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REFLECTION GUIDES FOR FAITH BASED LEADERS

Celebrating 16 days of Activism

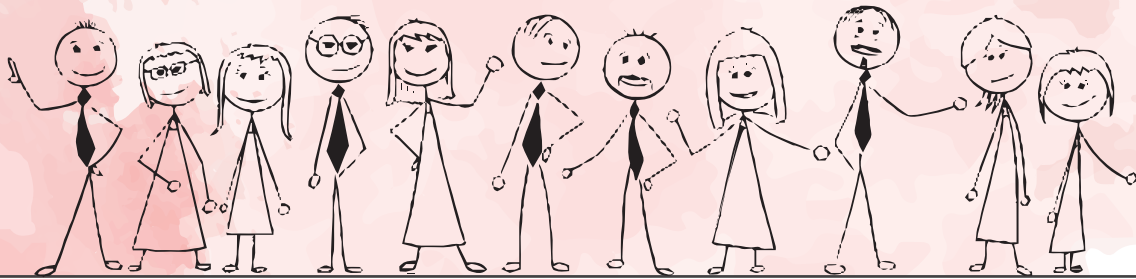
FAITH VOICE UGANDA

REFLECTION GUIDES FOR FAITH BASED LEADERS
CELEBRATING 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM



by
Faith Voice Uganda

(NOVEMBER 2020)



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FORWARD



Bishop Kosea Odongo,
Church of Uganda

This guide is a step of the “Churches Saying ‘NO’ to Violence against Women”. It is a collaborative undertaking of the Faith Voice Uganda chapter, the Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal member churches in Teso, Acholi, Karamoja and West Nile regions. It began in response to the violence that women and girls continue to suffer in our communities despite concerted efforts from government, civil society, cultural leaders and even individuals to address the vice.

Diverse groups of women and men were invited to further reflect on the issue of violence, provide action plans to reduce it and contribute to enrichment of the text. In response, many shared their interpretations of bible texts and the connotations this had on their day to day life. A team of religious leaders came together to interpret scripture using experiences that could address the matter of Violence Against Women. All of these were necessary and welcome responses as Faith Voice Uganda supports faith leaders in identifying the diverse manifestations of overt and covert forms of violence.

The document suggests ways in which women, men and faith communities can work together to overcome the sin of violence against women that hurts individuals, communities and the church’s very image. To be healers, we must first heal ourselves. Concise by intention, this working document invites individuals and congregations to use it as a discussion starter. When those who are victimized suffer, so does God. Let us work together to overcome all forms of violence that are an offense against God and humanity.

FROM THE LEAD AUTHOR

Religion or faith is both a personal and institutional reality in our lives as people in Uganda. Many people are guided by their religious beliefs in the way they bring up their children, conduct business, make decisions and relate with one another. Religion therefore influences the world view of many. It is therefore important for us as teachers of the word to realise the role our leadership plays in building the veins of society. Many of our flock depend on us for guidance, support, encouragement and validation. It means that whatever we say, whether while conducting our celebrations or in passing as causal talk is under scrutiny and can make or break the flock that are entrusted into our care.

Women play a key role in weaving the fabric of our community. It is worth admitting that some religious teaching and affiliation devalue women and set them up for abuse while others provide a significant context that address experiences of victimization. Religious texts and teachings can serve as resources to assist those who have experienced abuse in finding safety and in the process of healing. In the context of violence against women, religious teachings and communities will play a role; they will never be neutral.

As we begin the 16 days of activism, I want to encourage all of us, clergy and religious leaders from all denominations to embrace our role in the fight against Violence Against Women. This document gives us guidance on how we can transform religious texts, into words that can empower our communities, bring healing and most importantly provide a safe place, community for women and girls. Using our real life experiences, we share what we can do to embrace our place as faith leaders in the fight of Violence Against Women. I thank my fellow authors, Faith Voice Uganda partners, and Mensen Meteen Missie for recognising the importance of Religious leaders and working with us to fight Violence Against Women.

I thank you.



The Reverend Canon
Diana Mirembe
Nkesiga

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone on the Faith Voice Uganda team, partners that made the writing of this guide possible.

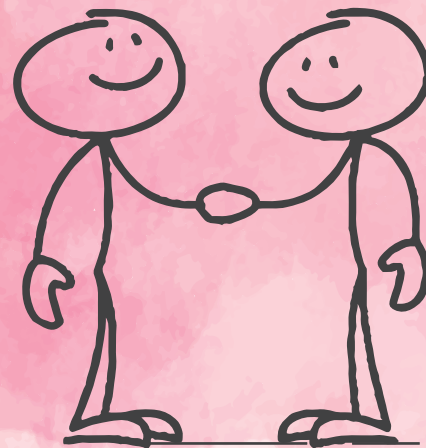
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Thank You

DEDICATION



To all...

..who contribute to



..ending violence in our communities.

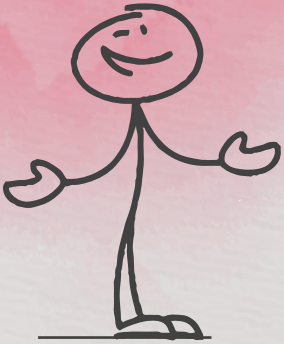


INTRODUCTION

Faith Voice Uganda (FVU) is a network of eleven faith-based organizations in the Acholi, Alur, Teso and Karamoja regions/dioceses. FVU is mainly supported by Mensen Meteen Missie, a Dutch Catholic development organization that promotes self-sustenance and resilience of local communities, with a special focus on the role of faith in strengthening community structures. MM financially supports local grassroot organizations, capacity building for these organizations, and networking among them with a special focus on linking and learning.

The partner organizations are implementing a programme titled “Enhancing the Role of Religious Leaders & Faith Based Institutions in Addressing Early Marriage and Domestic Violence in West Nile, Gulu, Teso and Moroto Dioceses”. The overall objective of the program is to contribute to a safe and secure environment for holistic and equitable development for women and men. The specific aim of the program is to promote greater engagement by communities and religious leaders in the greater north to address and provide support to victims/survivors of DV, FGM and early/forced marriages.

Faith Voice Uganda has developed this guide to support religious leaders in condemning Violence Against Women, using scripture as part of the 16 days of activism.



BACKGROUND

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign that takes place each year. It commences on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day, indicating that Violence Against Women is the most pervasive breach of human rights worldwide. It was originated by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. It is used as an organizing strategy by individuals, institutions and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls. The campaign builds on existing international legal and policy frameworks and works to synergize the efforts of all working to prevent and end violence against women and girls.

Following the outbreak of COVID 19, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and particularly domestic violence, has escalated around the world¹. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated key risk factors for VAWG, such as food shortages, unemployment, economic insecurity, school closures, massive migration flows and the threat of civil unrest. There has been an alarming increase in multiple forms of Violence Against Women and Girls, especially physical, psychological, sexual and economic forms of domestic violence fuelled by household economic and food insecurity and confined living conditions due to lockdown and social isolation measures. School closures, financial and food insecurity have heightened the risk of violence for girls including sexual exploitation, harassment, and child marriage. Harmful practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriages, have been pushed further underground during the pandemic. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls is not on pause, it is the focus of governments, civil society, religious leaders and cultural leaders.

