

**A PASTORAL APPROACH TO SUPPRESSION OF THE GRIEF
PROCESS AMONG MALES LEADING TO DEATH:**

A Reflection on an African Perspective in Zimbabwe

by

Ananias Kumbuyo Nyanjaya

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Supervisor: Prof. M J Masango

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DEDICATION

This **thesis** is dedicated to my late father **Atate Simeon Kumbuyo** whose value for education is remembered by sacrificing the best beasts among his herd of cattle and through his words to his sons and daughters; *get educated when I am still alive if you do not do it you will be jealous of the educated.* ABABA I wish you were still here.

Amai Jessie ma Sibanda

My mother, (Jessie) who brought me to this world and whose love can not be defined in words. She taught me from the time I was born to respect people and encourage unity among us children. I am proud of you for teaching me to pray; wokondendwa AMAMA, maSibanda

Rumbidzayi

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To males of Murewa Circuit

Men who have taught me through sharing their painful experiences of their losses the importance of grieving.

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DECLARATION

I declare that a thesis on

A PASTORAL APPROACH ON SUPPRESSION OF THE GRIEF PROCESS AMONG MALES
LEADING TO DEATH: A REFLECTION ON AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE IN ZIMBABWE

Is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledge by means of complete references.

Signed..... Date.....
ANANIAS KUMBUYO NYANJAYA

Signed..... Date.....
PROFESSOR MAAKE J MASANGO

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Summary

Suppression of the grief process among males following bereavement, deny the males to express their pain or respond to the realities of what has happened and can be traumatic and subsequently cause death. **This study was** guided by a qualitative and quantitative research method, and examines loss, and grief that follow the death of loved ones. Gerkin's Shepherding Model of caring for the individual and the community of faith and Kubler- Ross' model on grief dynamics are employed.

Expression of grief depends on a number of factors that may range from emotional closeness of the family, how the family defines grief, the role and relationship to the deceased, one's spiritual, psychosocial strength. In most Zimbabwean cultures the grief process is complicated by the delay in the initiation of funeral and mourning rituals as a result of unfinished businesses. Conflict management is pivotal to the process of grief in most African cultures where rituals provide a structured way of affirming that death has occurred and help in reducing suppression of grief. Traditional practices are carried out in a structured way; generally the bereaved needs an authority to give permission to carry out the funeral and mourning rituals, by so doing the society reduces guilty feelings in the bereaved.

In this study Chapter 2 traces the theoretical, biblical and the ex-biblical and African perspectives in the process of grief. Chapter 3 provides the methodology in carrying out the research. Chapter 4 details how 13 African males of Murewa circuit have journeyed through the grief process. Their stories indicated how: males are socialized; the expectations of the family, society, culture and church hinder the grief journey, and how male's view of masculinity has put pressure on them during grief. In chapter 5 concluding thoughts, include the role of practical theology as a social action in helping males to grieve, the role of the community in healing through rituals and how the Church's theology of grief should equip the Church in helping males to pass through the valleys of grief without shame and a feeling of guilt, by helping them to challenge their "predictable dishonesties of everyday Life" (Egan 2002:192).

CHAPTER ONE

1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background to the problem, states the problem, objectives, assumptions, significance and the limitation of the study. Important terms are defined; the research gap and conclusion are also included.

1.1 Background

The author is a minister of religion in the Methodist church in Zimbabwe. He has ministered to both urban and rural congregations. In his first appointment after ordination he was made superintendent of a circuit that had 103 congregations with only one assistant minister. The second circuit had 52 congregations; he was later appointed a District chairman (Bishop) of 13 circuits with a total of 395 congregations. Currently he is overseeing 30 congregations with a total membership of 596. In his entire ministry he has observed and experienced different reactions on how people deal with bereavement.

However the death of two male members of his congregations and later his father forms the background to this research on trauma caused by suppressed process of emotions. The first experience was at a funeral of the daughter of one of the author's male church members who died after a long illness. The father of this young lady collapsed during the ritual of body viewing and died few hours after the burial of his daughter. This man had participated in most of the funeral activities including drawing up the program, he consulted with the author, but, alas! it was all deception, that he was emotionally strong.

The second incident was of a man who suppressed his emotions when his wife died. During the funeral until the day the wife was laid to rest the man was very busy with funeral arrangements. The reader need to note that, though Kubler-Ross (1986) subscribes to this notion, it is unusual in the African culture for a person who has lost a spouse to carry out funeral arrangements. The funeral and other family arrangements are the **responsibilities of the extended family and the community.** **Coincidentally the week that his wife died he had a preaching appointment, which he fulfilled.** **A lot of people** thought he would not manage to preach that Sunday, but he did. Many congregants

admired and applauded his faith and emotional strength. Four months later he died. His health had greatly deteriorated; his church attendance had become erratic. The Ashtons recognized that “Society seems to esteem those of us who appear emotionally strong, so many of us hide or repress our feelings. Often this adds to our distress and we aren’t able to accomplish our grief work” (Ashton, J & Ashton, D 1997:69).

The above experiences challenged the author in such a way that he did not know how to respond to families that were grieving. He was also not aware that his father at one time would be the victim of suppression of grief. When his (the author’s) brother Petros died after a long illness, his father presented an extreme emotional bravery during the funeral. The author’s father was very busy with funeral arrangements. Cook et al, recognizes this behavior, which he deceived us with, as ‘problem-focused coping strategies’ of dealing with grief (Cook & Oltjenbrun 1998:102).

It was during the ritual of putting some gravel in the grave as a sign of bidding farewell to the deceased that he (the author’s father) convulsed and almost fell in the grave. He was suffering from delayed shock because of the death of Petros that he had denied and suppressed, which later affected him. According to Neuger et al, men are encouraged to deal with loss by taking charge, helping others bear up, and accepting the loss or death as a challenge (Neuger & Poling 1997:209). After burial he caught a fever which made him bedridden until he died seven days after the burial of his son Petros. The suppression of pain and repressed grief, led to his renal failure leading to his death.

It seems he was stuck in the **denial (shock)**, which according to Kubler-Ross (1969:34) is the first positive reaction to loss which an individual has to process. Though the author is in agreement with Cook et al’s assumption that:

“Men typically engage much more heavily in problem –focused coping strategies, whereas women more commonly use emotion-focused strategies, both men and women however, can effectively resolve their grief”(Cook & Oltjenbruns 1998:102)

The author’s father challenged part of the above assumption. He was unable to resolve his grief due to the death of his own son. The author noticed this when he was standing at his bedside, helping him to breathe properly. The author shed a few tears before his mother entered the room. He hid his

emotions as he informed his mother about the death. The author realized that he was also suppressing his emotions in the presence of his mother. The author is now aware that his father's death showed that, grief is universal; the way it is handled is unique and personal.

The author's mother cried a lot but the author and all his brothers suppressed their emotions, and they were bitter with their father's relatives especially their aunts who allegedly said "these children will now suffer". According to Kubler-Ross (1969:70) **anger is a normal reaction in the process of grief**. The sudden death of the author's father caused his young brothers to visit the African doctors as well as the African Independent Churches who confirmed that the mysterious death of their father was caused by the family members (bewitchment).

The author in this research would like to explore ways of caring for males who suppress their emotions during the death of their loved ones. He is going to engage the **five stages of grief process suggested** by Kubler-Ross (1969) **and the shepherding model of caring for an individual and Christian community** by Gerkin (1997), through which both psychological and religious dynamics are addressed, in order to equip pastors and the church so that they can help the bereaved males therapeutically. The research focused on **males from one denomination (the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe of Murewa District)**, in order to reduce the risks of universalizing the particular or particularizing the universal (Willows & Swinton 2000: 72).

1.2 Problem of the study

Faced with the death of any type individuals tend to grieve. The differences may be in flexibility, physical, psychological strength or level of emotion and spiritual maturity in coping with the trauma and learning new ways of adjusting. According to Kubler-Ross (1969), suppression of emotions following bereavement by death of a loved one, deny males to express their pain in order to respond to the realities of what happened. In many cultures men grieve differently from women. Jeremiah is helpful in exploring this issue. He says:

Consider, and call for the mourning women to come; send for the skilful women to come; let them make haste and raise a wailing over us, that our eyelids gush with water....teach to your daughters a lament, and each to her neighbour a dirge. For death has come up into our

windows, it has entered our palaces, cutting off the children from the streets and the young men from the squares (Jeremiah 9:17-18, 20-21).

In Murewa where the author ministers, one can hardly cross three villages without meeting people going to, coming from or gathered to bury the dead (loved ones). The many deaths are obviously telling a story about the impact of death on the family. The researcher in this study is particularly concerned about the grieving process among males, males whom society has socialised not to articulate feelings in a way that would put masculinity into shame. **The problem for this study is that males suppress emotions when bereaved by the death of their loved ones;** and yet the Ashtons cite the tragedy of non expression of grief in the following way;

‘Holding grief or emotions for a long period of time without “letting go” can deplete serotonin level in the brain and increase chances for depression and recovery’ (Ashton & Ashton 1997: 92).

When men suppress grief, it is also possible that the grieving process is being denied or avoided due to the internalized frame of reference. Unexpressed sorrow and incomplete grief can lead to development of exacerbation of medical problems, such as hypertension, heart attack, arthritis (Fuller 2002: 18). In order to explore the problem of unexpressed grief among males the author is guided by the following objectives, assumptions, significance and limitation of the study:

1.3 Aims and objectives of the study.

The objectives formulated for this study are:

- ❖ To explore **how males** in Murewa- Zimbabwe express their emotions during bereavement
- ❖ To **explore features of grief** among most males and how they express it
- ❖ To **explore and identify the pastoral role** of the church in bereavement
- ❖ To **explore and develop a methodology** that facilitates expression of grief among **males, and** equips pastors and the church to minister to the males therapeutically
- ❖ To develop **an awareness** among males on the tragedy of suppressing the process of grief.
- ❖ To maximize the **church’s pastoral ministry** to bereaved male

- ❖ To make **appropriate** recommendations to the church and community leaders about caring for males in their grief

1.4 Significance of the study

The Study findings are expected to benefit the following:

- ❖ The **church** will have an opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their bereavement support systems
- ❖ The **church** as it will identify opportunities for complimenting the extended family's efforts in supporting the bereaved males in the community
- ❖ Create awareness among **males** on the dangers of suppressing the process of grief

1.5 Assumption of the study

The study is guided by the following assumption

- ❖ Some males will be willing **to volunteer information**
- ❖ The church is **the most appropriate instrument** in helping the society to deal with bereavement
- ❖ **Funds** will be available to carry out the research- from the World Methodist Church Office in England
- ❖ The research project will be **completed by the 30th of November 2006**

1.6 Limitation of the study

The following challenges and shortcomings limit the study findings:

- ❖ **Self-report** methods (interviews) would be used to collect the data thus, some participants would respond to please the researcher
- ❖ **Descriptive statistics** will be used to analyse the data, thus limiting the value of the findings
- ❖ Only males from **one circuit in Murewa District** were studied thereby limiting the generalisation of the findings

1.7 Definition of terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of the study on suppression of the process of grief among males.

1.7.1 Grief

Refers to, “the cognitive and emotional reactions that follow the death of a loved one.” Newman and Newman (1999:491). According to Lewis (1998:6), there is great hurt in grief, generally a feeling that no one else really understands, that no one else has ever suffered in quite the same way or to quite this extent. The assumption that is often made to those who have lost loved ones are therefore not fair and are unfounded, when we tell them that ‘I do understand what you are going through’ or ‘I know what it means.’ These utterances might mean that we project our grief into the current griever. If grief is **the price one pays for the love invested in a relationship** then no one can understand how the grieving person feels.

1.7.2 Disenfranchised grief

Grief is a normal, unique and personal response to loss of any significant person or opportunity. The method of handling it would either be constructive or destructive, depending on the expectations of the society. Neuger et al acknowledges that **the non recognition of certain bereaved person’s right, role or capacity to grieve**, leads to abnormal or complicated grief. Males are often disenfranchised when they experience loss, they are expected not to feel the pain and if they do, they should not express it or if they grieve it should take a form that others do not recognize as mourning and they are easily ignored (Neuger and Poling 1997:206, Cook and Oltjenbruns 1998). They will be ignored because they will have disappointed their mentor, the society. They will be like a soldier who has broken the rules of the forces in public.

1.7.3 Suppression of grief

It is the reaction that denies the expression of the true feeling of the impact of loss. The grieving person keeps his feelings under tight control. In an attempt to be brave, he wears a mask that portrays emotional strength or false front (Bowman III 1998). The feelings are buried beneath the surface and are not allowed expression. Showing emotions may be interpreted by society as a sign of weakness or lack of faith, in spite of it being traumatic, males are expected to abuse or hide their gift

of emotions and tears, in order to qualify to be men. Suppression is a cover of true feelings (Neuger & Poling 1997: 206).

When men suppress their grief process, they will be faithfully responding to the teaching of their fore –fathers. It is an advantage to have a group of people who can uphold the teachings of their society. Instead of blaming them, a way should be found in order to explore this faithfulness to their advantage, society should through grandparents, community leaders, encourage proper stewardship in handling grief. Through out this research males were aware of the importance of grieving and the disadvantages of inexpressiveness of grief. Balswick affirms the important role that can be played by society in males in the following way;

“Not only does inexpressiveness become a part of males’ self-concept, but it also becomes a social expectation, reinforced by patterns and institutions of our culture. For this reason,... it is not only individual males who need to change; we need to bring change into the larger systems and structures of modern society” (Balswick 1992:73).

1.7.4 Funeral ritual

Cook et al, describe ritual as a specific behavior or activity that gives symbolic expression to certain feelings or thoughts. It serves as a **public acknowledgement that death has occurred and provides an opportunity for mourning.** It is the acknowledgement of death at a formal level, which provides powerful therapeutic experiences for both individuals and families and symbolizes transition; healing and continuity (Cook & Oltjenbrun1998:128). Rituals invest death with religious, psychological and social meaning for the participants. In spite of it being public, it uniquely benefits the individual in dealing with the unfinished business. For example the ritual of distribution of the deceased’s items, the remembrance ceremonies and the appointment of a guardian for the remaining spouse and children for the mourning period until the final ceremony is carried out are a confirmation that loss has occurred.

1.7.5 Mourning ritual

According to Heinemann English Dictionary (2001) **mourning** is described as “the outward signs of bereavement or grief, e.g. the wearing of black clothes.” It denotes the social prescription for the way in which a person is expected to display grief and **often reflects the practices of ones culture**

(such as wearing black clothes, shaving of the head). Among the shona people of Zimbabwe a girl can not be given out for marriage, until after a certain mourning period is over and particular rituals are done.

