about Soul Care ministries for widows. The goal was measured by the attendees completing the same survey before and after the training. The goal was successfully met as demonstrated by the results of a t-test paired two samples for means. The number of correct answers pre and post training for each attendee were the variables used in the calculation of the t-test. Both training sessions of pastors and deacons of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists for the provision of Soul Care ministries to widows made

²See appendix 15.

³See appendix 19.

a positive statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of their knowledge
 $t_{(12)} = 3.90858, p < .00208$).⁴

Pre- and Post-Training Survey Results

Table 1. Pre-survey scores for May 28 training attendees

| Attendee | # of Correct Answers | # of Wrong Answers | % Correct |
|----------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1. | 7 | 10 | 41 |
| 2 | 5 | 12 | 29 |
| 3 | 9 | 8 | 53 |
| 4 | 10 | 7 | 59 |
| 5 | 6 | 11 | 35 |
| 6 | 3 | 14 | 18 |
| 7 | 6 | 11 | 35 |
| 8 | 11 | 6 | 65 |
| 9 | 5 | 12 | 29 |
| 10 | 4 | 13 | 24 |
| 11 | 3 | 14 | 18 |
| 12 | 2 | 15 | 12 |

Table 2. Post-survey scores for May 28 training attendees

| Attendee | # of Correct Answers | # of Wrong Answers | % Correct |
|----------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1 | 9 | 8 | 53 |
| 2 | 10 | 7 | 59 |
| 3 | 9 | 8 | 53 |
| 4 | 13 | 4 | 76 |
| 5 | 13 | 4 | 76 |
| 6 | 7 | 10 | 41 |
| 7 | 9 | 8 | 53 |
| 8 | 15 | 2 | 88 |
| 9 | 6 | 11 | 35 |
| 10 | 7 | 10 | 41 |
| 11 | 6 | 11 | 35 |
| 12 | 3 | 14 | 18 |

⁴See appendix 24.

Table 3. Pre-survey scores for May 30 training attendees

| Attendee | # of Correct Answers | # of Wrong Answers | % Correct |
|----------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 15 | 12 |
| 2 | 8 | 9 | 47 |

Table 4. Post-survey scores for May 30 training attendees

| Attendee | # of Correct Answers | # of Wrong Answers | % Correct |
|----------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1 | 8 | 9 | 47 |
| 2 | 6 | 11 | 35 |

The fifth goal was that the pastors and deacons who attended the training sessions would have a positive evaluation of the developed curriculum. All the attendees were e-mailed a Post-Training Evaluation. The verbal feedback during the training sessions was positive in nature. This goal was successfully met because the returned Post-Training Evaluations indicated a positive evaluation of the developed curriculum.⁵

Strengths of the Project

The first strength of this project was that it was an initial effort to inform pastors and deacons of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists about the biblical imperative to provide Soul Care ministries for widows in light of their lack of resources. Everyone that engaged with the project was challenged by the biblical teachings in both the Old and New Testaments. Emphasis has been given in the church utilizing applicable scriptures from the New Testament regarding the care of widows. However, project consultants, teachers, and participants alike were truly astonished at the number of Old Testament teachings regarding widows.

⁵See appendix 23.

A second strength was the information presented to the pastors and deacons about the various patterns of grieving. The attendees at each training voiced the opinion that the information about the grief journey of widows and their inner lives was enlightening. The following excerpts were shared by the three deacons in response to the first three questions on the Post-Training Evaluations:

1. How has your participation in this training changed your attitude toward the widows in your church? The training increased my awareness of the issues that widows face after losing their spouse. I did not realize why it would be so difficult for widows to return to church after the death of their spouse.
2. How will your participation in this training change how you minister to the widows in your church? I will increase my dedication to the widows for which I am responsible. I will visit my widows with Pam more frequently and continue to send birthday greetings. I am now more sensitive to the plight of widows and their families and will make myself available to listen and provide physical help as I become more aware of needs.
3. How will your participation in this training change how you will teach others to minister to widows personally and as a local church body? I will be able to point to this training and use the materials to address some of the struggles that are occurring in our church body. By understanding the emotional toll being a widow takes on an individual I think that people will be better equip to assist.⁶

A third strength of the project is that it caused those who participated in any way at all to be stimulated and hopefully motivated to think about the widows in their respective local churches and what is happening or not happening in their ministry to them. Before there can be a ministry to any group, particularly those who can so easily become invisible in the life the church, thought must be given to their situation. In his critique of the curriculum, Harold Ivan Smith wrote,

Although I am a reader, it gave me a lot to think about. I ended up thinking the average Christian has no idea of the biblical response to widows. And for a serious follower of Christ, the student's interaction with the Scripture should be an incredible motivator.⁷

Weaknesses of the Project

The first weakness of the project was in the design of the curriculum rubric for

⁶See appendix 24.

⁷See appendix 19.

the three-member expert panel. It would have been a more effective evaluative tool if I had employed a scale, such as the Likert scale. Each member of the expert panel would have been able to critique each component with more specificity.

The second weakness was in the design of the Pre and Post Training Survey. I did not employ the use of True/False answers for questions 13 -17, which would have been a more appropriate method with which to measure their knowledge of the subject matter covered by those questions. In grading the attendees' answers, I counted "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" to be correct answers.

The third weakness was that some elements were omitted in the construction of the curriculum, including methodology, visual aids, physical setting, and resources.

Descriptions of these additions could include the following:

1. Methodology—Interactive lecture, small group study, presentation to entire class of small group findings, and guest presenter.
2. Visual Aids—A large number of grief resource books were displayed for attendees' perusal.
3. Resources—Handout of (1) curriculum, (2) grief resource list, (3) "Grief Affects Behaviors, Feelings, Thoughts (Including Memory) and Body," and (4) "Grief Facilitation during the First Week after Death of a Loved One.
4. Physical setting—Well-lighted and temperature controlled room, tables and chairs arranged in a manner to enhance visibility of teacher and other attendees.

In future teaching endeavors, the above information should be added to the curriculum.

Changes I Would Make

The main change I would make is to allow more time to communicate with the pastors and chairmen of the deacons on an individual basis. I believe the main stumbling block to more of the pastors and deacons choosing not to participate was that the vast majority of them did not know me. In other words, there was not a personal connection. William Henard's Letter of Recommendation and the email from the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists office were very supportive and helpful, yet despite this help, the turnout for the trainings was low.

Another change I would make is to communicate more clearly the content of the six-week Soul Care ministry. In founding and leading the Heart 2 Heart ministry at our local church, I began a weekly support group for widows that met at the church. The meetings lasted for six weeks and met in the fall and spring. We did this for several years until we decided to have weekly Bible studies in one another's homes for six weeks in the fall and spring. I did not communicate this clearly enough in the e-mails and surveys, nor during the trainings themselves. I think if I had given the pastors and deacons those details I would have received more commitments from the pastors and deacons to plan such a ministry.

The number of Post-Training Evaluations returned would have been greater if I could have given the attendees the evaluation at the end of each training session. However, if I had given them the evaluation at the end of the training session, the training would not have ended on time. In addition, I thought by e-mailing the evaluation to each of the attendees, time would be given for them to reflect on what they had learned and experienced during their training session. I also thought that the participants would have had the opportunity to discuss their training experience with other pastors and deacons of their respective local churches. With that time of discussion, I was hoping there would have been additional opportunity for them plan a six-week Soul Care ministry.

I realized during this evaluation stage that the name, Soul Care ministry, could have been misleading and perhaps deterred the church leaders from planning their own ministry to widows. I certainly did not intend for the pastors and deacons to plan a ministry that would be six weeks in duration. Rather, my intention was that they would plan a ministry for the widows in their local church that would meet once a week for six weeks. I am not certain if I explained this clearly to the attendees during the training sessions. Thus, it is possible that these two reasons contributed to the fact that none of the church leaders indicated they would plan a six-week Soul Care ministry for the widows in their church.

Theological Reflections

As a result of my calling from our Lord to minister to widows and complete project, I am more committed than ever to share with an audience of any size the value of widows and their care to the Lord. The foundation of my theological reflection is the exegesis of all the scriptures that were included in the theological section of the curriculum. It is the Lord's command to care for and give to people within the church and community who need love and care without expectation of receiving anything in return. To do so is a sign of spiritual maturity. It is easy to give time, energy, and money to those who can give back. The opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ and be a light to communities is present when a local church makes a commitment to care for and give to widows.

Such a commitment begins with the leadership of the local church. In the short term, the training that was completed for this ministry project can continue to be presented to pastors and deacons at the associational and local church levels. In the long term, this kind of information needs to be presented to the future pastors who are now and will be in seminary. Such a training would give basic information about ministry to widows (and other grievers) as well as information about the different patterns or styles of grieving.

A seminar could be developed where seminarians would have the opportunity to hear first-hand accounts from widows of various ages and stages in their grief journey. They would be given the opportunity to ask the widows questions and glean information that would be a great help to them in their preparation for pastoral ministry. The three sections in this project could be expanded to present more information and learning opportunities about the theological basis of Soul Care ministries and the various patterns of grieving. Students could be challenged to develop a Soul Care ministry for widows that would last six weeks and meet weekly. Then, they could partner with their local church or churches to plan and lead such a ministry. The combination of didactic and practical experience would help alleviate the awkwardness that can accompany

ministering to widows and other grievers before and after the death of her husband or other loved ones.

It has been suggested to me that such a seminar or course would be a good requirement for the seminarians at Southern Seminary who are majoring in counseling. However, I would respectfully argue that such a seminar or course needs to be a requirement for the all seminarians at Southern who are pursuing a Masters of Divinity degree, i.e., the future pastors. All must be done to prepare them for counseling and shepherding the people in their congregations as they experience any one of a number of crises. To do less is not fair to the future pastors of the denomination and the members of their congregations.

Personal Reflections

When I answered the Lord's call in May 2009, to begin a ministry to widows, I was not a widow. I asked my mentor from my Master's degree to help me get it started in order to give the ministry authenticity. As the Widows Helping Widows evolved into Heart 2 Heart, I would tell them that I could only walk so far with them, as I truly did not know the journey they were living. After spending an hour and half with them each week in the fall and spring, I would go home and give my husband a long hug and tell him how thankful I was that he was there when I came home.

In late June of 2014, when we learned that his metastatic cancer was terminal, my journey of knowing that I was going to become a widow began. He passed away on September 17, 2014. My journey began the moment he took his last breath. It is difficult to adequately express in words how *everything* in one's life and world changes when one's spouse passes away. I can no longer say to my widow friends that "I can only walk so far."

I have found that the most difficult thing is to give oneself permission to live life as led by the Lord. I have come to realize that everyone in my various worlds have spoken and unspoken expectations of what I, as a widow, should or should not do; how I

should live or not live. Widows need acceptance into the local church community as they are, and in whatever emotional and spiritual state they are presently in. Widows also need acceptance from one another.

The preparation, planning, research, and implementation of this project has stimulated me more than ever to continue to “plead the widow’s cause.” The information present in the social sciences, medical sciences, and thanatology about the effects of grief on a widow needs to be taught through a biblically-based theological lens in Christian academic and local church communities alike. The time to be *intentional* in teaching about death and dying from a biblically-based worldview within local churches, associations, state conventions, and at national convention are long overdue.