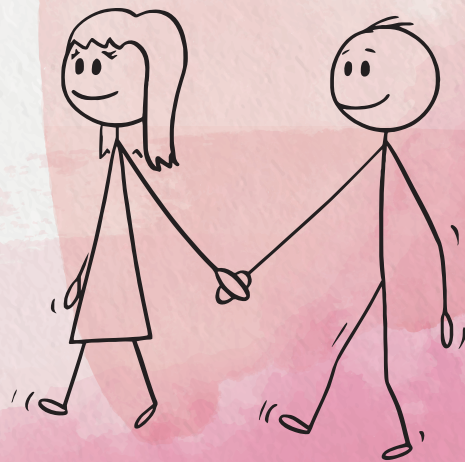
¹ UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, COVID-19 and Global Impact on Violence against Women: A Protracted Crisis, (2020)

SEEKING AFTER RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

Matthew 19: 16-22; Galatians 3. 28

Matt. 19:16-22, “And behold, one came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” 17 And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” 18 He said to Him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; 19 Honour your father and mother; and You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” 20 The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?” 21 Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor; and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” 22 But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.” (The parallel passage is found in Mark 10:17-22 and Luke 18:18-23, listed at end of article).

Galatians 3 .28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.



The Right Relationships

If I were to summarize the scriptures the most important theme that runs right through the scriptures is right relationships (righteousness)

Right relationship with God

Right relationship with ourselves (identity)

Right relationship with others

In **Matthew 19 text** the rich young man is concerned with making sure he understood the requirements of God, for eternal life or abundant life. Jesus answers by quoting the commandments pertaining to human relationships. You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; 19 Honour your father and mother; and then You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

ISSUES IN THE TEXT

The religious young man prided himself on keeping the commandments to a ‘Tee’ but when asked whether he could give up his wealth to the poor he realizes that wealth, property, desirable possessions meant more to him than human relationships and his relationship with God. He was unable to let them go, even though facing the truth deeply saddened him.

As we begin this 16 day reflection on Gender Based Violence (GBV) we need to realize that what has gone wrong with the world are human relationships and right relationships are at the heart of a righteous GOD.

Reconciled to God and one another, the hope of the nation, are the words on a placard, my husband, Rev Dr Solomon Nkesiga, once placed at the entrance of a shanty town, in which we served in South Africa, separated from uptown suburb by a railway line.

The heart of the message was, even if you threw all the wealth in the world at the problem of poverty, racism, gender inequality, the hatred, mistrust the fear and poverty of the mind would never be eradicated. The value of each human being is more important than worldly possessions in the world and that value comes from our relationship with a righteous God!

Right relationship gives us the most enriching experience, peace with God , peace with ourselves and peace with each other making us richer than we ever can be, giving us ‘abundant life,’ all fulfilling life, eternal life.

Shalom or peace means total wellbeing, and this is what every human being fights for **TOTAL WELLBEING.**



PRAYER

LET LOVE THE LORD OUR GOD
WITH ALL OUR HEART, ALL OUR
SOUL,
ALL MIND AND ALL OUR STRENGTH
AND
OUR NEIGHBOUR AS WE LOVE
OURSELVES.
AMEN



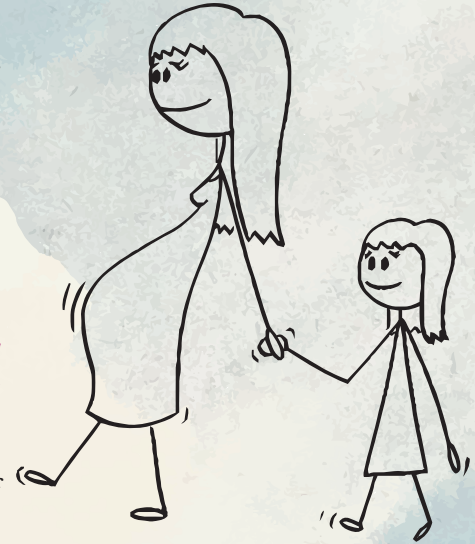
WOMANHOOD

Leviticus 15:19-21 New International Version (NIV)

19 “When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. 20 “Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. 21 Anyone who touches her bed will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

THE QUESTION: WHY WOULD A GOD-GIVEN HEALTHY BIOLOGICAL FUNCTION THAT BRINGS FORTH LIFE BE LABELLED UNCLEAN OR EVEN BE CONSIDERED DETESTABLE CAUSING THE NEED FOR ISOLATION?

In many African communities young girls miss school due to the onset of their menstrual cycle.



Womanhood

A Trip To Womanhood (a poem excerpt written by a Ugandan daughter)

“Whispers around me
Murmurs, question marks
Drenched in fear, clothed in shame
I tiptoe, head down as I ponder on the red stain on my skirt
Beads of sweat form as I hear the laughter behind me
Did I take the wrong direction to womanhood?”

This is a poem by a young lady, embarrassed by the onset of her first period, she is unprepared and ashamed and ridiculed by her school mates. **Leviticus 15** seems to share the same sentiments, it renders a woman unclean in her God given, life-giving cycle.

But no, these scriptures have nothing to do with the worth of a woman they are simply hygiene laws that kept the Israelite community healthy, written in an era before the wonderful provision of pads. The time of menstruating is not a disconnection. It is a time of great connection to God. How can the Creator of the Universe, who did not abhor a woman’s womb, stigmatize the beautiful process through which we all came into the world?

The poem ends, “when you next see my stained skirt, don’t laugh, support me and ponder on who you really are.’



A PRAYER FOR WOMEN

FATHER, I THANK YOU FOR CREATING ME A WOMAN AND THAT I
CAN BRING FORTH LIFE. HELP ME TO WALK TALL WITH DIGNITY
AND GROW INTO THE PURPOSE YOU BESTOWED ON ME IN THIS LIFE.

AMEN.



CONVERSATION:

How can we better support our adolescent daughters through life changes to embrace their womanhood with pride and dignity?

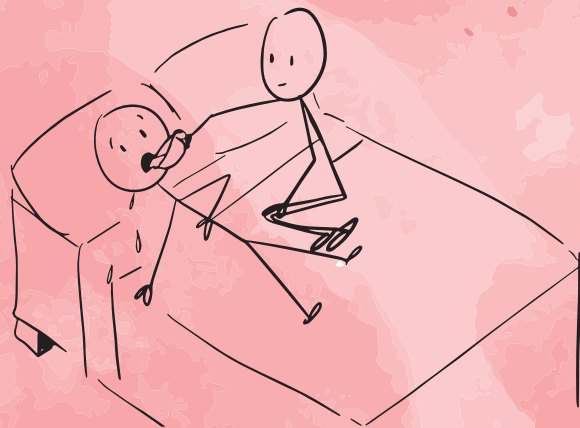
RAPE: DEMEANING AND DEVALUING AND DESTROYING.

