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**A PASTOR'S GUIDE**

*to widows care*

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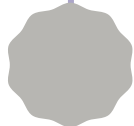
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## A MESSAGE FROM A

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## widow

Dear Pastor,

First of all, thank you for taking the time to read this, it shows your care for the widows in your church and your desire to learn more. When I was 36 years old my husband, Darren, passed very quickly and without warning. In that moment, my life was forever altered and changed. I had an amazing support system of friends and family. We both had been in ministry and at the time I was serving as a worship pastor at a small church. Even with all that support, I still floundered, questioned and worried. My faith was definitely tested. I wondered where was God and why my husband? I watched my then twelve year-old daughter work to come to grips with the loss of her daddy. She loved him immensely and I watched her struggle to function each day. Meanwhile, I didn't sleep, didn't want to go to church and didn't have any idea what our future would hold.

You see, no matter how strong your faith is, when you lose a spouse, you are changed and your relationship with God is changed. Everyday, you have to make a choice to move forward and allow God to heal your pain and walk with you in your grief. I did none of this perfectly and was a complete and utter mess more times than I can even share. I grew up as a Pastor's kid and knew how important the church was in my healing and in my journey. I was one of the fortunate ones, meaning the pastor I served under as worship pastor, was also my husband's best friend. He knew my pain because he was dealing with it as well. He knew how important the church and the people of the church were in my life and the life of my daughter. In my case, the church and my pastor showed up. They showed up in real and concrete ways and most importantly, they continued to walk with me in the weeks, months and years to come.

Why do I tell you all of this? Because you are called to care for widows. The Bible tells us over 80 times to care for widows. The plight of the widow is near and dear to the heart of our Heavenly Father. He knows and understands the pain of death and believes that the church and the people of the church, are the ones who should care and show up. You, as a Pastor, play an integral role in this healing process. The widows in your church need to know you care, they need you to love them in their mess and they need you to provide the resources and connections they need to help them in their healing journey. You are important and needed! We pray as you learn from this resource, you will better know how to care and love the widows in your churches.

Sincerely,

A Widow

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## CARE PROCESS

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*Flow*

### **The church is contacted**

Dependant on your church structure - you may not find out until the funeral.

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01

### **Contact 1st Response Team**

Have an on-call list for who to call or a ministry coordinator for the widows program to call.

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02

### **1st Response Team start's care**

They will show up in the first 24 hours when possible and then continue care for the 1st year.

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03

### **Communicate to pastors, deacons, elders, etc.**

Utilize the other ministries within the church. They will be vital to continued success.

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04

### **All continue long-term care**

You play a role in this as well. Communicate with the team members, elders and others caring to see what needs may arise and how to best care.

05



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## WHAT TO SAY AND WHAT NOT TO SAY: *a guide*

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She loves her husband and misses talking about him.

### What TO say:

- ✓ Her husband's name
- ✓ We are going to show up and help with (blank) on Thursday. Does that work?
- ✓ I may not understand your pain, but I'm here to support you.
- ✓ I would love to hear more about your husband.
- ✓ I love seeing how God is using you in the midst of your pain.
- ✓ I can't fathom what you are going through.
- ✓ You are seen. Your church loves you and we are here for the long-haul for you.
- ✓ Can you tell me a favorite memory about your husband?
- ✓ Saying something and bringing up the loss.

That does not cause pain, grief is an almost constant pain. Saying something is better than saying nothing.

### What NOT to say:

- ✗ He's in a better place.
- ✗ "What do you need?" OR "Let me know if you need anything."
- ✗ God needed him more in heaven.
- ✗ At least you know where he is.
- ✗ You'll see him again. That should give you hope.
- ✗ You are so strong.
- ✗ I know how you feel.
- ✗ Time heals all wounds.
- ✗ It has been a long time since he passed, aren't you doing better by now?
- ✗ Saying nothing or not bringing the loss up at all.
- ✗ Everything happens for a reason.
- ✗ You'll be okay.

