

## PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

**TITLE: PARTICIPATION OF WIDOWS IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES: A CASE STUDY OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN NAKURU EAST AND WEST SUB-COUNTIES, KENYA**

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Widowhood becomes increasingly common with advancing age. Previous studies seem not to have considered the participation of widows in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church activities. This study aimed to explore the influence of widows' participation in SDA Churches in Nakuru, Kenya.

This study was conducted to inform church officials, such as pastors and departmental leaders, to ascertain the widows' participation in SDA Churches. A total of 69 respondents was selected using a purposive sampling technique. The survey tool included the questionnaire and focus-group interview. The study established that there is high participation of widows in SDA Church activities. Further, prayer band, praise, and worship, Bible study, and visitations were considered to be more influential for the Participation of widows in church activities. Therefore, according to the primary data, widows in SDA Church Nakuru West and East sub-counties participated more

actively in prayer bands, Bible studies, home visitations, and weekly prayers conducted.

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CHURCHES IN NAKURU EAST AND WEST  
SUB-COUNTIES, KENYA

A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

by

Peter Ontiri Aruya

June 2020

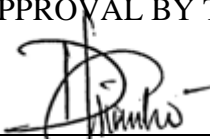


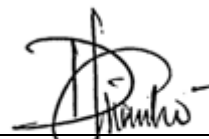
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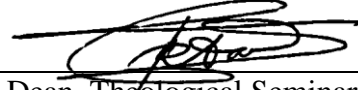
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This work is dedicated to my dear wife, Monica Chemutai, our children Harriet K and  
Chrismoses M, the Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders and its members in Central  
Rift Valley Conference of East Kenya Union Conference.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study**

The condition of widowhood increases as people advance in age. While spousal bereavement usually comes with some challenges in general, it appears Christian widows in particular, often suffer neglect and discrimination from participating in church activities by fellow believers. More closely, Seventh-day Adventist Christians are not immune to such a trend.<sup>1</sup> Peterson & Michael argue that;

The word translated widow from Hebrew is “*almanah*, which is well translated “unable to speak.” In biblical times, especially those communities from the ancient near east and Judaism societies, women were not allowed to speak before men or even for themselves in the society; these women in the society were not independent but were made dependents upon the relatives of their male relatives who were allowed to legally represent them in the public.<sup>2</sup>

A study conducted by Cooper on widowhood in 2010 indicated that 14,300,000 and more individuals who become widowed worldwide, many of them were much older than the age of 65 years.<sup>3</sup> He concluded that many women in the condition of being widows greatly exposed them to other risk conditions such as depression, drug abuse, and even others contemplating suicide. On one hand, Moran

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<sup>1</sup> Shantha Balaswamy, Virginia Richardson, and Christine A. Price, “Investigating Patterns of Social Support Use by Widowers during Bereavement,” *The Journal of Men’s Studies* 13, no. 1 (2004): 67–84.

<sup>2</sup> James Alfred Peterson, *Widows and Widowhood: A Creative Approach to Being Alone* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1977), 172.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Cooper, *Inheritance and the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policy Considerations*, Working Paper Series no. 2 (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 2010), 152.

while studying widows' economic status argues that widowhood can contribute to economic constraints due to increased need for health care especially in situations of less or no income.<sup>4</sup> Further, a study on old-age widows by Baltes, predicted that sometimes widows experience some difficulties in handling loss and grief because the number of people to share with keeps on diminishing a situation that may worsen their grief.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the aged widows are said to be particularly susceptible to decreased church attendance and social participation a situation that may lead to depression as well as spiritual disability especially in a case where the believing spouse could have enhanced engagements in church and social activities.<sup>6</sup>

Widowhood is a life situation that presents itself with numerous challenges in society. From antiquity to date the security and social status of grown-up women were determined by their roles as women and mothers; in such context, the husbands were held responsible for representing and supporting their women in all matters of concern in the public.<sup>7</sup> In the case where the husband died the grief was not only personal but also meant a radical and social upheaval and uncertainty in the economy. According to Cooper, in sub-Saharan Africa, the perception of widowhood is pictured as derivative, suffering, and much more discriminated from the family especially

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<sup>4</sup> W. L. Moran, "The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. G. Ernest Wright (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1979), 59–84.

<sup>5</sup> Margret M. Baltes, "The Psychology of the Oldest-Old: The Fourth Age," *Current Opinion in Psychiatry* 11, no. 4 (1998): 411–415.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Moran, "The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background," 59–84.

when they have lost their beloved husbands and the properties stripped off from them.<sup>8</sup>

Widowhood experiences continue to be a common phenomenon in modern society impacting the quality life of the widows negatively. This experience has affected the units of society in which widows belong including their families, places of work (economic and social activities) such as religious affiliations. The Church is one such social unit that is affected by the well-being of its members, of whom the widows form a significant fraction of the membership.<sup>9</sup>

Nakuru District's strategic plan of 2005-2010 shows that among the developmental challenges the district is facing is the and needs to address the increasing number of widows. And thus, being an issue that the strategic development, implementation authority, or sector cannot afford to overlook to address, for purposes of sustained development. The church is a unit in the society, corporate partner, and stake-holder in the continuous growth cannot afford to watch passively without addressing that plight of its members in their hardships as widows.

In the book of Acts 6:1-7, the word of God certainly presents a religious community where the church takes care of the widows' social needs and widows actively participate in fellowship activities and find the Church a safe dwelling. However, in the Adventist Churches of Nakuru-West and East sub-counties, this does not seem to be the case. One probably sees that the widows are not participating actively in Church activities and programs. The researcher will seek to determine factors behind such situations by analyzing biblical examples; critically interpret the

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<sup>8</sup> Cooper, *Inheritance and the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policy Considerations*, 159.

<sup>9</sup> Paul B. Baltes, "Theoretical Propositions of Life-Span Developmental Psychology: On the Dynamics between Growth and Decline," *Developmental Psychology* 23, no. 5 (1987): 611–626.

situation based on biblical theology, to be able to transform the Church here to be in harmony with the word.<sup>10</sup>

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research on widows in the SDA Church seems to address a wide range of issues on widowhood. However, none of the available data seems to directly tackle the participation of widows in church activities as well as the church's role in dealing with the women who are negatively affected by widowhood. The need to establish the participation of widows in the SDA Church is the gap that this research seeks to address. The uniqueness of the study investigates the role of the SDA Church, exploring how it involves its widows in ministry.

Currently, the churches realized consistent numerical growth of widows in Nakuru west and east sub-counties. However, as the number grows widows still are very few in participation at various ministries in the church. However, church administrators are not concerned as to the involvement of widows in church activities in the SDA Church.

### **General Objective of the Study**

This study is guided by the main objective which explores the factors influencing widows taking part in church activities in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and specifically the Adventist widows in Nakuru West and East Sub-Counties.

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<sup>10</sup> Elders consultation board of the Nakuru East Sub-County Sampled churches views on widows, 2017.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To determine factors that hinder Participation of widows in church activities in Nakuru west and east sub-counties, Kenya.
2. To encourage churches in Nakuru West and East sub-county, Kenya towards active participation of widows in church activities.
3. To ascertain factors that may motivate widows to participate in church activities in Nakuru West and East sub-county, Kenya.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of Participation of widows in church activities in Nakuru west and east sub-counties, Kenya?
2. What is the current role of the church in encouraging the active participation of widows in church activities in Nakuru West and East sub-county, Kenya?
3. What are the factors motivating widows to participate in church activities in Nakuru West and East sub-county, Kenya?

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

Several factors have played a key role in delimiting the current study.

Geographically the study is limited to the area of Nakuru east and west sub-county, which forms part of the Rift Valley in Kenya. The study was also delimited in terms of a church denomination, namely SDA widows' participation in church activities.

The research will focus solely on the experiences of widows and the role of the SDA Church in the demarcated area. This focus will particularly help to keep the survey at a manageable and cost-effective size considering the intricacies of the research sample, sample technique, data gathering, and collection procedure, and the objective interpretive approach to the research.

### **Study Significance**

The current study aims at:

1. Stimulating and introducing active church participation that could positively influence the active extent of widow involvement in church activities in the research area

2. Allowing society and the church to examine practical ways in supporting the Participation of widows in church activities
3. Providing information that is well-researched on the area of ministry to the widow, that is informative to the mission of the church.
4. Encouraging believers to become involved in a widow-supportive ministry that plays a vital role in helping widows overcome their situation.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF WIDOWHOOD

Women make up nearly half of the population of almost any given society. Little studies have revealed the welfare of widowhood. This chapter takes on descriptive literature based on a biblical approach.

Descriptive writing aims is to give information and to describe something, or an event or experience.<sup>1</sup> A literature review or scholarship review entails not only reading and summarizing current scholarship; it also analyses and evaluates other scholarly arguments. There will thus be a form of argumentative writing. The purpose of this chapter is therefore twofold. Firstly, to review the state of scholarship on the topic of widowhood generally in Biblical times. Secondly, to provide a meaningful description of the current status of widowhood and the involvement of widows in various church activities.

#### **The Reasons Pro-Widows**

The common cause of the state of widowhood is the death of a spouse. In societies, the attitudes toward the deceased, dying, and bereavement differs, but the inevitability is always that everyone will die unless the Lord hastens His return. The author of Hebrews states that “for everything that happens, there is always a basis, a time for everything beneath the earth, there is a season when one is born and the time to die (Heb 9:23). Reiterating on the beginning and end of an individual’s life, King

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<sup>1</sup> Moran, “The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background,” 59–84.



Solomon also alludes two basic truths about human existence: human life results in the birth of an individual, with the certainty of death (Eccl 3:2). According to Speiser, psychologists, counselors, and behavioral scientists in recent years have given scholarly attention to the subject of death.<sup>2</sup>

Commenting on the concept of death is an idea, the great thinkers of Egypt, Greece, and Rome also argue that; “In Judea death is part of reality and comes about as a consequence of original and personal sin. Nevertheless, death in itself is a multi-faceted reality. Death is tough not only of the widows but on anybody.”<sup>3</sup>

However, the disorganization and the following traumatic situation of the widows in Nakuru west and east sub-counties seem to be more severe on women than on men. The impact of death on a widow runs deep socially, psychologically, and economically. Agunwa observed that “tradition and some cultural practices prescribe harsh injunctions for widows and sometimes deny them essentials of life such as food, shelter, and clothing.”<sup>4</sup>

## **The Concept of Widowhood in Biblical Times**

### **The Old Testament**

Among the crucial matters addressed in the word of God, which also attracts God's compassion is widowhood. Biblically, issues concerning widowhood are treated mostly with compassion, an issue that makes it a concern even for modern Christians. Therefore, a serious matter when dealing or handling widows in the church is

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<sup>2</sup> E. A. Speiser, “‘The Wife-Sister Motif in the Patriarchal Narrative,’ *Studies and Texts*,” in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann, vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 15–28.