1.7.6 Trauma

It is defined as a Psychic injury caused by emotional shock, which continues to remain unhealed and sometimes dissociated from the conscious memory, often resulting in behavioral and emotional disorder (Bell-Gadsby and Siegenberg, 1996:3)

1.7.7 Death of the loved one

Gilliland and James distinguish between two different levels of loss; namely **minor** (as loss of job, money, physical illness or robbed of.) **and major** losses (as death of a parent, child, spouse, relative or, close friend (Gilliland and James 1993). The ‘loved one’ **in this research is any person who caused the respondent feel robbed as a result of their death.** The death of anyone they had invested in, emotionally attached to or depended upon his or her relationship. This suggests that it is the nature and the quality of the attachment that determines the intensity of grief, rather than the magnitude of the psychosocial transition that results. The pangs of grief, are more easily explained in terms of attachment theory than transition (Dickenson / Malcolm/ Katz 2000:330)

1.8 The task of practical theology

According to Swinton et al, (2000) practical theology is arguably one of the most fascinating aspects of contemporary theology. It provides ‘interface between theology and practical living’ (Swinton & Willows 2000: 11) not only the bridge between practices and theory. It tells the stories that create meaningful human existence and takes seriously and incorporates fully the diversity of human experience. It is rooted in the complexities of human lives, cultures and ever – changing contexts, the ‘texts’ that practical theologians work are ‘living’ Gerkin (1984) cited in Willows and Swinton (2000:12). It is concerned with critical theological reflection upon the life of the whole church and, even more important, with critical theological reflection upon Christian presence and action in the midst of contemporary society. Moreover it even engages into dialogue with platonic ideas that have caused double or piled up tragedies among males during grief. Practical theology emerges as a vibrant and challenging mode of theology that not only applies, but also constructs and clarifies

theological understanding, including our ‘understanding of spiritual dimensions of pastoral care’ (Swinton & Willow 2000:13) in the face of contemporary practices of grief management.

Gerkin reminds the author of the care that the people of his home area gave to the more problematic beasts when herding cattle. The animal that gave problems had a bell tied around its neck which always informed the herd’s boy or man where the cattle were grazing. That kind of an animal was a reminder of trouble and a helper in caring for the rest of the cattle. The farmer would not slaughter or sell that animal as a way of eliminating it in order to reduce the problem. The absence of that animal increased the shepherd’s complacency, which subsequently led to laziness on the side of the herdsman and the going astray of other animals. Equally the Pastor as a shepherd should not ignore males who need much attention from him or her, but must find a way of caring for them so that they care for the community of faith together as they redefine their practices. The task of practical theology is to build the body of Christ and care for each part.

1.8.1 Pastoral care

It is important to note that bereavement counseling in the traditional African societies is not a new phenomenon. It was accepted that a widow and her children automatically became absorbed within the extended family. Equally, the loss of a mother left many maternal women, aunts, elder sisters and so on who played the mother function. There were social links available within the family if they wished to take advantage of them. Counseling of the bereaved was done by the wise women and men of the society and the advice from the community medicine man/woman (African Doctor) was sought for guidance, hence the author’s brothers followed this process. Bereavement counseling was done through mourning ceremonies or rituals. Pastoral care givers are ministering to individuals and communities that have a world view which pastoral therapists should dialogue with and incorporate fully the diversity of male experiences in grief.

Moreover Gerkin (1997) argues that, Israel’s world of pastoral care was embodied in its tradition. In spite of it not always known by this name, pastoral care has been part of the ‘action story and its tradition over many centuries of Christian history’ (Gerkin 1997:21). “Before Christianity, pastoral care was a significant aspect of the Israelite Community’s life and its tradition, out of which the Old Testament or Jewish Scriptures emerged” (Gerkin 1997:21). The understanding that pastoral care

always involved a response to human experiences is central to the tradition of care. Gerkin emphasizes the importance of pastoral care on an individual and community in the following way:

“Pastoral care involves not only the care of the individuals and families, but also the care of the community itself. Pastoral care also entails the thoughtful reinterpretation of the tradition that shapes Christian identity as that tradition is brought into dialogical relationship with contemporary culture and its impact on the community of Christians as well as its individual members” (Gerkin 1997:118).

This simply means that as human being socio -cultural experiences have changed with time and differ in context , pastoral care practices can be modified, in order to engage with the environment in which the people live and the deep continuities that have shaped and continued to shape the pastoral tradition.

1.8.2 Biblical models for pastoral care

Gerkin further recognizes that the Bible is the source of our knowledge regarding the beginnings of pastoral care of “the community of people who worshipped the one God ‘Yahweh’” because it is through the Bible that we encounter our ‘**earliest pastoral ancestors**’ (Gerkin1997:23). He describes how the ancient people of Israel established a custom in which three classes of such leaders were designated in the categories of the priests, a hereditary class that had particular responsibility for worship and ceremonial life. The prophets, spoke of Yahweh in relation to moral issues sometimes rebuking the community and its stated political leaders, and the wise men and women, offered counsel of all sorts concerning issues of good life and personal conduct (Gerkin 1997:23). Therefore pastoral care concentrates on the salvation of an individual and the care of those who suffer under the conditions of the times in every community. Gerkin shares on how the three categories cared for God’s people at individual and community level. He says:

For the prophets that meant confronting the people with their deviation from the will of Yahweh. For the Priests it meant faithful and reverent observation of worship and cultic practice. For the wise men and women it meant practical moral guidance in the affairs of living together as a community (Gerkin 1997:24).

Therefore the care of God's people as well as the wise guidance expressed in prophetic acts of leadership and confrontation by the Prophet are crucial to our current practices, where a pastor plays all the three roles in all "human affairs and for the earth itself" (Gerkin 1997:24).

1.8.3 The Pastoral Leader as a Shepherd

Caring was and is still one of the most challenging activities in the author's life. The author's father had more than 20 herds of cattle which as young boys they were made to look after. It was common for the community cattle to be taken care of by each household for two to three days. The challenge was on how responsible they were in doing their duties as young people, herdsmen or boys. His father would always check on the cattle at the end of each day, to make sure that the cattle had been well fed; the kraal has been well closed and checked whether all cattle had been brought in. There are many a time when his complained that the beasts were not well fed, because they looked hungry and they would not produce enough milk. He would then whip them (refer to chapter 4 item 2.7.1) and forced them to wake up early the following morning to take them (beasts) to areas that had good pastures before they yoked them to plough. Grazing cattle is something that is done at the right time whether it is a rainy or chilly day the cattle had to be cared for and protected against all forms of danger and abuse so that the owner would be satisfied. The former presiding Bishop of the Methodist church in Zimbabwe would always say when ordaining pastors *dzinofundzwa dzinosisa* (meaning; the cows that are well fed produce more milk). Therefore the pastor is the shepherd of God's Flock and God is concerned when the flock is not cared for properly.

Moreover Gerkin (1997) observes that the metaphor of shepherd is captured in Psalms 23 and appears in John 10 to depict the care of Yahweh to Yahweh's people. Jesus in the New Testament (in John's Gospel) identifies as "the Good Shepherd" who knows his sheep and the sheep know Him. This contrasted with the condemnation of shepherds in Ezekiel 34 who had neglected the sheep but at the same time had benefited from them. The shepherding image of the pastoral leader as the "shepherd of the flock" has persisted as a prototypical image to both pastors and ecclesiastical leaders of the institutional church in ministering to the Christian community (Gerkin 1997:27).

Moreover Samuel Park's article on history of Charles Gerkin's Pastoral Theology recognizes that:

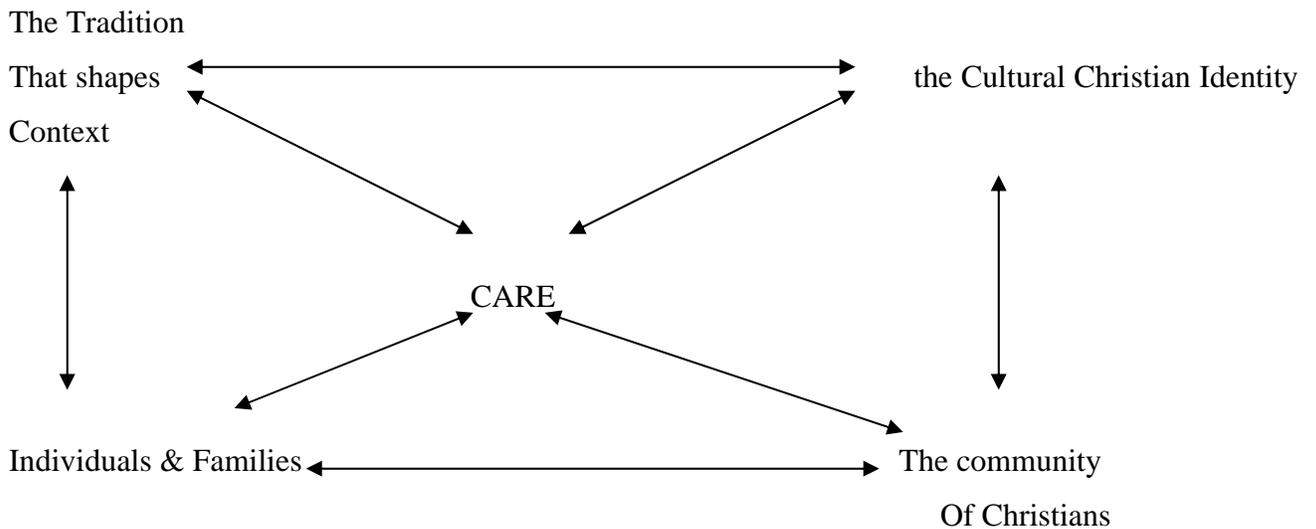
The pastor as “**guide of the interpretive process**” explains both the **Christian narrative tradition and the contemporary living situations encountered in ordinary lives. The transformation of life takes place when the pastor assists individuals, families, and communities to transform and reinterpret their core stories in dialogical interaction with the primary images and themes of the biblical and Christian story (pastoral psychology Vol. 54. No. 1 September 2005:58).**

This simply shows why the role of a pastor in caring for the individual and the community can not be ignored among the people of Murewa; the area where the author did this research. In many situations communities have sought the participation or presence of the pastor and the church in situations that present lack of clarity such as funerals and political rallies. It is important, therefore, to note that lack of theological knowledge in practical theology by the pastor disadvantages the individual and community of faith in interpreting or dealing with situations in which people find themselves. The pastor has to engage and connect the Christian story with the community’s life situations. He/she has to enter into dialogue with their stories as he/she leads the people in paths of righteousness, restores the souls of the people and walks with the people through the valley of grief. The pastor has a central role in men’s life. As a shepherd he/she engages the bereaved males with the grieving community, the grieved males with males who are grieving and the grieved males with the chief shepherd (Christ) who listens to their deepest needs. Gerkin further illustrates and connects this dialogical interaction with the four hermeneutic narrative elements that shape the Christian pastoral care story as shown in figure 1 & 2 below:

Fig.1. Gerkin’s model of pastoral care

The story of the Christian Pastoral Care The Particularity
 Community and tradition _____ of Life Stories

Fig. 2. The Interpretive Structure of Pastoral Care: A Quadrilateral Schema (Gerkin 1997:35)



The reader needs to note that Figures 1 and 2 show the flow of events and changing cultures through the history of care. This hermeneutical narrative element cited by Gerkin empowers and widens the horizon of the pastor to give attention to the issues and concerns of the contemporary cultural context with the aim of healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling the flock to God their owner whom they come face to face when confronted with the state of no being. The pastor should be the connecting link.

1.9 LITERATURE REVIEW

The research for literature on this research topic began with the University of Pretoria library in ATLA Religion database + ATLAS; Journals of Pastoral Counseling and narrative therapy on suppression of grief among males was carried out. A hand search and pre –designed strategy based on the Pre-selected list of key words was employed as a way to ensure that no other research of this nature was carried out, particularly on the research context under review.

Literature on bereavement has revealed that people generally respond to loss of a loved one in various (differently) ways. Individual responses to grief will largely depend upon the **emotional closeness of the family and on how the society expects men to express it**. However, Kubler-Ross (1969) coined **shock /denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance** as the normal stages

that grief should express itself. These grief dynamics may overlap and may not be linear (or orderly) but may depend on the context of the culture in which one lives or was socialized (Zuidgeest 2001:51).

2004:2). She however, indicated that culture can deny or even delay males to observe the grief reactions or accept that death has occurred. According to Cook et al, among the Indians of Lakota and the Jewish tradition expression of grief is done as part of a ritual of mourning. However society expects males not to express emotions openly (Cook & Oltjenbruns 1998:108).

Literature search in Journals on the international studies and the University of Pretoria database Contemporary literature has indicated that **African Americans and most Caucasian males** suppress grief when bereaved, this is because males are raised (and expected) to be strong and in control of situations, confident about their world; courageous even in times of adversity; and able to accomplish tasks, and endure stress and pain and be providers, but they are not given permission to cry openly, express fear, feel insecure or express loneliness, sadness or depression:(Cook & Oltjenbruns 1998:109).

Fuller contends that millions of men find it difficult to process their grief in bereavement, because society expects them to be able to protect themselves and others in any situation and to be able to handle their own problems. This attitude has encouraged men to live with unfinished business or unresolved feelings of anger, confusion and self-doubt, (Fuller 2002:60).

Suppression of grief process has been associated with cultural and religious beliefs which are patriarchal constructions that are oppressive and destructive to society (Neuger and Poling 1997:210). However, it is important to note that prominent figures of the Bible times expressed grief of their beloved ones without prohibitions or shame. We even learn that their struggles with grief at some point disturbed their immediate family members greatly when they refused to be comforted (discussed in chapter 2 on item 2.5.3).

Nevertheless, Greek philosophy with its emphasis on the power of knowledge and belief in immortality has influenced some Christian practices in their bereavement and many Christians **have interpreted scriptures during bereavement** by denying expressions of grief or suppressing it

(Walter 1997). The researcher acknowledges that suppression of grief has led to neurotic guilt, pathological or abnormal grief and has caused accidents, heart attacks, hypertension, stroke, drug abuse and other health conditions (stresses), among bereaved males that lead to death (Jones 1958, Collins 1988, Hinton 1967, Ashton and Ashton 1996, Neuger and Poling 1997:203). He however would like to explore how the African males in Murewa- Zimbabwe have suppressed grief.

1.10 Research gap

Literature on suppression of grief by males shows that in the western and African American cultures men suppress emotions Bowman 111(1998:89). A similar study was carried by Tong on Afrikaans and English speaking white male widowers, in South Africa. The differences however are that; her cultural focus was limited to White Afrikaans speaking men and whose loved ones were, limited to or meant their wives and were not representative of the community we serve –Christians- (Tong and World Wide Web (though the quality of material on www is variable, it has no quality control) shows that a research of this nature has not been carried out among African males of Murewa in Mashonaland East province of Zimbabwe, a dominant patriarchal society. Moreover most literature on suppression of grief among males was written from a western perspective as can be evidenced in the bibliography.

1.11 Chapter outline

Chapter One: Provides the introduction, the background, states the problem, aims, objectives, assumptions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, and important definitions for the study.

