

Ministry helps widows overcome loss, find purpose

November 22, 2024

When the casseroles are gone and friends and family wave goodbye, the woman who has lost her husband now faces the unknown. From that moment forward, a widow must tread through each day alone, facing unfamiliar emotions and situations.

Becoming a widow can be a time filled with grief, fear and anxiety, and it often feels as though no one can understand or help.

Widows find themselves asking so many questions. What is my purpose? What does the future hold? What does being a widow mean?

Beth Campbell, Texas Woman's Missionary Union communications consultant and the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions project manager, found herself asking similar questions during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Her husband Rex developed COVID-19 and had to be hospitalized. Due to regulations at the time, when Rex took his last breath, his wife could not be with him.

Snow fell as she sat in her car while their daughter-in-law, an occupational therapist at the hospital, held the phone to her husband's ear as he slipped away.

Stunned by the swiftness of what had happened over the prior 10 days, Beth Campbell said aloud to God: "I don't understand, but I know you have a purpose and a plan. You are present and faithful."

Through her grief, she clung to the promise of Psalm 119:50, "My comfort

in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.” Since her life as a wife suddenly was over, she began to ask God to point her toward a new goal, and she patiently waited for directions.

“I have learned to be patient ... waiting for God to reveal his purpose and plan, waiting to be ready to receive it,” she said.

She knew God intended her to work somehow with widows.

Grieving widows become Overcomers

Widowed friends joined her in prayer to discover God’s plan. In October 2021, they sensed it taking shape and becoming clear. Seven months later, Campbell and her friends Phyllis Brower and Connie Hamilton began Overcomers.

Living with their grief but filled with excitement, the three women unveiled a ministry that would focus on encouraging widows to overcome fear, anxiety, loneliness, doubt, adversity and worries about how to provide for themselves—all concerns widows face every day. Overcomers would be a community of women facing widowhood with confidence and grace.

Eighteen women came to the first meeting. Today, Campbell said, the ministry has grown beyond her church, First Baptist in Grand Prairie.

“It is from and of the Lord. It is an affirmation of his presence and faithfulness while being patient in affliction,” she said. The ministry expanded to include women outside the church and widows in all stages of grief and loss.

One member named Lisa, who was widowed at 40, said, “It is really nice to be in a room full of women who ‘get it,’ who understand the heartbreak, the loneliness, the trials and the challenges that come from this journey we are on.”

Another woman, Martha, said: “When I first joined Overcomers, I didn’t think it would really be beneficial to me. ... I have come to realize that no matter how long your spouse has been gone, God can use grief in ways that I never thought possible.”

Learning to see the joy of the Lord

Overcomers helped her see beyond the grief and see the joy of the Lord, she added.



Police officers from the Grand Prairie Police Department talk with Overcomers participants about personal safety awareness.

A typical two-hour Overcomers meeting includes games and activities, lunch, work on a mission project, a devotion and prayer. The members also enjoy excursions like a trip through the bluebonnet trails and a visit to a local museum.

Education and awareness are also part of the meetings, with members receiving information from experts about topics such as personal safety and making and updating a will.



Overcomers participants assist with assembling and preparing the church's donation of 700 Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes.

Overcomers helps other ministries through projects and donations. It partners with Isaiah 117 House, a foster care support ministry, by donating gift cards and hygiene products and making blankets for the children. The group also participates in Samaritan's Purse's Operation Christmas Child by assisting the church with shoeboxes.

Before launching Overcomers, Campbell and her friends discussed the ministry with the church's deacons, making them aware of the needs of widows in their congregation. She encouraged the deacons to prayerfully consider a widows' ministry for those who need it now and in the future, reminding them, "It could be your wife that will [someday] need this ministry."

Beth's pastor, Bill Skaar, said: "The Overcomers ministry helps our church to minister far more effectively to our widows with a consistent ministry focused exclusively on them. The ministry has also helped our deacon body ... by identifying practical needs [they] can meet."

Suggestions for ministry to widows

For churches considering a widows' ministry, Campbell suggests assigning two or three widowed members to each deacon so widows maintain regular contact with their deacon.

She offers these additional suggestions:

- Provide practical help. Set a scheduled time for widows to sign up for "handyman" help with repairs, computer and technical support, and financial guidance.
- Create a point of contact for widows. Widows are sometimes hesitant to call the church or a deacon when they have a need. Ask another widow or women's ministry leader to be the point person. If a widow has an urgent need, she would contact the person, who would then contact the church.
- Host a GriefShare group at your church. Campbell believes this is one of the best resources a church can offer in support of widows. It is an opportunity to reach widows outside church. Through GriefShare, Campbell can invite widows to join Overcomers, where they'll have a place to belong with others who understand.

Overcomers continues to grow and reach widows needing a community that understands.

The ministry operates according to God's promise of comfort in affliction. First Thessalonians 5:11 says, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

Campbell encourages every widow to gather with other widows to find strength and purpose and to be an overcomer.

Tamela Turbeville is a freelance writer, author and director of a Christ-focused pro-life pregnancy center in Arkansas. An expanded version of this

*article originally appeared in the November 2024 issue of Missions Mosaic.
It is republished with permission. Visit wmu.com for more information.*