<sup>3</sup> Elmer L. Towns, John N. Vaughan, and David J. Seifert, *Complete Book of Church Growth* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1981), 221.

<sup>4</sup> T. V. Agunwa, “Occasional Papers,” *Occasional Papers* 3, no. 1 (1999).

because; God treated them with compassion as the Christians did in the early church when the widows are carefully examined as advised by Paul for better understanding and treatment.<sup>5</sup> According to 1 Kings, 17:8-15; 2 Kings.4:1-7, widowhood was a life of poverty.<sup>6</sup>

As Payne observes, death before old age among the Jews is treated as a punishment from God due to sin which seems to be alluded in Isaiah 45:1-13 and Ruth 1:13. Payne further argues that it was not right for priests to marry widows; this tells the reason Jews probably attach religious significance to the marriage of widows in the society (Luke 21:14).<sup>7</sup> Biblically, widows are encouraged to remain childless and be part of her husband's family, or else she should turn and go back to her parents (Gen 38:11 & Ruth 1:8). However, this was not final because the widowed woman is also advised to look for another marriage outside her previous marriage (Ruth 1:9 & 1 Sam 25:42).

The widows are unjustly treated as commonly indicated by the attested by the coercion of rapid action alongside subjugation during the day of the Lord in the Old Testament (Mal 3:5). As eluded in Deut 14:29; 16:11, 14, widows should be considered as part of the covenant community. This means the church of God should extend mercy and compassion to defend widows and orphans. In the Old Testament widows were allowed during harvest times to collect a portion of the grain, some

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<sup>5</sup> R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 35.

<sup>6</sup> H. H. Rowley, ed., *Old Testament and Modern Study* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1952), 15–23.

<sup>7</sup> J. Barton Payne, *New Perspectives on the Old Testament* (Waco, TX: Word, 1970), 442.

fruits of the olive tree, and grapes in the vineyard, which are left for their sustenance (Ruth 2:2-12).<sup>8</sup>

Further, God shows concern on the widows and pledges to sustain them and have them live with hope in Him (Jer 49:11). He promises to preserve their heritage and become their guardian (Ps 146:9). Therefore, widows in Isaiah are compared to symbolic Babylon which is in her anguish indicating how Israel is supposed to forget the humiliation of her widowhood. She should Instead, recall how God has rescued her and won her back to her husband where she is restored to a more holy and fruitful union (Ps 44:9, Prov 15:25, Isa 54:46). Kitchen has stated that “the authors of Lamentations (Lam 1:1; 5:3-4) refer to Jerusalem and that following the devastation of the great city, “the distressed widow will have to call on YHWH for help.”<sup>9</sup>

### **The Pentateuch**

A careful examination of the Old Testament indicates the motif of widowhood, being that the concept is often mentioned. In this case, because of particular choices, the conduct of the widows is deemed worthy. Richard P. Patterson, in his book on the issue of widowhood, orphanage, and poverty in the Old Testament and the historical literature, states;

It should be noted that the concern for the widows is permanently interwoven into the fabric of the crucial sections dealing with the covenant which is made between Yahweh, and the children of Israel (the people of God) who are in a relationship with HIM, an agreement signed on Mt. Sinai, which was also renewed before the Israelites entered the promised land of Canaan.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> D. Winton Thomas and W. D. McHardy, eds., *Hebrew and Semitic Studies* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1965), 39–45.

<sup>9</sup> K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Madison, WI: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 24.

<sup>10</sup> Richard D. Patterson, “The Widow, the Orphan, and the Poor in the Old Testament and the Extra-Biblical Literature,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130, no. 519 (1973): 223–234.

In the OT literature, the widows are under God's safety and protection (Exod 22:21-24). This concept reiterates through the book of Deuteronomy where God represents a supreme judge who protects the widows at heart (Deut 10:18). This aspect is not correct only to the feasts observed in Israel as recorded in Deut 16:11-14 but also acted as special regulations of Israel's religious and social life. Through Deuteronomy, God almighty was seen, invoking the law of charity upon Israel for them to continuously remember the magnitude of God's redemptive power of grace towards them. This act of God is the significant and critical section found in Deuteronomy climaxed by the oath of ratification (Deut 26:8-18).

### **A Widow Came to the Prophet Elisha**

During the Prophet Elisha's time, a widow came in tears who had lost her husband and been left with a huge debt to pay. The prophet arrived when it was evident that the creditor would take both her boys and enslave them to recover his debts. As the Bible records, the unnamed man who died was a servant of God, preached the word of God before he lost his life leaving his family in jeopardy.<sup>11</sup> However, this widow had heard about the power of the prophet Elisha and she knew that he would help her certainly to solve her problem. When Elisha reached there and was given the story he offered a prayer about her situation and asked her; when she told Elisha her story, he thought and prayed about it. Then he asked,

If there was anything valuable in her house and she responded "there is nothing valuable only a jar of oil," the widow replied to Elisha. The man of Great faith Elisha was aware that God uses such opportunities of small things like a jar to perfume great miracles. Then the prophet sent her to her neighbors to borrow as many as she could of the empty jars to add on hers. After bringing the jars, the prophet instructed her to put them in the house and start pouring olive oil into each of them from the original jar that she had and that

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<sup>11</sup> Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2005), 212.

when each gets full to be set aside and continue pouring to them all till the last is filled.<sup>12</sup>

During Elisha's visit, a widow was instructed in the processes that resulted in all jars full of oil as the Prophet of God instructed. Amazingly, the oil stopped flowing after the last jar was full, excitedly; the widow went to Elisha and narrated what she had seen. At this point, the Prophet instructed her to sell some oil to be able to settle her debtor to be able to claim her sons back." The narrative is found in the Bible in 2 Kings 4:1–7. God helped this helpless widow with her two desperate sons. In this case, God protects and provides for the needy who promise to judge those who mistreat widows and orphans in the society (Mal 3:5).

In the early church, James defined true religion as follows "the undefiled religion that is considered pure before God is that which visits the poor, the orphans and widows in need" (Jas 1:27). God is pleased when the church visits and cares for the widows.<sup>13</sup> If the modern church should take care of the widows then it means not only on food and providing clothes but also providing spiritual counsel to help them remain strong in the Lord.<sup>14</sup> Widows in the modern Christian church need guidance on how to plan their lives in a new and very different relationships with God.

### **The Widow of Zarephath**

The widow of Zarephath, is one of a kind, renowned for being kind and self-sacrificial and said to have has the lovely name ever in Hebrew. Though her real name and that of her boy were not given in the story, the prophet might have known them

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<sup>12</sup> Donald E. Gowan, "Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament: The Case of the Widow, the Orphan, and the Sojourner," *Interpretation* 41, no. 4 (1987): 341–353.

<sup>13</sup> R. K. Harrison, *Widows in the Old Testament Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 211.

<sup>14</sup> Dana Hardwick, *Oh Thou Woman That Bringest Good Tidings: The Life and Work of Katharine C. Bushnell* (Kearney, NE: Morris, 1995), 332.

well. The woman of Zarephath is a commendable Widow, a reference that captures the attention of the and focus of the readers rather than focusing on her actions of generosity.<sup>15</sup>

This woman lived in Zerepta a town found in Zidon known by making evident the providence of YHWH. This generosity is evidenced during apostasy in Israel, a difficult time when Elijah could find himself a refugee in a pagan country, where Jezebel Elijah's enemy was a native, Jezebel Was a Zidonian native a daughter of Eth-Baal. This woman knows the faith of the Hebrew people before prophet Elijah comes across her, despite her being brought up a polytheistic environment.<sup>16</sup> This widow came to accept the Hebrew faith in full when she met Elijah a prophet of God and all that she saw when Elijah visited her miserable home. Though she was an outcast, she had a responsibility to take care of her child, her poor home was located between Tire and Sidon a humble home left by her husband, he fed her family from a few Olive trees and a small barley field where she could make her living for her and her growing boy.

This widow could manage to gather whatever she could during favorable seasons and that which she gathered sufficed for her needs. However, this was different during unfavorable seasons when a terrible drought attacked and killed the harvest. This period was unfavorable that invited difficult circumstances for the widows as it is today, cases where widows were not only oppressed but also lack of

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<sup>15</sup> James B. Pritchard, *Recovering Sarepta, A Phoenician City: Excavations at Sarafund, 1969-1974, by the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 217.

<sup>16</sup> David L. Weddle, *Miracles: Wonder and Meaning in World Religions* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2010), 35–70.

care makes life difficult for their survival.<sup>17</sup> However, Godly widows know that they have a lasting divine promise of provision and protection from the Lord just like the Widow of Zarephath who lived a hopeless life till the man of God arrived and God used him to transform her life for the very best.

Since queen Jezebel had set a price upon the prophet of God, Elijah felt a hunted man and was always on the run for his life because he had pronounced queen Jezebel to be a prophet of doom together with her ungodly husband Ahab. These two, however, never thought at any point that Elijah might visit or even hide in the poor home of the widow of Zarephath, yet God had singled her out for the task of taking care of the Prophet of God for more than two years. At her home, Elijah was fed just as a heavenly-protected guest without fear but just trusting God.<sup>18</sup>

The widow of Zarephath is said to be a hospitable woman for her willingness and acceptance to share her mouthful of food with a man who is termed as a stranger who looked exhausted after a long journey, still, this woman never knew that by so doing she was entertaining an angel unaware. Instead, this widow took Elijah in treated him hospitably to her level best said as a Christian is that that is all she had out of her depth of poverty. This woman would have protested at first when the Prophet requested and say, I do not need your mockery, please sir, am just a destitute widow with my dying son who has only one last meal. If this widow had met Elijah's request with bitterness, asking him questions about why he would even request food from a poverty-stricken home, it would be easy to understand her but never did she respond with bitterness. Though this widow would have felt that sharing her last meal would

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<sup>17</sup> Weddle, *Miracles: Wonder and Meaning in World Religions*, 35-70.

<sup>18</sup> Barbara J. Morgan, ed., *Illustrated Dictionary of Bible Life and Times* (Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest, 1997), 189.

be probably hurtful to both her and the boy she still went ahead to give the hungry Prophet a portion to eat without knowing that it would turn out to be an act of faith that would later translate to evidence of things not seen.

The Zarephath woman decided to bake her last meal and serve the stranger first as requested by the Prophet “make me a little cake fist and bring unto me.” hurrying to show hospitality as prompted innate love leading to the understanding that little with God is plenty. It’s unimaginable how anxious it was for her after that first meal which she probably thought would be the last meal. At this time she might have been able to tell the kind of a guest she had invited.<sup>19</sup> She was to continue experiencing this miracle until the famine was past and the rain came back.