Chapter Two: Focuses on the theoretic perspectives, Biblical, ex-biblical, cultural, factors that influence males in bereavement

Chapter Three: Discusses how data was collected, scored, analyzed, the sample identified and justified

Chapter Four: Data is presented, analysed and interpreted. Tables and percentages are used in summarizing the findings of the journey with males in their grief.

Chapter Five: Focuses on the significance of the research journey to the researcher and makes practical theological recommendations and concluding thoughts of the study.

1.12 Preliminary conclusion

This chapter dealt with the background to the research and how the death of three males motivated the author to carry out the research on suppression of the grief process among males that lead to death. Literatures on suppression of the grief process have also been consulted and summarized and showed that such a research has not been carried out in Murewa. Practical theology has been viewed as a tool that engaged in human complexities. The role of the pastor in interpreting the Christian stories has been considered important in grief management and connecting the males (people) to their creator. The pastor has also been identified as one who facilitates the process of connecting people's stories to the Christian story and vice versa; since these stories may differ he/she balances the two tensions in order to bring about healing to the individuals and community.

CHAPTER TWO

2 Theoretical Perspectives on the Process of Grief

2.1 Introduction

Many different theoretical perspectives provide insight into the process of grief. Grief is an obvious reaction from all people who lose loved ones. It is however important to note that the grief dynamics coined by Kubler-Ross (Shock/ denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance), though not linear would be of benefit for males within their society in bereavement. The researcher is also aware that societies, families and individuals grieve differently. But within the period of grieving and mourning these stages will help the pastoral care givers to explore ways of ministering to the grieving males. According to Dickenson et al there has to be a “frame of reference if we are to be of use to those who cannot cope with life’s vicissitude” (Dickenson | Malcolm| Katz2000:325).

Moreover Cook et al, further argued that the process of grief is not understood by a large part of the society as a result, many grieving males do not receive the type of support that is most helpful to them (Cook and Oltjenbrun1998:91). It should be noted that in this research literature on bereavement has not yet established fully, whether grief is a cause of death to those who have lost their loved ones, (Hinton 1967 Collins 1988; Balswick 1992; Schneidman 1980; Klass D 1999), though it has acknowledged the numerous deaths of widows in their first and second year of bereavement. The discussions below look at the various theories that influence suppression of grief.

2.2 Developmental challenges among males

The developmental theorists such as Freud, Adler and Erickson, though they differ and at times compliment each other on human developmental stages, they however, give insights of males’ developmental journeys. For example Freud asserted that young males experienced a necessary trauma as they establish a rapprochement with the father, which results in a love –hate relationship; Loving the mother and hating the father but yet loving his strength, protectiveness and power (Horne & Kiselica 1999:14).

Erickson, Freud’s student influenced by the social interest theory from Freudian psychoanalytic psychology stresses the psychosocial aspects of development which are important in human

development. Erickson indicated that **psychosexual** and **psychosocial** growth takes place simultaneously and that at each stage of development people face the task of establishing equilibrium between themselves and their worlds (Horne & Kiselica 1999:14).

Though they were both influenced by Freudian psychoanalytic theory, Erickson and Adler differ at the way they look at human development but contend that there are developmental male problems at each stage of development.

We can therefore recognize two stages of growth as they relate to the development of boys, which embody and later express themselves in bereavement among males.

<u>Freud</u>	=	<u>Erickson</u>
<u>Year</u>		
1 (Freud's oral stage)	=	(trust versus mistrust)
1-3 (Freud's anal stage)	=	(Autonomy versus Shame\doubt)
3-6 (Phallic Stage)	=	(Initiative versus guilty)
6-12 (Latency Stage)	=	(Industry versus Inferiority)
12-18 (Adolescence)	=	(Identity versus confusion)

The implications of these stages in the development of boys and adolescents though they may vary are crucial and pose a challenge to males' future ability in the processing of grief. The stages are "markers in the life and Development of males, and Carry a strong influence" (Horne & Kiselica 1999:14) in individuals and society. The author recognizes that through these stages society can develop well balanced males instead of males who grapple, with the intrusion of guilt and shame on the self esteem. Boys are confused as to how they should express manhood when faced with situations that require them to grieve (as indicated in 2.6.3 with Augustine's son Adeodatus on page 41). They look at the reactions of their father and find it hard to learn the fictitious ways of dealing with the process of grief. The self-images we create about ourselves may empower our boys and us in many ways but if they are created on faulty premises they traumatize and destroy them and us because they deny us the realities of our loss and grief. The author further recognizes that knowledge of the grief dynamics by Kubler-Ross on expression of the deep desires of the heart, in our

bereavement should be acknowledged and encouraged by our society. These stages will help in dealing with the process of grief among males.

2.3 Dynamics of grief

The work of Kubler Ross (1969) has been complimented by William Worden (1991) an expert in grief counseling, who brought to our awareness the many tasks that, must be worked through in order to adjust to the environment in which the deceased is missing. Males have suppressed these stages by minimizing them and rushing through to acceptance, while others have quickly taken refuge in early re-marriage thus suppressing the depression stage, people who have suppressed the process of grief have done so by either minimizing one or two of the stages in processing of grief at the pretext of having accepted the loss. Those who have rushed through the stages whether through counseling or mourning ceremonies have not survived the trauma thereafter. An explanation of the importance and what each stage entails is given in the discussions below;

(i) Stage 1: Denial / shock

Denial is a natural response to tragedy. It comes in many forms and is experienced in a variety of ways by different individuals or groups. Denial is what happens when a person's mind and body cannot fully grasp or accept the reality of what has happened. Numbness shock, disorganization, crying and withdrawal may be experienced. Some who are of hypertension, faint, particularly women or experience shortness of breath. Some individuals react by minimizing the importance of whatever loss has occurred; this is normally experienced among males or people who are influenced by their religious beliefs or culture on how they should express grief. Shock/Denial is one of the immediate health stages of reaction to a traumatic event, because it gives us time to absorb and accept difficult realities, before we start to come to our senses or grasping what took place (Walter 1997). The author remembers informing a member of his Congregation that his (congregant's) mother had died. The congregant's immediate reaction was that, he kept quiet for sometime and looked at the author then he laughed (this in a way was an attempt of minimizing the death reality), after a while he stood up and went into the house and remained there for more than 20 minutes.

Shock closes all our awareness and our current activities, before we are introduced to new experiences which normally need different reaction, strength for a painful journey as we deal with

our emotional injuries. “Stress does not diminish because you deny it’s there (or minimize it), it simply stays hidden and keeps you immobilized” (Balswick J and J 1997: 250).

The major issue in this study is that males have denied stress and hid anger as will be evidenced in stories with males in chapter 4 item 4.6 case studies 2, 4 and 6. Denial if it is processed allows the bereaved to go into another stage most probably he expresses anger.

(ii) Stage 2: Anger

As a pastor the author has heard people cry and ask where God was when they lost loved ones. At other times the bereaved said that the deceased had deceived them with health promises when they had visited with them in hospital. A man, whose mother had died, shouted during a funeral ceremony, saying “*Mwari hamuko*” (God you do not exist”). When his father died the author’s young brother went to the funeral carrying two guns, he wanted to shoot those whom he allegedly said bewitched his father, and the author advised him to lock them (guns) in the car and then he listened to his story. On the day of burial he reversed his car into a ditch and wanted to beat the young people who asked for payment for helping him out. Uncontrolled anger can be particularly dangerous as it will be evidenced when we deal with David’s grief in the Bible. It might be channeled to innocent old grannies, relatives, Pastor or Nurses (Balswick J and J 1997: 251; Kubler –Ross 1969:45) or the deceased as indicated in chapter 4 case study 4; item 4.6).

Expression of anger is a positive way of dealing with the loss. It is not a sin to be angry, if anger is handled properly it is helpful in dealing with loss but if it’s mishandled, it leads us into sin or trouble. The bible cites moments when Jesus was angry with the money changers, once or twice when he cursed a fig tree. If anger controls or dominates a person therapy should be effected. Anger exhausts the bereaved thereby making him to think of another way of living differently as indicated below through bargaining.

(iii) Stage 3: Bargaining

According to Neuger et al “Bargaining is closely related to denial those who try to bargain to change their situation cannot quite accept the final reality of what is going on in their lives. They haven’t come to terms with their loss of control and inability to turn back the tide....” (Neuger et al 1997:253). This attitude is subtly present in those who believe that a relationship with God offers

them a shield against the tragedies in their lives. These people often crumble in the face of adversity; because it catches them off guard (Worden 1991:11., Neuger & Poling 1997:253). In caring for the bereaved the author has come across men and women who at this stage have opted to remarry with the promise to be good husbands and wives in their second marriage. Three weeks after Patrick's wife (not real name) had died he came to the author and said 'Pastor I have found one who has also lost a partner', when asked whether they had already entered into a relationship? Patrick said 'yes! Actually, I have come to make an appointment with you so that I come with her for wedding arrangements'. This was unbelievable to the author but he allowed them to come. When they came the author learnt that they had not yet done a number of the things required of them by their extended families, among those were the remembrance ceremonies, from both sides. Months after counselling the woman approached the author and said that she was reconsidering not to re-marry and that she was opting for 'an affair' (a casual relationship). A week later, Patrick said he was afraid to go into marriage because he did not know what had led to the death of the woman's husband. The bargaining period helped them face the realities, thus leading them into depression.

(iv) Stage 4: Depression stage.

After going through the three stages of shock, anger, bargaining one becomes depressed. It appears a person is now tired and disappointed or feels betrayed by God, other people he thought he could trust or by life itself. It seems this experience leads to painful reactions such as anger, sadness, frustration, confusion and guilt. In the case of Patrick, he said that he felt guilt for thinking of entering into a marriage before his wife had even rotted (*in Shona kuputika*) in the grave. The person may have little energy, find nothing interesting in life, always wanting to sleep, avoid friends and it is at this time when even his pattern of going to church changes as pointed out in Chapter 1 item 1.1 leading to a spiritual crisis, due to the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness of life. The bereaved consequently lack of self esteem (or self –Affirmation) and the element of self-reproach clouds his mind (Neuger and Poling 1997, Walter 1997: 114). Though this stage is exhaustive it allows the bereaved to start reorganising his life.

(v) Stage 5: Acceptance : After a few months of courtship, Patrick and her partner abandoned their relationship as they faced the realities of their loss that led them to accepting that

life is no longer the same and will never be the same even when they re- marry. This stage helps a person to deal with the issues that may need attention before he re-marries.

When this stage is reached it means someone is reorganizing himself to face the future (Balswick & Balswick.1997:254). One will have understood that life has changed and that the loved one will not come back, but life can still be lived. The energy is redirected from mourning to the pursuit of living. According Freud and Kubler-Ross, the bereaved will reach a point of ‘letting go’ and re-invest the energies into another relationship, thus leading to healing. There concept of healing differs from the Zimbabwean attachment concept to the deceased as a way of healing. At this stage, among the Zimbabweans, the bereaved will have internalized the loss in order to take control of the grief. He will be dependent upon the society for sustenance and growth, but with the capacity to make his own independent healthy decisions. This will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 4. However a look at the process of grief shows that our anger and depression which delay acceptance emanate either from ones cultural or religious expectations discussed in the paragraph below.

2.4 Trapped between culture and religion

An individual’s grief in response to loss must be examined within the context of his culture and religion. The healthy or faulty expression of emotions and his subsequent behavior to the loss depends on one’s cultural heritage, religious tradition which influences the current responses to loss and exposure to other traditions and practices. Durkheim et al, in Dickson et al argued that “the intensity of grief expended by any individual or group was dependent on socially constructed formula rather than innate natural feelings” (Dickson, Malcolm and Jeanne 2000: 52).

In some cultures individuals are given permission to express their grief openly in public, whereas in other cultures the bereaved would be regarded as weak if they exhibited such behaviors. The expression of grief is also dictated by cultural norms and religious beliefs. Males have been socialized to be in control, confident about their world; courageous even when it hurts most. In other words they are taught to suppress their feelings. However males feel they are not given permission to cry openly and express fear, loneliness, sadness or depression. (Hinton 1967, Staudachers 1986, Cook and Oltjenbruns 1998 Collins 1988).

Though the suppression of grief process is socially sanctioned, cultural and religious groups differ in the extent to which they allow, discourage, or encourage the overt of expression of sorrows. In spite of being allowed, they are observed and at times cautioned.

2.4.1 How men grieve

In Zimbabwe, from childhood, males are encouraged to control their grief, statements like, “don’t cry like a woman, be strong, a man does not cry.” These are words that were often said to author when he was a young boy. This is why he found it difficult to shed tears when his brother Petros and father died though he wanted to. He would feel like crying as he talked but the words rang in his ears, to be strong because a man does not cry, and that it was embarrassing to cry publicly among women.

As already mentioned elsewhere in this research males are often disenfranchised when they experience loss, though they might want to cry, they should not feel the pain and if they do, they should not express it, or if they grieve it takes a form that others do not recognize as mourning and they are easily ignored (Neuger & Poling 1997:206, Cook & Oltjenbruns 1998).

Therefore to be a man is to suffer in silence. However it is a myth to say that a man does not grieve rather; a man’s grief is suppressed in order that one remains a man.

According to Neuger et al (1997):

“In traditional (American) rites of initiation, the boys are expected to leave the safety of mother’s world and enter father’s risky realm with determination and courage. In order to make the separation to manhood, Sadness and fear are numbed. Unacknowledged grief is therefore at the core of male identity from the beginning (Neuger & Poling 1997:206).”

Males are aware of their need for grief that is why they are taught to suppress their emotions. Males do not want to be exposed, they want to show emotions but in privacy. The danger is that if the emotions are inhibited for a long time, especially where burial takes a week or so after death, males are overwhelmed by the mourners and find it difficult to grieve, and suppression may be unhealthy. During these pre-burial periods, males avoid hurt and pain by wanting to take charge, as indicated in

the case studies of males in chapter 4, helping others to bear up or accepting the loss as a challenge. This is because families expect men to be in charge always, though it promotes suppression of grief. Since all the strategies are learned, the church and community can modify them, to replace hypocrisy with true expressions of feelings to loss.

2.5 Grief as a natural and normal phenomenon

2.5.1 Grief and Bible

Bereavement has largely been dealt with by religious organizations. The churches and other religious groups have cared for the sick or the dying, the burial or disposal of the dead and supported the bereaved. Walter (1997) observed that not much has been written from the theological perspective about these important activities:

“I noticed that most helpful wisdom on the subject of bereavement was coming from secular, usually psychological, sources. Christian books, with a few notable exceptions seemed either to repeat the pronouncements of the psychologists with little or no theological critique or to avoid the real issues facing the bereaved people by flight into next world.”(Walter 1997:2)

Walter is simply recognizing that lack of literature on bereavement following the death of a loved one has made many Christian embarrassed or created discomforts as they measured their responses of loss against uninformed faith. The task of the next paragraph is to explore how the bible traditions have revealed the process of grief among males in their response to the loss of their loved ones.