Judges 19: 16-25

That evening an old man from the hill country of Ephraim, who was living in Gibeah (the inhabitants of the place were Benjamites), came in from his work in the fields. 17 When he looked and saw the traveller in the city square, the old man asked, “Where are you going? Where did you come from?”

18 He answered, “We are on our way from Bethlehem in Judah to a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim where I live. I have been to Bethlehem in Judah and now I am going to the house of the Lord. [a] No one has taken me in for the night. 19 We have both straw and fodder for our donkeys and bread and wine for ourselves your servants—me, the woman and the young man with us. We don’t need anything.”

20 “You are welcome at my house,” the old man said. “Let me supply whatever you need. Only don’t spend the night in the square.”



Rape

21 So he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink. 22 While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, “Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him.” 23 The owner of the house went outside and said to them, “No, my friends, don’t be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don’t do this outrageous thing. 24 Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But as for this man, don’t do such an outrageous thing.” 25 But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go. 26 At daybreak the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, fell down at the door and lay there until daylight.”

Traditional Jewish men at the beginning of the daily morning prayers said, “Blessed are you Lord our God, ruler of the universe who has not created me a woman.” Some of these statements reveal the insolences, disrespect and distasteful attitudes men had toward women, relegating them to second class citizens, less than adults, less than equal.

In most biblical texts women and daughters were not mentioned in the family lineage genealogy and often remained nameless except for a few who towed the line.

THE ISSUES.

The story of a Levite (from a priestly family or lineage) going to redeem a concubine (a woman illegally living with him but whose status was lower than a wife) in her father’s home to which she had returned is most unusual considering a Levite’s call. The Levite is delayed for several days by the woman’s father and when he eventually leaves it is pretty late necessitating him to find a place to stop over. He is eventually taken in by an old man from the hill country of Ephraim after warning them not to risk staying the night at the square.

His kind offer is short lived as some wicked men of the city demand that the Levite be handed over to them to have sex with. It seems the old man was aware of this homosexual habit and he pleads with them and instead offers his virgin daughter for their sexual pleasure.

This outrageous negotiation to spare his visitor and to hand over his young daughter causes so many thoughts to cross one's mind.

1. Is it a lesser evil to defile a woman than it is to defile a man?
2. Is a woman less valuable and therefore easy to be used and disposed of at any one point?
3. As much as the Levite had gone to re-claim his unfaithful concubine, it was so easy to save himself and dispose of her, without a thought, to some wicked sexually tormented men to be used by them in any way they wanted!!!!
4. This act of cowardice led them to hide behind closed doors while the concubine was subjected to being gang raped and consequently her death.

This text reveals that Gender Based Violence is linked to a woman's value and her diminished and disposable purpose in society. A concubine was a sexual object and property that could be used, disposed of and replaced at any time. This should bring forth a deep grief and outrage among any sane community that considers women made in God's image and co-creator with God and placed on earth for a divine purpose. Rape is punishable by death. **Deut. 22:25**

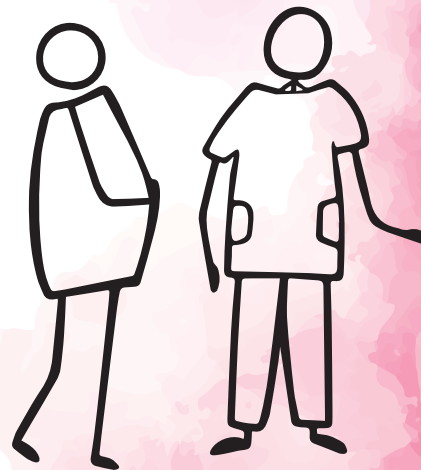
As church ministers we must stand up and be counted. A church led campaign against rape and Gender-Based Violence must begin with us. You cannot ignore this violence and preach the gospel. Let us not put our heads in the sand, it is a daily ordeal for many women and it must stop! Value, Protect and let women walk in their God given dignity.

Judges 20:7 Now all you Israelites speak up and give your verdict!

RID ME OF THIS WOMAN!

2 Samuel 13.1-22 (Scriptural texts are from the New Jerusalem Bible)

1 After this, the following event took place. Absalom son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar; Amnon son of David fell in love with her. 2 Amnon was so obsessed with his sister Tamar that it made him ill, since she was a virgin and Amnon thought it impossible to do anything to her. 3 But Amnon had a friend called Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother, and Jonadab was a very shrewd man. 4 "Son of the king", he said, 'tell me why, morning after morning, you look so worn? Won't you tell me?' Amnon replied, 'I am in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.' 5 Then Jonadab said, 'Take to your bed, pretend to be ill and, when your father comes to visit you, say, "Please let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat; let her prepare the food where I can see. What she gives me I shall eat."' 6 So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. The king then came to visit him and Amnon said to the king, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and make a cake or two where I can watch. What she gives me, I shall eat.'



7David then sent word to Tamar at the palace, ‘Go to your brother Amnon’s house and prepare some food for him.’
8Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon who was laying there in bed. She took dough and kneaded it, and she made some cakes while he watched, and baked the cakes. 9She then took the pan and dished them up in front of him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, ‘Let everyone leave me!’ So everyone withdrew. 10Amnon then said to Tamar, ‘Bring the food to the inner room, so that I can eat what you give me.’ So Tamar took the cakes which she had made and brought them to her brother Amnon in the inner room.

11 - And as she was offering the food to him, he caught hold of her and said, ‘Come to bed with me, sister!’ 12She replied, ‘No, brother! Do not force me! This is no way to behave in Israel. Do not do anything so disgraceful! 13Wherever should I go? I should be marked with shame, while you would become disgraced in Israel. Why not go and speak to the king? He will not refuse to give me to you.’ 14But he would not listen to her; he overpowered her and raped.

15 Amnon was then seized with extreme hatred for her; the hatred he now felt for her was greater than his earlier love. ‘Get up and go!’ he said. 16She said, ‘No, brother! To send me away would be worse than the other wrong you have done me!’ But he would not listen to her. 17- He called his personal servant. ‘Rid me of this woman!’ he said. ‘Throw her out and bolt the door behind her!’ 18(She was wearing a magnificent dress, for this was what the king’s unmarried daughters wore in days gone by). So the servant put her out and bolted the door behind her.

19- Amar put dust on her head, tore the magnificent dress which she was wearing, laid her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went. 20Her brother Absalom said to her, ‘Has Amnon your brother been with you? Sister, be quiet; he is your brother; do not take the matter to heart!’ Tamar, however, went back to her brother Absalom’s house inconsolable. 21 When King David heard the whole story, he was very angry; but he had no wish to harm his son Amnon, whom he loved because he was his first-born. 22 Absalom, however, would not so much as speak to Amnon, since he hated Amnon for having raped his sister Tamar.