When the Prophet was leaving, the widow might have felt sad due to the love and closeness they had developed to each other. The same might have been to Prophet Elijah when he had to face Ahab again to pronounce the end of the three and half years drought. Prophet Elijah might have not lost contact with the Zerephath widow because she had possibly become part of his life, though the bible does not reveal anything more about her and her son whom God raised from the dead, because Christ refers to her, she is probably held onto everlasting remembrance.<sup>20</sup> When Jesus was preaching at Nazareth, He selected this incident from the OT. He said that, although there many widows in Israel during Elijah’s days, none of them was the Prophet sent to receive such treatment as that by the widow of Zarephath (Luke 4:26).

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<sup>19</sup> Morgan, ed., *Illustrated Dictionary of Bible Life and Times*, 189.

<sup>20</sup> Mitchell Dahood, “Psalms 11,” in *The Anchor Bible*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 269.



## Naomi

Naomi was a woman of her kind in the Old Testament. She not only knew pain but also understood bitterness from her loss of husband while in a foreign land. Naomi had just left Bethlehem with her husband and two sons to escape from famine. Naomi's husband suddenly died and left her and the two sons in a new land, a widow left with two sons, however, her sorrow continued and worsened when she lost her two sons who had married the Moabite women and lasted for only ten years. At this point, being a widow with no remaining was a double tragedy which made her believe that God probably was dealing with her mercilessly as traditionally understood. This resulted in her becoming an unhappy woman in society.<sup>21</sup>

When the famine was over in Bethlehem, Naomi decided to go back to Bethlehem. After packing and loading their belongings with her daughter's in-law Orpah and Ruth they started their journey back. While on the way, Naomi opted to have the two daughters go back to their biological mothers. However, the bible does not reveal why Naomi encouraged them to go to their homes. Probably, could not find where to take them and thought that the only thing that remained with her was sadness and poverty.<sup>22</sup> Because of her grief, Naomi may have failed to see God leading them to perfect his plans.

Though challenging with tears in her eyes, Naomi managed to convince Orpah to go back to her parent's home, but it was not the same with Ruth. Ruth seems to have seen and witnessed a unique faith in Naomi. Ruth might have experienced love and inspiration from her mother-in-law, which made her accept to leave her biological parents and decide on following Naomi to watch and take care of her. This act made

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<sup>21</sup> Daniel A. Poling, "The Story of Ruth," *The Kiowa News*, 1961, 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Naomi press her no more, but to accept Ruth's company and forget about urging her to return to her parents. D. Noel says;

Naomi and Ruth were received and greeted with excitement when they entered Bethlehem. When the entire city hears, they rejoiced because of Naomi's return. However, Naomi did not seem to be happy or even join them in jubilation because she had returned sad, widowed, and childless. Naomi was saddened and heart-broken with the belief that God had inflicted her with anger and bitterness. It's the reason she refused to be called Naomi which means my delight, but rather chose Mara which means bitterness. Having been hurt, Naomi patiently guided Ruth into interaction with Boaz, a close relative of Naomi's late husband who was a kinsman-redeemer who was next on line to take Naomi's daughter-in-law as a wife to continue Naomi's generation.<sup>23</sup>

Naomi told Ruth to be humble in her dealings with Boaz, to glean the left-overs and be submissive to Boaz. Her actions of humility led Boaz to marry her.

However, Naomi was behind the scene directing Ruth's conduct concerning Boaz. As Gurney argues;

After the return of Naomi to Bethlehem, she did not connect Ruth with Boaz for her gain but her concern was for the young woman who was dedicated to serve and take care of Naomi even when it was not her business. Her concern for Ruth was an expression of a mother's love for the daughter and was her selfless reward which God used later to bring Naomi great joy and restoration through Boaz's marriage to Ruth. Later on, Ruth was blessed with a boy child who was nursed by Naomi as her own and took a great hand in the upbringing of Obed who later would become the grandfather to King David.<sup>24</sup>

## **Ruth**

Ruth was a Moabite woman who was married to Mahlon the son to Naomi a Hebrew migrant who seemed to be offering a possibility of a better future. As observed by Kline, Ruth had decided to stay with this Hebrew mother-in-law after the death of her beloved husband Mahlon. He explains that the two women (Naomi and

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<sup>23</sup> David Noel Freedman, *Ruth and Naomi* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 129–130.

<sup>24</sup> O. R. Gurney, *Naomi Widowed*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore, MD: Bancroft Press, 1966), 101–102.

Ruth) became desperately dispossessed widows who always had to lean for food and that they could not own land or even claim in their state of widowhood.<sup>25</sup>

The solidarity of these two widows made them survive together. Naomi had to wisely use the young woman Ruth's exotic beauty to open her new doors of life. Though Ruth had lost her husband just like the mother-in-law, she had gained a new faith that made her begin to feel her soul elevated to a unique experience. For Ruth, life seemed challenging to live as a widow but then it would have been more or rather impossible to live without her mother-in-law Naomi. Naomi and Ruth in their widowhood shared lots of sorrows as they took the last look at the graves of their husbands and this is what commenced their journey back to Bethlehem which is said to be near the border of Moab.<sup>26</sup> Lynn argues that "Naomi paused to counsel her companions. She was elderly; the girls were young, attractive, and desirable."<sup>27</sup>

Though Naomi tried to convince Ruth to go back, her overwhelming response can be considered less than six headings. Her courageous decision not to go back would push Naomi to accept the unacceptable in the Hebrew culture. Far more, Ruth had not been in Israel before. Neither had she ever met or even listened to the Prophet and that she has never entered into God's sanctuary before, but then meeting Naomi a Hebrew believer changed her faith experience. Ruth's knowledge of Yahweh is only delivered out of her mother-in-law who was her only councilor on spiritual matters. The fact she had not even attended any religious meeting or listened to any religious

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<sup>25</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1963), 108.

<sup>26</sup> B.P. Irwin, "Ruth 4: Person," ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 198.

<sup>27</sup> Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 172.

music that inspired her, she was converted by the irresistible charm of a godly woman from the Hebrews.<sup>28</sup>

### **New Testament Widows**

Rick Warren has emphasized the following in the New Testament;

The indigence of the widows remained frequent just like the apostolic era. This is the reason the apostles decided to have deacons appointed to be concerned about the widows belonging to Hellenistic Jews who converted to Christianity while in Jerusalem. (Acts 6:1). The widows of Joppa grieved deeply over the death of Tabitha (a widow) who was committed to meet their needs at that time. The reason they requested peter to raise Tabitha again to continue providing help to all those she served while alive (Acts 9:36-4).<sup>29</sup>

In this case, Payne seems to argue that the scribes and Pharisees were pretending to offer long prayers to widows, whose greed, Jesus condemned in the sense that they were mistreating these defenseless women of God (Luke 20:47). However, God approves the body of the widows who are highly respected in the apostolic church. Certain qualifications were set by the church and the community for whoever would qualify to be counted as a widow. Some of them included; being of the age of at least sixty and above, committed to prayer daily, should also have no more intentions of getting married as well as showing the hospitality of helping the indigent (1 Tim 5:3-16). Smith, Lee observes that;

during the time of our patriarchs, the second coming of Jesus Christ fostered the paralegal position of Christ-followers and the lack of centralized governmental systems led to the development of unique and special treatment of widows in the early church. Facts from the East seemingly indicate and confirm that widows in the early church specifically were allowed to serve as deaconesses and that their service group regularly survived the recognition from the public during Constantinople I regime. Looking at the decline of the institution's independence during the 5<sup>th</sup>C when women started rising and the

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<sup>28</sup> Leviticus 19:9–10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19.

<sup>29</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Every Church Is Big in God's Eyes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 31.

elimination of providing to their need financially was proposed together with the religious protection provided previously by the church.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Ministry of Widows in the New Testament**

In the book of Acts, the apostles teaching in evangelism keeps the church growing. In the time of the apostles, the number of Christ's disciples was growing each day till when complaints started rising from the group known as Hellenistic Jews who regarded themselves as neglected on bread that served each day (Acts 6:1). The issues concerning disregard continued to grow and lead to overload for the apostles to bear and administer common funds for the poor. These issues arose which led to the murmuring that threatened to destroy the unity among the church members. One of the internal problems faced by the church was that of Ananias and Sapphira who lied concerning the money they sold their property. The fact that at that point, the church was in unity, everything was done together as recorded in (Acts 2:44).

People were working together and were united as the heart and soul before God judged Ananias and Sapphira's actions (Acts 5:12). Stating in length, Gleason Archer writes;

Being a widow in the first century was not easy, it was a hard journey going through thick and thin to make life move from its basic level. The care and safety of the widows depended on the church in ensuring that they had shelter, food, and clothing as well as protection. The church developed a had an enormous conscientiousness among widows, orphans, and the hopeless people in the synagogue where they had a routine custom of collecting foods for the needy on each 6<sup>th</sup> day of the week to collect food for the those in need.<sup>31</sup>

Among those in need in the early church received support to meet their daily needs, especially those who were temporarily in need. However, those who seemed to

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<sup>30</sup> Smith Lee, "What Do We Owe to the Widows?," *Fortune*, 1989, 16–23.

<sup>31</sup> Gleason Archer, "Widows in the Church," *Bibliotheca Sacra* CXXVII (1970): 3–25.

be in a permanent need situation were provided as well, enough food to help them survive. The distribution of food and funds from the house-to-house daily enabled those in need to live an improved life. When some of the Jewish widows became Christians, the next thing happened was to disassociate them from the Jewish religious community.

In the early church, following Christ was essential in everything. Though there was no support coming from the synagogue for women, the Christian community immediately filled in and supplied those who were in need especially widows. As the church continued to grow and some widows were overlooked and neglected in the daily servings of food, there arose the need to reach for them and care for their needs among the congregation. As the Scripture says, Yhwh has designed that men should take care of women right from creation that God has designed women to be cared for by men, they should be protected, provided for, and cared for by their husbands (Gen 2.18-24). It is probably the reason why the Bible does not teach that women should provide for themselves or provide for men.