2.5.2 Males and grief in the Old Testament

The pain of separation remains in the heart of many people who lose their loved ones. The scars and the gaps of loss are real for as long as we live or until we also meet our own death. Consequently, various groups of people have designed ways that helps them to deal with their losses. In the Old Testament grieving process is described as fulfilling a legal and cultural necessity, rather than being an expression of personal grief (Walter 1997:11). It can be argued therefore that cultural practice of grief, may at times, address grief in a formalized way without giving particular attentions to the

individual's emotional and psychological content. Illustrating the experience of elderly partners in bereavement Walter contends that:

1. There is an acute expression of grief in private whereas dignity is maintained in the public manifestation
2. There is a concern to “do things properly in terms of the rites of disposal.”
3. There is a desire to do the best for the loved one even beyond death.
4. There is an acknowledged psychological need for a place of remembrance (Gen 37: 31 – 35, Sam 15, 11 Sam 9)

However, the assumption by Walter (1997) that cultural practices in grief may address grief in a formalized way without giving particular attention to particular individual's emotional and psychological content; may have ignored the fact that, mourning ceremonies in other cultures, especially the people of Zimbabwe allow the bereaved to vent out their grief in a formalized way while focusing and befitting the bereaving individuals in a community. The bereaved are successfully brought through their shock and sorrow back to normal status and relations with the dead because relationships continue beyond death.

(i) Grief expressed in full

The news of the loss of their sons was received with shock by both Jacob and David. Their exclamations were of great psychological truth and shocking effect to both. Jacob “Mourned his son for many days” all his sons and daughters (daughters- In- Laws) came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted (Walter 1997:14). Jacob exclaimed, “No, in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son” Jacob is determined to retain the visible signs of mourning until his dying day (Walter 1997:15). Jacob is showing that he may come to terms with the loss but his mourning would not end, because of the impact of the loss. It means then that, the amount of love we invest in a person relates to how much pain we suffer as a result of their death. People who have lost the loved ones find it difficult to completely deal with the loss, especially of a Child. When they see his or her friends making progress for example buying coffins for their parent's funerals or doing something nice the pain comes back. Mr. Elijah had this to say “*Whenever I think of whom I shall leave the things I worked for with, I always get disturbed*” refer to case study 1(in item 4.6 page 60).

Another narrative is that of David's expression of grief following the death of Saul's son Jonathan. When he received the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan David was both shocked and inquisitive. He asked; what happened? How do you know? This according to Kubler –Ross and other contemporary theorists is a normal reaction to news, and sudden to bereavement, there is shock, disbelief and an anxious need to verify the facts. *“David and his men tore their clothes and spend the rest of the day in weeping and mourning”* (Walter 1997:18). The bereavement narrative of David's process of grief followed the dynamics of shock, anger which he extended from expression of personal grief to giving vent to national or political feelings by killing the messenger.

The striking implication of this is that David; God's chosen one, like Abraham and Jacob whom we have already observed, faced grief in full pain without any attempt at mitigation by finding support in the love of God (Walter 1997:20).

Here is a detailed account of a personal grief in the Bible and it is fascinating to find in it so many features which are common to the human experience of grief in the modern world, as indeed in all ages (Walter 1997:21).

(ii) Aspects of David's grief that are recorded.

1. Shocked/disbelief on hearing the news of death
2. An expression of grief, once the news of death had been assimilated or shared
3. Violent blame of those present at the death and held responsible
4. Anguished visualization of the scene of death
5. Idealized praise of the deceased
6. An outpouring of intimate, personal feelings
7. Refusal to find comfort even in cherished beliefs

On receiving the news about the death of his son Absalom, David was overcome with the news, he retreated into the private room and cried *“O my son, Absalom, Absalom; My son, my son, Absalom: if only I had died instead of you – O Absalom my son, my son!”*² Samuel 18:33). Though it was not possible to retain both the throne and his son, David was greatly grieved. (Walter 1997:23)

Walter contends that:

1. In all the stories, written by a variety of authors at different times and in different political and religious contexts, the reality of grief is fully acknowledged. The need to grieve is never denied.
2. The features of grief described chime with the findings of the modern psychological study of bereavement. All the accounts are perfectly psychologically credible.
3. Although it has been traditional among biblical scholars to account for differences in detail in the narratives in terms of textual theories, these differences can, just as easily, be attributed to differences in the circumstances and personalities of the protagonists. A number of ‘puzzles’ disappear when they are read as human stories.
4. It is perhaps startling to discover that, although the people concerned are otherwise depicted by the authors as having great religious sensibilities, at no time are their religious beliefs or personal faith in God seen as modifying or even bringing comfort in the experience of grief. These considerations should obviously give light to the experience of Christians today (Walter 1997:24).

2.5.4 Males and grief in the New Testament

Grief in the Old Testament is a fact of life. In the New Testament it seems there is in the minds of Christians, an unconscious form of docetism, the heresy that denies the real humanity of Jesus (Walter 1997:27). The line is drawn at the idea of Jesus grieving, simply and naturally, for the death of a beloved relative and friend (Walter 1997:27):

When Jesus saw her (Mary) weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in Spirit and troubled. ‘Where have you laid him?’ He asked, come and see, Lord; they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘see how he loved him!’ (John 11:33 – 36)

What is of interest here is the depiction of Jesus’ emotions, the general expected initiated stage of shock is mentioned, and where Jesus started to speak of who he was “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies” (John 11:25). This shows how denial is so obvious when one loses a loved one. Jesus talked of the future to the bereaved; he did not address the current situation which the bereaved were faced with. This verse is an example of how males would sometimes easily want to divert the reality of loss upon receiving the news of the death of a

loved one. When Jesus saw that their situation would not easily accommodate the life after death message, he came to the level of the bereaved and grieved with them.

Jesus was troubled, agitated, and deeply moved in his spirit. ‘The verb used of Jesus is derived from the word for “a tear” (Walter 1997:27). Jesus burst into tears’ it seems hard to avoid the image of Jesus in emotional turmoil. According to Paul Christians should stand alongside those in trouble and share their trouble with them when he said ‘...who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God’ (2 Cor1: 4).

Therefore comfort can be based on the presence of those with whom one can share helplessness in the face of grief. For the Christians, Paul clears their misconception of bereavement about the future hope which had a bearing on their dealing with grief. Jesus expression of grief or anger is emotionally normal, consequently shock/denial, anger, depression, bargaining and acceptance stages should coexist with faith in Jesus the resurrected.

Above all grief is a normal response to loss, even for those who hope for resurrection beyond death. The Gospels describe how the disciples’ reaction to crucifixion was of grief. Luke the physician gives us a detailed and well observed picture of two people in grief on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-27) and how men buried and mourned the death of Stephen (Acts 8:2)

Although Paul clears the misconception on grief in 2 Corinthians 1: 4 his writings to the Thessalonians on Christian view of grief would forbid Christians to grieve when a believer dies. It seems grief should be expressed only for those who are without hope in the resurrection “But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope” (Thessalonians 4:13). Equally Jesus’ words on grief would also be taken to mean people should not grieve when he says; to the widow of Nain “Do not weep” (Luke 7:14).

“Let not your hearts be trouble...” (John 14). Paul subsequently encourages mutual support to people in both happy and sad times when he says; “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).

These verses make it hard to imagine Paul discouraging grief. The bible does not use religious faith or even belief in any form of life after death as a means of modifying the experience of those who lose loved ones through death. Biblical people – including Jesus himself – simply grieved (Walter1997:39). The misconception on the parts of biblical commentators can be seen as assuming that the full pain of grief is incompatible with strong religious belief, especially when this involves faith in an after life:

So Old Testament Scholars reduce the varied depiction of human pain to textual considerations. New testament Commentators fall prey to an implicit docetism when faced with grieving Jesus; or Claim that a group of grieving people cannot be Christians; or insists that Paul’s’ Pastoral Support of grieving people implies a prohibition on grief (Walter1997:40).

The above quotation shows that the attitudes of suppressing the process of grief did not come from the Bible, though they seem to be reflecting a tendency found among many Christians, which makes us find it difficult to grieve in our bereavement. Aristeides, a Christian Athenian philosopher, described Christians in bereavement in way that reflects the practices and beliefs among many Christians in Zimbabwe today in the following way:

And if any righteous person of their number passes away from the world they rejoice and give thanks to God, and they follow his body, as if he were moving from one place to another: and when a Child is born to anyone of them, they praise God and if again it chance to die in its infancy, they praise God mightily, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. And if again they see that one of their number has died in his iniquity or in his sins, over this one they weep bitterly and sigh, as over one who is about to go to punishment: such is the ordinance of the law of the Christians, O King, and such is their Conduct (Walter 1997:42-43).

Although Aristeides describes what he observed from the Christian conduct of his time nothing can be found as an influence from the Bible. His writings inform us of the following:

1. The response to the death of a fellow Christian is to be joy and thanksgiving. The expression of grief is implicitly excluded.

2. A Christian funeral is not an occasion for the public expression of mourning but rather a time of celebration.
3. Death is seen not as an end – with the hope of a new beginning in resurrection – but as a transition. The Christian has simply moved home.
4. If the birth of a child is a cause for praise, the death of that child in infancy is even more so since the child has died without sin. One can only imagine the effect of conformity to his practice upon Christian parents.
5. The expression of grief is only appropriate for someone who has died in sin and who is therefore seen as going to punishment (Walter 1997).

We can see two different attitudes to bereavement, one that allows the full expression of grief, and the other which must have an extra – biblical origin. Suppression of the expression of grief is seen as an unworthy of a truly Christian life- style (Walter 1997: 43)

The mid- second century Christians, used the ideas of life after death, as a reason for not grieving, in spite of it not being a biblical idea. The Bible treated grief as a natural and normal phenomenon, with no hint that it should be suppressed or showed immortality as cure of grief (Walter 1997:43).

2.6 Misconceptions about Expression of Grief

2.6.1 Extra –biblical concepts of grief.

Plato a Greek philosopher and student of Socrates was bitterly hurt and angered by the judicial murder of his teacher, Socrates (Walter 1997:48). Socrates refused to be incorporated into the political coup plan with the group of known as “the Thirty”. He was executed by poisoning himself in the cell; through this method, the condemned criminal would be responsible for his own death (Walter 1997:48).

Socrates believed in the immortality of the soul and that the body is a nuisance, it gets in the way of true philosophy (knowledge). Death for him was something to be looked forward to with joy. Since Socrates believed that the real person is the soul he would say:

“I want to explain to you how it seems to me natural that a man who has really devoted his life to philosophy should be cheerful in the face of death, and confident of finding the greatest

blessing in the next world when his life have finished... If this is true and (philosophers) have actually been looking forward to death all their lives, it would of course be absurd to be troubled when the thing comes for which they have long been preparing and looking forward. (Phaedo 107 in Walter 1997:51)

In Plato's view the true philosopher should not fear death; death is not really death at all. It is death only of the body, which is merely something which gets in the way of the real contemplation of things. The assertion of immortality of the Soul, seem to be a defense against the fear of non- being. Equally, evidence of the fear of death is a sure sign of a 'lack of real Philosophy' (Walter 1997:51)

“So if you see any one distressed at the prospect of dying.... It will be proof enough that he is a lover not of wisdom but of the body. As a matter of fact I suppose he is also a lover of wealth and reputation; one or the other or both (Phaedo, 113,114 in Walter 1997:51)

Socrates approached death by demonstrating that he practiced what he believed with the following details:

“I prefer to have a bath before drinking the poison.” He says, rather than give the women the trouble of washing me when I am dead,” And so Socrates takes the poison and calmly and with no sign of distaste, he drained the Cup in one breath” (Walter 1997:53)

The implications of these teachings are that grief and suppression of the grief process are absolutely forbidden and therefore denied. To understand this I quote Socrates rigid defense at his (Socrates) friend's unnatural outpouring of grief.

“Up till this time most of us had been fairly successful in keeping back our tears; but when we saw that he was drinking, that he had actually drunk it, we could do so no longer; in spite of myself the tears came pouring out, so that I covered my face and wept broken heartedly- not for him but for my own calamity in losing such a friend. Crito had given up even before me and had gone out when he could not restrain his tears. But Apollodorus, who had not stopped crying even before, now broke out into such a storm of passionate weeping that he made

everyone in the room break down except Socrates himself, who said , ‘Really, my friends, what a way to behave! Why, that was my main reason for sending away the women, to prevent this sort of disturbance; because I am told that one should make one’s end in a tranquil frame of mind. Calm yourselves and try to be brave.’ This made us feel ashamed and we controlled our tears (Phaedo: 182 in Walter 1997:53, 54)

The above quotation distinguishes the natural expression of grief and its prohibition on the basis of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Socrates sends women away because they would embarrass and disturb his belief, it seems it was common practice even during Socrates period for women to express emotions thus resembling the Zimbabwean culture of grieving. But one is forced to think and ask this question; is this what God expects of men? If tears and emotions are human reactions to life’s joys and threats, we cannot escape them since they are the natural lot of mankind and, males have to be simply people that God created to express emotion, instead of trying to perpetuate an image that is radically different from whom they(we)are made to be.

2.6.2 Platonic theory of grief

Platonic influence on belief in the immortality of the soul has been immeasurable when it came to dealing with grief in the western world. His (Plato’s) theory of grief can be tabulated in following way

- 1.The human soul is immortal. When the body dies the soul continues to live. Death does not interrupt the life of the soul and is merely a transition.
2. The soul not only outlives the body which it currently inhabits, but existed before it. Its present body is a random choice, having little to do with the nature of the soul. Real personhood resides in the soul.
3. The body is a hindrance to the soul’s fulfillment of its potential. Its loss in death is no loss at all but, rather, an advantage. There is nothing to be grieved for.
4. Grief is not only illogical but a weakness. It is part of the frailty of that very body which is to be despised.
5. The well- educated individual therefore has no place for grief. He should suppress it in himself and avoid such things as literature or drama which may stimulate it.

2.6.3 Influence of Platonic ideas on St Augustine

Equally Augustine was exposed to platonic idea of immortality of the soul, before he became a Christian. In one of his writing particularly the ‘**Confessions**’ a remarkable spiritual **autobiography**, in which he examines the inner working of his mind in the form of an extended prayer, gives two moving accounts of bereavement in his life. One occurs in his pagan days and another after his conversion. Augustine struggled with his grief when he lost his mother Monica. This is how he detailed it.

I closed her eyes and a great wave of sorrow surged into my heart. It would have overflowed into tears if I had not made a strong effort of will and stemmed the flow, so that the tears dried in my eyes. What a terrible struggle it was to hold them back! As she breathed her last the boy Adeodatus began to wail and only ceased his cries when we all checked him. I too felt that I wanted to cry like a Child, but a more mature voice within me, the voice of my heart, bade me keep my sobs in check, and I remained silent. For we did not think it right to mark my mother’s death with weeping and moaning, because such lamentations are the usual accompaniment of death when it is thought of as a state of misery or as total extinction. But she had not died in misery nor had she wholly died. Of this we were certain, both because we knew what a holy life she had led and also because our faith was real and we had sure reasons not to doubt it.... You know, O Lord, how I suffered but my friends did not, and as they listened intently to my words, they thought that I had no sense of grief. But in your ears, where none of them could hear, I blamed myself for my tender feelings. I fought against the wave of sorrow and for a while it receded but then it swept upon me again with full force. It did not bring me to tears and no sign of it showed on my face, but I knew well enough what I was stifling in my heart. It was misery to feel myself so weak a victim of these human emotions, although we cannot escape them since they are the natural lot of mankind and so I had the added sorrow of being grieved by my own feelings, so that I was tormented by a twofold agony (Confession 200,201 in Walter 1997: 67).