Conclusion

I view the conclusion of this project as only the beginning of a lifelong commitment to invite other widows, seminarians, pastors, and professors to “plead the widow’s cause” that God will surely bless with spiritual transformation within local churches and communities. As He leads, we will follow into being the Christian Soul Care communities that are good and bring glory to God. “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (Jas 1:27).

APPENDIX 1

STATEMENT OF COOPERATION

Agreement to Participate

This document is being requested to be signed by the parties described below as part of the research being conducted by Cheryl Erwin for a ministry project. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to refuse to sign it.

The Bible clearly teaches the value of widows to God the Father and God the Son. Due to the increasing number of widows in our churches and country, we understand the urgent need for more intentional ongoing ministry to widows. In light of these facts, we pledge our enthusiastic support and cooperation to urge the pastors and chairmen of the deacons of the churches of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists to participate in the training on the provision of ongoing Soul Care ministries to widows.

Director of Missions

Date

APPENDIX 2

INTRODUCTION TO SURVEY OF CENTRAL KENTUCKY NETWORK OF BAPTISTS CHURCHES

The purpose of this survey is to identify the churches within the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists that have widows within their local churches. By reporting how many widows they have, they could realize for the first time the actual number of this group within their local church body.

APPENDIX 3

SURVEY OF CENTRAL KENTUCKY NETWORK
OF BAPTISTS CHURCHES

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the number of widows in your church and your knowledge of your church's ministry to them. This research is being conducted by Cheryl Erwin for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, data will be collected regarding the number of widows in your church, ministries to them, and your opinion regarding the need of training. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal "code" word _____

Date _____

1. What is the average attendance of your church in Sunday School? _____
2. How many widows are members of your church? _____
3. Do the deacons of your church have an ongoing ministry to widows after the week of the funeral?
Yes _____
No _____ [If No, please go to question 4].
4. If the answer to question 3 is "Yes", please describe their ministry.

5. Upon completion of this survey, I am willing to make a commitment to attend a training on how to provide Soul Care ministries to widows.
Yes _____
No _____

APPENDIX 4

INTRODUCTION TO SURVEY OF PARTICIPATION

The purpose of the survey is to help pastors and chairmen of deacons begin to examine their own feelings and thoughts toward widows and ministering to grieving people. By answering these questions, the pastors and chairmen of the deacons may more readily recognize their need of training and participation in this project.

APPENDIX 5

SURVEY OF PARTICIPATION

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your need for participation in a training regarding the provision of Soul Care ministries to widows. This research is being conducted by Cheryl Erwin for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal “code” word _____

Date _____

Use the following scale with which to register your opinion regarding each statement by circling the corresponding abbreviation.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Disagree Somewhat | Agree Somewhat | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 1. The training I received in seminary prepared for ministering to widows in my church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. I am sure of what to do or say to a widow in my church after the week of her husband’s funeral. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. I intentionally lead or teach others in my local church how to minister to a widow after the week of her husband’s funeral. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. I have a basic understanding of the grieving process from the death of her husband that a widow must journey through to healing. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I have an accurate understanding of the term “Soul Care ministries.” | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. I need training on how to provide Soul Care ministries to widows in my church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

7. I am willing to make a commitment to attend a training on how to provide Soul Care ministries to widows in my church.

SD D DS AS A SA

8. I will commit to plan and for a six-week Soul Care ministry for the widows in my church.

SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 6
CURRICULUM RUBRIC

1. Does the order of the presentation of the materials follow a logical progression?

2. Is the theological basis for Soul Care ministries of widows well balanced in its content of the Old and New Testaments?

3. Is the explanation of the grieving process thorough and understandable?

4. Are the differences in the grieving styles of men and women and among both genders clearly explained?

5. Do the examples of Soul Care ministries given and the resources provided to the attendees stimulate them to be motivated to commit to planning a six-week Soul Care Ministry in their church?

6. Is the time allotted for the training and each component of the training sufficient and reasonable?

APPENDIX 7

PRE- AND POST-TRAINING SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge of biblical teaching regarding widows before and after participating in a training. This research is being conducted by Cheryl Erwin for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal “code” word _____

Date _____

Match the following Scripture verses with the correct Scripture references.

1. Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from . . .
the widow. _____ Psalm 68:5
2. Complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews
because their widows were being neglected. _____ James 1:27
3. Do not take advantage of the widow. _____ Deuteronomy 27:19
4. And the widows who live in your towns
may come and eat and be satisfied. _____ Isaiah 1:17 b
5. A defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling. _____ John 19:27
6. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow. _____ Mark 12:40
7. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless,
and the widow. _____ Acts 6:1
8. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God,
the Father, is this: to visit orphans and
widows in their affliction. _____ Deuteronomy 14: 29
9. Behold, your mother! And from that hour
the disciple took her to his own home. _____ Exodus 22:22

10. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows. _____ Deuteronomy 10:18
11. Take up the cause of the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow. _____ Deuteronomy 24:20
12. Who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation. _____ 1 Timothy 5: 16 b

Use the following scale with which to register your opinion regarding each statement by circling the corresponding abbreviation.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Disagree Somewhat | Agree Somewhat | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

13. Fifty percent of widows do not return to the church they attended with their husbands after he dies.
SD D DS AS A SA
14. A widow will be doing better emotionally the week of the funeral than she will six weeks later.
SD D DS AS A SA
15. A widow loses 75 percent of her friendships with couples.
SD D DS AS A SA
16. The second year of being a widow is harder than the first.
SD D DS AS A SA
17. A woman who becomes a widow can feel as if she is invisible at her church if she goes back to participating in the church activities.
SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 8

TEMPLATE PLAN FOR SIX-WEEK
SOUL CARE MINISTRY

1. Name of Church _____
2. Name of Pastor _____
3. Name of Chairman of Deacons _____
4. Name of person who will be leading the six-week Soul Care Ministry:

5. Title of book that will be used as a resource/study guide:

6. Description of efforts to encourage widows to attend:

7. Dates of six-week Soul Care Ministry:
1st meeting _____
2nd meeting _____
3rd meeting _____
4th meeting _____
5th meeting _____
6th meeting _____
8. Location of each of the meetings:
1st meeting _____
2nd meeting _____
3rd meeting _____
4th meeting _____
5th meeting _____
6th meeting _____
9. Provide a copy of the evaluation tool that will be given to the widows at the conclusion of the ministry. Thank You!

APPENDIX 9

SOUL CARE MINISTRY EVALUATION

Agreement to Participate

The evaluation in which you are about to participate is designed for the purpose of evaluating the biblical integrity and clarity of curriculum used during this six week Soul Care ministry. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this evaluation form, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses with which to evaluate this ministry.

Directions: Please check the appropriate box. This information will be held in strict Confidence.

Lesson 1 Evaluation

| 1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| Criteria | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments |
| Does the lesson title clearly describe the lesson's objective? | | | | | |
| Are the Scriptures used in this lesson appropriate to the lesson's objective? | | | | | |
| Is the flow of the lesson understandable and logical? | | | | | |
| Does this lesson address the most pertinent issues in light of the objective? | | | | | |
| Overall, does the lesson meet its objective? | | | | | |

APPENDIX 10
POST-TRAINING EVALUATION

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to learn of any change in your thinking regarding widows and ongoing Soul Care ministries to them. This research is being conducted by Cheryl Erwin for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal “code” word _____

Date _____

Instructions: Please describe your thoughts and feelings in response to each question.

1. How has your participation in this training changed your attitude toward the widows in your church?

2. How will your participation in this training change how you minister to the widows in your church?

3. How will your participation in this training change how you will teach others to minister to widows personally and as a local church body?

4. Will you commit to plan and implement a six-week Soul Care ministry for the widows in your church?

Yes _____

No _____

(If yes, please complete attached Template and e-mail to Cheryl Erwin by July 31, 2014).

APPENDIX 11

CENTRAL KENTUCKY NETWORK OF BAPTISTS CHURCHES

1. Anchor Baptist Church – Lexington
2. Assembly of Saints Worship – Lexington
3. The Baptist Church at Andover – Lexington
4. The Ashland Avenue Baptist Church – Lexington
5. Broadway Baptist Church – Lexington
6. Brookside Baptist Church – Nicholasville
7. Calvary Baptist Church – Lexington
8. Calvary Baptist Church – Winchester
9. Cane Run Baptist Church – Lexington
10. Cedar Grove Baptist Church – Stamping Ground
11. Center Point Baptist Church – Lexington
12. Central Baptist Church – Paris
13. Clear Creek Baptist Church – Versailles
14. Clover Bottom Baptist Church – Versailles
15. Consolidated Baptist Church – Lexington
16. Cornerstone Baptist Church – Lexington
17. Cornerstone Baptist Church – Nicholasville
18. Crosswoods Baptist Church - Nicholasville
19. David’s Fork Baptist Church – Lexington
20. Dry Run Baptist Church – Georgetown
21. Durbin Memorial Baptist Church – Lexington
22. Eagle Creek Baptist Church – Sadieville
23. East Hickman Baptist Church -Lexington
24. Eastern Baptist Church - Lexington
25. Eastside Baptist Church – Winchester
26. Edgewood Baptist Church - Nicholasville
27. Faith Baptist Church – Georgetown
28. Faith Center Lexington
29. Faith Covenant Church – Lexington

30. First Baptist Church Cadentown - Lexington
31. First Baptist Church – Corbin
32. First Baptist Church – Lexington
33. First Baptist Church – Mt. Sterling
34. First Baptist Church – Paris
35. First Baptist Church – Winchester
36. Gano Baptist Church – Georgetown
37. Gardenside Baptist Church – Lexington
38. Georgetown Baptist Church – Georgetown
39. Glens Creek Baptist Church – Versailles
40. Grace Baptist Church – Lexington
41. Great Crossing Baptist Church – Georgetown
42. Heritage Baptist Church – Lexington
43. Highlands Baptist Church – Lexington
44. Hillcrest Baptist Church – Lexington
45. Hillsboro Baptist Church – Versailles
46. Iglesia Bautista Cardinal Valley – Lexington
47. Iglesia Bautista Ebenezer – Georgetown
48. Imani Baptist Church – Lexington
49. Immanuel Baptist Church – Lexington
50. International Ministries for the Propagation of the Gospel - Lexington
51. Lawrenceburg Baptist Church – Lawrenceburg
52. Lexington Jyoti Baptist Church – Lexington
53. Living Hope Fellowship – Lexington
54. Long Lick Baptist Church – Stamping Ground
55. Main Street Baptist Church – Lexington
56. Mallard Point Baptist Church – Georgetown
57. Maranatha Baptist Church – Lexington
58. Midway Baptist Church – Midway
59. Millersburg Baptist Church - Millersburg
60. Millville Baptist Church – Frankfort
61. Mosaic Church - Lexington
62. Mount Freedom Baptist Church – Wilmore
63. Mount Pleasant Baptist Church – Nicholasville
64. Mount Vernon Baptist Church – Versailles
65. New Hope Baptist Church – Versailles
66. Nicholasville Baptist Church – Nicholasville

67. Northview Baptist Church – Lexington
68. Open Door Baptist Church – Lexington
69. Palomar Baptist Church – Lexington
70. Parkway Baptist Church – Lexington
71. Penn Avenue Baptist Church – Georgetown
72. Pinckard Baptist Church – Versailles
73. Porter Memorial Baptist Church – Lexington
74. River View Baptist Church – Lexington
75. Rosemont Baptist Church – Lexington
76. Royal Springs Baptist Church – Georgetown
77. Russell Cave Baptist Church – Lexington
78. Seventh Street Baptist Church – Lexington
79. Shawhan Baptist Church – Paris
80. Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church – Lexington
81. Silas Baptist Church – Cynthiana
82. South Elkhorn Baptist Church – Lexington
83. Southern Heights Baptist Church – Lexington
84. Southside Baptist Church – Lexington
85. Stamping Ground Baptist Church – Stamping Ground
86. Thoroughbred Community Church - Nicholasville
87. Trinity Baptist Church – Lexington
88. Turning Point Church – Lexington
89. Versailles Baptist Church – Versailles
90. Victory Baptist Church – Lexington
91. White Sulphur Baptist Church - Georgetown

APPENDIX 12

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FROM WILLIAM D. HENARD

Dr. William D. Henard
Senior Pastor

Dear Friends in Christ,

I want to recommend the training for ministry to widows that Cheryl Erwin is providing. Cheryl was a long time member of Porter before moving to Mercer County after the death of her husband Leon. She was incredibly active in our church and supportive of our pastors and all facets of ministry. If you are interested in launching or improving your ministry to the widows in your church, this training is perfect for you.

