

**CARING FOR THE POOR, THE MARGINALIZED, AND THE OPPRESSED
(MATTHEW 25:31-46): A CASE STUDY OF OKE-OGUN BAPTIST CONFERENCE,
OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

In a country like Nigeria where poverty, marginalization, and oppression persist as pressing social issues, faith-based organizations play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. Therefore, this paper examines the theological and practical dimensions of the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference's commitment to social justice and care for the needy, grounded in the biblical foundation of Matthew 25:31-46. The Christian responsibility to support marginalized populations is the dominant motif of the selected passage. The historical development of the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference is then examined, highlighting its mission, vision, and previous efforts in social welfare. The paper details current outreach initiatives, including support for the poor, marginalized communities, and advocacy for the oppressed. Through case studies, it presents success stories, identifies ongoing challenges, and extracts valuable lessons for effective ministry. The role of community engagement, partnerships, and sustainable support systems is emphasized, underscoring the Church's pivotal role in driving social change. The article concludes with practical recommendations for enhancing the impact and sustainability of the Conference's social justice efforts.

Keywords: Poverty, Care for the needy, marginalized and oppressed, Social responsibility, Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference, Matthew 25:31-46.

Introduction

In a world where poverty, marginalization, and oppression persist as pressing social issues, faith-based organizations play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference stands as a guiding light of hope and compassion, embodying the teachings of Christ as expressed in Matthew 25:31-46, which emphasizes the moral imperative to care for "the least of these." This scripture serves as a guiding principle for the Conference's mission, inspiring its members to actively engage in the upliftment of the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed within their communities. Through various outreach programmes, advocacy efforts,

and community development initiatives, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference seeks not only to alleviate immediate suffering but also to empower individuals and families to break free from the cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement. This article explores the Conference's multifaceted approach to social justice, highlighting its commitment to living out the Gospel through tangible acts of service and solidarity with those in need.

Oke-Ogun, a region characterized by its rich cultural heritage and agricultural potential, faces significant challenges that hinder its development and the well-being of its inhabitants. Despite its resources, the area is plagued by widespread poverty and marginalization, which have become

entrenched in the socio-economic fabric of the community. The high levels of poverty in Oke-Ogun are exacerbated by limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Many residents rely on subsistence farming, which is often insufficient to meet their basic needs. The lack of infrastructure, such as roads and reliable electricity, further isolates these communities, making it difficult for them to engage in trade or access markets. Marginalization in Oke-Ogun is not only economic but also social and political. The voices of the local population are often overlooked in decision-making processes, leading to policies that do not address their specific needs.

This exclusion perpetuates a cycle of poverty, as residents are unable to advocate for resources or programmes that could improve their circumstances. Furthermore, systemic issues such as inadequate government support, corruption, and a lack of investment in rural development contribute to the ongoing struggles faced by the people of Oke-Ogun. As a result, many families remain trapped in a cycle of poverty, with limited prospects for upward mobility. Addressing the widespread poverty and marginalization in Oke-Ogun is critical for fostering sustainable development and improving the quality of life for its residents. This article seeks to explore the underlying causes of these issues, the impact on the community, and potential pathways for intervention and support.

Exposition on Matthew 25:31-46

Matthew 25:31-46 is a critical passage that articulates the criteria for judgment based on one's treatment of the marginalized and oppressed. In this text, Jesus describes the final judgment, where He, as the Son of Man, will separate people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats (Matt. 25:32). The righteous are those who have actively engaged in acts of compassion, such as feeding the hungry,

welcoming strangers, and visiting the sick and imprisoned (Matt. 25:35-36). This passage emphasizes that these acts of kindness are not merely social obligations but are integral to one's relationship with Christ, as He identifies Himself with the needy: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40).

Hermeneutical analysis of this passage reveals several layers of meaning. First, it underscores the notion of social responsibility within the Christian faith. The judgment is based not on belief alone but on the tangible expressions of faith through service to others (Horsley, 2018). This aligns with the broader biblical theme that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). The text also highlights the radical inclusivity of Jesus' message, as it calls for care not only for fellow believers but for all who are marginalized, thus challenging societal norms that often prioritize the powerful over the powerless (Bock, 2019). Also, the imagery of the sheep and goats serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of inaction. The goats, representing those who failed to act, are condemned not for overt wrongdoing but for their neglect of the needy (Matt. 25:41-46). This reinforces the idea that indifference to suffering is a serious moral failing within the Christian context (Nolland, 2005). In the context of the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference, this passage serves as a foundational text that inspires and motivates its members to engage in social justice initiatives and outreach programmes aimed at alleviating poverty and supporting marginalized communities.