In the Old Testament, gleaning the field was allowed for the widows and orphans after harvest (Deut 24:19-22). This was a way God commanded for them to feed and share a portion of the field collection for tithe with the Levites as recorded in Deuteronomy 26:12. The return of tithes and offerings from the collection was a sign that God blesses those honor widows and help them as recorded in Jeremiah, God also rebukes and punishes those who hurt the widows (Jer. 7:6, Job 24:3). It is God's responsibility to care for the needy and widows was evident among the Israelites as a nation. The widows are sought and cared for as God commanded because Israel understood how God values the widows. Among the Jews, God laid down in marriage that a man ought to make an effort and provide for his wife in case she becomes a

widow. The Jewish law laid down that at the time of his marriage, every man should be able to provide for his wife even in the situation of widowhood. As recorded in Acts 6:1, the early church had to incline her ministry towards developing the care for widows. Agomoh states that;

During the early church, the disciples of Jesus did not start building programs, nor Christian schools, but they cared for the widows as instructed from the OT. According to Ignatius, the widows should not be neglected because Jesus taught that, the disciples should be their guardians. The scripture makes it clear that because the Lord cares for the widows, Israel as a nation should also care for them henceforth. As revealed by the gospels, Jesus cared for widows and so the church, the new Israel, was to do the same.<sup>32</sup>

The pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God the father is visiting the widows and the orphans in their distress and trying to meet their needs equally (Jas 1:27; NASB)

The Jewish adoption and usage of the term religion stand for the outward performance of the aspect of worship.<sup>33</sup> This means that the pure religion with undefiled worship boils to two important things; love and holiness. The former is not an abstract emotion but an action. This is because both the widows and orphans had lost their protectors and providers as a result they were subjected to many afflictions. The idea of supporting and caring for the needy is supported by James who suggests that the “untainted religion” is where the care of widows and orphans is taken seriously. According to 1 Timothy 5:3-16, the underlying thought, unstated in the text, is that God’s design for women being the weaker gender they should be taken care of. Paul also suggests to Timothy that our responsibility to care for widows is essential (1 Tim 5) and that it is a very pertinent aspect of the church today that the 21<sup>st</sup>-century church desperately needs to hear.

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<sup>32</sup> O. Agomoh, “Coping with Widowhood,” *Vanguard Newspaper* (Lagos, Nigeria, 1987), 27.

<sup>33</sup> Moran, “The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background,” 42.

**Honor widows who are widows indeed.** The instruction Paul gives to Timothy is clear that Paul had it in mind that all believers in the early church should conduct themselves as Christians in the church (1 Tim 3:14-15). By respecting both widows and widowers, the church's basic ministry was accomplished. In the early church, the term widow from the Greek point of view broadly meant bereft. It was coined from the noun *knera* (sic) which is the feminine form of the adjective *kneros* (sic) and means: "bereft, robbed, and having suffered loss."<sup>34</sup> The woman who lost a husband in any fashion such as through death, divorce, desertion, or prison would be described as bereft meaning "widow."

The church has the responsibility of caring for widows despite the cause of widowhood. Not only because the husband died, but the husband could also as well take off, the church today should not abdicate its responsibility to directly take care of the widows. The church should not abandon them because that will not be a true religion. Unfortunately, the church in 21<sup>st</sup>C is busy building monuments and constructing mega and superstructures with no caring Christians. To take care of Gods' dear hearts, true religion much of the church should be geared towards accomplishing and ministering to the widows. No Christian should have trouble accepting and implementing these principles as part of the society and Christian living unless they are part of the society that is characterized by Godless, Christless, and non-biblical philosophy of living. During the early church, the disciples were increasing in number there were complaints of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Jews because their widows were overlooked in the daily serving of food (Acts 6:1;

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<sup>34</sup> Moran, "The Hebrew Language in Its Northwest Semitic Background," 42.



NASB). The seeming neglect of these widows seems to be a result of the rapid increase of and growth of the church in Jerusalem.

## **Ellen G. White Writings on Widows**

### **Christian Fathers and Mothers Needed**

In the *Review and Herald* magazine Ellen White states that;

Death will be swallowed up in victory, but before that, orphans should be taken care of, because they are likely to suffer in situations where compassion, love, and kindness when the church is not exercised on their behalf. God bids us to, “take care of those in need and cast out from their houses.” One of the goals of a Christian community is to ensure that the fatherless and motherless are supplied with both mothers and fathers in these homeless situations. In remembrance before God, Christians should show their compassion to the widows and the orphans and remember them always in their prayers. The compassion for the widow and the orphan manifested in prayers and deeds will come up in remembrance before God, to be rewarded by and by.<sup>35</sup>

Ellen White further argued that widows are committed to the mercy of God and that God's stewards should ensure widows and orphans are well taken care of when there is still an opportunity to do so Galatians 6:10. The church of Christ must take care of the need, widows, and orphans, a duty accorded by Christ among his followers. It is God who has permitted them to be within the church and among his people.

### **Widows and Orphans**

In one of her books, Hellen G. White states that;

Every member of a true family of God ought to ensure that those in need are well taken care of in the church, minister to those who are sick, support those who are weak, teach the ignorant and train those with experience so that “the Lord's church of believers” will ensure that those in need including the helpless are provided for in the Christian church of God.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ellen G. White, “Our Duty in Ministering to the Poor,” *The Review and Herald*, 1893.

<sup>36</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950), 107.

Her argument seems to indicate all widows, whose needs demand the attention of the church, among those who have very strong claims upon our tender compassion are the widows and the orphans. These belong to God and God has entrusted Christians to take care of them. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world (Jas 1:27).

In her book, *Testimony for the Church*, Ellen White reports that;

When a faithful father dies, he leaves his family in trust that God will take good care of them. But then God does not work miracles to feed the left spouse and the children from heaven, neither does he send manna or ravens to bring food from heaven. However, God works miracles to provide through human hearts of generosity. God tests the love of his followers by the way they commit to their tender mercies to the afflicted and the bereaved who lives among them. He urges those who have loved God to open their hearts and homes so that they can take care of the needy. It is not the best plan to care for the orphans in large institutions. If they have no relatives able to provide for them, the members of our churches should either adopt these little ones in their families or find suitable homes for them in other households.<sup>37</sup> By beholding Jesus, the church should help and bless the needy and the suffering of all who shall minister to them wholeheartedly.<sup>38</sup>

### **Widow's Faith Measured by Motive**

In Luke, the story of the poor widow is narrated who cast the mites into the treasury with much love for the Lord (Luke 21:3). This shows not only love but also faith and benevolence. Her giving was symbolic of trusting God and acknowledgment of the care God provides for the unknown future. The small she gave, the Lord Jesus pronounced her great cast to a treasury that day and that was measured not by how many coins but the motive in the woman's heart that prompted her to give. As Howard Marshall reports “ the mite of the widows in the ancient near east was more

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<sup>37</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, vol. 6 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 281.

<sup>38</sup> White, “Our Duty in Ministering to the Poor.”

of a small stream that flows through the ages while deepening or even widening its course which contributes to several directions that extend the truth and support for those in need.”<sup>39</sup>

The small gift by the woman influenced thousands of hearts in all generations to act the same in every country. Many gifts so far are given to the Lord’s treasury from the liberal, self-denying poor. The woman’s example further motivates thousands to engage in good works, loving others, and undoubtedly helping and proving for the needy in the church of God. As reported by Warren, liberalism is on no account a duty to be neglected. However, the rich or poor should not deceive themselves that whatever they give as offerings to the Lord will ever atone for their sins or even atone for their defects of Christian character. As the apostle reports;

If I give all my goods to feed the needy or even give my body for them to be burned and have not charity then it will profit me with nothing”<sup>40</sup> and also the apostle sets the fruit of the charity; “ helping the needy suffer for a long time, it does not envy, does not vaunt itself, cannot be puffed up, seeks not her own and not provoked easily, does not think evil and also does not rejoice in doing evil, only rejoice in truth and bears all things, it endures all things without fail. If we would be accepted as the followers of Christ, we must bring forth the fruits of His Spirit; for our Savior, Himself declares: “You will have to know them by their fruits.” Christians should cultivate the spirit of benevolence that they are called for by the Lord Jesus Christ when it comes to giving offerings in the church. They should as well realize that God is not dependent on them for sustenance, as the prophet declares every animal in the forest is his and all the cattle upon thousands of hills. He knows all fowls of the mountains and the beasts so the world is his and all that is there (Ps 24:1-3).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles: The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark, 1999), 487.

<sup>40</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe and David W. Wiersbe, *Comforting the Bereaved* (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1985), 318.

<sup>41</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Signs Of The Times* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1886), 21.

## Widows and Orphans

According to David (Ps 68:5), God offers special care to the fatherless and the widows. Many a widowed mother with her fatherless children is bravely striving to bear her double burden, often toiling far beyond her strength to keep her little ones with her and to provide for their needs. In the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen states that “little time has her for their training and instruction, little opportunity to surround them with influences that would brighten their lives.<sup>42</sup> Further, God calls upon believers to supply to these children and meet their daily needs. Believers should not keep complaining of the troubled or even the faults of the orphans or widows, instead, they should help them in every way possible.

There is a crowd of widows who are wholly deprived of the guidance and subduing influence of Christian homes. Christian believers should open up their hearts and homes for widows because that is the work God has committed to them individually which should too not be turned over to some benevolent institution or left for the charity of the world. When there are no relatives to take care of the widows, members of the church should take that responsibility and provide not only food and clothing but also homes for the widows. The Lord ordained humanity and the entire body of Christianity ordered that believers should be associated with families and the widows will develop best in the loving atmosphere of a Christian home.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1887), 520. Compromise of truth for the sake of unity must be avoided: “One object must be kept in view constantly; that is, harmony and cooperation must be maintained without compromising one principle of truth.”

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

## Widows, Reputation, and Conduct

The author of First Timothy portrays a goal to deal with the challenges in the community of the Pauline era. This portrayal appears divisive in 1Tim 1:19-20 and compromising the reputation of the community as in 1 Tim 5:14. Here Paul provides the outline on how Christians in the community of God should behave while in the house of God (3:15), this is the best metaphor used for the community of Christ-followers. The authors seem to propose that the behaviors seen among the members of Christ's household in the ancient Mediterranean should govern the behavior of the community.<sup>44</sup>

Proper behavior should serve the two purposes: to combat the "other" to teach the community (1:3-7; 4:1-3), also to ensure that negative views are refuted from the perspective of the outsiders (3:7; 5:14). Other lessons provided were correcting behavior that would be understood as a threat to the group. The categories of people in 1 Tim 5:1-2 seem to resemble the list in Titus 2:2-6, dividing the community into older and younger men and women. These two verses form an apt introduction to the sections that follow on older and younger women (5:3-16) and older and younger men (5:17-25).<sup>45</sup>

The problem here seems to be how the women in the community would be perceived by outsiders. Since women embodied the reputation of the group, their behavior was crucial. The rhetoric of this section might help us understand the historical situation. Paul could exhort Timothy in 1 Timothy, giving him specific instructions to take to the old man (5:1), honor real widows (5:3), proclaim these

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<sup>44</sup> Karen Cokayne, *Experiencing Old Age in Ancient Rome* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 427.

<sup>45</sup> Virginia Kerns and Judith K. Brown, *In Her Prime: A New View of Middle-Aged Women* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 228.

things (5:7), and intercede for young widows (5:11).<sup>46</sup> Some other times Paul would direct third parties through Timothy. The author seems to provide a glimpse into the first-century situations and the concern he shows on how women play their important roles in the community.