While at Porter, Cheryl was instrumental in starting a ministry to our widows called Heart 2 Heart. The ministry grew rapidly, not only reaching the widows of our church, but also reaching out to unchurched ladies who had gone through the tragedy of losing their husbands. By the testimonies of those involved, this ministry definitely met a need that was going untouched.

As a pastor, I was aware of the special needs of the widows, but I was unprepared to hear of the silent cry of many of these dear saints of God. This ministry helped to meet the needs of these ladies and to get them active again in our church. We also were enabled to expand the ministry that our deacons provided to our widows.

We had Cheryl lead this training that she is offering to you at Porter. To this day, our deacons both utilize and brag on the training they received. Cheryl is careful not to usurp the pastor's leadership. Her desire is to offer help in a growing and often neglected area of church ministry. At our church, we provided some ministry to our widows. This training helped our deacons understand the real needs that both widows

and widowers face and to expand their ministry to genuinely meet people's needs.

There are several reasons why I want to endorse this training.

1. It will help you to initiate or strengthen any current ministry that you have to widows.
2. It is theologically sound and well-researched. You will be amazed at what you will learn.
3. It is conducted under the authority of the pastor and the deacons.
4. It provides information that few churches understand regarding widow ministry.

I realize that, as pastors and leaders, you are inundated with training opportunities and requests for your time. I am confident that you will not regret attending this training. It will revolutionize your ministry to widows in your church.

Sincerely,

William D. Henard, D.Min, PhD, LLD
Senior Pastor



APPENDIX 13

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION TO CENTRAL KENTUCKY NETWORK OF BAPTISTS EXECUTIVE BOARD

APRIL 14, 2015

- I. Introduction of myself –
 - A. Member of Porter Memorial Baptist Church, moved to my farm N.W. of Perryville, KY to continue to establish and grow a Christian family retreat named The Huntley Haven of Rest in loving memory of my parents Eugene and Leah Jean Huntley.
 - B. God’s call on my life to go in to full-time ministry.
 - C. Doctorate – Ministry Project
- II. Overview of Ministry Project
 - A. The number of widows is exploding in our country and thus within our churches.
 - B. Average age of widows is mid-50’s. This goes against the common stereotype many have of widows as being elderly white haired women.
 - C. Need for Soul Care ministries is great; resources are few to help you and your church minister to widows.
- III. Specifics of Ministry Project
 - A. Training will be three hours long and will consist of three different sections.
 - 1. Theological foundation of Soul Care – Material will be presented by Pastor Jerry Ball, Pastor to seniors at Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington.
 - 2. Presentation of information about the variance in grieving processes and styles as well as the definition of Soul Care ministries and what constitutes them. Information will also be provided about the widow’s journey.
 - 3. Presentation of information and discussion about the “how to” of providing Soul Care ministries to widows and lead church members to have better understanding of grieving and providing comfort. Care is required long after the week of the funeral. Discussion opportunities will be provided for attendees to share from their experience and “brainstorm” for ministry opportunities.
- IV. Specifics of Training
 - A. Dates – Thursday, May 28 – 6 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Saturday, May 30 – 9 a.m. – noon.
 - B. Same material presented at each training
 - C. Strongly encourage you to have chairman of deacons and/or deacon who is in charge of care to widows attend a training.
 - D. Before trainings, talk about e-mails that they will receive, each containing two brief surveys and ask them to return them.

APPENDIX 14

HANDOUT TO EXECUTIVE BOARD

I. Overview of Ministry Project

A. Need for Training

1. Number of widows is exploding in our country and in the church
2. Lack of resources

B. Specific Information about Training

1. Location: Porter Memorial Baptist Church
2. Dates: **Thursday, May 28, 6 p.m. – 9 p.m.**
Saturday, May 30, 9 a.m. – noon.
3. Same material will be presented at each training.
4. Attendees are to include senior pastors and the pastoral staff, deacon chairmen and deacons who are responsible for ministry to widows.

C. Surveys

1. Two brief surveys will be e-mailed to each church in the next 2-3 weeks to recruit pastors and deacons to trainings.

D. Be sure to complete information sheet today so that Cheryl has your e-mail address. Thank You!

E. Any questions?

APPENDIX 15

EMAIL FROM CENTRAL KENTUCKY
NETWORK OFFICE

Pastors,

I need to give you an updated schedule for the Widow Care Training at Porter Memorial with Cheryl Erwin.

The trainings will be: Thursday May 28th 6-9 PM

Saturday May 30th 9 am-12 pm

Also, you should have received a survey from Cheryl. She needs those completed and turned back into her. It is essential for her to have those back for her Ministry Project.

In Christ,
Chris Mofield
Administrative Assistant
Central Kentucky Network of Baptists
1161 Red Mile Rd., Lexington, KY, 40504
(859) 254-7747

APPENDIX 16

HOW TO PROVIDE SOUL CARE MINISTRIES TO WIDOWS TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this training, the pastors and deacons in attendance will be able to:

1. Identify the applicable Scripture passages in the Old and New Testaments that teach the high value that God places on widows and their care.
2. Possess a greater understanding of the wide variance in grieving styles and the uniqueness of each widow's grief journey.
3. Define Soul Care and the accompanying ministries.
4. Implement a six-week Soul Care ministry to widows within their local church.
5. Be equipped to lead their local church community to know how to minister to widows after the week of the funeral on an ongoing basis.

APPENDIX 17

CURRICULUM: HOW TO PROVIDE SOUL CARE MINISTRIES TO WIDOWS

I. The Theological Foundation for Soul Care Ministries to Widows

Deborah Carr writes, “More than 900,000 adults are widowed each year in the United States, and nearly three quarters of them are over age 65.”¹ This reflects the aging of our country, specifically Baby Boomers. The Bible has a great deal to say about the value of widows to God. An examination of the verses from both the Old and New Testaments teaches us the depth of God’s love and care for widows.

Teachings from the Old Testament

A. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. (Exod 22:22-24)

God warned Israel that if they did not obey the commands regarding the care of widows, orphans, and foreigners, He would allow them to be destroyed as a people. Wenham writes, “The expression ‘the sword’ is often used in the Old Testament and New Testament as a metonym for ‘warfare’”² God is reminding them that what happened to the Egyptians when they mistreated His people will happen to them if they choose to mistreat these disadvantaged groups within Israel.

B. For the Lord your God is the God of and Lord of Lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. (Deut 10:17 -18)

Merrill states, “As Lord over all he cannot be enticed or coerced into any kind of partiality through influence peddling (v.17) and, in fact, is the special advocate of

¹Deborah Carr, “Factors that Influence Late-Life Bereavement: Considering Data from the Changing Lives of Older Couples Study,” in *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention*, ed. Margaret S. Stroebe, Robert O. Hansson, Henk Schut, and Wolfgang Stroebe (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 417.

²Gordon J. Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch Volume One* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 51.

defenseless persons who are so often victims of such unscrupulous behavior (v.18).”³ Impartiality towards the powerless by those who claim to love God and man is emphasized.

C. Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. And all the people shall say ‘Amen’. (Deut 27: 19)

Craigie observes, “Once again, the status in law of those offended against was such that they might fear to bring proceedings against the offender, but the curse nevertheless brings the offender under the judgment of God.”⁴

D. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat, and shall be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. (Deut 14:29)

God gave specific instructions regarding provision for the needs of the widow. At the end of the third year the people were to bring their tithe, a tenth of their produce, to the Levites, and the widow directly benefited from the Levites’ obedience. God implemented a system where the widow would be taken care of by his people. The vision expressed in Deuteronomy is an integral characteristic of the people of God in their capacity to share and care for one another. Peter T. Vogt explains,

For this reason, the Levites, aliens, orphans, and widows were not to be considered poor. . . . Sharing with these groups was not meritorious, but was expected behavior on the part of the community as a whole. Yahweh would richly bless his people, who would, out of devotion to him, share that bounty with everyone in the community.⁵

E. When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. (Deut 24: 19-20)

Jehovah instructed the people of Israel with a deep degree of specificity in His instructions regarding the normal agricultural practices which would have been done on a very regular basis. He concludes these instructions with a restatement of what is stated earlier in chapter 14. In Deut 24: 22 we read, “You

³Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 204.

⁴Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 333.

⁵Peter T. Vogt, “Social Justice and the Vision of Deuteronomy,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 51, no. 1 (March 2008): 40.

shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.”

F. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil. Learn to do what is good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause” (Isa 1:16-17)

The last three commands are to be the results of the change that takes place in the heart and minds of Judah and Israel. Beyer explains, “The last three imperatives in verse 17 describe specific actions the people could take to follow through on their decisions to refuse evil and choose good.”⁶ Oswalt comments, “Thus, injustice and oppression are wrong because they are in defiance of the nature of creation. Similarly, to do good is to learn to value persons as the Creator does.”⁷ The meaning and intention of the Hebrew word “*rib*” for “plead” is to “contend for” or “argue” and is used mainly in a legal or judicial context. “The underlying sense of the verb involves a resolution or vindication of a conflict from both a divine and human perspective.”⁸ Thus, a successful king of Israel would defend the widow to reflect the nature of God, the King of Creation, and not leave justice to the gods of the cosmos as their neighboring countries believed. Walton writes, “Mesopotamians would have viewed the washing in physical terms accomplished through ritual. Israelites were to accomplish it in spiritual terms through repentance and reformation.”⁹

G. Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. (Ps 68:5)

Tate writes, “Orphans, widows and those without family were subject to oppression in the societies of the ancient world (as they still are).¹⁰ The society of that day was dominated by the male who represented the family and provided the resources. Wilson comments, “Those who had no male representative—especially orphans (NIV “the fatherless”) and widows, as here were at a disadvantage, have no one to secure their rights or basic needs.”¹¹

⁶Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 42.