The poor young Adeodatus was sharply reprimanded for expressing grieve at the death of his grandmother thus hampering the inner growth and independence as he responded to loss, thus creating confusion in a boy child who identifies with the father in suppressing grief in public though

willing to express emotions freely. Yet when Augustine was alone in bed he allowed the natural expression of grief to take place while abusing his son in public. Erickson's model on identity verses role confusion in developmental stages verifies how adolescents are wounded and grow without authentic role models to manhood. Augustine in spite of being a Christian Church father misunderstood his role on parenting; He writes as follows:

The tears which I had been holding back streamed down and I let them flow as freely as they would, making of them a pillow for my heart. On then it rested, for my weeping sounded in your ears alone, not in the ears of men who might have misconstrued it and despised it (the Confession 202 in Walter 1997:68).

Although Augustine felt comforted, the meaning of tears, rekindled a sense of guilt to which he addressed with fear.

“And if (anyone) finds that I sinned by weeping for my mother, even if only for a fraction of an hour, let him not mock at me... Let him weep for my sins to you, the Father of all the brothers of your Christ (Confession 202, in Walter 1997:68).

Theory and practice in both Plato and Augustine go hand in hand. They both maintain that death is illogical. However, natural emotions do not comply with theory.

Their suppression of emotions is based on the doctrine of natural immortality of the Soul and declares grief to be an inconsistent emotion which must be minimized if not suppressed altogether. Christians who hold such a view believe that their grief to be a weakness and an evidence of lack of faith leading to shame and guilt as they think about their response in light of their belief (Walter 1997:69).The account given by Plato on his son's suppression of grief reminds the author of the way he was socialized to manhood.

2.7 Growing up Male: The development of mature masculinity

The author remembers when, as a young boy how he was praised by his late grandfather in front of many young people of his age group and even those older than him. His grandfather saw him as a responsible boy who did things like a mature person. These praises made it difficult for him to act like a normal child. He grew up wanting to please the whole extended family because they trusted

his grandfather. Three years before he died, at the author's twenty seventh birth day he gave him a cow because he pleased him. His trust in the author which the whole family acknowledged and which he values made him to suffer for assuming greater respect and responsibilities leading to unexpressed emotions because he did not know how to deal with the two tensions. Moulding a child to be a responsible person is something important but becoming a man before you finish to be a boy is traumatizing because it makes a boy to be a 'silent son'. One should then be aware that a community is composed of a particular group of people who may undermine other members of that particular society who do not share their vision. The marginalized are not involved in coming up with the beliefs, practices and systems that will govern society in the process. Particularly in the African communities there is a tendency for a group to dominate, making its own existence an end rather than existing for the individuals who compose it (Coetzee & Roux 1998). Children do not participate or do not ask questions on what affects them instead they should be silent sons as discussed in item 2.7.1 below.

2.7.1 Silent sons

The socialization of boys is both in word and action. The words of raising boys by parents have great impact in their growing up into adulthood. The author believes his grandfather's words had great influence in his life. Most men of his age in his village know very well that parents did not allow them to report the results of a fight they will have lost at school or while herding cattle. They would either send them back to fight again or would be whipped. His father did not want any of his sons to cry whenever he was whipping them using a rubber. As he whipped them he would always say "Shiiiiiii, Shiii..... shut up! Shut up!" He would stop whipping them or any of his brothers only if they kept quiet or suppressed the pain. This teaching and its influence is illustrated in Richard's story cited by Neuger et al in the following way:

I was eight when my father died. He had never been sick. When my mother told us he had died, my six year –old brother started crying. I told him to shut up .I only allowed myself to cry when I was alone. Everyone told me I had to be strong because I was the “man of the house” I remember waiting in the drive way for weeks and weeks, hoping he would come back. Even now, thirty years after his death, I often get unpredictably sad driving home from work (Neuger and Poling 1997:215)

The socialization of boys causes them to hide their feelings and let no one know what takes place inside them. Many boys need help as they grow with the inexpressible feelings which were culturally planted in them throughout their formative years. This developmental challenge to adulthood has made it difficult for men to deal with grief when they lose a loved one. According to Levant (1992) cited by Horne et al (1999), observes that the contradictory messages about the meaning of masculinity exposed men to long standing, traditional image that “real men” are strong and silent providers and warriors who should not express vulnerability and tender emotions. Ackerman (1993) in Horne et al furthers this idea by describing “men wounded” in their developmental process as “Silent Sons” (Horne & Kiselica 1999:5). Formative experiences, such as suffering, alienation, chaos and confusion, are invariably communicated and interpreted through the stories that people tell about themselves and their experiences. It could be argued that the essence of faith itself is to do with the possibility of encountering stories that transform, who we are and the way in which we see the world (Gerkin 1997). The passage that follows discusses how culture has conditioned males to suppress expression of grief and consequently view it as a way of being male.

2.7.2 A way of being male.

The cultural messages to young adults and to men is very clear “Deny your grief and suppress your anger or you won’t be a real man” or “Don’t get mad, get even” (Horne & Kiselica 1999: 8). The process of “emotional shutting down” (Horne & Kiselica 1999: 9) begins in the formative age, actualized during adolescence and becomes a way of being for adult males, it is a learned process. In item 2.8 below the author discusses the cost of suppressed grief that males learn from their cultures.

2.8 The cost of suppressed grief.

According to Horne et al (1999) the price of suppressing the process of grief among males is high and difficult to settle, because the emotions are repressed or diverted and reconciling of anger and grief becomes difficult, hence sorrow creeps in. **“Medical knowledge is beginning to demonstrate how a lifetime denial of strong emotional feelings may culminate in both emotional and physical death” (Horne & Kiselica1999:9).**

2.8.1 The restrained tears

Suppression of the process of grief produces materials that are dangerous to the body, especially if expression is denied. Hence Dickenson et al (2000:92) pointed out that holding our grief or emotions for a long time without “letting go” can deplete serotonin levels in the brain and increase our chances for depression and delayed recovery. Research findings underscore holistic nature of health; as a result what happens in the body affects the mind as well? According to Kubler Ross (1969) restrained tears **have toxic** that would cause a chronic headache to the bereaved. Hence spiritual, physical and emotional factors are all interrelated in causing illnesses or in generating health in males who express emotions. Males pay high prices for their repressed grief at both social and individual levels. Culture constructed the defensive walls surrounding the dam of tears, with myths and faulty assumptions about manhood, in an attempt to protect faulty assumptions about masculinity. The patriarchal society has abused and traumatized males since it deprives them of their own best means of managing pain and overcoming the effect of loss.

Several studies have shown that grief hinders the body’s immune system so that viruses and other diseases causing organisms are more difficult to resist. There are marked increases in heart failure, high blood pressure, stroke, cancer, infectious diseases and damaging behavioral changes, loss of interest in life and problems in interpersonal relationships (The Strommens 1996:26; Collins 1988:351). Therefore grief can put a lot of stress on the body at a time when people can at least be able to resist the onslaught of their illness. These are feelings of anxiety, inner emptiness, guilt, anger, irritability withdrawal from others, forgetfulness, declining interest in sex, dreams about the deceased, night mares, errors in judgments and feelings of loneliness (Collins: 1988:351).

The suppressed process of grief appears when grief is denied, delayed or distorted and emotional, cognitive and social effects are experienced. These pathological grief reactions have **led to the death of some men by weakening their immune systems**. Jack Mc Call, in Neuger et al (1997) shares an interesting point in the following way:

I could feel the tears within me, undiscovered and untouched in their inland sea. Those tears had been with me always. I thought that at birth, American men are allotted just as many tears as American women. But because we are forbidden to shed them, we die long before women do, with our livers eaten away by alcohol because the lake of grief inside us has no outlet (Neuger & Poling 1997:203).

The above quotation shows that Jack is aware like any other man that he has enough tears that are a gift from God. And that society has made it difficult for him to use the available tears in the dam for healing. The author recognizes that societal expectations have forced him as well to close the natural outlet of the dam, which many males have opened when everybody else is not watching. They have however, expressed these emotions with shame and guilty (compare Plato in the discussion in 2.6.3). Our problem as males is not in the shedding of tears but in being discovered and in the protection of our self image.

2.9 Preliminary conclusion

In this chapter the grief process coined by Kubler –Ross has helped the author to appreciate how the Old and New Testament males expressed grief. The chapter has also shown that childhood socialization, the influence of extra – biblical practices and beliefs have led to suppression of grief that has culminated in the death of many males in their bereavement. The author is aware that it may not be easy for males to act differently from what society expects, especially when it comes to expression of emotions. However for the sake of their own health it is important for males to take their physical and spiritual health seriously and avoid remaining in private hells of grief. They should not allow the open sores caused by loss of a loved one to become infected, like an infected wound, when there is an inland dam of tears that can be used to clean the injuries of loss, thereby avoiding the mental, physical and spiritual tragedy that come as a result of repressed grief. The author weaved together his own story of grief, those of three males one of whom among them was his father together with literature from religion, psychology, philosophy and culture to form a framework that describes the research design and methodology in chapter 3. This would help to explore or examine closely the personal experiences of males who have lost their loved ones in chapter 4.

CHAPTER THREE

3 Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

A research design lays the foundation for conducting a study effectively and efficiently (Malhotra 1999:83). In a broader sense the term refers to the plan for data collection, data analysis and interpretation in all types of research (Wilson 1989: 133), to enhance the eventual validity of the finding (Mouton & Marcus 1988:33). In this research a survey design was adopted for the study because the researcher wanted to identify the current bereavement practices among males in the Methodist church in Murewa District under Chief Mangwende in Zimbabwe.

According to Malhotra (1999:178), a survey method is based on the questioning of the respondents. In this research respondents were asked questions as contained in the appendix A&B. The research design helped the researcher in obtaining the necessary information needed to deal with the research problem. The researcher was also mindful of doing research ‘on the participants rather than with them’ (Mc Taggart 1997:29), as to avoid taking the participants as subjects but as co-researchers who are trying to find a solution to a problem (Kotz`e 2002:25). The researcher valued ‘the importance of dialogue in helping’ (Egan 2002:65), which Egan said leads to an outcome that benefits both the respondents and the researcher

3.2 A Narrative attachment theory- approach

According to Gerkin (1997), a narrative approach points us toward recognition that in the long story of the people of God the metaphor of care has multiple origins. Its meaning embraces many roles within the historic community and varying emphasis, which from time to time have asserted themselves as primary for the care of God’s people in particular situations (Gerkin (1997:25). Narrative gives bereaved people a sense of worth, respect of their past and life. According to Morgan (2002) in Tong:

Narrative therapy seeks to be a respectful, non –blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts of their own lives. It views problems as separate from people and assumes that people have many skills ,competencies , beliefs, values,

commitments and abilities that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives(Tong 2004:35).

While Holmes notes that:

“Attachment Theory has shown that self knowledge in the form of narrative is associated with a core state characterized by secure attachment. Narratives turn experience into a story which is temporal, is coherent and has meaning” (Holmes 1993:150).

This shows that when personal history is re-told it helps the bereaved to link the past with the present and future. The previously fragmented and broken stories are brought to mind and mended thus making a person feel secure (**Holmes 1993:150**). Similarly, in light of what has been advanced in the preceding statements, Willows et al, asserts that listening and telling stories can provide opportunities for both revelation and healing with merit. This can be summed up as follows:

“ Practical theology has consistently given voice to the fact that listening to stories lies at the heart of all human experiencing and forms part of the fabric of Practical theology task” (Willows and Swinton 2000:15).

The author also realizes that Jesus interpreted the activities of the people of his time with stories that revealed the beauty of the kingdom of God.

3.3 Random sampling and population

A sample is a limited number of observations from a population(a register of 52 males) chosen in a way that allowed every possible observation (each member) had equal chances of appearing in the sample (Sprenkle1996, Jackson 2003:59). Its purpose was both to save money and time. Random sampling was generated by selecting males by ‘chance or haphazardly using a table of random numbers’ (Bloom&Ottong 1987:54). The researcher chose the starting place arbitrary and the 4th male from the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe – Murewa Circuit men’s register were randomly picked. The following characteristics were considered from the respondents under this study: The

age group of between 20- 80years, type of death suffered, and all respondents were to be African males. Thirteen respondents were sampled from a population of 52 males in the Circuit.

3.3.1 Executing the sampling process

The Chairmen of the Men's Christian Union was contacted and the church stewards of the congregations (societies) under the study were contacted through the leaders meetings. The process was successfully completed a week before the interviews took place.

3.3.2 Challenges encountered

Due to fuel problems in Zimbabwe the researcher had to travel on foot for up to thirty kilometers (30km) on most of these days, in order to meet the respondents at their homes. In spite of arriving late at six interview points the people were patient enough to hang around their homes for the interview to take place. Only one respondent failed to attend on the appointed date because he had some family commitment. Nevertheless the interview was rescheduled and carried out. All the respondents asked to be interviewed alone instead of in the presence of stewards who were mostly women.

3.4 Data collection methods

The interviews were conducted from a structured interview schedule prepared by the researcher and pilot tested before embarking on the research. With the permission of participants, the researcher tape-recorded the interviews. The use of audio tape reduced the interruption of notes taking thereby creating a 'Good dialogue' that led to an outcome that benefited both the respondents and the researcher (Egan 2002:65). In cases where the respondent was reminded of his loss, the researcher allowed him to express his feelings uninterrupted and helped him to cope with his inner and outer world more creatively. Egan further states that A 'good dialogue' was expected to 'challenge the predictable Dishonesties of Everyday Life' (Egan 2002:192) and also influenced the researcher and co-create in the outcome of the research. The worth and self- respect of the respondents or co-researchers were upheld, and respondents were not manipulated directly or indirectly in the process. Hence their points of view were **taken as a contribution to the resources for understanding the situation** (Winter 1996:22), in suppressing of the process of grief.

Structured interview were mostly preferred because the literacy level and language performance of most respondents were unknown. In addition, several open –ended questions, which were included, required some probing by the researcher. The interview schedule was used for its advantages of allowing the interviewer to observe non-verbal behavior, recording spontaneous reactions and ensuring that all questions were understood and answered.

3.5 Scoring

Daily taped interviews were transcribed on the scoring sheet highlighting major views. The author recognizes Jackson’s recommendation that the information (tapes) should be kept for 2-3 years before they are destroyed (Jackson 2003:59).The author will follow the Jackson’s suggestion.