The children of the widows are to repay her (1 Tim 5:4); when a Christian cannot provide for their widows in the community, then they are worse than non-believers according to Paul (5:8); widows who live exemplary life should always be considered (5:9); and if some believing woman has widows, let her care for them so that the community might be free to care for the real widows (5:16).<sup>47</sup> The “real widows” are the bookends of this section: they are alone (5:5) and need the help of the community (5:16). However, the problems, are with those who do not care for their own, especially those in their households (5:8).

As Carolyne Osiek records; There are two forms of lack of care for the widows. Those who should be caring for their widowed mothers but instead they have neglected them (5:4). In ancient Roman settings, filial piety was considered an essential cultural value since all children adults were expected to take care of their old parents.<sup>48</sup>

In 1 Tim 5:8, the non-believers would not neglect widows. Such neglect among members of the Jesus community would reflect poorly on the community as a whole in the eyes of outsiders. Even more troubling was the situation of the younger

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<sup>46</sup> Mona Tokarek LaFosse, *Age Matters: Age, Aging and Intergenerational Relationships in Early Christian Communities, with a Focus on 1 Timothy 5* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto, 2012).

<sup>47</sup> Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris, eds., *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 219.

<sup>48</sup> Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, and Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches In Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 328.

widows (5:11-15). They are posing a threat to the community's reputation: they are idle, go from household to household, say things they should not be saying, and are being led astray. Paul says he wishes these women to assume roles that are proper and honorable for young women of that culture: marry, bear children, and manage a household (5:14). According to Mary Harlow and Laurence, these roles are very similar to the ones we saw in Titus 2:4-5, where the establishment of younger women's roles involved older women.<sup>49</sup>

### **Social and Spiritual Approaches to Widowhood**

#### **Social**

Family and friend relationships are discussed in many studies providing a sense of integration to serve as a predictor of self-rated wellbeing or quality of life after becoming a widow. This shows that widows who engage frequently with family and friends reflect high levels of self-efficacy. Therefore they tend to require less profound psychological adjustments and thus were found to accept and easily adapt to the loss.<sup>50</sup>

#### **Spiritual**

Studies confirm that widows that regularly attend church services were engaged in social activities and religious meetings that strengthened their relationship and solidified the closeness among congregants, perhaps by increasing commitment to the ideals, goals, and values of the church. Further, such widows that attend regular services in the church also receive spiritual awakening that supports and increase their

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<sup>49</sup> Mary Harlow and Ray Laurence, *Growing Up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome: A Life Course Approach* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 118.

<sup>50</sup> E. López. García et al., "Social Network and Health-Related Quality of Life in Older Adults: A Population-Based Study in Spain," *Quality of Life Research* 14, no. 2 (2005): 511–520.

religious commitment, beliefs, and behavior. For instance, parishioners may share their own religious experiences with recently widowed or may show them how to apply their religious beliefs as they manage their loss.<sup>51</sup>

According to Kirkpatrick, religion often provides a structure for believers to think about the world and coping with difficult stressors during widowhood. Religious teachings and beliefs over time provide a sense of certainty and instill hope during times of despair (Persons who have a close relationship with God may develop a deep sense of trust in God and believe that God is in control of their lives, God knows what is best for them, and God will provide what they need to manage life's challenges.)<sup>52</sup> In a study by Shear found that women were found to score high in spiritual aspects during stressful events. The research indicated that aged women cope religiously and also use their spiritual beliefs to facilitate positive adjustment as widows.<sup>53</sup>

Coping religiously is one of the vital aspects of the widow's response to painful and stressful events. This aspect is conceptualized as an active, effortful approach to decrease negative affect and increase psychological wellbeing. Black widows were found to turn to formal religious activities and rely more on their religious beliefs as a coping strategy for stressful events. The importance of religion among these people has been attributed to the historical church provision of social and spiritual haven.<sup>54</sup> Studies have shown that spiritual well-being is strongly associated

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<sup>51</sup> Coralie Buxant et al., "Cognitive and Emotional Characteristics of New Religious Movement Members: New Questions and Data on the Mental Health Issue," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 10, no. 3 (2007): 219–238.

<sup>52</sup> Lee A. Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2005), 233.

<sup>53</sup> M. Katherine Shear, "Exploring the Role of Experiential Avoidance from the Perspective of Attachment Theory and the Dual Process Model," *Omega* 61, no. 4 (2010): 357–369.

<sup>54</sup> Margaret Susan Stroebe et al., "The Prediction of Bereavement Outcome: Development of an Integrative Risk Factor Framework," *Social Science & Medicine* 63, no. 9 (2006): 2440–2451.



with physical and psychological well-being and provides restoration of meaning following a loss.<sup>55</sup> This dimension of well-being is more prevalent among the elderly who demonstrate increased religious and spiritual beliefs at 6, 24, and 48 months post-loss. People who experience insecurity in the attachment to parents or an adult partner tend to be attracted to religious and spiritual beliefs, practices, and groups.<sup>56</sup>

### **Widows and God's Work**

#### **Anna**

Aged widows in need of serving the Lord should be granted opportunities to participate in the church activities. Whether in a prayer group or even fasting, like in the early church, the widows seem to have had such support to serve especially those who were above sixty years.<sup>57</sup> As Paul writes to Timothy;

Widows under the age of sixty years old should not be let or counted into the number of widows until it is confirmed that she had been a wife of one husband, with a good reputation of bringing up children and dodging up strangers into her life (1 Tim 5:9–10).<sup>58</sup>

In the early church, women who were true widows in the church seem to have been on a special list of serving the Lord. This means they must have been responsible for certain duties in various ministerial departments such as deaconesses, women's ministry, and the like. They had proof of being widowed in regular standing who were hospitable, caring, and upright in all they did. Doing well was one of the expectations from the widows in the early church. The church also was expected to care for them

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion*, 29.

<sup>57</sup> Harry Thomas Frank, *Discovering the Biblical World* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1975), 331.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

in return and support their ministries. In the New Testament, one widow who was special and equivocally spoken about is Anna.<sup>59</sup>

The Lord had a special reward for Anna and it is why she lived to a very ripe age as a prophetess as recorded in Luke (Luke 2:36–38). The Bible records that Anna was in a marriage for seven years before her husband died and that now she was 84 years old. Anna spends her last years at the temple praying to God just the bible says because she knew the time God had to use her was near. Anna came into the temple, one time and saw a family, a young man, and his wife carrying a newborn baby. Anna was a woman who feared the lord and always spoke to Simon about the coming savior Jesus Christ.<sup>60</sup>

When the time came and Anna was able to see them standing together, it was certain that this was the child. Jesus Christ the savior had come. She had gone to the family and joined them since at this time; her heart was overflowing with happiness for she had thanksgiving to God for sending his son. Before the end of the day, Anna had greeted all those in the temple and informed them about the coming messiah. Anna also did not forget thanking God for allowing her to live for such a long time to see the savior of the entire world.<sup>61</sup>

## **Dorcas**

Widows at home and church can be of help by being supportive of the children. Young parents can also benefit from an older widow by helping them on both growing spiritually as Christians and developing an experience with God. From

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<sup>59</sup> Ann Spangler and Jean E. Syswerda, *Women of the Bible: A One-Year Devotional Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 331.

<sup>60</sup> Debra Evans, *Women of Character* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 182.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

the widow's experience, she could "teach younger women to love their husbands and to love their children" (Titus 2:4) together with reaching out to other widows should make her life a satisfactory life like Dorcas.<sup>62</sup>

According to the book of Acts, the widow "Dorcas" as a woman had found joy and satisfaction in the Lord. She had good works and actions of loving-kindness. When she died the group of women around her became very sad, that's why when they heard that the Apostle Peter was in a nearby town, they sent word for him to come and speak some words of comfort to them. When Peter got to the house where she was laid, all the believers gathered around. They showed Peter the lovely clothes that Dorcas had made for them.<sup>63</sup> They were in here with good words and intentions from the memories of Dorcas' friendship. Peter asked them all to leave the room. When he was alone with the body, he knelt and prayed.

When Dorcas saw peter she opened her eyes and he helped her to stand on her feet before opening the door and inviting others to enter the room. It was after this and later in the day that news spread all over that Dorcas had been raised back to life by God and as a result, many people believed in the faith of Peter and all believers praised God for the miracle they had witnessed (Acts 9:36–42).

### **Summary**

The common cause of widowhood has been addressed both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. It has been established from the available literature that widowhood was a crucial matter God addressed in the Old Testament.

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<sup>62</sup> Elizabeth George, *Women Who Loved God: A Devotional Walk with the Women of the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1999), 165.

<sup>63</sup> James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 310.

In the Pentateuch for instance, widows were under God's safety and protection (Exod 22:21-24). In the New Testament, the widows were taken care of after the apostles realized their mistreatment. Following the instruction is given by Paul to Timothy also indicated that women who lost a husband in any fashion such as through death, divorce, desertion or prison would be treated well like all other believers in the early church.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

The chapter described the following; the research design, location of the study, population, sample size, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

#### **The Locale of the Study**

The study was conducted in Nakuru west and east districts, Nakuru District, Nakuru county-Kenya. According to the 2012 projection, the area has an approximate population of over 5022 households. The people in the area depend on employment and business as a way of living.

The study was limited to widows who attend the SDA Church within Nakuru town. Hence, the findings of this study may only be generalized to other churches in other parts of the country with caution. This is because; in other areas not covered by the researcher may not share characteristics as Nakuru West and East Districts. The study was conducted within 10 months beginning

#### **Target Population**

This research purposively targeted 6 churches with a population of 900 members. The target population was 139 since the research was on widows only. The researcher also interviewed church pastors, elders, and head deacons of every church. The study comprised of only Swahili speaking churches because the research does not discriminate tribes. The selected churches include Nakuru West-SDA Church,

Abundant Life, Heshima Church, Rhonda Central, California, and Race Track SDA Church. The target churches were representative of the entire population of the Adventist Church population within Nakuru West and East. This was done to assess the Participation of widows on church activities in the SDA Church to avoid biases in the outcome.

### **Sampling Technique and Selection of Participants**

The study area was demarcated through purposive sampling. This technique was arrived at because the research was based on widows and not the entire population of women in the church. Besides, the SDA directory was consulted and 6 churches were selected from both east and west sub-counties of Nakuru SDA Churches with a total population of 139 widows. The sample size of the study was 69 respondents.

This sample size was arrived at, by assessment of widows who regularly attend church and are registered members of the widowhood department in their respective churches. The respondents were also selected, irrespective of age, tribe nor in proportion to the demographics of the total congregants, ministers, lay-ministers, or paid staff in the SDA Church. Ten widows from each of the churches for this present study. Informal discussions with widows revealed their understanding and participation in church activities and how adjustable strategies could be used as deliverables in the transformative task of the Church.