⁷John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 99.

⁸Stephen D. Renn, ed., *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), s.v. “rib.”

⁹John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 585.

¹⁰Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51 -100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 176.

¹¹Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, The NIV Application Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 936.

Teachings from the New Testament

H. He also said in his teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and who like greetings in the marketplaces, and have the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.” (Mark 12:38-40)

With the passage of time, the people of Israel and their religious system continued to be corrupted by sin. Jesus Christ was teaching in the temple and warned his disciples about the scribes. His warning concerning their prideful desire for recognition from people was contrasted with the widow’s humble service to God. Both Mark and Luke record this contrast: The original Greek text demonstrates how much Jesus wanted His disciples to learn from the scribes as to what *not* to do.

Matheny writes, “The Greek words *blepete apo ton grammateon* ‘you see from the scribes’ interpreted: ‘you see with understanding by the way they dress, want to be noticed, how self-centered, and self-important the scribes are.’”¹² He was telling them to “turn away” from the scribes’ brand of religion. He wanted to be certain that his disciples knew that the scribes’ object of worship was religious practices and not Jehovah God. Brooks comments, “The greetings in the marketplace were not ordinary greetings but expressions of deference to a religious authority.”¹³ He furthermore wanted them to understand that their outward appearance of piety and righteousness could not hide their sinful treatment of widows from the eyes of Jehovah.

What did Jesus mean when he said that the scribes devour widows’ houses? The Greek word for “devour” in this context is “*katesthio*.” Jesus used it metaphorically to mean “buying up.” The widows could easily have been talked into willing their homes to the scribes and Pharisees instead of their being “willed” to their families as directed in the Old Testament. Witherington explains further, “The phrase ‘to devour a house’ is a technical one in extrabiblical Greek, referring to the bilking of someone’s property or funds.”¹⁴

I. But standing by the cross of Jesus was his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour, the disciple took her into his own home. (John 19:25-27)

The most compelling example of God’s love and concern for the widow, as for all people, comes from Christ himself as he hung on the cross. One cannot imagine the pain of his crucifixion; it is amazing that he was able to speak at all. Christ chose to do so despite the difficulty.

¹²James Matheny, “They Devour Widow’s Houses,” accessed February 13, 2010, <http://bible.org/article/they-devour-widows-houses>.

¹³James Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: B & H, 1991), 202.

¹⁴Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 334.

The question arises as to why Jesus would entrust the care of his mother to John instead of Joseph or his half-brothers. The presumption can be made that Joseph had died by this time, making Mary a widow. Kostenberger explains, “In Jesus’ first three words from the cross recorded by John, Jesus gave the ‘disciple he loved’ charge of his mother, perhaps because his own brothers still did not believe in him.”¹⁵ In John’s account, Mary and her sister are named as witnesses at the crucifixion. John did not name Mary’s sister, but Mark says that Salome was among the women present. Salome was the mother of Zebedee’s sons, James and John. Beasley-Murray states, “This last suggestion . . . makes James and John, the sons of Zebedee, the cousins of Jesus. This traditional identification of John the son of Zebedee with the Beloved Disciple helps to explain his close relationship with Jesus in the ministry.”¹⁶

Jesus Christ did much during his earthly ministry to elevate the place of women in Jewish culture. He knew what could happen to his mother if provision was not made for her care. Thurston writes, “In Hebrew tradition, widowhood was a misfortune and even disgraceful (Ruth 1: 20-21). A widow could return to her family only if her bride price was repaid. She was expected to await levirate marriage or public refusal (Deut 25:5-10). Women’s status was lower than men’s and widows were the lowest.”¹⁷

He wanted to convey his love to his mother by arranging for her care in his final moments as a human being on earth. Keener explains,

Jesus makes an oral testament in front of witnesses, which makes it binding, and formally places his mother under his disciple’s protection, providing for her after his death. Dying fathers could exhort sons to take care of surviving mothers . . . for a disciple to be accorded a role in his teacher’s family was a great honor to the disciple . . . (disciples sometimes called their teachers, “father”).¹⁸

The words, “Behold your mother!” are recorded only in the Gospel of John and not in the Synoptic Gospels. John, no doubt, felt a sense of honor and duty to be asked by Christ to take care of Mary as he immediately took her into his home. Carson writes, “It is wonderful to remember that even as he hung dying on a Roman cross, suffering as the Lamb of God, he took thought of and made provision for his mother.”¹⁹

What Jesus Christ did for his mother is so characteristic of his love. Pink writes,

He was performing the mightiest work of all history; He was engaged in doing that which in comparison makes the creating of a world fade into utter significance, yet He forgets not to make provision for His mother—much as He

¹⁵Andreas L. Kostenberger, *Encountering John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 181.

¹⁶George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 349.

¹⁷Bonnie Bowman Thurston, “Widows,” in *The IVP Women’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol Kroeger and Mary J. Evans (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 745.

¹⁸Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 313.

¹⁹D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 616.

might have done had they been together in the home at Nazareth.²⁰

Christ's command from the cross regarding the care of his mother, the widow, remains compelling to this day.

J. Now in those days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6)

Sociological reasons existed for the number of widows in the relatively new church. Jewish women traditionally married while in their teens and Jewish men married in their thirties. As would be expected, many of these husbands would die before their wives. Thus, a large number of widows were present in the community and church alike. Winter writes, "It has been estimated that forty percent of women between the ages of forty and fifty were widows and that, as a group, they comprised some thirty percent of the women in the ancient world."²¹ The Jews present in the Christian community included not only those born in Palestine but also those who were Diaspora Jews that returned to Jerusalem. Keener comments,

Thus, a disproportionate number of foreign Jewish widows lived in Jerusalem which did not have enough Jewish synagogues for their distributors of charity to supply all the widows adequately. The urban social problem of Jerusalem spilled over into the church.²²

The daily distribution of food became a problem when the Hellenistic widows were not being fed to the extent of that of the Hebrew widows. Bruce writes, "As daily allocations were made to poorer members of the community from the common fund to which the wealthier members had contributed their property, complaints began to arise that one group was favored in the expense of the other."²³ The disciples exhibited both brilliant practical and spiritual wisdom in setting their limits of what they could do so as not to jeopardize their own ministry. Instead of choosing the men to oversee the solution for the group, they guided the group to choose the seven men.

²⁰Arthur W. Pink, *The Seven Sayings of the Saviour on the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 69.

²¹Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 124.

²²Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 338.

²³F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 120.

K. Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

“Let a widow be enrolled if she not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions turn them away from Christ, they desire to marry and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. For some have already strayed after Satan. If any believing widow has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.” (1 Tim 5:3-16)

Paul’s first letter to Timothy includes the longest text in the New Testament addressing the necessity of the church to minister to widows. However, in this portion of the letter he also delineates who is a “real widow,” the kind of widow *not* to be enrolled, and the godly requirements of a widow who could be enrolled by the church.

The care of widows was an intrinsic part of the Jewish community which then carried over to the Christian body of believers. To do so was to keep covenant with God who had commanded that widows were to be defended and treated kindly to reflect his love and care for them. Towner explains, “In Jewish communities, the synagogue and wider community leadership provided an institutionally structured mechanism for ensuring that daily and longer-term requirements of the needy were met.”²⁴

To take care of one’s widowed mother was to be obedient to the commandment to “honor your father and your mother” (Exod 20:12a). In the context of both the Old Testament and the cited passage from 1 Timothy, the meaning of honor did not mean payment: “It is incorrect to interpret the verb as commanding ‘payment’ to a qualified widow, ‘honor’ should be understood to mean something like ‘provide the support that honor demands.’”²⁵ Paul wants to be certain that all who read his letter understand how important the care of the widow is to God with an emphasis on how it pleases him. He makes this point again at the end of the subject by stating again that those widows who have relatives need to be cared for by them, instead of the church. “One cannot be truly religious and please God when ignoring the needs of human beings, especially in one’s own family.”²⁶

²⁴Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 334.

²⁵Ibid., 337.

²⁶Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 178.

Paul writes of the sharp contrast between the “godly” widow and the “worldly,” young widow. He described the godly widow as having an ongoing, intimate relationship with her heavenly Father. Her hope is in him and not of the things of the world. The latter was indicative of a new kind of woman emerging in the culture at large. Winter explains, “Ancient historians have observed that around 44 BC evidence of a ‘new type’ of woman emerged in certain circles of Rome . . . a woman in high position, who nevertheless claims for herself the indulgence in sexuality of a woman of pleasure.”²⁷ Leaders of the secular culture were also alarmed by the change in behavior of many of their widows. Winter also observes, “Secular literature, including that from legal sources, described widows in the same way as did Paul in 1 Timothy 5: 11-15”²⁸ Paul’s concern that the behavior of these young widows not ruin the reputation and witness of the church to the surrounding community is evident. Towner writes,

The bottom line is that in this case, too, behavior adopted in the church or sanctioned by the church ultimately affects how those on the outside regard the church. . . . Imperial culture stood ready to evaluate the responsibility of what would be perceived as Christian behavior.²⁹

L. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (Jas 1:27)

James’ definition of pure religion is one that has resonated in the church from his time to the present. The intensity of the Hebrew idea is foreign to us and needs to be given voice if we are to properly understand James.”³⁰ McCartney explains further,

The term used here for religion (*threskeia*) means not one’s overall faith commitment but religious practices, acts of piety, or cultic activity. By “true religion,” therefore, James does not mean “the essence of true Christian faith;” but the “essence of true Christian religious activity.”³¹

James’ strong emphasis on outward expressions of an inner life consecrated to God is definitely influenced by Jesus and his teachings, particularly the Sermon on the Mount. Morgan writes, “There is not one section of the Sermon on the Mount that James does not reflect, and there is not one section of James that does not reflect the teachings

²⁷Winter, *Roman Wives*, 21. The author notes that this occurred at the time of Cicero and Caesar. During their reign, promiscuous behavior of rich married women was promoted by Roman poets and in Roman Comedy as described in detail on pp. 24-31 of this text.

²⁸Ibid., 123.

²⁹Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 359.

³⁰David P. Nystrom, *James*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 101.

³¹Dan G. McCartney, “Suffering in the Teaching of the Apostles,” in *Suffering and the Goodness of God*, ed. Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 33.

of Jesus.”³²

Other English translations of this scripture use the word “distress” instead of affliction. To what kind of distress was James referring? Some scholars have suggested that James had the final days in mind, but this view does not fit into the context of what James wrote. “It seems most likely, then, that with ‘in their distress’ James is describing the socio-economic and emotional condition of the widows and orphans rather than the eschatological location of these sufferings.”³³ A correct understanding of “distress” is necessary to effectively practice what James emphatically taught and practiced. “Orphans and widows may be outcasts to the world, but they must be enfolded into the relationships of believers. And this ministry begins by identifying those who are in distress.”³⁴

Christ consistently modeled and taught to minister to the suffering. McKnight explains,

Widows too, were a special concern of Jesus and of the early messianic community, and this concern extended into the first few centuries. . . . Anyone who practices the Jesus Creed of James 2:8-11 will see the needs of the orphans and widows and will respond with compassion.³⁵

The crux of that creed is to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Thus, when the church walks alongside the widow on her grief journey from the deep pain of a broken heart to the healing found in Jesus Christ, this command is being obeyed.