Theological Implications of Caring for the Needy

The theological implications of caring for the needy, as articulated in Matthew 25:31-46, extend deeply into the fabric of Christian doctrine and practice. This passage not only emphasizes the

necessity of compassionate action but also frames such actions as integral to one's faith and relationship with God. The text presents a clear mandate that the treatment of the marginalized is directly linked to one's standing before Christ at the final judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). This connection highlights the idea that faith is not merely a personal or internal experience but is expressed through tangible acts of love and justice towards others (Sider, 2015). Theologically, this passage challenges the church to view social justice as a divine imperative. The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference, in its mission, embodies this understanding by prioritizing outreach programmes that address the needs of the poor and marginalized. The conference recognizes that neglecting the needy is not just a social failure but a spiritual one, as it contradicts the teachings of Jesus who identifies Himself with the least among us (Wright, 2016). This identification calls Christians to a radical form of discipleship that prioritizes service and advocacy for the oppressed, reflecting the heart of God for justice and mercy.

Furthermore, the implications of this teaching extend to the communal aspect of faith. Caring for the needy fosters a sense of community and solidarity among believers, as it encourages them to work together towards common goals of justice and compassion (Moltmann, 2015). The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference exemplifies this communal approach by mobilizing its members to engage in collective efforts aimed at alleviating poverty and addressing systemic injustices. This collective action not only serves the immediate needs of the marginalized but also cultivates a culture of empathy and responsibility.

Overview of Jesus' Teachings on Compassion and Justice

Jesus' teachings on compassion and justice are central to understanding the ethical framework of the Christian faith, particularly as they relate to the care of the

poor and marginalized. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus articulates a profound vision of social responsibility, emphasizing that one's treatment of the needy is a reflection of their relationship with Him. This passage serves as a clarion call for believers to embody compassion through actionable justice, illustrating that faith must be accompanied by works that uplift the oppressed (Bauckham, 2015). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus consistently demonstrates a commitment to social justice and compassion. He frequently engages with those on the margins of society, including the sick, the poor, and sinners, thereby challenging the social norms of His time (Horsley, 2018). For instance, in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus proclaims His mission to "proclaim good news to the poor" and "set the oppressed free," which encapsulates His ministry's focus on liberation and healing. This mission aligns closely with the teachings found in Matthew 25, where acts of kindness towards the least among us are equated with service to Christ Himself (Matt. 25:40).

The implications of Jesus' teachings extend to the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference, which seeks to live out these principles through various outreach initiatives. By prioritizing the needs of the marginalized, the conference reflects Jesus' call to action, emphasizing that true discipleship involves a commitment to justice and compassion (Sider, 2015). This commitment is not merely about charity; it is about transforming societal structures that perpetuate poverty and injustice, echoing Jesus' challenge to His followers to advocate for systemic change (Moltmann, 2015). Moreover, Jesus' parables often illustrate the importance of compassion and justice. Bock uses the case of The Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 that exemplifies the call to love one's neighbour beyond cultural and social boundaries, reinforcing the idea that compassion should be extended to all, regardless of their status (Bock, 2019). This teaching rings deeply

within the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference's mission, as it strives to break down barriers and foster inclusivity in its service to the community.

Historical Context of Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference

Origin and Development: The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has its roots in the broader history of Baptist missions in Nigeria, which began in the early 19th century. The conference was established in the Oke-Ogun region of Oyo State, Nigeria, as a response to the spiritual and social needs of the local communities. The origins of the conference can be traced back to the efforts of early missionaries who sought to spread the Christian faith and provide educational and social services to the people (Ogunyemi, 2017). In the late 1940s, the Baptist mission work in Oke-Ogun gained momentum, leading to the formation of local congregations that were eager to address the pressing issues of poverty and marginalization in their communities. The conference was officially established in 1967, bringing together various Baptist churches in the region under a unified structure aimed at fostering collaboration and resource sharing (Akinyemi, 2018). This development was significant, as it allowed for a more organized approach to ministry and outreach, particularly in addressing the needs of the poor and marginalized.