### **Research Instruments**

The information used in this research was sourced from the church and the widows from the Nakuru East and West sub-counties who served as discussion partners, also, questionnaires and interviews were used to explore the real-life

situation of Nakuru East and West sub-counties widows. The interview guide was used where the participants were not able to read and write which took the form of religious life histories. This interview type allows for in-depth probes for respondents.<sup>1</sup> The researcher used the Swahili dialect to conduct the interviews and focussed group discussions and this was translated into English for analysis.

## Questionnaire

The questionnaires were constructed and administered. The nature of the questions was in form of structured and close-ended questions whereby a 5 Likert scale of measurement was used on closed-ended questions as seen in Table 1: The instruments of research were divided into three sections: A, B, and C. Section A dealt with a bio-data on issues such as Age, years married, level of education and period spent in church as an Adventist. Section B comprised of variables while Section C was an interview guide where respondents gave their opinions.

*Table 1. Likert Scale Coding Interpretation*

Description	Mean Range	Scale Coding	Interpretation
Strongly Agree	4.20 – 5.00	5	Very high
Agree	3.40 – 4.19	4	High
At times	2.60 - 3.39	3	Moderate
Disagree	1.80- 2.59	2	Low
Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.79	1	Very low

The data were double-checked first during the collection of the tools and during entry to the analyzing software to ensure its reliability and validity concerning the essential information revealed by the respondents. The chosen tools were used in gathering the relevant information as it ensured that, the required data was gathered

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<sup>1</sup> Dawson, 27

within minimum time and expense. It also allowed for wide cover and allowed greater consistency in the way in which questions were posed and followed up on and to enhance the collection of responses from the above-selected groups to obtain the exact information required for the study. As noted earlier, the study was situated within a broad practical theology framework and more specifically within the field of pastoral theology as a reflective action of practical divinity concerning caring activities.

### **Interviews Guide**

This referred to the person to person verbal communication whereby the researcher gathered information through direct verbal interaction with the participant or respondents. Instead of written responses, the subject gave the needed information verbally in a face to face relationship where the ideas were exchanged. The questionnaire covered both independent and dependent variables.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument**

Before data was collection the validity and reliability of the instrument was ascertained

#### **Validity**

Before data was collected the instrument was validated. The validity of the questionnaire is concerned with how accurate and correct the instrument was. The purpose of the validity was to provide accurate and useful information. The researcher used a standardized instrument to measure intended content in terms of coverage, representativeness, and balance of the total domain. This was obtained through a mathematical value called the content validity index.



The researcher consulted his supervisors so that they can provide direction because they had expertise in the field. The researcher calculated the content validity index (CVI) using the formula below:

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Total number of relevant items}}{\text{Total number of items}}$$

35 number of relevant items

39 number of items

=0.89

The researcher only took a minimum content validity index of 0.7 and above to ensure that the research instrument was valid.<sup>2</sup> In this case, the researcher took a Content Validity Index of 0.89.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher acquired an introductory letter from the conference of SDA Church (CRVC) which he served to every district pastor within Nakuru East and West to seek permission. After permission was granted the researcher made appointments for days to collect the data from the selected churches. The researcher conducted the interviews and questionnaires to all respondents intended by the research.

Appointments were made with respondents to seek consent and time of interview. All respondents were briefed before the administration of the questionnaires and interviews. This allowed the researcher to give clarifications about the objectives of the study and to establish rapport.

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<sup>2</sup>E. Amin. *Social Science Research Concept, Methodology and Analysis*. Uganda: Makerere University Printer. (2005).

## **The Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

After the data collection, the raw data was fed into a computer to analyze it through the SPSS. Objectives 1-2 were analyzed using descriptive analysis to measure the frequency, percentages, and means of the overall descriptions of situations or phenomenon systematically and comparably conceptualizing the reality in terms of variables. The last objective 3 was analyzed using charts and percentages that presented factors that motivated widows to attend and participate in various church activities.

Data from the interviews guide was analyzed using coding through themes to back up the primary data. The quantitative data that could not be coded was synthesized with critical analysis to back up the primary data.

Response patterns were categorized into meaningful units or segments or categories. The codes were used to construct and interpret common themes or patterns. Recurrent and emerging themes were identified and organized into meaning full categories and subcategories. Some quotations were extracted and presented in verbatim. For comprehensiveness, data from the different data collections techniques were triangulated to validate and complement the findings from each of the sources.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS, RESULT, AND DISCUSSION

The current chapter is concerned with data presentation, as well as the analysis of empirical data. The data was documented in the form of simple tables and discussions. The analysis was carried out on various aspects such as; the age of widows, years married, education level, the current status of marriage, number of grandchildren, duration of widowhood, and duration in the church and dependence level.

The specific objectives were to determine the level of Participation of widows in church activities, to establish the influence of the churches policy on Participation of widows in activities within the SDA Church family, to establish the relationship between widow's influence (motivation, attention, participation, recognition) and churches participation in Nakuru West and East sub-county, Kenya. The findings of the study are analyzed, discussed, and presented in line with the study objectives. Data obtained were presented in frequency, percentages, and tables from which conclusions were drawn. This chapter also presented the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in this study.

#### **Socio-demographic Characteristics**

The study investigated eight demographic characteristics that the researcher believed to imply the study findings. The age of widows in marriage before being widowed, Years in marriage, the highest academic level achieved by widow, and years spent as a member in SDA Church. The findings are illustrated as follows:

*Table 2. Demographic Characteristics*

Items	Description	Frequency	%
Age of the respondents	25yrs & below	8	11.6
	26-30 years	33	47.8
	31-35 years	9	13.0
	over 36 years	12	17.4
	clergy	7	10.1
Years married	0-5 years	8	12.9
	6-10 years	14	22.6
	11- 15 years	23	37.1
	16 and above	17	27.4
The highest academic level of the widow	Primary	21	33.9
	Secondary	29	46.8
	University	12	19.4
How long have you been an SDA member?	1-5 years	16	25.8
	6-10 years	27	43.5
	10-15 years	11	17.7
	16-20 years	2	3.2
	21 and above	6	9.7

n = 69 Sources: Primary Data

### **The Age of the Respondents**

Results from Table 2 indicated that the majority of the respondents were between the age of 26-30 years making (47%), followed by 12 being those above 36 making 17%. The lowest was 8 aged below 25 making 11%. This implies that the responses of the study were dominated by the views of widows aged 26-30 years.

### **Number of Years in Widowhood**

Regarding the number of years, those married were between 11-15, making it (37.1%) and they dominated the study. They were followed by those above 16 (27.4%), followed by those who were married between 6-10 years (22.6%) while the least number of years in marriage before being widowed was 5 years and the respondents ran true for 12.9% of the total number of respondents. This means that

responses were mostly those who had an experience of above 16 years of marriage before being widowed.

### **Highest Academic Level**

Regarding the level of education attained by widows and participation in SDA Church activities, the result from the table indicated that the majority of respondents were secondary school graduates (33.9%) had attained primary education and 19.4% of the widows were university graduates. This implies that among the widows interviewed those with a secondary level of education were dominating in number by the views since they were found to be the majority in the study.

### **Duration as an SDA Member**

Concerning the membership in the church, the majority had been members between 6-10 years 27 representing (43.5%) followed by those who had been in the church for between 1-5 years 16 representing (25.8%) and only 2 representing (3.2%) had been in the church for 16-20 years. This implies that the majority had an acceptable and potential to participate in church activities.

### **Objective 1: The Level of Participation of Widows in Church Activities**

The first objective of the study was to determine the level of participation of widows in church activities in Nakuru West and East Sub-Counties, Kenya. Mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the first objective. The outcomes are as represented in Table 3 below.

*Table 3. The Level of Participation of widows in Church Activities*

Items	$\bar{X}$	D	N	Fre (%)
Widows are highly motivated to participate in and supervise their activities of the church	3.47	0.96	69	24(34.8%)
Widows themselves manage church programs, through representatives in the widow programs in the SDA Church	.89	0.56	69	52(75.3%)
The plight of the widows is a strong incentive to the SDA Church leadership (union, conference, station, district, local church) so that the church leadership has put active structures to meet the widow's needs	.89	0.99	69	43(62.3%)
The SDA Church leadership view the long-term stakeholders with big wealth contribute to the church in terms of tithes and offerings and are disturbed about the church not giving back to them	3.21	0.78	69	44(64.7%)
The cost of time and energy of participation in church activities and programs are too high to allow active participation of the widows	.10	0.14	69	44(64.7%)
Widow shy away from SDA Church activities because they are stigmatized by other married women	.26	0.32	69	22(31.9%)
Widows participate in family life programs is affected due to the separate single parent class	3.10	0.28	69	21(29.9%)
The church cares for widows in the church always	10	0.73	69	16(23.2)
The church demonstrate love to the widows equally to married women	.21	0.08	69	28(40.3%)
Widows prefer staying at home rather than participating in church activities	4.05	0.97	69	17(24.3%)
Only married women are allowed to participate in church activities	.00	.33	69	10(15.5%)
Widows always waive church activities to married women	.21	.97	69	4(6.6%)
Educated widows in SDA Church leadership are never appreciated	.15	.01	69	11(16.0%)
Employed Widows participate actively in SDA Church activities	3.73	0.04	69	14(20.3%)
Most widows who participate in church activities have advanced their education levels and have appropriate church training	3.57	0.90	69	6(8.7%)
Widows lack education required for participation in church activities	.15	.25	69	30(43.5%)
Widows lack confidence and have low self-esteem	.89	.26	69	18(26.1%)
Widows lack efficiency to deliver in SDA Church activities	.31	.24	69	22(31.9%)
Widows are not normally preferred to participate in church activities	.63	.01	69	22(31.9%)
Widows always lack proper orientation on church activities	.52	.46	69	13(18.8%)
Widows are not are not promptly responsible on assigned/delegated church duties	3.84	0.06	69	17(24.6%)
Widows are not motivated to participate in church activities.	.52	.96	69	24(34.8%)
Only married women can participate in SDA Church activities	.00	.47	69	9(13.0%)
Aggregate Mean and SD	3.56	0.44	69	

N=69 Sources: Primary Data; **Legend:** 4.20-5.00., (Very High), 3.40 -4.19, (High), 2.60- 3.39 (Moderate), 1.80- 2.59 (Low), 1.00- 1.79 (Very Low)

## **Level of Participation**

With regards to the level of widow's participation in SDA Church activities, the results in Table 2 indicate a high pooled mean (Agg. mean = 3.56; SD = 0.44). The findings from Table 5 suggest that there is a high level of participation of widows on church activities. It is evident with the result which indicated a high mean of 3.56 with a Standard Deviation of 0.44. The findings agreed with the verbal qualitative data gathered which was recorded as from both widows, pastors, and the church elders in SDA Church who were in leadership positions and the summary is as presented below; to the question what extent do widows get motivated to participate in SDA Church activities they had the following to say

Yes, participating in church activities puts me in a better position to be the head of the department. Yes, helps me make friends who encourage me, I have married friends at church who support my children and life goes on; by participating at church as a deaconess, I set for myself a goal; since I was appointed the head of this department, my role has been active and so far I have been able to overcome stigma through church participation because my husband and I were renting, these days I even enjoy doing church responsibility and I have got a job and constructed a new home; I think education places widows at a better chance to become active in the church since they also need to support the church and take care of their children. I have managed to get a loan from the women group of the SDA Church and started an income-generating project together with being active in women ministry in the SDA Church.