She often won't know what she needs or want to ask for help.

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## DIFFERENT TYPES OF *care*

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### Emotional Care

- Don't overwhelm them in the beginning, but do check on them.
- Continue check-ins (this may be on Sundays at church or a phone call)
- Check in with person providing care (your 1st Response and 1st year teams)
- Check-in with others providing care (Elders, small groups, deacons)
- Insure they are getting help -Grief share, SITGM groups, counselors
- Use Resources in Additional Resource section.
- We encourage you to create a resource guide with counselors, grief groups, widows ministries, etc. that can be readily available for your widows and those providing care.
- Refer as needs to local \*counselors.

### Practical Care

- Use Additional Resource section in ToolKit to find resources for these items. (you do not have to be an expert, there are a lot of great resources available broken down for these areas)
- Funeral - help with from the beginning as needed
- Financial planning - Using Resource Section
- Estate planning - Using Resources Section
- We encourage you to create a resource guide with plumbers, electricians, mechanics etc. that can be readily available for your widows and those providing care.
- Also refer to the Home Maintenance, Car Care and Freezer Meal Ministry for additional direction in how to provide practical care for your widows.

### \*Counseling Resources (Links are clickable!)

[Association for Death Education and Counseling](#)

[Association of Certified Biblical Counselors](#)

[Grief Share](#)

[Grief Therapists](#)

### Long Term Ministry Care

- Mental health and counseling needs - Use resources for them.
- Spiritual Well-being-Are they still coming to church, are they still plugged into church, are they using church resources? Do they have someone attending church with them or who they sit with? Are they connected to small groups or other emotional resources?
- Financial Planning - Do they have the resources to make long-term planning needs. Are they needing to move and have help with that?
- Are they isolated from others or are they part of a community?
- Are they connecting with the 1st Year Team and others in the church providing support to them?

### Short Term Ministry Care

- 1st Response Team
- Funeral Planning
- Immediate Financial Needs (Life Insurance, Social Security, Budgeting and immediate needs) \*\*Use Additional Resources Section\*\*

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## DIFFERENT ROLES WITHIN THE church

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*We recognize that each church has a different structure for care. If you have an active widows ministry, a lot of this will fall under them, however, we want you to understand that other ministries can play a vital role in caring for widows especially in the 1st year. We also want to remind you that widows often are still struggling into the second year (sometimes the second year is the hardest), so by the second year of their loss, it is vital that they are connected with other ministries that can provide continued support, care and love.*

### Utilizing Other Ministries to Care for Widows

**Deacons** - Many churches assign a Deacon to each new widow. This deacon will regularly check-in with the widow and mostly provide for practical needs.

**Care Ministry** - If you have a care ministry within your church, insure they know about the importance of caring for widows. They can work through your widows ministry to be involved in the 1st year team or in the other needs your widows ministry may have.

**Church Staff** - Your input is invaluable. Regular check-ins with the widows and others in the widows ministry, will help in many ways. If the widow serves in a particular ministry, that pastor should know that the volunteer is a widow and may need some additional support.

**Small Group Leaders** - You may have small groups within your church that want to do things to help support the widows. This may be in practical ways or in volunteering in the widows ministry at events, outreaches or even on the 1st year team. Make sure they are aware of the needs. Insuring they understand how to care for widows in this time, may require some input from the Pastoral staff.

**Sunday School Classes** - Many Sunday School classes will help with Meal Trains at the beginning. Insuring they understand how to care for widows in this time, may require some input from the Pastoral staff. They may also be interested in helping with practical needs like home maintenance etc.

**Youth/Children's Ministry** - We have seen success with having your youth and children involved with the widows. They may want to do a car wash for widows, make crafts for an event or help if you are doing a practical needs day.

**Administrative Staff/Volunteer** - Identifying new widows is often an issue, especially within larger churches. If you don't have someone who keeps track of new widows and informs staff and the others involved in the widows ministry, think about adding someone designated to do this.