ISSUES ARISING

The five(5) main characters in the text are Amnon, Jonadab, Absalom, King David and Tamar. Amnon, Absalom and Tamar are children of King David. Amnon is the first-born son of David and a half brother to Absalom and Tamar. Jonadab, the shrewder, is their cousin and son to Shimeah, King David's brother.

Absalom burns with lust for his half-sister Tamar. Amnon connives with Jonadab to get his way with Tamar. Pretending to be sick Amnon calls for King David's attention and asks for Tamar to attend to him and serve him with bread. Amnon sends the other servants away and he rapes Tamar despite her desperate appeal to his common sense and how abominable it would be. Tamar wailing and distraught, places ashes on her head and rips her garments in public lament.

Tamar is taken in by her brother Absalom but she is silenced and left desolate and inconsolable. Absalom is enraged but secretly plots to avenge Amnon for defiling his sister. When King David learns of his daughter's rape, he is furious but still chooses to keep silent to protect his son.

The above text is a complex web of lies, deception, dominance, seduction, exploitation, intrigue, perversion, violence and wickedness.

- * Sexual violence is inhuman, abominable and violates. Tamar is 'inconsolable' cf. v. 20. Her cry is like the one who has lost a husband, as if it is Rachel crying for her children cf. Mt. 2,18.
- * There is the element of exploiting and ignorantly exposing the girl-child: (boys too could cook for a 'patient'). While Tamar keeps calling Amnon to conscience and reason, the man is obsessed by sexual arrogance, aggressiveness, abuse, bad temper and bad language.
- * But Tamar does not give in, she does not keep quiet: she appeals to their tradition and keeps reminding him not to do anything disgraceful and abominable in Israel.

- * She tries to put sense in him, showing him the impossibility and the scandal but the lust of Amnon is stronger than common sense. She even asks Amnon her half-brother to seek permission from the king – a call for possible a dispensation by King David cf. v.13; but Amnon was bent on seduction not marriage!
- * While Tamar has a sense of shame, Amnon is driven by his bodily passions. He is shameless (v. 13 “Wherever should I go? I should be marked with shame”).
- * Amnon was selfish and egoistic and driven by lust to the point of breaking the Torah, cf. Lev 18,11 “You will not have intercourse with the daughter of your father’s wife, born to your father.” Cf. also Deuteronomy 27,22 “Accursed be anyone who has sexual intercourse with his sister, the daughter of his father or his mother.”
- * In her princess-regalia she is degraded, a King’s daughter is reduced to nothing; her values and beliefs are desecrated, her virginity – a rare commodity even today is violated, a princess is molested, not by an Amorite or a Canaanite, the arch enemies of Israel, but by her real half-brother, moreover a would be king!
- * The misconduct would leave a permanent social stigma upon her. V. 16 “No, brother! To send me away would be worse than the other wrong you have done me!” The horror of this sin Tamar testify how Israel’s standard of morality was higher than those of the surrounding communities.
- * Tamar keeps respecting her half-brother even after the act, but to Amnon she is now, ‘Rid me of this woman’(v. 17). He is intent to abuse, to insult and to dehumanize this lady!
- * The daughter of King David does not keep quiet: she claims for her rights, she makes an alarm and goes crying loud, she reports to her brother Absalom. Moreover Lev 18,1-5 had prohibited the Israelis not to behave as Canaanites who were marrying their relatives.
- * If Tamar had remained mute, we would not be reading/reflecting upon 2 Sam 13,1-22.

- * King David allowed himself to be deceived by his first-born son. Preferential selective love of children by parents brings disaster.
- * There was undue silence on the part of King David (it almost cost him his kingdom cf. 2Sam 15-16). Silence after the act of sexual violence kills.
- * A Father who was a fighter, a conqueror, a warrior, who defeated Goliath failed to protect his beautiful daughter when she needed him! A sin of omission?
- * David would have obliged Amnon to marry her as an exception cf. Deuteronomy 22,28-29. Moreover, Abraham had married his half-sister, cf. Gen 20,12. But such marriages were forbidden by Lev 18,9; 20,17 and Deuteronomy 27,22.
- * Sexual violence is inconsolable, and the victim remains dejected and desolate
- * Rape is always followed by extreme hatred of the violated victim (girl/woman), cf. v. 15.
- * The love David had for first born Amnon miscarries justice for Tamar because she is a girl.
- * There is virtue in standing against sexual immorality, that is why we still read of Tamar as one to imitated. Tamar continues to protest rape for many more generations.
- * The sin of David with Bathsheba and the killing of Uriah her husband is repeated by his two sons cf. 1Sam 13,23-39. Sexual sin is contagious and a replica.

1. CASE STORY (THIS IS A TRUE STORY, BUT THE NAMES OF THE PERSONS AND VILLAGES ARE CHANGED).

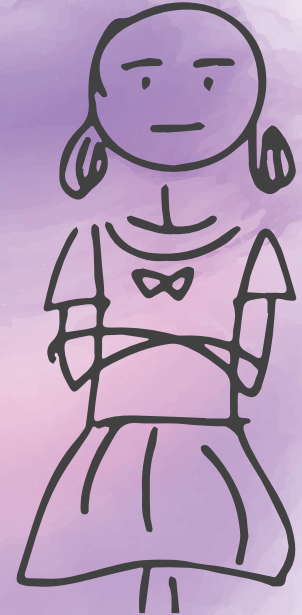
On 17 June 2020 at Katahile, a young girl was raped by a neighbour and the father's good friend.

Rhoda was left at home while her parents went to run some errands. Taking advantage of their absence. Peter Lokee, her father's friend, dropped by seeking to borrow his friend's charger. On entering her father's bedroom to retrieve the item, Peter rushed into the room and locked her in, gagged her with a towel. After a long scuffle he overpowered her and raped her. He left in a hurry.

Rhoda came out crying loud, covered with blood; but there was no one hearing her. Unfortunately, that fateful day both her parents came back late. Her father was drunk so she told her mother first, who told her to wait for her father to sober up.

The following day Rhoda and her father went to report to the police. When they went to Peter's place he had taken flight. The police padlocked his room. At the hospital the girl was given the morning after pill and was given an HIV test. The test was negative.

Four weeks later, Rhoda discovered she was pregnant and the father was very angry with her. He concluded that she had gone with another man since she had taken the morning after pill. Rhoda could not convince him that she had not gone with anyone else except the man who raped her. She is now keeping her pregnancy. She is worried about the expenses of the baby due to be born.



2. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Possible Action Points to curb Rape Sexual Violence Cases

- * Rape cases must be severely punished at every level of society in order to stop this behaviour.
- * Need for constant reminder of laws governing sexual violence in media.
- * Special arrangements to support victims of rape cases by civil authority at every Sub-county level.
- * A Christian country like ours which knows that the human body is the temple of the Lord, cf. 1Cor 6:19; rape and sexual misconduct should not arise, but does come up.
- * Special attention should be given to girls/women by families in order to protect them from sexual violence.
- * Empower women through skills, formal and informal education
- * Reawaken moral and spiritual values today through the church.
- * Rape is an unspeakable public sin which is still being allowed to thrive in our societies with mitigated punishment. Political, civil and spiritual leaders must work to bring this evil practice to an end.
- * Incest breeds hatred and violence as it appears in Amnon's case.
- * Parents should be vigilant and empower girl-children to imitate and to emulate Tamar daughter of King David,
- * We have proclaimed Saints who stood up against rape and sexual violence e.g. St. Maria Goretti. St. Agnes. St. Lucy.
- * The God given beauty of a woman is not a crime, men and boys should be taught not to objectify women.
- * Church and family should intentionally develop a sense of pride and value of all its members

- * Uganda, which has promoted women causes in all spheres, could do more to curb sexual violence against her daughters.
- * Can a Ugandan girl/woman say no to illegal marriage, to cohabitation or to casual sex?

More Possible Action Points to instil today Moral Values and Respect for Sex

- * Sex is of divine origin, therefore it is good but must not be misused nor abused.
- * Sensitization through media: radio talks, television shows, newspapers and campaigns to respect girls and women.
- * Create program in schools, where a culture of frowning at rape instead of exhorting it is instilled in pupils.
- * Parents should be careful not to favour one child over another, even a would-be heir.
- * Enhance responsible parenthood that will bring about respect of all.
- * Most rapists deceive, cheat and tell seemingly believable stories before they attack their unsuspecting prey. Support girls to uncover sinister advances.
- * Girl-children should be taught to be cautious and learn to defend themselves.
- * Like Amnon, most rape cases are a result of long planning, especially by relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. Parents and caretakers must be vigilant and on watch out.
- * Laws governing rape cases must be strong, incorruptible yet applicable: FIDA and Law Societies should help implement such by-laws.

- * Exchange of money or benefits in rape cases should be seriously punished and controlled at all levels in order to curb the culture of rape at all levels. Include unwarranted and unacceptable sexual advances or touches of opposite sex.
- * Use social media and communications avenues to publicise and expose girl/women rapists and girl/women abusers.
- * Since girls/women are vulnerable, they must be trained to decipher and unmask masquerading suitors.
- * Girls/women should be taught to know their worth, a woman is dear and very valuable; she is a co-creator.
- * Sexual sin corrodes the future of a person.
- * Sexual violence is sin cf. 2Sam 13:1-22
- * Even to look at a girl/woman/man lustfully is sin: cf. Mt.5:28 “But I say this to you, if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart”.
- * Violent sexual sin is indelible, but thanks to the redemptive act of Jesus Christ, Saviour at Calvary, it is forgivable if one repents cf. Jn 20:23 “If you forgive anyone’s sins they are forgiven; if you retain anyone’s sins they are retained”. (Please, note the divine passive). Cf. also Romans 5:15 where sin abounded, grace became more abundant.
- * One must avoid (guard oneself) negative sexual-inducing environment: cf. Mt. 5:29f “If your right eye should be your downfall, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body thrown into hell...”.



GOD OUR FATHER SEND US YOUR HOLY SPIRIT, TO IMBUE IN US, A SENSE OF
RESPECT FOR OUR DAUGHTERS, SISTERS, WIVES AND MOTHERS.

YOU HAVE GIVEN THEM THE POWER AND POTENTIALITY TO CO-CREATE AND
NURTURE HUMAN LIFE TOGETHER WITH YOU. PROTECT THEM AND ALL HUMANITY,
LORD, THAT WE MAY HEED TO YOUR PRECEPTS AND LEARN TO RESPECT OUR
SEXUALITY AND OUR BODIES BECAUSE THEY ARE TEMPLES OF THE LORD.

WE ARE PRAYING WITH OUR MOTHER MARY, IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST YOUR
SON OUR LORD.

AMEN.

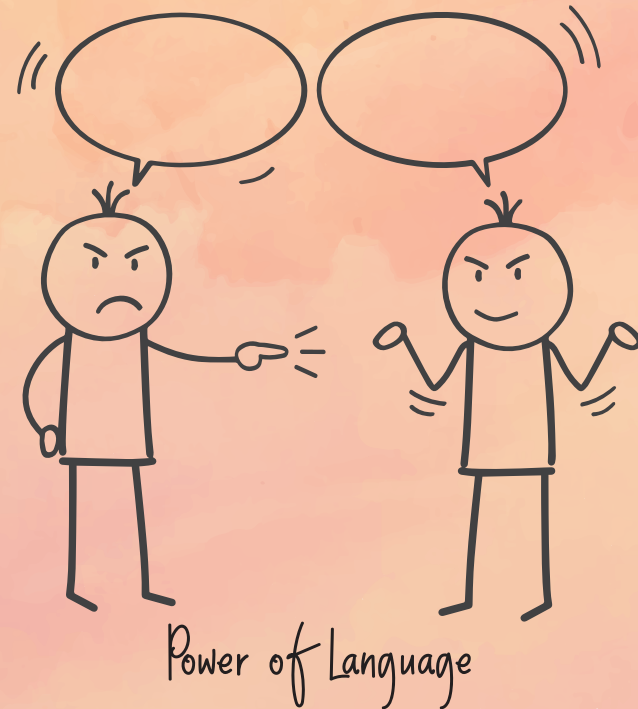


THE POWER OF LANGUAGE AND GENDER EXCLUSION

Proverbs 21: 18

Language is a powerful tool of dehumanizing or glorifying a human being. In Africa we are quick to name the relationship we have with someone even if we have just met. You are either brother, mother, uncle, auntie, grandma even if we are not related to one another. By naming the relationship we then know how to relate to the person.

In the same way when dictators come to power, they often use a well-planned strategy for ousting their rivals. One part of the strategy gradually strips away the human character of their adversaries by labelling them and by doing so dehumanizes them. When they dehumanize the people they oppose, they begin the process of objectification that is, turning people into objects. Once they paint a group of people as objects, they can do virtually anything they want to the group because objects have no moral standing.



For example if you label a group of people cockroaches it makes it easy for you to stomp them out.

Objectification involves viewing and or treating a person as an object, devoid of thought or feeling. Often, objectification is targeted at women and reduces them to objects of sexual pleasure and gratification.

Proverbs 18:21 puts it this way: “The tongue has the power of life and death.” The stakes are high. Your words can either speak life, or your words can speak death. Our tongues can build others up, or they can tear them down.

Sexist hate speech is a form of Violence Against Women and Girls that perpetuates and exacerbates gender inequality. There are many subtle ways language can be used to suggest the female gender is a lesser human for example ‘she is just a woman’ or when a man is introduced with all his titles. For example, The Rev. Dr Canon Andrew Mukasa and his wife. Let us try to do the reverse, ‘We welcome the Reverend Dr Canon Carol Namubiru and her husband.’ It all sounds very innocent but without knowing you are suggesting the one person is of less significance.