The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has since evolved to become a vital institution within the Nigerian Baptist Convention, playing a crucial role in promoting social justice and community development. Its mission has expanded to include various programmes aimed at alleviating poverty, providing education, and advocating for the rights of marginalized groups (Adeyemo, 2019). The conference's commitment to serving the needy aligns closely with the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46, underscoring the importance of compassion and justice in

the life of the church. Over the years, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has initiated numerous projects, including health clinics, educational programmes, and vocational training centers, all designed to uplift the community and provide support to those in need (Ogunyemi, 2017). These initiatives reflect the conference's understanding of its role as a servant to the community, embodying the call to care for the poor and marginalized as articulated in the Gospel.

Mission and Vision Statements:

The mission and vision statements of the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference reflect its commitment to addressing the needs of the poor, marginalized, and oppressed in alignment with the teachings of Jesus, particularly as articulated in Matthew 25:31-46. The conference's mission statement emphasizes the call to "proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ while serving the community through acts of compassion and justice" (Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference, "Mission Statement"). This mission underscores the belief that faith must be actively expressed through service, echoing the biblical mandate to care for the least among us. The vision of the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference is to create a "transformed community where every individual, regardless of their socio-economic status, experiences the love of Christ through tangible support and empowerment" (Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference, "Vision Statement"). This vision aligns closely with the theological implications of Matthew 25:31-46, where the care for the needy is not only a reflection of one's faith but also a pathway to communal transformation. By aspiring to foster an inclusive community, the conference seeks to break down barriers that often marginalize individuals based on poverty, disability, or social status (Adeyemo, 2019).

The mission and vision statements also highlight the importance of holistic development. The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference aims to address not only

spiritual needs but also physical, emotional, and social needs through various outreach programmes. These initiatives include health services, educational support, and vocational training, all designed to empower individuals and uplift communities (Akinyemi, 2018). This comprehensive approach reflects a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of faith and social justice, reinforcing the idea that true discipleship involves active engagement in the struggles of the marginalized. Moreover, the conference's commitment to advocacy for the oppressed is evident in its programs aimed at raising awareness about social injustices and mobilizing resources to support vulnerable populations. This aligns with the call in Matthew 25:40 to recognize Christ in the faces of the needy, urging believers to act with compassion and urgency (Wright, 2016).

Previous Initiatives for Social Welfare: The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has a rich history of initiatives aimed at promoting social welfare and addressing the needs of the poor, marginalized, and oppressed within its communities. These initiatives are rooted in the conference's commitment to the teachings of Jesus, particularly as reflected in Matthew 25:31-46, which emphasizes the importance of caring for "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40). Over the years, the conference has implemented various programmes designed to uplift individuals and families facing socio-economic challenges. One of the notable initiatives is the establishment of community health clinics that provide essential medical services to underserved populations. These clinics offer free or low-cost healthcare, including maternal and child health services, immunizations, and health education (Ogunyemi, 2017). The initiative not only addresses immediate health concerns but also promotes long-term well-being, reflecting the conference's holistic approach to care. By prioritizing health, the

Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference embodies the call to serve the sick and vulnerable, aligning with Jesus' ministry of healing.

In addition to the healthcare, the conference has been actively involved in educational initiatives aimed at empowering the youth and adults in the community. Programmes such as literacy classes, vocational training, and scholarship opportunities have been established to enhance educational access and skills development situated at *Ago Are*, a town in Oke-Ogun region. These efforts are crucial in breaking the cycle of poverty, as education is a powerful tool for social mobility. By investing in education, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference demonstrates its commitment to fostering a more equitable society, where individuals have the opportunity to improve their circumstances. Furthermore, the conference has organized food distribution programmes and relief efforts during times of crisis, such as natural disasters or economic downturns. These initiatives provide immediate assistance to families in need, ensuring that basic necessities are met (Adeyemo, 2019). The response to crises reflects the conference's understanding of the urgency of compassion, as articulated in Matthew 25:35, where Jesus highlights the importance of feeding the hungry and providing for those in distress.

The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has also engaged in advocacy efforts to address systemic issues affecting marginalized communities. By raising awareness about social injustices and mobilizing resources for those in need, the conference seeks to influence policies that promote equity and justice. This advocacy work aligns with the biblical mandate to speak up for the oppressed and defend the rights of the vulnerable, further emphasizing the church's role in societal transformation.