II. Variances in Grieving Styles and the Uniqueness of Each Widow’s Grief Journey to Acceptance and Healing

A misperception exists within our culture and yes, within our church as to the stereotypical image of a widow. What comes to mind when someone says to you that a lady has become a widow? Do you picture her as an elderly, frail white-haired woman in her 80’s? If so, the stereotype does not match the facts. “Forty-five percent of women and 15% of men over the age of 65 have lost a spouse, and the mean age of losing a spouse is 69 years for men and 66 years for women (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging Related Statistics 2000)”.

The leadership, as well as individual members of the church, cannot provide the needed Soul Care ministry to each widow until they have an increased understanding of the work of grieving. Widows are in an extremely vulnerable state spiritually both at the time of and after the death of their husbands. As a result, about half of the widows leave the church they attended with their husbands. The local church can be ready to provide the

³²Christopher Morgan, *A Theology of James: Wisdom for God’s People* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 37.

³³Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, The International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 171.

³⁴Kurt Richardson, *James*, The New American Commentary, vol. 36 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 103.

³⁵McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 170.

needed Soul Care ministries to stem and reverse this trend.

As the local church seeks to meet the unique and various needs of individual widows, there is the increased opportunity for their spiritual transformation and retention as an active, contributing member. Various ministries need to be developed and supported that meet their practical, spiritual, and social needs during and after the week of their husband's death and funeral. The church's positive witness to the family and friends of the widow is increased through the demonstration of Christian love to their widowed mother, sister, daughter, and friend. Thus, spiritual transformation can occur within families, communities, and the church itself because of the Christian Soul Care given to widows.

When a woman's husband passes away, she usually receives an outpouring of support and love upon hearing the news of his passing. Family and friends come to her home bringing food, hugs, and tears. She may receive a number of cards expressing sympathy and intentions to keep her in their prayers. The funeral service is planned and her husband is laid to rest. She can have countless details to address that can occupy a great deal of her time and energy. Hopefully, family members can remain a few days, perhaps even a couple of weeks to help her take care of everything. Eventually, however, she must face the inevitable; she is alone in her home after everyone has gone back to his or her own lives. All of this activity has occurred while she has been in a state of shock. The work and difficult journey of grieving has only begun for her.

The presence of loving and supportive friends and family offers one of the most important things that a widow continues to need after the funeral. When the immediate need for help with practical matters ends, the widow must not be forgotten. "Loneliness and solitude are not descriptive enough of the space that becomes the cocoon of the widow."³⁶ She needs the presence of people with her who are comfortable enough themselves with the reality of death. As the leadership and members of the local church gain a greater understanding of various grief patterns or styles, they can really be of assistance to her on her journey of grief.

A. Patterns or Style of Grief

1. Grief is energy- an emotional reaction to loss.
2. Emotions are more than feelings and are defined by Doka and Martin as biologically based adaptive reactions involving changes in the physical, affective, cognitive, spiritual, and behavioral systems in response to perceived environmental events of significance to the individual.
3. Adaptations and Responses – Determined by genetics, gender, culture and personality.
4. Intuitive Pattern of Grief
 1. Feelings are intensely experienced
 2. Expressions such as crying and lamenting mirror inner experience.
 3. Successful adaptive strategies facilitate the experience and expression of feelings.
 4. There are prolonged periods of confusion, inability to concentrate,

³⁶Miriam Neff, "The Widow's Might," *Christianity Today* (January 2008): 44.

disorganization and disorientation.

5. Physical exhaustion and/or anxiety may result.

5. Instrumental Pattern of Grief

1. Thinking is predominant to feeling as an experience: feels are less intense.
2. There is general reluctance to talk about feelings.
3. Mastery of oneself and the environment are most important.
4. Problem solving as a strategy enables mastery of feelings and control of the Environment.
5. Brief periods of cognitive dysfunction are common.
6. Energy levels are enhanced, but symptoms of general arousal go unnoticed.

6. Blended Pattern of Grief

Even though these two distinct grief patterns have been identified and described by sociologists, the existence of either pattern in its distinct pure form among grievers is rare. What is much more likely to exist are “blended” grief patterns that contain some characteristics of both the intuitive and the instrumental grief patterns. Just as rare, is the existence of a perfectly “pure” blended pattern of grief. Since these grievers straddle both instrumental and intuitive experiences they may already possess a larger repertoire of strategies. Of course the opposite might also be true: the blended griever whose experiences are widely varied and whose storehouse of adaptive strategies is severely limited.

7. Factors Affecting Grief Responses

1. Circumstances surrounding the loss (e.g. was it sudden or long term, preventability, timing, presence or absence of additional stressors, etc.)
2. Extent and responses to prior losses
3. Social variables (e.g., age and gender, cultural beliefs and practices, social class, presence and strength of spiritual systems, external and internal support systems, etc.),
4. Personal variables (e.g. health, lifestyle management, etc.)

B. Models of Mourning

1. Rando’s Model of Mourning

1. Reorienting one’s relationship to the deceased and stimulates the period of acute grief as one acknowledges that current ties can no longer be maintained.
2. Redefining oneself and one’s own identity after the loss.
3. Modifications that occur as survivors seek to redefine their world and adjust to the many changes necessitated by the loss.

2. Rando’s Model of Mourning Merged with Grieving Phases

Avoidance Phase

1. Recognizing the loss (e.g. acknowledging and understanding the death)

Confrontation Phase

2. Reacting to the separation (which includes experiencing the pain, expressing the psychological reactions to the loss, and identifying and mourning secondary losses).
3. Recollecting and re-experiencing the deceased and the relationship (which includes cognitive and affective dimensions).
4. Relinquishing the old attachments to the deceased and the old assumptive world.

Accommodation Phase

5. Readjusting to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the old.
6. Reinvesting in new relationships.

3. Dual Process Model (Stroebe and Schut)

The second model is the dual-process model described by Stroebe and Schut. The bereaved person utilizes two processes simultaneously in order to learn to live with the loss. One set of processes is loss-oriented, where individuals cope with things as the new reality of loss or separation. Restoration-oriented processes refer to the processes that individuals employ as they readjust to the new demands of life now in the face of this loss. This is a critical point. "Restoration" does not mean a return to the old reality, for that no longer exists. Rather it emphasizes that individuals are challenged to develop new patterns of behavior and assumptions as they respond to loss. To Stroebe and Schut, individuals vacillate between these two complimentary demands of grieving, "oscillating" as they cope with each in turn.

A. Four Specific Components of Dual Process Model (DPM).

1. Intrusion of Grief
2. New Roles, Identities, Relationships
3. Denial/Avoidance of Restoration Changes
4. Distraction from Grief

4. Dissonant Patterns

Sociologists have identified and described a fourth general pattern of grief that can occur in a widow's grief journey. "The term *dissonant* is used to describe a persistent way of expressing grief that is at odds with the griever's primary internal experience."³⁷ One example of this would include an instrumental griever remaining emotionally expressive for some time after the death of a loved one instead of utilizing his or her dominant cognitive domain. "Instrumental grievers are often at a disadvantage since their strengths usually do not include being comfortable with an uninhibited expression of feelings."³⁸ Another illustration would be that of an intuitive griever remaining stoic and not expressing his or her grief. "On the other hand, intuitive grievers are usually not as adept at managing their cognitions; thus, they expend more energy reining their feelings."³⁹

5. Challenges Faced by the Elderly Widow

³⁷Kenneth J. Doka and Terry L. Martin, *Grieving beyond Gender: Understanding the Ways Men and Women Mourn, Death, Dying, and Bereavement* Series, ed. Robert A. Neimeyer (New York: Routledge, 2010), 91.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 94.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 92.

C. Effects of Grief

When a woman's husband dies, *everything* in her world is changed with one of the most stressful events in her life. Married people suffer exceedingly after the loss of a spouse. Not only do they lose a confident, companion, lover, friend, and financial partner; they also lose their identity as married persons and must establish new roles for themselves. The myriad of emotions experienced by the widow ranges from shock to anger and everything in between. Grief affects the widow's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and physical body in various specific ways. See Appendix 1.

“Acutely, bereavement is characterized by pervasive and intense negative emotions including sadness, loneliness, anguish, disbelief, hopelessness, guilt, anxiety, fear, and anger. Feelings of distress are common for at least several months after the loved one's death.”⁴⁰ A common assumption is that a widow will go into a state of depression and remain in that state of mind for a long time. However, sociological research done during the past forty years does not support that assumption. Although research shows that a substantial number (19 -58%) of bereaved individuals are depressed at 1 month post-loss (Bornstein, Clayton, Halicas, Maurice, & Robins, 1973; Harlow, Goldberg, & Comstock, 1991; Lund, Caserta, & Diamond, 1986), it is important to keep in mind that the majority of bereaved spouses does not become clinically depressed following the loss. Most of sociological research has focused on the negative emotions and outcomes of a woman becoming widowed and ignored studying any positive emotions or outcomes. Shuchter & Zisook reported in 1993 “that at 2 months after losing a spouse almost a third of widows and widowers report experiencing a sense of relief in knowing that their loved ones are no longer in pain.”⁴¹ This was particularly true for those who had cared for their spouse over a long period of time or while they were dying.

When a married woman becomes a widow, her life is thrown into a crisis mode, possibly the greatest one she has faced thus far in her life. In addition to the innumerable changes that have occurred in her daily life, she must also “handle” her grief. A qualitative research study was done several years ago of widows, in their mid-50's after they had been a widow for a year. Their grief journey included a need to make meaning of their husband's death and to experience a sense of healing from their grief. Danforth and Glass identified six significant themes as a result of their interviews with the widowed participants. The themes are as follows:

1. Emotional dissonance with the reality of being widowed
2. Assumptions about self, relationships, and life which no longer fit reality
3. Reflections on current life experiences
4. Sense of acceptance of reality and recognition of self as survivor
5. Changes in sense of self and ways of knowing
6. Meaning-making experienced through change in perspective.⁴²

⁴⁰Yulia Chentsova Dutton and Sidney Zisook, “Adaptation to Bereavement,” *Death Studies* 29 (2005): 881.

⁴¹Ibid., 882.

⁴²Marion M. Danforth and J. Conrad Glass, Jr., “Listen to My Words, Give Meaning to My Sorrow: A Study in Cognitive Constructs in Middle-Age Bereaved Widows,” *Death Studies* 25 (2001): 519.

It is essential for those wanting to help the grieving widow to understand the impact of *past* losses on her grieving process. In other words, the work of grieving or lack of grief work that has been done in regards to past losses will affect how she responds to the death of her husband. Issues that had been “stuffed away” may very well rise to the surface and contribute to her emotional, mental, and spiritual turmoil. She may even be unaware that these are affecting her grieving. She may need the guidance of a caring, Christian counselor to help identify and deal with the root causes of these unresolved issues that, in turn, will help her with her grief journey after the death of her husband. Shaw writes, “Many people assume that the best way to be healed from hurts is to ignore them. This is not true. It cannot be true when the Spirit of Truth reveals and brings everything into the light. To ignore the past is to ignore reality, which is to ignore truth.”⁴³ She has so much to deal with on so many levels for much longer than even her own family may realize. There is hope in Christ for healing from past grief as well as for her present grief.