3.6 Instruments/tools used.

Data was collected through an interview schedule and audio tape recording. The interview schedule comprised of seven items which were both in English and Shona (see Appendix A & B; Appendix C & D are the Informed Consent Forms). The Structured interview items were put together after a thorough literature review and discussions with various interested people in the area of this research. They were (Structured interviews) preferred because the **literacy levels and language performance of most** respondents were unknown. Two versions of the interview schedule were designed, one in English and another in Shona. Experts in English and Shona based in Zimbabwe were asked to check the content validity of the interview schedules. Both versions were pilot tested with people who were not part of the study. The results of the pilot test revealed that the interview schedule could be used with ease, after reframing two questions which the respondents had sought some clarifications. By carrying out a pilot study or a testing of the proposed questions, the most common errors in doing a research were avoided and the formulation of the research problem directed (Mouton 2001:103 ., Devos et al. 2002:210) .

3.7 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the research data. According to Mouton (1996:163), descriptive statistics organizes and summarizes the data to render it more comprehensible. The age of the respondents and the relationship to the loved one were considered. The loved ones in this research meant any of these; wife, child, parent or any other close relative or friend.

3.8 Preliminary conclusion

This chapter discussed how data was collected, scored and analyzed, and how the research sample was also identified and justified. The respondents were told the reason, for the interview and they gave their own consent to be interviewed. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in order for the research interpretation of empirical stories, theological and interdisciplinary literature, and the co-researcher's interpretations, to develop into an alternative understanding. The research focused on males from one denomination (the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe- Murewa District), in order to reduce the risks of universalizing the particular and particularizing the universal (Willows & Swinton 2000: 72). The next chapter gives the African thought of a person and community, articulates the experiences and the process of grief among African males and summarizes the data gathered.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 **But Why African Males**

4.1 **Introduction**

One would wonder why the researcher decided to carry a study on suppression of the process of grief among males. This is because there are marked differences on how men and women express grief in bereavement among the Africans. Equally facing grief in African culture may differ from the western. Among the Africans, though the man is the head of the family, when he loses a loved one, the funeral and the grief process are initiated, carried out, concluded by the extended family members. The bereaved male is consulted largely where there are financial implications to a decision that the family may want to make. While in the western practices the bereaved individual participates in the planning of the funeral, picking of a coffin and the burial location and headstone (Dickenson, Malcolm & Jeanne 2000:92, Kubler-Ross 1986:87). The completion of the process of grief among African males is understood by firstly understanding how an individual relates to his community.

4.2 **The Person and community in African thought**

To help men to grieve, we have to identify the African concept of a person and community which would be communicated by Mbiti (1970) in Coetzee et al, as “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” (Coetzee & Roux 1998: 318). The African’s strong belief in communal understanding of life, from which everything else is measured, assures an individual of internal and external support in times of need. The community is given priority over a person because an individual, unlike in the western cultures, is embedded and understood in a context of social relationship and Interdependence, and never as isolated atomic individuals (Coetzee & Roux 1998:320). Similarly the grief dynamics are understood in the context of the community.

The group is linked by personal bonds, biological, non biological the living and the departed have common goals and values. The beliefs of what should and how it should be done are shared by everyone in the family and community. It is the society that gives the bereaved the status of a mourner and later the social status of a widower.

This simply shows that in order to understand the process of grief among males, there is need to enter the men's world through the communities in which they were born and socialized. It is through these communities that their behaviors are accountable to and which help them acquire personhood as an achievement. This is because their values and beliefs are a construction by those they cherished and cherish, and physically separated with, but in whom they have invested their trust and dependence. These departed are also loved ones whom the living experience in their day to day life. In Zimbabwe there is belief among the African people that relationships continue beyond death, moreover a definition of the extended family makes the distinction between the dead and the living difficult because they are included in their family activities. The deceased influences the family decisions in a personal way. Therefore the above discussion provided the framework in which the events in an individual's life could be interpreted as he processes grief and interacts with the community of the Christian story.

4.3 Caring for the community of the Christian story.

A traditional African male is a member of the extended family which includes various relatives and, enables members to mutually affect and influence each other through interaction in both happy and sad times. Most of these families are able to accomplish this role because they are extended families. Members of the extended families are bound together and controlled by common values and network of relationships.

Similarly, Paul's metaphoric writings to the Corinthians about the unity in the body of Christ (1Cor 12: 12-26), show that the church is the Body of Christ whose members depend upon each other for its function and health. He further indicates that an individual does not exist alone but as part of the whole. African men therefore, find it easy to understand their responsibilities and duties in terms of other people in the family and community. When death occurs it affects the entire family invariably and all members bereave in spite of, personal differences or religious persuasions. Moreover all members of the extended family and church are expected to attend the funeral. It is however important to note that individuals and families tend to show individual differences. These differences may be in flexibility, physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual strength or maturity in coping with the event and learning new ways of adjusting as already alluded to in this study.

Moreover Gerkin (1997) reminds us in his writings about pastors as shepherds in the community, when he says:

For Pastoral Theologians, that meant finding ways to open dialogue between Christian ways of speaking and the ordinary language of the people. Pastors needed to become more proficient interpreters: interpreters of the Christian language and its ways of seeing and evaluating the world of human affairs, and interpreters of the cultural languages that shape much of every day life. Christian communities needed to become more self-aware in their Christian identity as they lived out their lives in a world of many languages and ways of speaking (Gerkin 1997:76).

Pastoral care therapists should acknowledge the importance of community life and at the same time be aware of the challenges that exist within its world view. It is therefore necessary for pastors to be aware that any attempt to interpret the world of human affairs with the Christian language would create a tension. This is because dealing with existential matters among males challenges their identity and long cherished practices, but this tension should not make them (pastors) to abandon their prophetic role.

Kubler-Ross and Worden have made great strides in creating awareness on the processes of grief; unfortunately they have emphasized the ‘reparable losses as against the ‘Irreparable losses, “have reconceptualized grief as a psychological process which is painful, but which, when the work is done, restores the survivor to status *quo ante*” (Klass 1999:31). **“Conceptualizing the grieving process as if the emotions could be sorted (out) and as if time guaranteed the safe and easy passage from one stage to another marginalizes and trivializes the people who experience it ”** (Klass 1999:31). When grief is thought of as an orderly process, there is little regard for the people’s tradition, context and experience that shape their Christian faith (Willow & Swinton 2000:74) and it minimizes the importance of dialogue as an approach in therapy. The author wonders whether Contemporary therapists like Kubler –Ross (1969), do not tempt the bereaved to suppress the process of grief when they specify a period of ‘letting go’ or normal grief. If the bereaved sees that his grieving period has taken longer than the expected time he would put a false front thereby suppressing the process of grief. Human beings are unique and the process of grief depends upon various factors such as, the level of attachment to the deceased or spiritual maturity. The process of

grief becomes difficult to determine especially among the Africans where healing largely depends upon many other factors, mentioned later in 5.4 that involve the extended family in facilitating the bereaved into social interaction which is vital for healing. Though the above discussion shows that cultural realities have great influence to our current difficulties, they are also part of the bedrock of our lives, from which healing is realized in relation to others and our environment. Therefore practical theology should engage communities to create order and meaning out of these difficulties through the re-telling of the fragmented story of these cultures and connecting it with the story of the Christian tradition as discussed in item 4.4

4.4 Practical theology as story through grief

Among many Africans societal norms and values were and are relayed to children through story telling. The author remembers how as children her mother and grandfather sat down around the fire telling them stories every evening. The author used to enjoy these stories because they always challenged him to be a disciplined and courageous boy. Some of these stories are still part of him and the process of his research. In light of what has been discussed about how males are brought up, Harwood et al observes that;

a culturally sensitive approach to strange situation behavior needs to proceed on the basis of indigenous understanding of the interactional norms and socio-emotional display rules that begin to shape the expressive behavior of children from birth, and that affect the interpretation and consequent management of those behaviors by adult caretakers (Harwood, Miller & Irizary 1995:141).

The care for males is achieved only by the early childhood re- told stories and health is assured in the present and future through them. As pastoral care therapists our journey with males in their grief should inform our theology, in order for pastoral care to remain a ‘social action’ among Zimbabwean males as it were among the Israelites. It should encounter males in their grief within their culture in which they were brought up, in order to confront and challenge the unhealthy beliefs. Furthermore, practical theology has consistently given voice to the fact that listening to and telling stories lies at the heart of all human experience and forms part of the fabric of the practical theological tasks.

The above discussions in this chapter have shown how stories are an indispensable part of caring among males during bereavement. However the stories below will illustrate how males of Murewa have expressed grief during bereavement.

4.5: The stories of males in grief

A few case studies that represent the general ideas of the people interviewed will be closely described and diagrams that summarize the general responses shall be displayed. Only eight (8) case studies have been looked into because they are representative of the general views of the respondents in the research. In these case studies the actual names of the respondents were used as per their consent. The following stories will enable the author to better appreciate the process of grief among African males in order to explore ways of ministering with them pastorally. Therefore the author quotes the respondent's actions and words *in italics* that show suppression of the process of grief.

First case study 1: **Mr. Chitongo** is former political activist and a headman of a village with a total number of 300 households. In April 2004 his wife died after a long illness and a year later in May 2006 her only daughter passed away. He had this to say about his losses.

*"I had almost accepted the death of my wife; maybe because she had been sick for a long time which obviously allowed me some time to be with her. Anyway I had anticipated her death because of her long illness. But when my daughter died it rekindled the pain endured to me by my wife's death. My daughter's death impacted on me so much, because I had thought that I was going to leave the house and everything else with her, but she went before me, which should not be so. Then emphatically he said **ndakarwadziwa! Ndakarwadziwa** (it pained me! it pained me) and, then he took a deep breath and kept quite and went on to say *one of the nights I thought of her **handina kumuona** (I did not see her) I was troubled, I fell from my bed and lay on the floor for some hours unconscious, **chinhu chiya! Chinhu chiya chakaipa** (that experience! that experience is bad). If it happens again it would kill me. If it had happened in my dream I would have died. It is dangerous; if one is standing he would collapse and die or get paralyzed. When I gained consciousness I said this is dangerous."**

This discussion was important for Mr. Chitongo because it allowed him to connect and retell the stories of his double loss to the trauma that expressed itself when he was lying on bed at night. According to Kubler- Ross (1969) what he experienced in the night shows that he was in a

depressive stage as indicated in chapter 2 item 2.3(iv). However the case study below describes denial.

Case study 2: **Mr. Munemo said that. *Kana ukanzwa nezwe rufu rwehama yako unopera simba*** (*When you hear about the death of a close relative you lose strength*) ***Asi semurume unofanira kuchemera mumwoyo*** (*but as a man you should cry quietly*). The author noticed suppression of feelings in Mr. Munemo. He went on to say; *you ask yourself a lot of questions about the remaining children, whether it is true that the person is gone forever. Normally you want to be alone. Moreover a man is not expected to show excess loss of control because when relatives come they will be asking you to control yourself in order to be able to meet with your in-laws. When a man suppresses emotions he sometimes makes illogical decisions seku Kuda kuita zvinhu zvose ega* (*for example wanting to do all things alone*), *buying a coffin or taking control of the funeral arrangements, rejecting a helping hand, thus making it hard for him to find time to grieve.* Mr. Munemo believes that men console those who show emotional weakness not those who suppress emotions. However he has a strong feeling that the emotionally strong need to be cared for because unexpressed emotions can be very dangerous. He said that, *men hide their emotions because they are socialized to do so from childhood. When you suppress emotions, you also find it difficult to relate with people and you become unfriendly to your family members, at times you think of wanting to commit suicide. Suppression of emotions can finally cause stroke.* Andrew's view on who should be consoled shows how males are disenfranchised. He acknowledged that males who are task focused will be suppressing grief; this shows a denial stage referred to in chapter 2 item 2.3 (i). However the story below shows that family conflicts would confine the bereaved to a depressive stage.

Case study 3: **Mr. Mutandwa** said that: *When I first learnt that my wife had difficulties in breathing, I told my daughter to drive us to hospital. My wife died soon after we had arrived at the hospital. I had remained standing in the waiting room. A nurse came to call me, upon arriving at her hospital bed, the sister in charge informed me that my wife had died, and that **I should be strong for my daughters and my son.** I shed a few tears, and then arranged to take the body to mortuary. 'A man has to be strong because, most funeral arrangements are done by him. The in-laws may be wanting you to explain to them what happened and at times blame you for not telling them of the illness in time, it is at this time when the in-laws will be reminding you of the remaining*

amount of their **lobola** (dowry). Normally the in-laws do not care that you have lost a wife . What they are interested in is the unpaid items on their list. He said; **Kanganwa! kanganwa kuti vachakunzwira tsitsi** (Forget! forget that they will feel sorry for you). Can you see why I say that a man need not waste too much time in tears than in planning ahead? **Unofanira kupfundika Shungu** (You must bury your emotion). It is also easy for a man to suffer a stroke or a heart attack especially during body viewing which is one of the hardest times to the bereaved. **Ini ndakatadza kudzora misodzi yangu** (I failed to control my tears). Mr. Mutandwa acknowledged the support he received from the community and church during the funeral. He however felt that men don't care much for each other **kana murume akafirwa anotarisisira kuti vamwe vake vamushanyire shure kokuviga umwe wake**(when a man loses a loved one he expects other men to visit him but men do not make that effort of making a follow up visit after burial). Mr. Mutandwa showed how family conflicts hinder the process of grief. This shows that family practices would delay males to heal by keeping them in a depressive stage (refer to chapter 2: 2.3(iv)).

Case study 4: Mr. Magomo is one of the dedicated old men in Murewa circuit. He lost his wife a few years ago. He shares his story in the following way:

*When a man loses a wife his first reaction to the news is that of getting annoyed, but just for a few minutes. My wife died when I was sitting with other members of the family in the house in which she laid. I was informed of her death by a woman who was seated near her bed, that **atisiya** (she had passed away us). I immediately got annoyed that she had left me, but I was not shocked. I later thought whose wife did I want to die? After all death comes to everyone that is living. Mr Magomo further said, as a man I did not shed tears. When asked what makes men find it difficult to cry. He had this to say; *the way we express our emotions is different. A men should not express emotions like women who shed tears, hit themselves to the ground, at some funerals women faint, do you know what fainting is?* He asked. The author said yes. *It is condemned to express emotions like that; a man should grieve for a short period, because he has a lot to do. Therefore he has to be strong.**

Case study 5: Mr. Murombo said that; *When my son died I was immediately troubled and I shed a few tears. Mr. Murombo* feels that men should cry but not in the presence of people because everything else at the funeral depends upon their initiatives. *Men should cry for a shorter period. If a man cries for a long time two or three respected women or men would approach him and ask him to*

control his emotions. These people may, if a man persists, rebuke him. When men came to console Mr. Murombo at the funeral of his son they said 'It is not your will that your son has left you, so stop crying and plan ahead. If you keep on crying everything will be at stand still. Mr Murombo felt that men who came at his son's funeral encouraged him through these words but like Plato he cried at night (refer to item 2.6.3).