## **Implementation**

The implementation of the program was suggested and implemented as an In-depth inquiry to the researched churches to establish the issues surrounding the widow's right from their social and economic settings which also interfere with their participation in church activities.

Family life seminars were arranged and conducted during August camp-meeting from august 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> 2017 for the widows within the research area.

The seminar package was purely for the widows meant to emphasize the faithfulness of widows in their widowhood situation and how to serve God faithfully as a widow who stands as did Naomi, Ruth, and as said in the Bible. Emphasis was further put on a commitment to God's service, living a prayerful life and remaining committed to the work of God. The church was further taught how to accept, acknowledge, and appreciate the service rendered by the widows without forgetting to treat them as fellow Christian members.

**Objective 2: Current Role of the SDA Church  
in Encouraging Active Participation  
of Widows in the Church Activities**

Regarding the role of the church on the Participation of widows in Nakuru east and west sub-counties, the findings were as follows. Mean and standard deviation was used to analyze this objective. The outcomes are as represented in Table 4 below.



*Table 4. The Current Role of the SDA Church in Encouraging Active Participation of Widows in the Church Activities*

Items Rated	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	Freq(%)
The church has recognized the widows in the SDA Church	4.11	0.70	69	11(15%)
The church has the difficulty of dealings with widows and married women in the SDA Church	4.05	0.87	69	20(28.9%)
The church treats widows like other married women in the SDA Church	3.31	0.39	69	13(18.8%)
The church is not implemented in SDA Church	3.22	0.76	69	13(18.8%)
There is a prevailing belief that the widow has poor abilities and skills to participate in church activities	3.17	0.84	69	12(17.4%)
There are levels of acceptance of widows participation in the church	4.16	0.56	69	19(27.5%)
The church has a prevalence of married women to participate in the church that the widows	3.10	0.45	69	18(26.1%)
Church members visit the widows regularly	3.47	0.12	69	25(36.2%)
Widow's economic status cannot enable them participate in church activities	2.05	0.67	69	34(49.2%)
The church favors married women to lead and the widows to follow	4.21	0.47	69	17(24.6%)
The church acknowledges married women and men in church activities rather than widows	3.00	0.81	69	12(17.2%)
Only married women can participate in church activities	3.01	0.67	69	52(75.4%)
The church has it that widows are less informed than married women	3.20	0.19	69	23(33.3%)
The church has special recognition of the widows in SDA Church	4.33	0.12	69	13(18.8%)
Widows cannot influence decision making in SDA Church	4.10	0.67	69	19(27.5%)
The church only favors men and women who are married to serve the church	2.18	0.71	69	21(30.4%)
Widows have a negative attitude towards church activities	3.15	0.51	69	17(24.6%)
Negative criticisms by men and women in the SDA Church make widows hate church activities.	1.92	0.65	69	20(28.9%)
Aggregate Mean and SD	3.24	0.41	69	

N=69 Sources: Primary Data; **Legend:** 4.20-5.00., (Very High), 3.40 -4.19, (High), 2.60- 3.39 (Moderate), 1.80- 2.59 (Low), 1.00- 1.79 (Very Low)

### **The Role of the Church**

With regards to the level of the role of the church on Participation of widows in SDA Church activities, the results in Table 3 suggest that there is a role played by the church in motivating the Participation of widows in SDA Church activities. It is

evident with the result which indicated a mean of 3.24 with a Standard Deviation of 0.41. These findings differ with the study carried out by Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris, a church is to care for the widows. If a church does not care for its widows, that church is worse than an unbeliever. Also, let an exemplary widow be put on a list and if some churches have widows, let them care for them so that the community might be free to care for the real widows.<sup>1</sup> The “real widows” are the bookends of this section: they are alone and need the help of the community. The problems, however, are with those who do not care for their own, especially those in their households.

The findings agreed with the qualitative finding from the interviewed stakeholders on the question; what role the church plays to help members understand the widow’s needs? The respondents had the following propositions concerning the role the church should play in understanding the widow’s needs and help them to remain active in church:

Widow’s should join church activities as a way of encouraging them through interaction with other church family members; Working hard to sustain themselves and avoid being under looked by married women; getting involved in church activities made me feel part of the church family in the absence of my husband; Meeting church women ministries edifies and renews our hearts; church activities make me easily discuss certain issues which is sensitive in widowhood and makes my heart feel good; attending and conducting church activities and meeting costs a lot of time and as a result I miss my family members and friend to discuss some social issues; in the church, I meet friends and who are there for me because I don’t belittle or overlook them; Discussing with my children and church women is difficult because I always feel under looked when I am not able to contribute finances like other women; I do consultations from the pastor and some widows who are in the similar situation; Being a widow made me lose my position as a women ministry leader.

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<sup>1</sup> Neufeld and DeMaris, *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, 219.

### Objective 3: Factors Motivating Widows' Participation in Church Activities

The third objective was meant to establish the factors motivating widows to participate in church activities in Nakuru East and West sub-counties, the findings are as shown in the chart that follows.

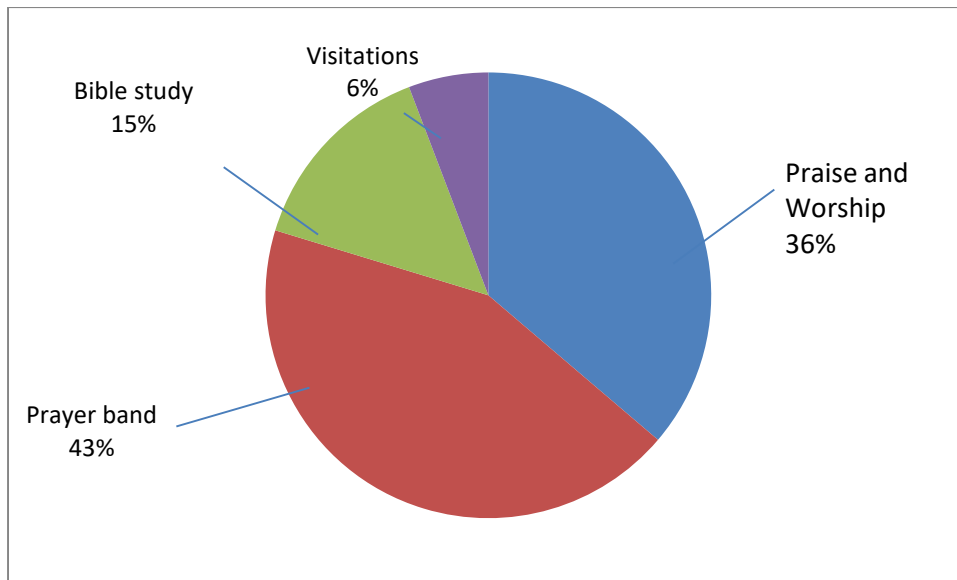


Figure 1. Factors Motivating Widows

Regarding factors influencing widows to take part in church activities, four factors that stood out were analyzed. These included Prayer band, Praise, and worship, Bible study, and visitations which were considered to be more influential during data collection.

On prayer band, which seemed to have a higher response, 30 (43%) of respondents agreed that they are happy and comfortable when they are inclusively involved in the church prayer band. Though some disagreed 10 (15%), the majority thought that, since most church members don't attend morning or week-day prayers, they find comfort while attending and praying to God to meet their situation. The result indicated that the widows in the area were involved in prayer band activities

where they get time to intercede for the church and themselves. Praying together was found to be paramount for the effort and dedication of the widows in churches Nakuru West and East sub-counties

On matters of praise and worship in the church, the widows and elders gave contradicting statements. However, when widows during interview 25(36%) of the widows agreed in one accord that they attend praise and worship although the church does not motivate and give the program enough time. The results indicate that, since many widows come from families that are not well economically, their attendance and participation in praise and worship can be improved by acceptance, appreciation, and recognition of widows in the service. This seems to affect widows' regular attendance and love of the program of praise and worship.

On the matter of Bible study, a frequency of 10(15%) agreed to have been committed to returning to church on Sabbath for bible study regularly as compared to widows who regard it as boring and time wastage. The findings indicated that a small proportion returned to church for bible study as well as attended the weekly bible study program occasionally as opposed to week-day prayer band meetings. It also follows that 4(6%) widows admitted that visitations were minimal in the church. They unanimously agreed that visitation is done by the church elders only ends in families with two couples and rarely are they visited. When the researcher tried to reach the elders through the pastors, it was further affirmed that visitation to widows is a challenging matter, especially young widows. It was further confirmed from 27 women who were actively serving in the women ministry department women with husbands accuse widows of taking their husbands which also create fear among church elders and other male deterring them as members of the church from visiting

widows. The result indicated a bigger number of widows felt lonely, abandoned, and victimized, a condition that exposes them to intimidation and low self-esteem.

From the respondents, it seems imperative that church members, elders, and pastors are aware of the experience the widows go through. The findings indicated that visitation as a factor that, well-utilized will encourage them to strongly support the ministry and will feel recognized and appreciated.

### **Strategy to Arrest the Situation**

A seminar was organized and conducted by the in July 2017 towards camp meeting. The district pastors of the sampled churches in the study organized with Pastors Rhono of Kaptembwa district, Jairus Obwoye of Kiamunyi, Zachary Amenya of Rhonda, Evans Ooga 'CRVC Ministerial director, and Peter Aruya (researcher).

Emphasis was put on monitoring and caring for widows as follows;

1. The elders and departmental leaders were taught how to minister to widows in all situations after understanding their needs.
2. Church members learned how to interact with widows in a Christian manner without conflicting with them.
3. Church members learned how bible study is key to effective ministry and especially how widows were treated in biblical times
4. Elders and departmental leaders got a new understanding of widows and orphans and how God promises to care for them as their father, so should the church care for them

The seminar also helped the members to learn that ministry to the widows creates an atmosphere where non-members will find a place to fellowship with them.