As women we see this is played out in boardrooms, church functions and in preaching only about the negative aspects of women like Jezebel, Delilah, the prostitute, the woman caught in adultery, the barren woman and we hardly hear teaching on Deborah, Vashti, Pricilla, Lydia, Anna and the other women in scripture. Sometimes women characters are relegated to Mary’s Day. Women are often excluded from the narrative and hence their insignificance in society.

Please objectively think on these things and ask yourself why one half of the human race is left out and is treated with less value.



KEEP A MOMENT OF SILENCE AND THINK ABOUT THE WOMEN IN LABOUR, THOSE NURSING A SICK CHILD, WOMEN IN THE FIELDS, WOMEN AT THE WELL, THE WOMEN AS THEY DANCE TO WELCOME A NEW BABY, THE WOMEN IN THE KITCHEN AND THE WOMEN IN THE BOARDROOM AND THE WOMEN AT THE ALTAR.

FATHER WE THANK YOU FOR THE WOMEN IN OUR LIVES. TEACH US LORD TO VALUE EACH ONE OF THEM.

AMEN.

Think of the derogatory words which are used to devalue women in our society. How can we change them into more helpful words.



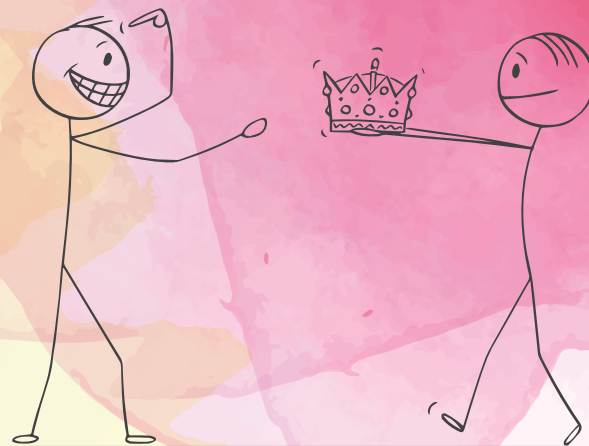
THE HEIR AND THE HEIRESS

Numbers 27

Following the burial of the former Prime Minister, Prof. Nsibambi on June 4, 2019, a row erupted between the Ffumbe Clan leaders in Buganda, the deceased's family members and the Church, over the choice of his heir.

Prof. Nsibambi chose Rhoda Nakimuli Kasujja his elder daughter as his heiress, a decision which the clan leadership has protested, arguing that a woman cannot be heir to a man. The debate drew in President, Yoweri Museveni who supported Nsibambi's heir, arguing that it would not be wise to import a nephew to work as the heir if he is not of good character just because culture demands. [New Vision 16th June, 2019 article by John Semakula]

The above scenario reminds me of the story of the five daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 27



Heir and Heiress

After Zelophehad's death his five daughters petitioned Moses, Eleazar the priest, the chieftains, and the whole assembly, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting for their right to inherit his property rights in the Land of Israel. 3 Zelophehad's daughters argued that if they were they not to inherit, then Zelophehad's name would be lost to his clan. 4 Moses took their case to God. 5 God told Moses that the plea of Zelophehad's daughters was just, and that they should be granted their father's hereditary holding. 6

Equity and equality are two strategies we can use to produce fairness. Equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. Equality is treating everyone with the same value. Equality aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help.

Often women and children in Africa are disinherited when the male spouse dies. The clansmen assume that the wife had nothing to do with the wealth creation and the property, which is often taken over by greedy relatives, the wealth often including the marital home, car and land. To crown it all when the children she raises on her own become successful the clansmen return to reclaim their rights over them especially the gifts that come with bride price.

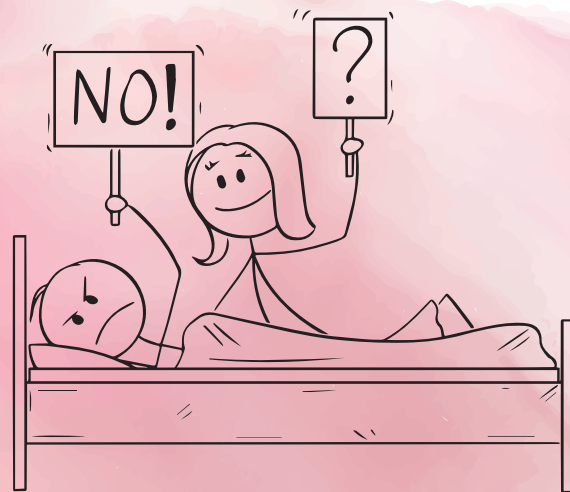
Remember you are a woman made in the image of God and God says you matter! Pray that our cultural leaders and elders will realize by disinheriting women, they are disinheriting themselves and the nation will not prosper and that when they bless a woman she will become a blessing to the clan and the nation.

NO ONE IS SAFE UNTIL EVERYONE IS SAFE. WORLD AIDS DAY

Galatians 6:2-10

2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfil the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting regarding himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5 For each one will bear his own load.

6 The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.



World AIDS Day

COVID-19 has demonstrated that, during a pandemic, no one is safe until everyone is safe in the same way no one is safe from HIV/ AIDS until everyone is safe.

The scripture urges us as people of faith to do the following:-

Carry one another's burdens.

Reflect on who we are. Do not think too highly of yourself.

Each must examine their own work and their motive, is it selfish or does it consider others.

Do not grow weary in doing good.

Never give up.

How are women affected by HIV

The greater burden of HIV falls on women simply because they more easily infected because of the nature of their internal sexual organs.

They also bear children, so Mother To Child Transmission (MTCT)

They nurture and care for those children born HIV+ requiring access to medication, testing, nutrition and counselling.

They nurse the sick (husbands) and other relatives.

They often bear the burden of grief, grand children, spouse, relatives.

In poorer communities they usually bear the financial burden even though they have less access to finances.

Today as we thank God for medication, nutrition and spiritual support that have sustained a world living with HIV, we must not become complacent because of possibility of prolonged life. We must remember that no one is safe until everyone is safe. Stigmatisation, shame and fear are one of the reasons people are silent about their status and can easily spread it to their partner. Today we have forgotten that children who were born HIV positive have now become of age.

We have not addressed the issues that come along with the challenge like;

- * What happens when they get to a marriageable age?
- * How do sero-discordant couples live together safely?
- * How do we prevent new infections of AIDS and protect our loved ones from opportunistic infections like COVID 19?
- * How do we support individuals not to get tired of taking their medication?
- * How do we fight inter-generational sex often caused by poverty and hence the further spread of HIV.
- * How do men and women work together to curb the further spread of the virus?

We must be involved in continuous awareness, spiritual support and promote safe and responsible sexual living.

