A STUDY OF WIDOWS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT SELECTED PASSAGES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR WIDOW CARE IN KOYONZO LOCATION, WESTERN KENYA

BY

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This Dissertation is submitted in Partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of a Master of Theology (MTH) (Old Testament) Studies from St. Paul's University-Limuru.

August 2015

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary society worldwide has widows whose husbands die due to natural death (sickness), HIV and AIDS pandemic, accidents and wars. A general survey through the Old Testament shows clearly that the people of Israel also had widows among them. In both, the plight of widows ranges from socio-economic to psychological and spiritual problems. The Old Testament is very clear on how widows were cared for, protected and supported through institutions such as levirate marriages, kinsman redeemer and laws of gleaning, which were put in place to safeguard the poor, the alien and the widow. However, in contrast to this, church denominations in Koyonzo location, which are expected to be the voice of the voiceless people, have remained silent on the issue of the plight of widows. Widows therefore, are silent victims of suffering, exploitation and oppression, with little care and support. This thesis examines the widowhood practices and their plight in the books of Ruth 2:8-20; Deuteronomy 24:19-21; Job 22:9-10 and Zachariah 7:10. Specific objectives that guide this research are: *To critically assess if there existed any welfare institutions for widows in the Old Testament based on the selected passages*; *To establish the plight of widows in Koyonzo location, how it relates to the plight of widows in the Old Testament and how it is addressed*; *To recommend the best approach for pastoral care for widows in Koyonzo location based on the lessons learnt from the selected passages of the Old Testament*.The research is exegetical (literary analysis of the selected Old Testament passages) and empirical (primary and secondary data collection) in design. The latter is meant to establish the nature and causes of the plight of widows in the contemporary society. The researcher used purposive and stratified sampling techniques to get population samples. The data was analysed using thematic and didactic approaches using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 16.0 (SPSS). Data was then interpreted and the findings were presented in form of text. The findings are meant to help sensitise the community on the challenges facing widows, give suggestions and recommendations for the best strategy which church leaders and pastors can use in the support and care for the widows, based on the principles drawn from the selected passages of the Old Testament and to shed light for further researches on the plight of widows.

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