Case study 6: **Brother Caston** lost his father 2 years ago. He had this to say concerning suppression of emotions. *A man should not shed tears or cry when a wife dies. He has to be strong. If he cries how is he going to console his children? He has to tell the children that **vanangu ndirikurwadziwa norufu rwa mai venyu asi hapana zvokuita** (my children I am grieving about the death of your mother but there is nothing I can do). **Asi kana wava oga unofanira kuchema nokuti unova ne guilt conscious yokuti mufi ahati chinyi** (but when you are alone you must cry because of guilt conscious that the deceased would be unhappy with you).* This is a belief that is common among many Shona people of Zimbabwe. *When asked what would be the after effects of suppression of grief? Caston said that it can cause death to those people who are already sick. We hear of people dying after their football team has lost a match. He further says that; when a man loses a wife or child after burial people should not visit him because they remind him of the death. They should just meet at Clubs or church. It is important to be visited by a pastor only because friends say a lot of rubbish when they visit. He thinks grieving takes a long time because of the problems of distribution of property and the demand of **lobola (dowry) which is a prerequisite for a** another wife. *If you are poor that means it is difficult to remarry and that might affect your health.**

Case study 7: **Rev. Chiwundura** believes that, *the first reaction to the loss of a loved one is that of shock or denial. Culturally men are expected to be in control. Men try by all means to hide their grief by drinking beer. Some cry better when they are drunk and say all that is in their mind, though it is not a good method of expressing grief it is therapeutic. Moreover it is easy to help someone who shows emotions and say out his mind whether he is drunk or not than someone who keeps quiet. Your right is not the same as the right for the bereaved. The problem is that people have misinterpreted the bible on many issues that affect their life. If grief is not expressed, it is a cause of accidents, when driving, at work, affect health relationships, causes heart attack or high blood pressure. The bereaved men should be helped by our presence and we should listen to what they are*

saying as we continue to support them. Morrison observed that males suppress the process of grief by excess beer drinking even before burial and that this has led to conflict and fighting at many funerals thus delaying healing. However, in the next case study the respondent strongly felt that expression of feelings by shedding tears was not the only way of grieving.

Case study 8: **Mr. Dzapasi** said that: *when I lost my son, I did not cry. I controlled my emotions. Personally I find it difficult to cry. But it does not mean that I did not feel the pain I did; it is only that I do not have tears. Asi murume hake anofanira kushinga (but a man has to be strong). If you cry what will women do (refer to Socrates in item 2.6.1 page 36). Suppression of grief does not cause death unless someone was already sick. Men should visit each other when their friend is in difficulties to fellowship; but they do not have that courage and love.* Although Mr. Dzapasi felt that there was no need to cry he acknowledged that some males who lose loved ones do cry. But he did not expect males to cry. The above case studies show that males should control their emotions. The author noted that males who were between 60 -80 years of age strongly felt that it was women’s business to shed tears and that males should be strong. Generally males want to process their grief among males who accept them. Below data is presented, analysed and interpreted through tables in detail.

Table 1 Distribution of respondents in bereavement by age

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
21-40	3	23
41-60	4	31
61-80	6	46
Total	13	100

A considerable number of respondents were between 61- 80 years of age showing that most of the responses were from custodians of traditional values systems.

Table 2 **Distribution of respondents by type of loss suffered**

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Loss suffered		
Wife	5	38
Child	4	31
Parent	4	31
Total	13	100

The losses suffered were of family members with whom they had invested their love. Thirty eight percent of the bereaved were those who lost their spouses and are between 61-80 years.

Table 3 **Perception on how males react to the death of loved ones**

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Shock/denial	12	92
Anger	1	8
other	0	0
Total	13	100

All the respondents except one indicated that their immediate reactions to death were surprise, shock and confusion.

Table 4 Perception of the church and society on how men are socialized to grieve

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Socialization		
Express emotions freely	0	0
Control emotions	13	100
Other	0	0
Total	13	100

All respondents thought that the church and society expect men to be emotionally strong when faced with the death of a loved one.

Table 5 Perception on how societies react to inexpressive grief among males

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Reactions		
Sign of strength	11	85
Sign of weakness	0	0
Sign of both of the above	2	15
Total	13	100

Almost all respondents (85%) indicated that inexpressiveness of grief among the males is considered a sign of strength by the society; with 15% of those who thought that society sees it as both weakness and strength.

Table 6 Perception on the tragedy of inexpressive grief

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Tragedy of grief		
Cause death	3	23
Does not cause death	0	0
Cause illness or behaviors that lead to death	10	77
Total	13	100

Seventy –seven percent (77 %) of the respondents think that suppression of grief causes illness that lead to death.

Table 7 Perception on visits after burial by church members

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Visits		
Visited	0	0
Not Visited	13	100
Other	0	0
Total	13	100

All respondents indicated that the church did not make pastoral visits with them after they had lost their loved ones.

Table 8 Perception on what men expect when they are visited

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Expectations of men		
Fellowship but avoid the loss topic	10	77
Fellowship and refer to the lose topic	3	23
Other	0	0
Total	13	100

A considerable number of the respondents (77 %) strongly felt that when they are visited they do not want to discuss or refer to the loss.

Table 9 Perception on the role of mourning ceremonies in grief process

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Ceremony		
Helpful in grief process	13	100
Not helpful in grief process	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	13	100

All respondents believe that mourning ceremonies successfully transport the bereaved through shock and bring them back to their normal status and relations.

Table 10 Perceptions on Practices of the society that may delay males to go through the normal grieving process

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
What hinders grief process		
Family Conflicts	12	92
Lack of resources	1	8
Other	0	0
Total	13	100

A considerable number of respondents indicated that certain funeral rites may arouse family conflicts.

Table 11 Perception on church practices that may delay the grief process among males

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Church support		
Encouraging emotional Strength	0	0
poor attendance at mourning ceremonies	9	69
lack of follow up visits after burial	12	92

The respondents felt that the church should participate in mourning ceremonies and visit with them after the burial ceremony.

The **above perceptions simply** suggest that; males find it difficult to express grief when they are emotionally injured by the death of a loved one. In everyday life males encounter greater challenges of masculinity that lead to suppression of the process of grief thereby increasing their vulnerability to illness that can cause death. The above perceptions revealed **emotional closeness** and **stress** as two major factors in grief process and these are discussed below:

4.7 Emotionally close families

The way in which some families function can hinder the necessary grieving process of its male members. The value which societies place on expressing emotions has a significant influence on how well family members deal with grief. In some families, sadness and crying are seen as signs of weakness or even madness. In these settings, it may be hard for males to adequately grieve a loss and this leads to later problems. Members share their joys and sorrows without fear of being rebuked or judged or they can rebuke each other on unhealthy expression of grief, while maintaining their closeness. Sharing in this way becomes part of the process for caring. From the above we move toward stress caused by the death of a loved one.

4.8 The stress caused by the death of a loved one

This can result in a situation where conflicts and arguments take place within the extended family, thereby resulting in some family members closing off emotionally and becoming isolated or developing stuck or complicated grief. When males are attacked by a series of crises that hit too close together they are simply left unable to cope with the demands of everyday life, let alone the aftermath of the latest few crises-experiencing piled –up grief (Balswick J &J 1997:40).

The above idea can be evidenced among the Shona people of Zimbabwe. When a wife dies the husband is expected to pay off the remaining requirements for dowry, before or in order for the burial to take place. The settlements of several issues during the funeral has strained relationships and made it difficult for particular rituals to be done thereafter, hence making it difficult for healing to take place. Bowman (1998) notes that:

The religious rites and practices surrounding the process of mourning can help the bereaved individual to engage all his feelings in a framework that makes them not only acceptable but also easily expressible....the group practices that make the person feel comfortable with his own deep feelings speed the normal work of mourning and help prevent those delayed reactions that are the product of unresolved grief feelings (Bowman 111, G W 1998:118).

The process of grief which is initiated and concluded by the extended family through these rituals is delayed because of the stress that is brought about by the conflicts in some families, as indicated in the stories with males during this research. An analyses of particular rites in Zimbabwe has shown that under certain circumstances, the performance of certain funeral rites have raised conflicts during the funeral. Furthermore the insensitivity of the church in its pastoral role has affected the spiritual and physical wellbeing among many bereaved males.

4.9 Preliminary conclusion

The study has established that males in Zimbabwe suppress the process of grief when they lose a loved one, though the Christian faith makes no claim to erase grief. Males said it is important to suppress emotions because it helps them to deal with issues that need their attention. All these require a man to be strong and also because society expects them to be emotionally strong.

However 85% of the respondents believed that suppression of emotions is a sign of strength that should be encouraged among males. Fifteen percent of the respondents who are both 80 years old said when they lost their loved ones they did not shed tears though the losses were painful experiences. It was generally accepted in this study, that males do cry or express more grief emotions in private than in public. A considerable number of respondents said that the pang of the loss is felt at night normally when friends and relatives have all gone to their homes. Mr. Murombo had this to say *Unochema usiku uri mumagumbezi* (you weep at night in bed). Which then shows that males grieve but they need time and space in order to immerse themselves in grief, like David in the Bible they would want time and space to express grief in a way that makes them feel comfortable, before they resume their duties (II Samuel 19:8). Therefore a Pastoral care therapist should help the society's attitude towards expression of emotions by males. **Society should allow both control and full expressions of emotions, when and how should depend upon individuals**

not the community. Nevertheless the community should continue to value the importance of the public manifestation of grief through mourning rituals. The church's participation in these rituals should demonstrate an informed theology of grief and about life after death (resurrection). The poor pastoral responses by the church expressed by all the respondents may make it difficult for the church in nurturing those willing to walk through the valleys of grief.

Respondents felt that some bereaved people can easily be stuck in the valleys of grief if the Christian community does not visit them after burial of their loved ones. They indicated that this is the time they needed much support because of the many pressures they faced, that were both intra and interpersonal as well as spiritual. One respondent said *unenge uchinda kubvunza ne zvekuroora asi unoshaya varume vechechi vaungabvunza meaning* (you might need information from your fellow males on re-marriage but there is no one to ask). In chapter five the author provides concluding thoughts and gives a way forward of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 Concluding thoughts as a way forward

The major objective of this thesis was to explore how men suppress emotions when they lose loved ones. Several stories were shared. The whole process began with the author's personal story. The death of his father challenged him as the first born in a family of seven boys and two girls. This research has helped the author to knit the early childhood fragmented experiences, and to re-tell it in light of the several reactions to losses he has experienced in life. However his supervisor twice challenged him by saying 'I can see your problem even from your writing that you have not yet been healed.' This made the author aware that his childhood experiences that were part of and embedded in his socialization obstructed him from being healed. The research journey has affirmed the Zimbabwean saying that *chitsva chirimurutsoka* (new knowledge is acquired through exposure). This is because the researcher has been exposed to the fears of the bereaved males which he had taken for granted for the past 20 years in his ministry. Moreover he was challenged by the importance attached to mourning rituals by males in the society and how they wished the Christian community participated in them. Previously he had thought that burial was the most important ritual, which enables one to complete his/her journey of bereavement.

The author has also learnt that males express grief differently from women especially in the way they cry. This is not the only way one can express grief, because some males would want to cry but they are unable to, while others have a lot of tears which they allow to flow when time and space is created, and others talk or sing as a way of expressing of grief. Therefore, knowledge on these reactions should be shared with the community in order that, it is embedded within its social practices of mourning as discussed in 5.1.

5.1 Practical Theology and Social Action

According to Willows et al (2000), critical prophetic voices from within practical theology have, for many years, consistently sought to challenge individualistic tendencies and remind us of the need to greater involvement in, and reflect, on the wider social and political aspects of the pastoral task (Willows & Swinton 2000: 21).

Pastoral theologies emerge out of human encounters and institution from real conversation with the actual human beings especially in the area of brokenness. They are best and most usefully constructed within communities whether ecclesiastical or other, where they are enriched, made relevant and have a positive value in helping people understand and grasp their situations.

And it is in communities and between communities that these theologies will be best criticized, modified and expanded (Willows et al 2000: 55). The church should intervene in situations that may threaten the health process of dealing with grief. For an example, when people are married they tend to ignore the previous arrangements they would have made with the in-laws, on paying lobola (dowry), which lead to conflicts when there is a death. These are issues people should deal with when there is no death. Males have caused their own problems in this area of life. Practical theology should therefore help communities to find ways of avoiding conflicts, in order to minimize situations and circumstances, and conditions that will be the breeding ground of pathologies in the process of grief among males.

5.2 Helping Males to Grieve

Practical theology should help **males to develop new ways of thinking about being human as well as being men.** They should be encouraged to use strategies for coping that acknowledge their vulnerability, when they are emotionally injured by the death of the loved ones. It would be healthier for men to discover different views of being human in order to be more open to the gift of tears and the process of grief. Paul's letter to the Corinthians reminds us to be mature in order to give up false means of thinking. He says "When I was a Child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a Child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (1Cor 13:11). Paul is reminding us to deal with issues of life in a more mature way. 'Men are more likely to avoid confronting their sadness by focusing on activities and chores' (Canary & Emmers-Sommer, 1997). Paul and Canary are simply inviting males **to be honest with their emotions and to avoid fighting their true selves.**

In the gospel of John, Jesus informs us of the power of knowledge that may lead to healing by the following words, which were said to his disciples "*If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, the truth will make you free*" (John 8:32), males should be encouraged to revisit the cultural constructed myths about expression of emotions. The

deconstruction of some of the constructed myths does not mean that, men should express feelings in the same way as women. The researcher suggests that men **should face their grief in their own way**. Thus society should allow them to cry, show shock, anger, bargain, and depression and accept the loss without labeling them as weak or disenfranchising them. Helping males to recognize the tragedy of what they have internalized about power and masculinity will contribute to their self understanding and possibly avoid self blame, and other pathologies in the process of healing. The journey requires of the bereaved males to take courage in reconciling their grief and making the necessary steps to begin to recover and live again (Ashton and Ashton 1996:114). While the author agrees with the idea of males taking courage, it is important that the society supports males in this journey that leads to healing, because healthy life is sustained within the community. Moreover in Zimbabwe people say *kana uchinda kukurumidza kufamba famba wega asi kana uchida kupfupikirwa nerwendo famba nerunzhinji*, (if you want to walk fast walk alone, but if you want to walk longer walk with others). The bereaved males need the community that accepts them and correct their misconceptions about self in their predicaments. The influence of the church in this area of healing is undisputable. The church's influences in issues of existential nature have always been important. As a result its theology of grief should be relevant and meaningful to the community in healing.

5.3 The influence of the community in healing

While a grieved person is attended to, as an individual in therapy healing and sustenance of his health takes place within the community. In the African context one can not privatize the healing process. No one wanting to experience healing can do so without being ready to experience it within a community. Luke in Acts of the Apostles writes about the works of the community that would be important for healing; learning, fellowship, sharing meals and prayer (Acts 2:42). No one wanting to journey with Jesus can do so without being ready to experience his grief within the community. Kremer (1981) recognizes that a cohesive family can be a refuge and source of strength during difficult times. Similarly the Balswicks writing on "learning to cope" affirms that:

In all this, it should be apparent that recovery from stressful situations is aided by healthy relationships. When you have people in your life who care about you, it's easier to deal with difficult situations. These caring people may be members of the family or close friends. During

painful times, most people look first to other members of the immediate family for support, then to members of the extended family, and, finally, to friends (Balswick 1997:41).