The widows to whom this author has ministered report that their grief causes them to have difficulty remembering things and feeling so “mixed up” for some time after their husbands’ death. They have shared how they feel that half of them are gone, having to learn how to live life without their husbands. Many times, they feel like a “third wheel” when they are around couples. Without exception, they have shared that fewer people call them, fewer cards are received, and people stop talking about their husband and/or their loss starting six weeks to two months after the funeral. James C. Petersen explains, “In our culture an unwritten rule suggests that people feel okay discussing losses for about six and half weeks. After that, those who suffered the loss think that they shouldn’t burden their friends by talking about it any longer. Their friends don’t bring it up either, because they’re afraid that doing so would re-open sore wounds.”⁴⁴ Sadly, this “six and a half week” rule exists inside the church as much as it does outside of the church.

Many times the widow receives some degree of support during the shock stage, but then as stated previously, begins to experience much less as the weeks pass. As the shock begins to wear off and she begins to face reality, her need for love and support is the greatest! The local church must and can be prepared to provide the Christian Soul Care that she so desperately needs to recover, heal, and to have the hope that is present in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The death of a woman’s husband can cause her to call into question her spiritual and religious beliefs. “Results of several studies show that patterns of adjustment to bereavement are influenced by therapy in terms of understanding the dynamics of spiritual belief systems, self-identity transformations and re-engagement in life activities following older adults’ loss of a spouse.”⁴⁵ Those widows who utilize their belief system as they grieve and mourn are better able to accept and make the necessary adjustments to their new life. Religious and spiritual rituals can be very helpful in expressing emotions,

⁴³Nathan Shaw, *Unto the Least of These: Expressing God’s Love to Widows and the Fatherless* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 89.

⁴⁴James C. Petersen, *Why Don’t We Listen Better? Communicating and Connecting in Relationships* (Portland: Petersen, 2007), 165.

⁴⁵Thecla Damianakis and Elsa Marziali, “Older Adults’ Response to the Loss of a Spouse: The Function of Spirituality in Understanding the Grieving Process,” *Aging & Mental Health* 16, no. 1 (2012): 59.

thus helping to reduce physical symptoms of grieving. “Spiritual and/or religious practices and rituals enhanced the grieving process because they felt in a supportive environment they were able to express their emotions, such as anger and sadness.”⁴⁶

III. Christ-Centered Soul Care Ministries

A. Definition and Ministries of Soul Care

Soul Care is a term that has recently re-emerged in the language of Christian spiritual formation. Soul Care has been happening for centuries and recognized by other terms. Pastoral Care and Christian Counseling are types of care given within the church familiar to clergy and laity alike. Soul care comes from the Latin *cura animarum*. David Benner writes, “While *cura* is most commonly translated ‘care,’ it actually contains the idea of both care and cure. Care refers to actions designed to support the well-being of something or someone. Cure refers to actions designed to restore well-being that has been lost.”⁴⁷ The soul is not a certain part of a person, but rather it is the spiritual whole. Soul care is then concerned about supporting and restoring every aspect of a person’s wellbeing with particular attention given to the person’s inner life.

The study of the history of Christian Soul Care reveals four common elements: healing, guiding, reconciling, and sustaining. At least two of these elements are needed specifically in the Soul Care of the widow. Benner explains, “*Sustaining* refers to acts of caring designed to help a hurting person endure and transcend a circumstance in which restoration or recuperation is either impossible or improbable. *Guiding* refers to helping a person make wise choices and thereby grow in spiritual maturity.”⁴⁸

For Soul Care to be effective in the local church, five components must be present: 1.Christian friendship, 2.Pastoral Ministry, 3.Pastoral Care, 4.Pastoral Counseling, and 5.Spiritual Direction. These characteristics involve the most people moving to the care of the soul, involving the individual person and the Holy Spirit. The main goal of Soul Care is spiritual transformation, to help each Christian grow to become more like Christ through all the challenges and circumstances of life.

Christian friendship among the members of a local church consists of listening to, encouraging, and praying for one another. It runs deeper than members just sharing about the superficial aspects of their lives, but rather really loving and trusting one another enough to share what is *really* happening in their inner lives and relationships. This kind of Christian love needs to occur within family relationships as well. Benner writes, “If we could more regularly be in relationships in which friends and family cared for us in our totality with particular attention to the inner self, the need for more formal and specialized expressions of Soul Care would be greatly reduced.”⁴⁹

The Pastoral Ministry is broad in nature and, of course, is vital to the Soul Care of the

⁴⁶Damianakis and Marziali, “Older Adults’ Response,” 64.

⁴⁷David G. Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling: A Short-Term Structured Model* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 14.

⁴⁸Ibid., 15, emphasis original.

⁴⁹Ibid., 17.

local church community. Preaching, teaching, leading of worship, pastoral care, and pastoral counseling by the Pastor directly affect the Soul Care of so many, both corporately and individually. This awesome responsibility and privilege cannot be carried out without the guidance, obedience to, and strengthening of the Holy Spirit.

Pastoral Care can be a misleading label in that it may cause Christians to think that care is to be provided by only the Pastor. This certainly is not the case. Not only do the Pastors, Elders, and Deacon provide Pastoral Care but also do the members of the church community to one another. Pastoral Care is a ministry rooted in compassion with the motivation being to demonstrate the love of Christ to people, regardless of their circumstances. It can be simple acts of kindness and/or loving actions that require a long-term commitment. Comforting the widow at the time of her loss and continuing to provide the support that she needs after the funeral is one example of Pastoral Care. Benner observes, “Congregations that include an ever-increasing number of members and adherents who are concerned about the welfare of others within the fellowship are congregations that place Soul Care at the heart of ministry.”⁵⁰ The hallmark of Pastoral Care is that it is given to people without *expecting* anything in return.

Pastoral counseling is a specific type of Pastoral Care and is sought by individual members of the church community. The individual seeks out the counselor because of problems experienced in his/her life. It involves confidentiality and a commitment of time on the part of the Pastoral Counselor. Benner comments, “While pastoral care may be delivered in the face of difficult life experiences, these are usually seen not so much as problems that need to be solved as experiences that need to be understood theologically and faced with the awareness of the presence of God.”⁵¹ It is imperative that individuals who are committed Christians, trained in Christian Counseling, and sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the ultimate Counselor, provide Pastoral Counseling.

The Pastor or other mature Christians who help another to grow spiritually provide Spiritual Direction that can be done through a mentoring relationship involving Bible study and discipleship. The purpose of this kind of Soul Care is to help one grow in her/his faith and have an increased desire to become more like Christ. It involves a commitment of time and effort to be willing to help another Christian become what God would have her/him to be. Of course, this relationship has to be a healthy and ethical one involving trust and obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, all five major categories of Soul Care are needed in the life of a church whose desire corporately and individually is to grow to become more like Christ. Each one complements the other four to progress toward this goal with the result being the glorification of Christ through compassionate Christian Soul Care.

C. How to Provide Soul Care Ministries for the Widows

The Church needs to be prepared to provide Christian Soul Care Ministries to help meet the needs of the widow that fall within three basic categories:

1. Spiritual
2. Social
3. Practical

⁵⁰Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 20.

⁵¹Ibid.

Through different avenues of ministry within the local church, these needs can be addressed. The leadership of these ministries need to have a basic understanding of the grieving process and be prepared to provide training if necessary for those who will be providing the Soul Care. Harold Ivan Smith writes, "Every congregation needs a standing grief care task force to respond like a volunteer fire department summoned by an alarm."⁵² All who interact with the widow must exhibit compassion and patience towards her, as she can be so very vulnerable spiritually and emotionally. The individuals providing the ministries need to practice the art of active listening and presence and refrain from giving hurtful advice.

Each Deacon or Elder within the local church can be assigned three to four widows to assist with the practical needs of taking care of her house or car. The remembrance of the widow on the anniversary of her husband's death and other significant dates in her life by the Deacon and his wife is especially meaningful to her. The widow who has health issues needs to be contacted and encouraged regularly by the Deacon couple. An annual banquet can be held in honor of the widows with the Deacons and their wives providing the service.

A Support Group can be very helpful to widows, regardless of how long they have been a widow, to encourage them on their grief journey. No one can understand what it is like to be a widow except another widow. The mutual encouragement and support that they can provide one another is invaluable. The facilitator can guide the group in such a manner to help each widow identify issues that she did not realize needed to be addressed. Members can provide helpful advice to one another regarding their own experiences in adjusting to life as a widow. Monthly socials can help to meet the need for social interaction and reduce loneliness.

The Pastoral staff needs to be available for at least one visit to her home several weeks after the death of her husband to begin to determine how she is doing spiritually. "Following the funeral, for the next six months, women preferred the pastor to visit about once a month, while men were not as concerned about follow-up visits."⁵³ The presence of the Pastor can provide tremendous spiritual support as she begins the long grief journey. Smith teaches, "Grievers want three things from a pastor: competence, presence, and sensitivity."⁵⁴ He can listen, offer prayer, and help her find answers to questions about death and life after death that may have arisen. He can identify her social and spiritual needs and alert leaders within the local church for her need of receiving specific ministries and/or inclusion in specific activities. "Women welcome contact from both pastors and laity, immediately following the death and throughout the first six months, both in person and by telephone, and find comfort through various means of ministry."⁵⁵

Involving the widow in ministry is one of the best ways that Soul Care of the widow can

⁵²Harold Ivan Smith, *When Your People Are Grieving: Leading in Times of Loss* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2001), 151.

⁵³J. Jay Schade and Kathy Allison Schade, "Parishioners' Expectations Following a Death," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 50, no. 3 (1996): 279.

⁵⁴Smith, *When Your People Are Grieving.*, 28.

⁵⁵Schade and Schade, "Parishioners' Expectations Following a Death," 279.

be provided in the church community. The widow can do many things in addition to Paul's instruction to Timothy to have them be prayer warriors. In the first three hundred years of the Church, there existed an Order of Widows. "In the first centuries of Christianity, the Church understood the ecclesial category of widows as materially equivalent to that of deaconesses, though for us it better approximates the role of female monastics. St. Basil the Great (A.D. 329 – 379) draws the connection."⁵⁶ Their Christian service was in stark contrast to the pagan practices involving the devaluation of women in the cultures in which they lived.

Those who are younger yet have their families raised can be of especially effective service. They have skills and experience that can be of help in various ministries. The leaders within the local church may need to help the widow identify her strengths and encourage her to become involved. The leaders of the various ministries can contact the widow and invite her to participate. Her being involved will help with a basic need of "being needed."