We do not simply preach at them but give guidance and counsel by facilitating difficult conversations around the disease.

The Church must not remain complacent or silent, as a gateway to people, we must continue to address these challenges, taking care of the body, mind and spirit of the people we shepherd.



LORD OF ALL HOPEFULNESS, WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR HOW FAR WE HAVE COME WITH
THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV AND FOR LIVES RENEWED AND RESTORED.

LET US NOT GROW WEARY OF CARRYING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS AS WE HOLD ONE
ANOTHER TO ACCOUNT AND TO RESPONSIBLE LIFE CHOICES.

AMEN.



RESPECT FOR FEMININE INDIVIDUALITY

(a reflection by Fr. Michael Lubega)

Deuteronomy 21,10-13:

10 “When you go to war against your enemies and God delivers them into your power and take prisoners, 11 and among the prisoners you see a beautiful woman, and you fall in love with her, and you take her to be your wife 12 and bring her home; she must shave her head and cut her nails, 13 and take off her prisoners’ garb; she must stay inside your house and mourn her father and mother for a full month. You may then go to her and be a husband to her, and she will be your wife.” (The quotations are from The New Jerusalem Bible)



Feminine Individuality

QUESTIONS AND CULTURAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THE TEXT.

1. Conduct of Israelis towards the conquered (God goes to war with his people).
2. Considering the time of the writing the text, there is a remarkable respect for feminine individuality. (While men were killed, women and children were taken as booty – without rights cf. Deut. 20,10-14. Here we see respect for a woman (not sure if this is enslavement).
3. War justified abduction of prisoners.
4. A fighter had a right to take an abducted woman for a wife without consent of the abductee.
5. Ritual of hair-cutting and nail-cutting: was a sign of cutting off from her former cultural background. It is an oriental rite of renunciation and purification (N.B. Some Ugandan ethnic communities still shave heads after death of a relative. In Ugandan communities that shave soon after a burial of a close family member, the meaning is a part of mourning, but also beginning of a new life. As the hair grows once again life sprouts out anew). Death of a family member is not the end of everything. Life must go on. 'Stop mourning and begin to live'.
6. A woman was granted a month to mourn her parents to allow her grieve properly and get used to the new culture – an improved gesture at that time.
7. The culture of war with the privileges of the winner was not yet redeemed, Deut 21,10ff. Jesus was to redeem it, “You have heard how it was said, You will love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies.” Mt 5,43-44.

CASE STORY: (THIS IS A TRUE STORY, THE NAMES ARE CHANGED)

Mary Namilo a 16 (sixteen year) old, with three brothers are total orphans. Her paternal uncle Martin Akol was taking care of her and paying her school fees. She was in P.6. Due to COVID-19 lockdown, schools were closed in March 2020. Susan came back from school to stay with her uncle. Suddenly the uncle decided that educating the girl was a waste of his resources. He wanted his money paid back. So he forced her to marry. The would-be husband abducted her and took her to his house where he continuously sexually abused her. The girl reported the issue to the Police who promised to handle her case. But the uncle also went to Police to say that it was a family issue. The Police did nothing. Later it was discovered that the man had paid part of the bride price without Susan's knowledge. She is now staying with the man – bowing to cultural norms.

Possible Action Points to redeem the arrogance of men towards the girl-child.

- Social awareness on the rights of women and girl-children (sensitization) at local, district, regional and national levels.
- Strict application of laws involving security personnel to restrict mal-behaviour of some men and their arrogance.
- Police in Uganda is corruptible at every stage but very difficult to prove: this stance must be reversed.
- Introduce by-laws that prevent oppressive cultural behaviour against women and girl-children today.
- Negative cultural practices must be abolished including forced marriages civil leaders must take a lead

How do we change cultural mindset so that they are convinced about what they are doing and they don't believe it is just another women's movement eroding their culture?

TO REDEEM SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR OF MEN

1. Train families (involving boys and girls) to respect each other regardless of sex.
2. The oppressor (aggressor) must also be redeemed and saved just as the oppressed.
3. Make family members especially boys and girls aware of values of women and girls and their rights and equality.
4. Train men and boys to be sensitive to feminine individuality and issues.
5. Advice to parents of girl-children: Ephesians 6,4 “And parents, never drive your children to resentment but bring them up with correction and advice inspired by the Lord”.

TO REDEEM THE GIRL-CHILD

1. Make the girl-child know their God-given rights and teach them to defend them at all times even in courts of law.
2. Train the girl-child and women to fight for their dignity and how to make personal, mature and well-informed decisions.
3. Train girl-children to unmask women-abusers in their communities and societies and make them (women-abusers) known to the public and security organs.
4. Let girl-children and their parents know where to go for shelter and protection like FIDA Uganda, Child Protection Unit, MIFUMI, Police among others
5. The fate of a girl-abuser: cf. Lk 17,2 “It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round the neck than to be the downfall of a single one of these little ones”.

What is the churches role in the changing of dominant attitudes toward women and girls?



GOD OUR FATHER, YOU ARE THE HEAVENLY FATHER, WHO KNOWS US YOUR CHILDREN, THOROUGHLY WELL. EVEN BEFORE WE SPEAK YOU ALREADY KNOW WHAT WE WILL SAY. RESCUE THE WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILDREN FROM OPPRESSION AND ABUSE, FOR DARKNESS IS NOT DARK FOR YOU, AND NIGHT IS AS BRIGHT AS THE DAY. TEACH US TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE BEAUTY OF WOMEN SHOULD NOT BECAUSE FOR US TO OPPRESS AND HURT THEM, BUT THEIR GOD-GIVEN RIGHT TO LIVE IN DIGNITY AND JOY. OH FATHER, RISE AND SAVE THE GIRL-CHILDREN FROM THE HANDS OF THE ARROGANT. WE ARE PRAYING IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

AMEN.



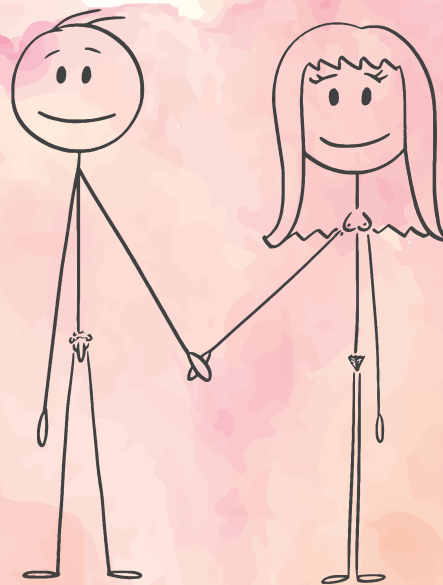
WIDOW INHERITANCE

Widow inheritance is defined as a custom, where a relative of a deceased husband inherits the widow as his wife. The practice is believed to be among the cultural practices that are blamed for furthering the sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS in patriarchal societies in sub-Saharan Africa.