The author acknowledges Balswick's concept of recovery from stressful situation and values the sense of Communal life which reflects the general way of life among the Zimbabwean people. It is therefore, the role of the church to engage the society in developing ways of dealing with existential issues without undermining the beliefs of the people as it tries to help males to grieve.

Of course according to Coetzee et al (1998) culture can be seen as “an assemblage of texts, “as acted documents,” imaginative works built out of social material (Neuger & Poling 1997, Coetzee & Roux 1998) and that meanings are constructed and communicated between members of a group, tribe, community or society, whatever the case may be meaning is guaranteed, even if the meanings ascribed do differ. Men should assemble a culture that helps them create, time to talk about their painful and difficult situations in the Men's fellowships, Class meetings, preachers and the pastor should help the community to develop and assemble a culture of encouraging grieving as a normal way of dealing with loss. Since culture is seen an ‘assemblage of the text’ built from social material then practical theology as social activity should engage the community to construct a model that is therapeutic to all human beings since community has the human resources to do it.

Moreover Coetzee et al (1998) writes that:

Central to African metaphysics are religious beliefs, relating to the African conception of God, the universe, and their interrelations. Further notions such as spirit, causality, person, space and time, and reality, in their various conceptions, play a significant role in the life of Africans as they grapple with existential realities through phenomena such as religion, ancestral veneration, witch craft, magic (Coetzee & Roux 1998:138).

The above quotation simply shows that the African way of life is intimating with each other, as a result you cannot be lonely even in your grief. Therefore practical theology should build bridges in order to reach out to males within their communities because, “**African metaphysics is holistic in nature, (therefore) Reality is seen as a closed system so that everything hangs together and is affected by any change in the systems**” (Coetzee et al 1998:138). If the healing process is

assimilated into this closed system then health practices will be embedded in **mourning rituals** in every community.

5.4 The role of mourning rituals in grief

Grief is a process that can lead to early acceptance or delayed acceptance of death, depending upon cultural practices (socialization), childhood development (refer to chapter 2 item 2.2), and attachment to the object of love that had been lost and exposure to other cultures. However the interpretation of acceptance and what symbolizes it varies according to cultures as mentioned elsewhere in this study. ‘Holding on’ to the deceased in an African bereavement process, if well attended to, through funeral rituals would lead to healing. In the western concept of grief process a continued attachment to the deceased would be interpreted as pathological grieving. While in the African concept of mourning the true stage of healing is achieved when the bereaved individual manages to re-invest his libido in the deceased and move on with life.

In grief, the reality of absence lives with the bereaved, and is never forgotten. The gap is a reality; the painful experience might diminish but the loss is never forgotten. In the African context to ‘let go’ would easily lead to pathological grieving because the extended family is formed by the living and those who have gone before us (deceased). To let go would therefore lead to neurotic behavior, because it brings a feeling of receding the loved one in the family. Moreover when confronted with hardships family members would think in terms of their attitude towards the deceased (as indicated in chapter 4 by Caston in case study 6 item 4.6). And the problem would be dealt with by re-telling the story of or referring to the deceased, for example one would say “your mother did not like you to do things in this way” and that reference to the deceased helps resolve conflicts. The people of Zimbabwe have dealt with suppression of the process of grief through the funeral and mourning rituals. (Ritual as defined in chapter 1; item 1.7.4). According to Cook et al, these rituals are designed to help people to achieve four grief work tasks.

- ❖ To accept the reality of the loss
- ❖ To experience the pain of grief (emotions, feelings, thoughts are expressed thus reducing suppression of the process of grief because it involves the full participation of the bereaved)
- ❖ To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing
- ❖ To emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life (Cook et al 1998:100)

The above tasks should therefore enable the pastor to minister to males and dialogue with the communities in re- interpreting and reframing rituals that connect them to the Christian tradition of caring for God’s people. Moreover among the Africans rituals have often provided positive therapy for both individuals and bereaved families. These rituals symbolize guiding, healing, reconciliation, sustenance or continuity of life for the bereaved and deceased within the extended family. They (rituals) have provided environments that have brought the bereaved to face the pains of death. Men have expressed their grief during these rituals. In Zimbabwe the guiding, healing, reconciliation and sustenance is done by consulting *ng’angas* African doctors (medicine man), especially in those families that have fewer male members who have strong Christian background. **Unless the Christian community takes its shepherding role in grief counseling seriously, the individual and the community of faith will find it difficult to complete the process of grief within the parameters of the Christian faith.** As already indicated in Chapter 4, by males, the full participation at funeral and memorial services by the church and society would promote social, physical and spiritual healing to the individual and the community as detailed below:

5.5 Funeral and memorial services; funeral and mourning rituals fulfill functions such as;

- ❖ Give recognition that a life has been lived
- ❖ Confirms the dignity and worth of human beings
- ❖ Provide public recognition (in a structured way) that death has occurred
- ❖ Allow the bereaved to publicly express and share the loss
- ❖ Facilitate the expression of grief consistent with cultural values
- ❖ Provide an immediate support network for the bereaved
- ❖ Serve as a rite of passage from one status to another for both the deceased and the bereaved
- ❖ Provide an opportunity to re- establish contact with distant relatives and a larger society and promote group cohesion (Cook et al 1998:128), can build family relationships and assist in the realignment of family roles such as appointment of a *Sarapavana* (guardian)

Respondents in this research showed concern on the poor attendance of church members at the mourning rituals such as *nyaradzo* (memorial ceremony that is done 2 to 5 weeks after burial). This ceremony is carried out at night; there will be dancing and the calling out of the deceased’s name, and venting of emotions. After the night vigil, family members gather, in the morning, to guide the

remaining spouse, and distribute part of the deceased's items and deal with the issues that may need immediate attention. It is a day on which a *Sarapavana* (guardian) would be appointed to help the remaining spouse look after the remaining children, pending the final ceremony *kurova guva* (**the cleansing of the spirit of the dead**) that takes place after a year, at which ceremony a wife is given to the widower. This depends upon the type of relationship that existed between the in-laws. Males have indicated that the success of the process of grief has largely depended upon the proper completion of these ceremonies, which depend upon the co-operation and participation of the extended family members. It is however the pastor's role to help build a theology of grief that enables the males to emerge from the valley of grief with convincing sincerity of God's richest blessings.

5.6 Theology of Grief

The deaths of our loved ones have always brought with them various reactions among many people. Males in particular, have found it difficult to openly express their grief, because of two major beliefs that have been encountered in their loss. On one hand society has taught them to be strong when faced with grief, on the other the extra biblical beliefs which are neo-platonic, influenced Christian views on immortality of the soul and resurrection. The promise of resurrection comes as a solace to the grieved, because the hard facts about a state of non-being are a challenge to male existence.

However, the Old and New Testament has in no way shown us that grief should be suppressed or avoided by those who are faithful. Our study of grief in the Bible has exposed how the great men of faith and our Lord Jesus Christ immersed themselves in grief. Christ faced his death with full grief and trust in God. When our Lord stood in the midst of mourners he mourned with them by engaging with them in their tears and grief. The writer to the Hebrews puts it in the following way:

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchiz'edek (Hebrews 5: 7)

If males want to follow Christ they should follow his examples in times of sorrow and in their grief journey. Like our Lord Jesus Christ males should be courageous enough to face grief and internalize it, in order to take control of it. The Strommens had this to say about their grief:

Therefore, Irene and I made a conscious decision to face our grief the way one walks into the full fury of a storm.... [W]e decided against asking God to heal the wound or remove the pain created by Dave's death, because that would suggest allowing Dave to recede in our memory. Believing that god transferred him for another purpose –a higher –calling-We decided also to cultivate an active sense of his living on the other side of an invisible wall “in an adjoining room.” We were determined to maintain Dave in the present tense as one who continues to work with us in carrying out God's mission (Strommen M, P. & Strommen A, I. 1996).

The above quotation reveals to us that in processing grief the intensity of pain diminishes with time as God works through us, restoring us to a time of acceptance. However, a time of mourning should be respected and faced, since it is during this time that **God does meets us to comfort, and to mould us**. Moreover Jesus says to those who mourn “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). The author likes the way Luke puts it “Blessed are you that **weep now**, for you shall laugh” (Luke 6:21). Jesus informs us through the gospels that God descends on those who are in need of comfort, those who are aware of the dangers of suppressing the process of **grief now** because they face it by being honest; mournful and tearful.

Males, in this research, forbade reference to the loved one's death when visited few weeks after burial, in a way they would not like to experience the facts about the loss. But in life the greater the pain is in protecting ourselves from it. Pastors should therefore help males to avoid false assumptions about masculinity and the misconceptions about resurrection, and immortality of the soul. Nothing should give charge or stand between our grief and Christ if we want to heal. Putting it in the words of Paul in his letter to the Romans:

Who shall bring charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand side of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulations, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or distress, or peril, or sword?... [F]or I am

sure that neither death, nor life,.... nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8: 33-39).

Paul, in the above verses to the Romans, informs us that the Christ who loves us allows us to cry and express emotions. And that He himself found it difficult to control His emotions as He walked toward the grave of a loved one. Nothing should therefore make us feel embarrassed or ashamed in displaying the deep hurts of our mind and heart or separate us from the love of God, who gave us the dam of tears and the emotions that help us to deal with loss as we walk through the valleys of grief.

5.7 Summary

The researcher now realizes that males in Zimbabwe need pastoral care before and when they lose their loved ones and that God has allotted them with the same emotions, which they should express like all human beings. Shedding of tears is important in processing grief. Therefore society and Christians should not modify the Biblical perceptions by non -biblical thoughts, in their attempt to deal with the anxiety of non –being or when trying to address the problem of suppression of the grief process among **males**. The reader, however, needs to be aware that the males in the African communities need to address other issues that would delay the process of grief through rituals. These rituals help males deal with anger, shame, emptiness which are some of the factors in the process, of grief that put males at risk of subsequent illness or behaviors that may lead to their death. Males ought to remember that; while physical pain can be a result of suppression of grief in bereavement and may be relieved by drugs, no antibiotics can ease the pains of losing our loved ones. Unless grief is faced and expressed realistically, it will be difficult to appreciate that our loved ones are as much in God's hands as the bereaved themselves. Above all it is the prophetic task of the pastor to create awareness among the Christian and the Contemporary society on existential issues. The Methodist church should therefore provide an integrated approach to healing males that is embedded in people's culture. Therefore the pastor should be the connecting link between the grieving males to bereaved males, grieving males to the bereaved community and the grieving males to the chief shepherd (Christ).

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Appendix A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE ON BEREAVEMENT COUNSELING

- 1 How do men react upon hearing or witnessing the death of a loved one?

- 3 What is the relationship between your private grief and your public mourning?

- 4 What particular forms of cultural thought and practices encourage the denial and suppression of grief among males?

- 5 What impact does suppression of grief process have on the bereaved males?

- 6 After a loved one is buried, how do the church and community help males to adapt to the environment to which the deceased is missing?

- 7 What particular forms of Christian or Cultural thought and practices make it difficult for males to go through the grieving process?

APPENDIX B

SHONA INTERPRETATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE 'A'

(BANDIKO RE CHISHONA)

HURUKURO NEVARUME PAMUSORO PENZIRA DZAVANORATIDZA NADZO SHUNGU KANA VAFIRWA NEHAMA YEPAMWOYO.

- 1 Varume kana vafirwa nehama yavo yepamwoyo vanoita sei pavanozvinzwa?
- 2 Mungatsanangure sei kuchema kunobatsira nekusinga batsiri?
- 3 Pane hukama here pakati pekuchema kwepachena nekweparuvande?
- 4 Itsika dzipi dzinoitwa ne Chechi neve Hukama dzinobatsira Varume kana vafirwa kugamuchira rufu?
- 5 Zvinyi zvinoitika kana murume akarega kuratidza kana kuti akasabudisa shungu kana afirwa nehama yepa mwoyo?
- 6 Dedzipi nzira dzinoshandiswa neve Chechi kana neMhuri dzinobatsira kunyaradza varume shure kwe kuviga mufi (shure kwerufu)?
- 7 Zvinyi zvingakonzera kuti murume atore nguva yakareba kuchema rufu rwe Hama yake yepa mwoyo?

APPENDIX C

A PASTORAL APPROACH ON SUPPRESSION OF THE GRIEF PROCESS AMONG MALES: A REFLECTION OF AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE IN ZIMBABWE

Consent form for the respondents

Ananias has explained the purpose of an interview between him and me on the above research topic. I understand that his findings are to be used for his research project in a **Masters Degree in Practical Theology**. I also understand that I am free to ask for clarity at any stage of the interview.

I know and understand that:

- All personal information shared by me will remain confidential throughout the research project
- Taking part in this research is voluntary and that no payment or compensation for participation will be expected.
- I allow him to use my contributions in his research project.
- I am also aware that his promoters will read the material
- I am free to terminate the interview without any feeling of regret.

I am willing to share my experiences and views in this research project.

I prefer that my name /or Pseudonym be used in the report or any other publications, resulting from the information I share in the research.

Name to be use

Signature of the participant

Signature of the researcher

Signature of the witness.....

Date of the interview

APPENDIX D
SHONA INTERPRETATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE ‘C’
(BANDIKO RE CHISHONA)

HURUKURO NEVARUME PAMUSORO PENZIRA DZAVANORATIDZA NADZO
SHUNGU KANA VAFIRWA NEHAMA YEPAMWOYO.

Chibvumirano Chehurukuro

Ananias atsanangura chinangwa chehurukuro yaitwa pakati pangu naye iri pamusoro pekuzvidzora kunoita varume kana vawirwa ne nhamo yemundiwa wavo. Andizivisa kuti zvichabuda mu hurukuro iyi zvichashandiswa mukudzidza kwake kwe Masters Degree in Practical Theology. Andizivisazwe kuti ndakasununguka kubvunza mibvunzo pandinenge ndisina kuzwisisa.

- **Zvandichataura zveupenyu hwangu haazozvibundisi pachena.**
- **Hurukuro iyi haina muripo.**
- **Ndamubvumira kushandisa zvatichakurukura.**
- **Ndinoziva kuti vakuru vake vacha verenga pfungwa dzangu ne dzake.**
- **Ndakasununguka kugura hurukuro iyi naye pasina mubvunzo.**

Ndabvuma uyezve ndakasununguka kupinda muhurukuro iyi

Ndinoda kuti ashandise zita rangu /asashandise zita rangu

Ngaashandise rokuti.....
Runyoro rwangu (respondent).....
Runyoro rwa Ananias.....
Runyoro rwa Gosa.....
Musi.....