Current Socio-Welfare Programmes and Initiatives of Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference

Outreach Programmes for the Poor: The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has developed a variety of outreach programmes specifically designed to assist the poor and marginalized in its communities. These programmes are rooted in the teachings of Jesus, particularly the call to serve "the least of these" as outlined in Matthew 25:31-46. The conference recognizes that addressing the needs of the poor is not only a moral obligation but also a fundamental expression of Christian faith and discipleship (Sider, 2015). Such programmes are listed below:

i. **Food Security Programme.** One of the primary outreach initiatives is the food security programme. Its aim is to alleviate hunger and malnutrition among vulnerable populations. This programme includes regular food distribution events where families in need receive essential food items. The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference collaborates with local farmers and businesses to source food, ensuring that the assistance provided is both sustainable and community-oriented (Ogunyemi, 2017). By addressing immediate nutritional needs, the conference reflects the biblical mandate to feed the hungry, as highlighted in Matthew 25:35.

ii. **Health Outreach Programmes.** Another outreach programme the Oke Baptist Conference is embarking is health activities that provide free medical services to underserved communities. This responsibility is saddled on the health department of the conference. These programmes include health fairs, mobile clinics, and health education workshops that focus on preventive care and disease management. The emphasis on health care aligns with the conference's commitment to holistic well-being, recognizing that physical health is a critical component of

overall quality of life. By providing access to healthcare, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference seeks to embody Christ's healing ministry, serving those who are sick and in need (Wright, 2016).

iii. **Educational Support Initiative** is another significant outreach program aimed at empowering children and youth from low-income families. This initiative offers scholarships, school supplies, and tutoring services to ensure that children have access to quality education, through investing in education; the conference not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters long-term development and social mobility, reflecting the belief that education is a pathway out of poverty.

iv. **Vocational Training Programmes.** Furthermore, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has implemented vocational training programme designed to equip adults with practical skills that enhance employability. These programmes focus on various trades, such as tailoring, carpentry, and agriculture, providing participants with the tools they need to secure stable employment and improve their economic circumstances. This initiative aligns with the conference's vision of empowering individuals to become self-sufficient, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty.

v. **Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns.** This is another programme that addresses universal issues affecting the poor and marginalized. These campaigns aim to raise awareness about social injustices, promote human rights, and mobilize community support for vulnerable populations. By advocating for the rights of the oppressed, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference fulfills its.

Supports for Marginalized Communities: The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference as a regional body under the Nigerian Baptist Convention, has continued to demonstrate a clear biblical commitment to marginalized groups in society. This is

rooted in the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 25:31–46, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference interprets Christian responsibility as the active care for “the least of these,” which includes the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the sick, and those who are socially ostracized. In this passage, Christ equates service to the marginalized with service to Himself: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40). The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has embraced this mandate by initiating grassroots programmes that directly benefit disadvantaged populations. For instance, through its Royal Ambassadors and Women Missionary Union arms, the Conference provides scholarships, vocational training, and school supplies for orphans and children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Okore, 2023). These educational interventions aim to reduce systemic inequalities by empowering the younger generation with skills and access to opportunity.

Furthermore, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference partners with healthcare workers and NGOs to deliver medical outreach in remote and underserved communities in the Oke-Ogun region. These health missions provide free services including vaccinations, maternal care, and basic treatments, targeting areas where healthcare infrastructure is either weak or nonexistent (Ojewumi and Amodu, 2021). In doing so, the Conference embodies the holistic gospel that addresses both the spiritual and physical needs of humanity. The Conference also mobilizes food and clothing donations, particularly during emergencies such as natural disasters or economic downturns. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nigerian Baptist Convention, which includes the Oke-Ogun arm, distributed food items and hygiene kits to vulnerable populations? (Tribune online, 2020). This intervention demonstrated a practical application of Christ’s command

to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, as seen in Matthew 25.

Advocacy for the Oppressed:

Beyond material support, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference plays a prophetic role by advocating for the rights of the oppressed and speaking against societal injustices. In keeping with Matthew 25:31–46, where Jesus identifies Himself with the imprisoned and the stranger, the OBC has taken up the cause of those who suffer due to systemic neglect, discrimination, or violence. One of the major areas of advocacy involves human rights and social justice. The OBC, through its pastors and denominational leadership, publicly condemns gender-based violence, child abuse, and human trafficking. Sermons, public forums, and workshops are organized to educate congregants and community members about the importance of human dignity, a theological stance rooted in the imago Dei—the belief that all people are created in God’s image (Okegbile, 2021).