Delma Tronson has heard of this basic need from many women, especially those who have become widows in their late fifties. One important issue that she has identified is a desperate lack of being needed. In discussion with many women, she has tried to identify exactly what this means. Tronson writes, "One widow, who lost her husband when she was in her late fifties, which was many years ago, mentioned quite recently that this sense of 'no longer being needed' still has the greatest effect on her."⁵⁷

Brown, House, and Smith identified and described what widowed persons *do*, both in terms of relating to others and changing their religious behaviors or religious beliefs. Their studies document the ways that bereaved older adults rearrange their social and spiritual worlds in order to meet their new needs as bereaved individuals. "The results of their research revealed that increasing one's reliance on religious coping and increasing one's level of social integration by giving support to others are two independent ways of coping with loss."⁵⁸ For instance, they find that bereaved persons who become more intensely involved in religion after spousal loss are more psychologically resilient and bounce back from depression more quickly than those who do not intensify their religious beliefs. Yet they also find that giving social support to others-rather than receiving support- is a critical important step on the path to resilience.

For example, they find that the linkage between early grief symptoms and later depressive symptoms weakens as widows and widowers increase the amount of social support they give to others. These findings challenge and call for re-conceptualizations in how bereaved persons are treated by family members and social service providers. . . .Brown and colleagues show persuasively that widowed persons also benefit from giving to others. By taking control over their spiritual and interpersonal lives, they may

⁵⁶Christiana T. Partridge and Jennifer Turiaso, "Widows, Women, and the Bioethics of Care," *Christian Bioethics* 11 (2005): 81.

⁵⁷Delma Tronson, "Ministry to Widows in Their Late 50's," accessed February 13, 2010, <http://au.christiantoday.com/article/ministry-to-widows-in-their-late-50s/7714.htm>

⁵⁸Carr, Wortman, and Neese, *Spousal Bereavement in Late Life*, 10.

feel energized and empowered to manage the myriad other challenges posed by spousal loss.⁵⁹

Increasing one's reliance on religious belief and one's level of social interaction through giving support to others are two independent ways of coping with loss. For instance, they find that bereaved persons who become more intensely involved in religion after spousal loss are more psychologically resilient and bounce back from depression sooner than those who do not. Yet they also find that giving social support to others—rather than receiving support—is very important to one's grief journey leading to healing.

Miriam Neff, the widow of the late Bob Neff, an executive with Moody Broadcasting, has written extensively about the needs of widows. She also has developed a website to help churches begin ministries to widows. In the January 2008 issue of *Christianity Today*, she provides a helpful list of “Dos and Don'ts” that can be helpful to individuals as well as the local church when ministering to widows.

Among the things that a widow does not need to hear is the platitude that “God is now your husband”. Nathan Shaw exhorts, “What could sound more consoling, more meaningful, and more wonderful than to tell a lonely widow that God is her husband! Since this statement is based on Scripture, Christians feel solidly biblical about offering it. ‘For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth’ (Isaiah 54:5). Sounds good, right? No, generally wrong.”⁶⁰

The widow might feel as if her feelings of grief and loneliness are being minimized with such a statement. She might be feeling conflicted in her feelings toward God following the death of her husband, especially if she is blaming him for her husband's death. She might be offended and perceive it as being very insensitive to her need for affection from a human husband.

To quote this Scripture to a widow would be to do so totally out of context. These Scriptures are speaking of the relationship between Israel and God. Israel is referred to as a widow because of its people being in exile in Babylon. God is referred to as Israel's husband because of His being their Redeemer. This verse is one in the section that speaks of the coming joy for Israel in Isaiah 54:1 -55:13. J. Gordon McConville writes, “This joyous section crowns the whole argument in chapters 40-55. Especially, however, it grows out of the fourth Servant Song, which has just gone before. The ‘many’ children of the barren woman (54:1) recall the ‘many’ of whom the servant will make righteous (53:11).”⁶¹ Sensitivity to the widow's feelings is essential so that one does not say something that can make her feel even worse. Sensitivity to the leadership of the Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity in effectively ministering to the widow.

⁵⁹Carr, Wortman, and Neese, *Spousal Bereavement in Late Life*, 10.

⁶⁰Shaw, *Unto the Least of These*, 83.

⁶¹J. Gordon McConville, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 4:29.

IV. Conclusion

The need for Christian Soul Care of widows both within and without the church could not be greater. “One of the potentially great barriers to effective grief intervention is the general lack of understanding of grief in the service professions, which is at least partly explained by the discord between grief researchers and service providers.”⁶² By providing the needed Soul Care Ministries in a compassionate and effective manner, the church can be an ongoing source of grief education and comfort to griever in the church as well as the community. The Spiritual Transformation that can occur within the church out of the provision of this ministry in obedience to our Lord is without measure. The Bible clearly states how the widows are to be cared for, and it is the church’s responsibility to provide that care, to whatever extent is needed. To do less is to *be* less than what the Lord Jesus Christ would have his church to be. May the widows within our communities never have reason to be made to feel invisible or invaluable as the unique persons that they are to the church family.

V. Discussion of Attendees’ Soul Care Ministry Experiences and Ideas

⁶²Lauren J. Breen and Moira O’Connor, “The Fundamental Paradox in the Grief Literature: A Critical Reflection,” *OMEGA* 55, no. 3 (2007): 204.

APPENDIX 18
GRIEF RESOURCES

- A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss.* Jerry Sittser.
- A Grief Like No Other: Surviving The Violent Death of Someone You Love.* Kathleen O'Hara.
- A Grief Observed.* C.S. Lewis.
- Becoming a Widow: The Ache of Missing Your Other Half.* Elizabeth W.D. Groves.
- Believe: A Young Widow's Journey through Brokenness and Back,* Jennifer Silvera.
- Beyond the Suffering: Embracing the Legacy of African American Soul Care and Spiritual Direction.* Dr. Robert Kellemen and Karole A. Edwards.
- Bible Background Commentary.* Austin, TX: WORDSearch 5 Electronic version, WORDSearch Corp, 2004.
- Carnes, Beverly and Jo Ponder. "Grief Facilitation During the First Week After Death of a Loved One", *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, Fall 1996, Vol. 50, No. 3, 281 -289.
- Confessions of a Grieving Christian.* Zig Ziglar.
- Dowsett, Rosemary M. "Matthew", *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary.* Edited by Carol Kroeger and Mary J. Evans. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- Experiencing Grief.* H. Norman Wright.
- Finding Your Way after the Suicide of Someone You Love.* David B. Biebel and Suzanne Foster.\
- Finding Your Way after Your Spouse Dies.* Marta Felber.
- Finishing Well: Learning to LIVE Through Terminal Illness.* John Eaves.
- From One Widow to Another: Conversations on the New You.* Miriam Neff.
- Getting to the Other Side of Grief: Overcoming the Loss of a Spouse.* Susan J. Zonnebelt-Smeenge and Robert C. DeVries.

God's care for the widow: Encouragement and wisdom for those who grieve. Austin Walker.

God's Healing for Life's Losses: How to Find Hope When You're Hurting. Robert Kellemen.

Gone But Not Lost: Grieving the Death of a Child. David W. Wiersbe.

Good Grief: God's sustaining presence during my heartbreak. David A. Dean.

Grace for the Widow: A Journey Through the Fog of Loss. Joyce Rogers

Grief and Loss: Theories and Skills for the Helping Professions. Katherine Walsh.

Grieve Like A Man: Finding God's Strength As You Walk Through Your Loss. Jonathan Fann.

Grieving God's Way: The Path to Lasting Hope and Healing. Margaret Brownley

Grieving the Child I Never Knew: A devotional companion for comfort in the loss or your unborn or newly born child. Kathe Wunnenberg.

Grieving the Death of a Father. Harold Ivan Smith.

Grieving the Death of a Friend. Harold Ivan Smith

Grieving the Death of a Mother. Harold Ivan Smith.

Grieving with hope: Finding Comfort As You Journey Through Loss. Samuel Hodges IV and Kathy Leonard.

Helping Those In Grief What to Say – and What Not to Say: A Guide To Help You Care For Others. H. Norman Wright.

How Do I Help a Hurting Friend? Rod J.K. Wilson.

Hope for an Aching Heart: Uplifting Devotions for Widows. Margaret Nyman

Living with Grief: Who We Are How We Grieve. Edited by Kenneth Doka and Joyce Davidson.

Matheny, James. "They Devour Widow's Houses". [http://bible.org/article/they-devour-widows houses](http://bible.org/article/they-devour-widows-houses), [accessed February 13, 2010].

Ministering to the Mourning: A Practical Guide for Pastors, Church Leaders, and Other Caregivers. Warren and David Wiersbe.

Neff, Miriam. "The Widow's Might", *Christianity Today*.(January 2008) : 43 – 48.

No Time For Goodbyes: Coping with Sorrow, Anger, and Injustice After a Tragic Death,
6th ed. Janice Harris Lord.

Redeeming the Tears: A Journey Through Grief & Loss. Picking Up the Pieces.
Serendipity House.

Reflections of a Grieving Spouse. H. Norman Wright.

Schade, J. Jay and Kathye Allison Schade, "Parishioners' Expectations Following a
Death", *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, Fall 1996, Vol. 50, No. 3, 275 -279.

Shepherding Women in Pain. Bev Hislop.

Speaking of Dying: Recovering the Church's Voice in the Face of Death. Fred Craddock,
Dale Goldsmith, and Joy V. Goldsmith.

Stories from the Edge: A Theology of Grief. Greg Garrett.

Strategic Pastoral Counseling: A Short-Term Structured Model. David C. Benner.

Surviving Widowhood. Esther Goshen-Gottstein

The Empty Chair: Handling Grief on Holidays and Special Occasions. Susan J.
Zonnebelt-Smeenge and Robert C. DeVries.

The Faces of Grief: A Women's Bible Study. Marian Talley-Cunningham.

The God of All Comfort: Finding Your Way into His Arms. Dee Brestin

The God of All Comfort: Finding Your Way into His Arms through Scripture & Song. Dee
Brestin.

The Grief Care Kit. Harold Ivan Smith.

*The Joy of Serving Well: A Guide for Beginning a Widow and Homebound Ministry In
Your Church.* Vicki Hendryx.

*The Orphaned Adult: Understanding and Coping with Grief and Change After the Death
of Our Parents.* Alexander Levy.

Thurston, Bonnie Bowman. "Widows," *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*. Edited by
Carol Kroeger and Mary J. Evans. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

*Transforming the Valley of Grief: Men Finding Hope and Their Path Following the Loss
of a Loved One.* Thomas O. Mason

The Undistracted Widow: Living for God After Losing Your Husband. Carol W. Cornish.

Traveling through Grief: Learning to Live Again After the Death of a Loved One. Susan J. Zonnebelt-Smeenge and Robert C. DeVries.

Tronson, Delma. <http://au.christiantoday.com/article/ministry-to-widows-in-their-late-50s/7714.htm>. [accessed February 25, 2010].

Unto the Least of These: Expressing God's love to widows and the fatherless. Nathan Shaw

What Do I Do When Teenagers Deal With Death? Steven Gerali.

What To Do When The Police Leave: A Guide to the First Days of Traumatic Loss 3rd ed. Bill Jenkins.

When Your Family's Lost a Loved One. David & Nancy Guthrie.

When Your People Are Grieving: Leading in Times of Loss. Harold Ivan Smith.

Why Don't We Listen Better? Communicating and Connecting in Relationships. James C. Petersen.

Widow to Widow: Thoughtful Practical Ideas for Rebuilding Your Life. Genevieve Davis Ginsburg.

Written in Tears: A Grieving Father's Journey Through Psalm 103. Luke Veldt.