### **The SDA Church in Nakuru East and West Sub-Counties**

The clergy who participated in the study revealed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally informed of the status of widows and where practical try to assist them by engaging them in church activities and occasionally providing for

their immediate need. They claim the assistance of the SDA Church has restored the widows' dignity, relieved them of distress, created a healthy environment, helped them to gain access to spiritual needs, developed their positive outlook on life, and enabled them to become productive church members was confirmed by some respondents.

### **Implementation**

In Nakuru East and West, the study on the Participation of widows in the SDA Church seems to have been given minimal attention among the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In SDA Church and personal ministry in particular has to do with the mutual relationship between church members as a whole under the pastoral work of the pastor by providing a framework for the departmental ministry, including the widows as an important branch of the ministry.

In terms of this study the contextual analysis and the findings show that Nakuru East and West sub-county, the church should concern itself with widowhood recognition, their involvement in church activities with adjustment strategies that will support them and others who may fall in same categories in days to come. For effective personal ministry involvement, strategies such as having the widows join women ministries are imperative for the health functioning of the church.

The women were asked to emphasize a relationship among women ministry, Dorcas, and outreach church ministries to enhance cohesiveness, love, and active participation of the widows in various church activities. This will equally lead to motivation and encouragement of the widows in church activities and alienate them from stress. The word of God in the Scripture rightly interpreted, should generate a social consciousness to the believers in the SDA Church in the way that reveals the heart of God "this is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to

visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (Jas 1:27; NASB).

Any Christian organization should apply the principle of holistic mission which has no boundaries because, a high view of Biblical evangelism, pastoral care, and social action should go together at all times in all situations. This is because godliness in its literal sense involves taking care of the widows and the orphans the same as others who may be in need as well. This point is stressed throughout the whole Bible in both the Old and New Testament. In Job 31:28 mistreatment of the widows may be interpreted as being ‘unfaithful to God on high’ and that may lead to judgment. God vows in the text that the ‘eyes of the widow’ will never grow weary.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter serves as the concluding chapter of the study. The chapter has three main components. Firstly, the chapter briefly summarizes the main findings of the research. Secondly, the conclusion is made regarding the study and finally, recommendations are put forward to continue, upgrade and intensify widowhood and SDA Church participation in Nakuru east and west sub-counties, Kenya.

#### **Summary**

The study explored the influence of widowhood on SDA Church participation in Nakuru east and west sub-counties. The study revisited the Biblical mandate and the role of the Church in engaging the most vulnerable people in our societies. The objectives were; to determine the level of Participation of widows in church activities, to establish the role of the church on encouraging Participation of widows in activities within the SDA Church family, to determine the factor influencing the Participation of widows in church activities in Nakuru West and East sub-county, Kenya. The sample size of the study was 69 respondents.

Regarding the number of years, the majority were those married between 11-15 years who were 23 in numbers thus making 37.1%, followed by those above 16 years who were 17 making 27.4%, followed 6-10 years who were 14 in number accounting for 22.6% and the least were only 8 years who accounted for 12.9% below 5 years. Regarding education level, the majority of widows were secondary graduates 29 (46.8%).



Regarding the membership in the church, the majority had been members between 6-10 years 27 (43.5%) followed by those who had been in the church for between 1-5 years 16 (25.8%) and only 2 (3.2%) had been in the church for 16-20 years. The result regarding the level of Participation of widows in SDA Church activities indicates a high pooled mean (Agg. mean = 3.56; SD = 0.44). These findings suggest that there is a high level of participation of widows on church activities. On the role played by the church to encourage widow participation, four factors were analyzed including Prayer band, Praise, and worship, Bible study, and visitations which were considered to be more influential during data collection.

On prayer band which seems to have a higher response, 30 (43%) of respondent agreed that they are happy and comfortable when they are inclusively involved in church prayer band. Though some disagreed 10 (15%), the majority thought that, since most church members don't attend morning or week-day prayers, they find comfort while attending and praying for God to meet their situation. The result indicated that the widows in the area were involved in prayer band activities where they get time to intercede for the church and themselves. Praying together was found to be paramount for the effort and dedication of the widows in churches Nakuru West and East sub-counties

### **Conclusion**

The state of being a widow and active church participation in the SDA Church in Nakuru west and east sub-counties in Kenya was found to be high; the role of the church on encouraging the Participation of widows on church activities was found to be moderate. Also, widows involved in prayer band activities could get time to intercede for the church and themselves. It was concluded that, though widows were not motivated to participate in SDA Church activities, they were found to be highly

participating in SDA Church activities within Nakuru east and west sub-counties, Kenya. Therefore, according to the primary data collected, the more widows engage in church activities, the less they are acknowledged and motivated to participate in the church activities in Nakuru east and west sub-counties, Kenya.

### **Recommendations**

The churches in the East Kenya Union Conference and Central Rift Valley Conference, should devise a sustainable plan as part of and/or alongside a financial strategy should be considered to aid widows especially those with dependent children alongside establishing and maintaining the future ministry of the widows in the SDA Church. Besides, the Church clergy and pastor will be better positioned if they aim to engage widows to work for the common good of all members. Further, the district pastor should more aggressively transfer values, ideas, and loyalty to serve a greater cause of Participation of widows and engagement in church activities.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS**

Questionnaire My name is PETER ARUYA ONTIRI, a student of Adventist University of Africa Theological Seminary, conducting a thesis on THE INFLUENCE OF PARTICIPATION OF WIDOWS IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH ACTIVITIES; A CASE STUDY OF NAKURU EAST AND WEST SUB-COUNTIES, KENYA

The aim of carrying out this research is purely academic and the findings will be helpful to the SEVENTH-DAY Adventist Church and other Christian administrations. I kindly request you to read and answer the questions that best describe your life as a member of the SEVENTH-DAY Adventist Church since you became a member. All information you give will be treated with uttermost confidence and your name will not appear anywhere. Your response will be highly appreciated. This will take just a little of your time and I am grateful for giving me an audience.

**SECTION A: (BIO DATA)**

Respondents Personal Information

Tick all that apply

1. Age of widow: 25 and below [ ] ; 26-30 [ ] ; 31-35 [ ] ; 36-40 [ ] ; 40-50[ ] ; 50 and above [ ]
2. Years married 1-5 [ ] ; 6-10 [ ] ; 11-15 [ ] ; 16 -20 [ ] ; 21and above[ ]
3. Education level of widow primary level[ ] ; secondary level [ ] ; university level[ ]
4. How long have you been in the Adventist Church? 0-5years [ ] 6-10years [ ] 11-15 [ ] ; 16-20 [ ] ; 21 and above [ ] .

**SECTION B (widows participation in church activities)**

(Using the following scale, Please tick [√] what best describes your views or opinions)

KEY: 1=strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Not sure; 4= Agree; 5= strongly agree

Items Rated	1	2	3	4	5
1. Widows are highly motivated to participate in and supervise their activities of the church					
2. Widows themselves manage church programs, through representatives in the widow programs in the SDA Church					
3. The plight of the widows is a strong incentive to the SDA Church leadership (union, conference, station, district, local church) so that the church leadership has put active structures to meet the widow's needs					

4. The SDA Church leadership view the long-term stakeholders with big wealth contribute to the church in terms of tithes and offerings and are disturbed about the church not giving back to them					
5. The cost of time and energy of participation in church activities and programs are too high to allow active participation of the widows					
6. Widow shy away from SDA Church activities because they are stigmatized by other married women					
7. Widows participate in family life programs					
8. The church cares for widows in the church always					
9. The church demonstrate love to the widows equally to married women					
10. Widows prefer staying at home rather than participating in church activities					
11. Only married women are allowed to participate in church activities					
12. Widows always waive church activities to married women					
13. Educated widows in SDA Church leadership are never appreciated					
14. Widows who are employed actively participate in SDA Church activities					
15. Most widows who participate in church activities have advanced their education levels and have appropriate church training					
16. Widows lack education required for participation in church activities					
17. Widows lack confidence and have low self-esteem					
18. Widows lack efficiency to deliver in SDA Church activities					
19. Widows are not normally preferred to participate in church activities					
20. Widows always lack proper orientation on church activities					
21. Widows are not promptly responsible on assigned/delegated church duties					
22. Widows are not motivated to participate in church activities.					
23. Only married women can participate in SDA Church activities					

(Using the following scale, Please tick [√] what best describes your view of the SDA Church.

1 = does not apply at all, 2 = does not apply 3 = applies some times, 4 = applies and 5 = always apply.

Items Rated	1	2	3	4	5
1. Church has recognized the widows in the SDA Church					
2. The church has difficulty dealings with widows and married women in the SDA Church					

3.	The church treats widows like other married women in the SDA Church					
4.	The church does little to support widows in SDA Church					
5.	There is a prevailing belief that the widow has poor abilities and skills to participate in church activities					
6.	There are levels of acceptance of widows participation in the church					
7.	The church has a prevalence of married women to participate in the church that the widows					
8.	Church members visit the widows regularly					
9.	Widow's economic status cannot enable them to participate in church activities					
10.	The church favors married women to lead and the widows to follow					
11.	The church acknowledges married women and men in church activities rather than widows					
12.	Only married women can participate in church activities					
13.	The church has it that widows are less informed than married women					
14.	The church has special recognition of the widows in SDA Church					
15.	Widows cannot influence decision making in SDA Church					
16.	The church only favors men and women who are married to serve the church					
17.	Widows have a negative attitude towards church activities					
18.	Negative criticisms by men and women in the SDA Church make widows hate church activities.					

### Section C: (Widows Social Welfare)

#### Interview guide Questionnaire

These were conducted by the researcher who probed to get more information or clarifications for any information that is not clear. It was administered to the local church officers.

#### Focus group discussions

1. If you were a younger member of the church, how would you involve widows in church activities?
2. What would you say to the church to help them understand the widows' need for?
3. When you talk about widows and church participation, what seems to be their greatest challenge in the church leadership?
4. To what extent do widows get motivated to participate in SDA Church activities?
5. What you would say to the church to help them appreciate the widow's active participation in church activities?

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

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Dates	Program	Institution
2013-2017	Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology Candidate	Adventist University of Africa
2001-2004	Bachelors of Theology	Bugema University
1998-2000	certificate in electronic KCIT	
1993-1997	Secondary School	Nyaguta Secondary School
1984-1993	Primary School	Nyanderema Primary School

### Work Experience

Dates	Place	Title
2015 Sept- to date	Nakuru Station Pastors'	Representative
2015 Sept- to date	Nakuru West	District Pastor
2015 Feb 2015 Sept	Mutaragon District SDA	Church District Pastor
2013- 2014	Langa langa District SDA	Church District Pastor
2011-2012	Lanet District of SDA	Church District Pastor
2009- 2010	Riruta district	District Pastor
2008 -2008	Makongeni district	Associate pastor
2005-2007	Mariakani district	District pastor