Likewise, the Conference works with legal practitioners and social workers to assist victims of abuse and wrongful incarceration, especially women and children who are often without representation. These efforts are done in collaboration with faith-based legal aid groups and advocacy networks, creating avenues for the oppressed to access justice (Yusuf, 2022). The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference also encourages civic engagement among Christians, urging them to participate in governance and hold public officials accountable. This advocacy for transparency and good governance is not merely political but deeply theological. It affirms the biblical call to “let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (Amos 5:24). By acting as the voice for the voiceless, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference fulfills its call to represent Christ to a hurting world (Okorie, and Mmesomachukwu, 2023).

Success Stories from Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference' Socio-Welfare Engagements

The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing the needs of the poor, marginalized, and oppressed, aligning with the teachings of Matthew 25:31–46. One notable initiative is the annual mission outreach organized by the Men's Missionary Union (MMU). In 2016, the first edition of this outreach took place at the mission village in *Kotogiri-Igbope*, involving approximately 465 men from 15 Baptist Associations in Oke-Ogun. They were deployed to various villages and farmlands around *Igboho*, *Igbope*, *Igbeti*, and *Kisi* axes, engaging in evangelism and community service (Mission Reports - Men's Missionary Union, 2016). Another significant effort is the empowerment of secondary school students in *Atisbo* Local Government Area. In 2023, the Oke-Ogun Dynamic Forum organized a one-day empowerment programme at Baptist Secondary Grammar School, *Ago Are*. The event, titled "Entrepreneur Skill Acquisition and Motivational Talk," aimed to equip 150 students with self-supporting skills to enhance their relevance in the 21st century (Tribune Online, 2023). These initiatives reflect the Conference's dedication to serving the underprivileged and marginalized communities in the Oke-Ogun region.

Challenges Facing Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference in Its Outreach Efforts

Despite the commendable efforts, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference faces several challenges in its outreach initiatives. One significant issue is the lack of adequate infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. The poor state of roads and limited access to healthcare facilities hinder the effective delivery of services to remote communities (Onigbinde, 2025). Additionally, the Conference encounters resistance from certain groups within the

community. For instance, there have been reports of conflicts involving Fulani herders, leading to insecurity in some areas. These tensions can impede the progress of outreach programmes and deter participation from affected communities (Tribune Online, 2020). Also, there are challenges related to resource mobilization. Limited financial resources and dependence on donations is a big constrain to the scope and sustainability of outreach activities. Alawode (2023) asserts that ensuring consistent funding remains a critical challenge for the Conference.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices for Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference

Through its experiences, the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has gleaned valuable lessons that inform its outreach strategies. One key lesson is the importance of community involvement. Engaging local leaders and residents in the planning and execution of projects fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that interventions are culturally appropriate and widely accepted (Alawode, 2023). Another best practice is the establishment of partnerships with other organizations. Collaborating with governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and other religious groups can enhance resource mobilization and broaden the impact of outreach programmes. Additionally, the Conference has learned the value of adaptability. Being responsive to the evolving needs of the community and flexible in programme implementation allows for more effective interventions (Alawode, 2023). Incorporating these lessons and best practices has enabled the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference to navigate challenges and continue its mission of serving the poor, marginalized, and oppressed in alignment with the teachings of Matthew 25:31–46.

Current Engagement and Partnerships

Collaborations with Local Organizations: The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference has established meaningful partnerships with various local organizations to enhance its outreach efforts. For instance, the Oke-Ogun Community Development Forum, a non-governmental group comprising members from across the region, distributed over 3,000 exercise books to 18 public primary schools in *Iwajowa* and *Atisbo* Local Government Areas in 2019. This initiative aimed to support education in underserved communities and was carried out in collaboration with the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). Additionally, the Conference has worked alongside the Nigerian Baptist Convention and other faith-based organizations to provide relief to displaced persons in Ogbomoso land. These collaborations have included the provision of food, clothing, medical assistance, and educational support to internally displaced persons affected by conflicts.