You Can't Leave Till You Do the Paperwork: Matters of Life and Death. Marcia Camp.

APPENDIX 19

CURRICULUM RUBRIC EVALUATIONS

Completed rubric from William D. Henard

1. Does the order of the presentation of the materials follow a logical progression?
Yes
2. Is the theological basis for Soul Care ministries of widows well balanced in its content of the Old and New Testaments?
Yes
3. Is the explanation of the grieving process thorough and understandable?
Yes
4. Are the differences in the grieving styles of men and women and among both genders clearly explained?
Yes
5. Do the examples of Soul Care ministries given and the resources provided to the attendees stimulate them to be motivated to commit to planning a six-week Soul Care Ministry in their church?
Yes
6. Is the time allotted for the training and each component of the training sufficient and reasonable?
Yes

Completed rubric from Dr. James Estep

1. Does the order of the presentation of the materials follow a logical progression?
Yes, builds; could possibly integrate biblical-theological info into the rest of the presentation
2. Is the theological basis for Soul Care ministries of widows well balanced in its content of the Old and New Testaments?
Yes, well done.
3. Is the explanation of the grieving process thorough and understandable?
Yes, even for a novice counselor such as myself.
4. Are the differences in the grieving styles of men and women and among both genders clearly explained?
Yes
5. Do the examples of Soul Care ministries given and the resources provided to the attendees stimulate them to be motivated to commit to planning a six-week Soul Care Ministry in their church?
Yes, but please read my comments for #6.
6. Is the time allotted for the training and each component of the training sufficient and reasonable?
Cheryl, the material is done very well. It is organized, thorough, timely, etc. The only question I raise may be one as an educator. The word "curriculum" usually means more than just the materials to be presented, more than the content. It is also the methodology, supporting materials, etc. I don't know if this concern is valid for a doctoral project, but wanted to at least raise it.

Completed Rubric from Harold Smith

1. Does the order of the presentation of the materials follow a logical progression?
Yes.
2. Is the theological basis for Soul Care ministries of widows well balanced in its content of the Old and New Testaments?
Yes, it is quite thorough. Although I am a reader, it gave me a lot to think about. I ended up thinking the average Christian has no idea of the biblical response to widows.
3. Is the explanation of the grieving process thorough and understandable?
Yes. One thing I hope is that in a future edition(s), some of the new researcher that is just being published can be included.
4. Are the differences in the grieving styles of men and women and among both genders clearly explained?
Yes. I am so appreciated that the new understandings are incorporated in this project. Very up-to-date with the work of Ken Doka and Terry Martin.
5. Do the examples of Soul Care ministries given and the resources provided to the attendees stimulate them to be motivated to commit to planning a six-week Soul Care Ministry in their church?
Yes. And for a serious follower of Christ, the student's interaction with the Scripture should be an incredible motivator.
6. Is the time allotted for the training and each component of the training sufficient and reasonable?
I think so. Some widows will talk and there may be some that will seek to dominate the conversation. This program will make a difference. Would be great if it could be translated into Spanish because there are so few resources for our Hispanic population.

APPENDIX 20

ANSWERS TO PRE- AND POST-TRAINING SURVEY

1. Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from . . .
the widow. __5__ Psalm 68:5
2. Complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews
because their widows were being neglected. __8__ James 1:27
3. Do not take advantage of the widow. __1__ Deuteronomy 27:19
4. And the widows who live in your towns
may come and eat and be satisfied. __11__ Isaiah 1:17 b
5. A defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling. __9__ John 19:27
6. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow. __12__ Mark 12:40
7. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless,
and the widow. __2__ Acts 6:1
8. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God,
the Father, is this: to visit orphans and
widows in their affliction. __4__ Deuteronomy 14: 29
9. Behold, your mother! And from that hour
the disciple took her to his own home. __3__ Exodus 22:22
10. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may
care for those who are truly widows. __6__ Deuteronomy 10:18
11. Take up the cause of the fatherless, plead
the cause of the widow. __7__ Deuteronomy 24:20
12. Who devour widows' houses and for a pretense
make long prayers. They will receive
the greater condemnation. __10__ 1 Timothy 5: 16 b

Use the following scale with which to register your opinion regarding each statement by circling the corresponding abbreviation.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Disagree Somewhat | Agree Somewhat | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

13. Fifty percent of widows do not return to the church they attended with their husbands after he dies.
SD D DS AS A SA
14. A widow will be doing better emotionally the week of the funeral than she will six weeks later.
SD D DS AS A SA
15. A widow loses 75 percent of her friendships with couples.
SD D DS AS A SA
16. The second year of being a widow is harder than the first.
SD D DS AS A SA
17. A woman who becomes a widow can feel as if she is invisible at her church if she goes back to participating in the church activities.

APPENDIX 21

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF CENTRAL KENTUCKY
NETWORK OF BAPTISTS CHURCHES

Table A1. Results of survey of Central Kentucky Network of Baptist churches

| Question | Church 1 | Church 2 | Church 3 | Church 4 | Church 5 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. What is the average attendance of your church in Sunday school | 100-115 | 90 | 20 | 2400 | 105 |
| 2. How many widows are members of your church? | 10-12 | NA | 3 | 150 | 10 |
| 3. Do the deacons of your church have an ongoing ministry to widows after the week of the funeral? | No | No | Yes | Yes | No |
| 4. Upon completion of this survey, I am willing to make a commitment to attend a training on how to provide Soul Care ministries to widows. | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

APPENDIX 22

RESULTS OF SURVEYS OF PARTICIPATION

Table A2. Results of survey of participation

| Statement | Church 1 | Church 2 | Church 3 | Church 4 | Church 5 |
|---|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. The training I received in seminary prepared me for ministering to widows in my church. | NA | No answer | SD | D | D |
| 2. I am sure of what to do or say to a widow in my church after the week of her husband's funeral. | AS | A | DS | AS | AS |
| 3. I intentionally lead or teach others in my local church how to minister to a widow after the week of her husband's funeral. | SD | No answer | SD | AS | D |
| 4. I have a basic understanding of the grieving process from the death of her husband that a widow must journey through to healing. | A | No answer | AS | AS | A |
| 5. I have an accurate understanding of the term "Soul Care ministries." | SD | A | AS | D | DS |
| 6. I need training on how to provide Soul Care ministries to widows in my church. | A | SA | SA | SA | A |
| 7. I am willing to make a commitment to attend a training on how to provide Soul Care ministries to widows in my church. | A | SA | A | SA | A |
| 8. I will commit to plan and for a six-week Soul Care ministry for the widows in my church. | A | Not sure | DS | A | Not sure |

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat, AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

APPENDIX 23

POST-TRAINING EVALUATIONS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to learn of any change in your thinking regarding widows and ongoing Soul Care ministries to them. This research is being conducted by Cheryl Erwin for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Instructions: Please describe your thoughts and feelings in response to each question.

Participant 1

1. How has your participation in this training changed your attitude toward the widows in your church?
It made me aware of some of the personal struggles that widows endure.
2. How will your participation in this training change how you minister to the widows in your church?
I will try to do a better job of making them feel as though they're not alone. Though I can't relate to their feelings I can be there to listen.
3. How will your participation in this training change how you will teach others to minister to widows personally and as a local church body?
I will be able to point to this training and use the materials to address some of the struggles that are occurring in our church body. By understanding the emotional toll being a widow takes on an individual I think that people will be better equip to assist.
4. Will you commit to plan and implement a six-week Soul Care ministry for the widows in your church?
Yes _____ (If yes, please complete attached Template and e-mail to Cheryl Erwin by July 31, 2015).
No x
I am currently participating in a widow's ministry but appreciate the learning opportunity.

Participant 2

1. How has your participation in this training changed your attitude toward the widows in your church?
The training increased my awareness of the issues that widows face after losing their spouse. I did not realize why it would be so difficult for widows to return to church after the death of their spouse.
2. How will your participation in this training change how you minister to the widows in your church?
I will increase my dedication to the widows for which I am responsible. I will visit my widows with Pam more frequently and continue to send birthday greetings. I am now more sensitive to the plight of widows and their families and will make myself available to listen and provide physical help as I become more aware of needs.
3. How will your participation in this training change how you will teach others to minister to widows personally and as a local church body?
I will encourage the other deacons at our church to increase their dedication to support the widows assigned to them. I will work with Richard Carr to provide periodic feedback regarding results from our ministry at periodic deacon meetings.
4. Will you commit to plan and implement a six-week Soul Care ministry for the widows in your church?
Yes _____ (If yes, please complete attached Template and e-mail to Cheryl Erwin by July 31, 2015).
No we already have a care ministry defined

Participant 3

1. How has your participation in this training changed your attitude toward the widows in your church?
The training increased my awareness of the issues that widows face after losing their spouse. I did not realize why it would be so difficult for widows to return to church after the death of their spouse
2. How will your participation in this training change how you minister to the widows in your church?
I will increase my dedication to the widows for which I am responsible. I will visit my widows with Pam more frequently and continue to send birthday greetings. I am now more sensitive to the plight of widows and their families and will make myself available to listen and provide physical help as I become more aware of needs.
3. How will your participation in this training change how you will teach others to minister to widows personally and as a local church body?
I will encourage the other deacons at our church to increase their dedication to support the widows assigned to them. I will work with Richard Carr to provide periodic feedback regarding results from our ministry at periodic deacon meetings.
4. Will you commit to plan and implement a six-week Soul Care ministry for the widows in your church?
Yes _____ (If yes, please complete attached Template and e-mail to Cheryl Erwin by July 31, 2015).
No we already have a care ministry defined

APPENDIX 24

T-TEST: PAIRED TWO SAMPLE FOR MEANS

Table A3. T-test: Paired two sample for means

| | <i>Variable 1</i> | <i>Variable 2</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Mean | 6.076923 | 8.846153846 |
| Variance | 7.910256 | 10.97435897 |
| Observations | 13 | 13 |
| Pearson Correlation | 0.663235 | |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference | 0 | |
| df | 12 | |
| t Stat | -3.90858 | |
| P(T<=t) one-tail | 0.001039 | |
| t Critical one-tail | 1.782288 | |
| P(T<=t) two-tail | 0.002078 | |
| t Critical two-tail | 2.178813 | |

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ABSTRACT

DESIGNING A TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR SOUL CARE MINISTRIES TO WIDOWS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. John David Trentham

The purpose of this project was to train the pastors and deacons of the Central Kentucky Network of Baptists based in Lexington, Kentucky, to provide ongoing Soul Care ministries to widows after the week of their husband's funeral. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the ministry project including goals, ministry context, rationale, and research methodology. Chapter 2 reveals the biblically-centered theological foundation through exegesis of applicable scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments. Chapter 3 explains the far-reaching effects of grief and various grieving styles. Practical ministries are identified with which church leaders can apply to meet the needs of widows. Chapter 4 records each step of the ministry project as it occurred. Chapter 5 evaluates the project and elucidates implications for future training efforts of church leaders in possessing a deeper understanding as to why and how Soul Care ministries need to be provided to widows in the local church.

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MINISTERIAL

Youth Leader, Bethel United Brethren Church, Wichita, Kansas, 1972-1974

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