Role of Volunteers and Church Members: Volunteers and church members play a pivotal role in the Conference's outreach initiatives. During the annual mission outreach in 2016, members of the Men's Missionary Union (MMU) demonstrated resilience by rebuilding structures at the mission village in *Kotogiri* village, *Oorelope* Local Government Area, after they were damaged by a storm. This collective effort exemplified the commitment of church members to serve the community in line with the teachings of Matthew 25:31–46. Furthermore, the Conference's youth groups, such as the Royal Ambassadors, actively participate in various community service projects, including environmental clean-ups, educational support, and health awareness campaigns. These activities not only address immediate community needs but also foster a culture of volunteerism among the youth.

Building Sustainable Support Systems: The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference is committed to establishing sustainable support systems to ensure the long-term impact of its outreach programmes. Efforts include the establishment of scholarship funds to support the education of underprivileged students, vocational training programs to equip individuals with skills for economic independence, and healthcare initiatives to provide medical services to underserved communities. Collaborations with local and international partners have been instrumental in mobilizing resources and expertise to support these initiatives. For example, the Conference has partnered with organizations like the Nigerian Baptist Convention to provide food and medical supplies during emergencies, demonstrating a collective approach to addressing community needs.

The Role of the Church in Social Justice: The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference views social justice as integral to its mission, aligning with the principles outlined in Matthew 25:31–46. The Conference actively advocates for the rights of marginalized groups, including displaced persons, women, and children, by providing humanitarian aid, promoting education, and fostering community development. In 2015, the Conference participated in the Pioneer Movement, *Iseyin* (PMI) Week, an event aimed at rallying support for education and sustainable development in the Oke-Ogun region. The event featured discussions on educational development and social justice, highlighting the role of the church in advocating for equitable development in underserved areas.

Conclusion

In light of Matthew 25:31–46, the mission of the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference to care for the poor, marginalized, and oppressed stands not only as a moral imperative but as a visible

expression of true discipleship. This passage, which centers on Christ's identification with "the least of these," challenges the Church to demonstrate its faith through compassionate action. The Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference, by engaging in social outreach, community empowerment, and advocacy, reflects the heart of Christ's teaching—where service to the vulnerable becomes service to Christ Himself. Moving forward, a continued and intentional commitment to justice and mercy will not only strengthen the witness of the Church in Oke-Ogun but also fulfill the Gospel's call to embody God's kingdom on earth through tangible love for the least, the lost, and the overlooked.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and theological reflections on Matthew 25:31–46, the following recommendations are proposed for the Oke-Ogun Baptist Conference to deepen and expand its ministry to the poor, marginalized, and oppressed:

1. Develop a Comprehensive Social Ministry Framework. The Conference should adopt a holistic social ministry strategy that prioritizes sustainable interventions—such as education, healthcare, vocational training, and food security—for the economically disadvantaged and socially excluded. This framework should be rooted in the Gospel's call to serve "the least of these."

2. Strengthen Theological Education on Social Justice. Pastors, church leaders, and members should be regularly equipped with sound biblical teaching on justice, mercy, and compassion. Seminaries and Bible study groups can integrate Matthew 25:31–46 into curricula to inspire practical expressions of faith through social action.

3. Establish Community-Based Outreach Programmes. Local congregations within the Conference should be encouraged to

assess the specific needs of their communities and implement outreach programs accordingly—whether through caring for widows, supporting orphans, visiting prisoners, or creating safe spaces for marginalized groups.

4. Form Strategic Partnerships. The Conference should seek collaborations with NGOs, government agencies, and faith-based organizations to amplify its impact. Through such partnerships, resources and expertise can be pooled to more effectively serve vulnerable populations.

5. Encourage Lay Involvement and Volunteerism. Lay members should be mobilized and trained to take active roles in outreach initiatives. Encouraging volunteerism will not only foster community ownership but also make the ministry to the poor a shared responsibility rather than the work of a few.

6. Institute Accountability and Impact Assessment Mechanisms. To ensure transparency and effectiveness, the Conference should establish structures for monitoring and evaluating its social care programs. Regular assessments will help track progress, identify challenges, and refine approaches.

7. Advocate for Social and Structural Change. Beyond charitable acts, the Conference should also use its prophetic voice to challenge unjust systems and policies that perpetuate poverty and marginalization. Advocacy rooted in the Gospel can be a powerful tool for long-term transformation.

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