1 Corinthians 7:39 & Matthew 22:23-33

1 Corinthians 7:39, NIV: “A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.”... If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if he loves the Lord.”

Matthew 22:23-33 (NIV): That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. ²⁴ “Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷ Finally, the woman died.



Widow Inheritance

28 Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?” 29 Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. 30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. 31 But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.’” 33 When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

In the text the Sadducees use the example of the culture of widow inheritance as a trap to discredit the whole doctrine of resurrection. But Jesus exposes their ignorance by telling them there is no marriage in heaven. In other words there is no death, there is no need for property or children or ownership because no one dies in heaven. These are only temporary cultural solutions for our time on earth. No one’s status, dignity or value is dependent on marriage or bearing of children (especially the bearing of a male child). In heaven no one can own another human being.

Marriage and remarriage after loss should be by consent only, as stipulated in 1 Corinthians 7:39. She can marry anyone she wishes! Before Christ, widow inheritance was used to preserve the deceased son’s name and to take care of the widow and children. But today greed and accumulation of wealth is the motivating factor. The widow is often expected to become a second wife (polygamy) and is treated as a slave. This is not of God!

Paul in his teaching to the church in 1 Corinth. 7 responds to the practical questions raised concerning marriage. He responds to an area of trouble due to the moral corruption of the culture that tolerated homosexuality, adultery, fornication, polygamy and concubinage. God’s law designed marriage for life Genesis 2:24, Malachi 2:16 and Romans 7:1-3. A widow is free to remarry a person of her choice in the Lord.

Wife inheritance is also practiced among many cultures in Uganda. A widow marries a male relative of her late husband so he can keep the property in the family and take care of any children. It is usually carried out with or without the widow’s consent. This is wrong and should not be upheld in the community of believers.

LOCAL STORY 1

Doreen Angwech (not real name) narrates that a week after her husband's death, in 2012, her in-laws gathered for a meeting at her marital home in Lagara central where she was told that the new husband, she would choose would take on ownership of all her family's property and take care of both her and the children. She was told to choose a new husband between her two brothers -in-law by her in laws. A 38-year-old mother of two, Angwech refused to choose any of them saying she didn't want to get married but only wanted to raise her children. "I was a grieving woman who had just lost my husband and the least I needed was a marriage with another man," Angwech said "I knew all they wanted was my husband's property and I think that after acquiring it, they would throw me and my children out on the streets." Her refusal to get married to one of her in-laws marked the beginning of persecution for Angwech, as she narrates that life after then was filled with death threats, insults and endless calls for clan meetings during which she was scorned. "They threatened to set me ablaze with my children in the house , they labelled me a witch, harlot, a thief." Even with the threats and insults, Angwech stood by her decision not to marry any of her in-laws. When her in-laws came to throw her out of the house, she sought help from the Acholi clan leader, a clan and tribe to which both her and her late husband belong.

1. How can a human being become property that can be inherited without question or consent?
2. How much more pain can be inflicted on one who is already going through bereavement?
3. Widow inheritance is devaluing. Is a woman less deserving of human dignity?
4. Widow inheritance destroys the future of the women and children and ultimately the future of the family.
5. Widow inheritance treats a human being, created in the image of God, as human property

Despite the ignorance of the Sadducees on marriage after resurrection, they questioned Jesus, exposing their ignorance in the word and power of God. In short, Jesus tells them that they have no idea what they are talking about because they do not know the Bible or God. That is a shocking rebuke to these men. St Luke 20.34 records that Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.” In brief there will be no marriage in heaven. Marriage is not what gives you status. Many people today ignorantly use the word of God to justify their wrong doings. It is therefore our call, that we understand scriptures before using them to achieve our own interests.

ACTION.

- * Teach and encourage all men to write a will. They need to put their wills into writing in front of a witness and update them regularly in order to protect their families after they die.
- * Comfort widows with human dignity. Widows are not property but human beings who deserve respect and treatment with dignity.
- * Promote and protect the human rights of a woman, for example right to inherit and own her husband’s property, right to consent to marriage and right to life.
- * The health of the widow is the health of the children (orphans). Protect the widow from getting sexually harassed and contracting sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS.
- * Do not manipulate the word of God to achieve our ends.
- * Honour widows 1Timothy 5:3.

James 1:27 (NIV) 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world



HEAVENLY FATHER, THANK YOU FOR CREATING WOMEN AND
INITIATING THE GIFT OF MARRIAGE. HELP US TO UNDERSTAND YOUR
WORD. WE PRAY THAT CHRISTIANS STAND UP AND DEFEND THE
WIDOW. AND MAY THE WORLD TO UPHOLD HER DIGNITY.

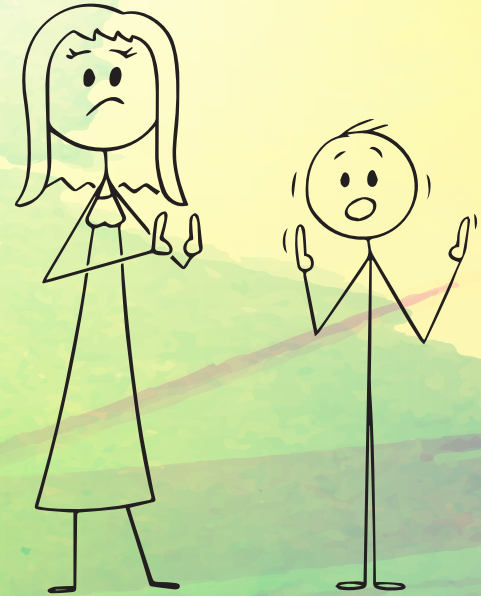
AMEN.



INCEST

Leviticus 20:17-21 & Leviticus 20:17-21(NKJV): 17

‘If a man takes his sister, his father’s daughter or his mother’s daughter, and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a wicked thing. And they shall be cut off in the sight of their people. He has uncovered his sister’s nakedness. He shall bear his guilt. 18 If a man lies with a woman during her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from their people. 19 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother’s sister nor of your father’s sister, for that would uncover his near of kin. They shall bear their guilt. 20 If a man lies with his uncle’s wife, he has uncovered his uncle’s nakedness. They shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. 21 If a man takes his brother’s wife, it is an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother’s nakedness. They shall be childless.



Incest

DEFINITION OF INCEST

Sexual relations between people classed as being too closely related to marry each other. It refers to the crime of having sexual intercourse with a parent, child, sibling, or grandchild, sexual harassment of a child or adolescent by a relative, especially by a parent or other adult relative. It is also referred to as the crime of sexual intercourse, cohabitation, or marriage between persons within the degrees of blood kinship wherein marriage is legally forbidden.

THE QUESTION: why should men run to young girls (relatives) when there are many women of age?

LOCAL STORY UGANDA: INCEST ON THE RISE IN TESO. 20 JULY 2011 THE MONITOR (KAMPALA) BY RICARD OTIM

Soroti: Many girls across Teso region have been subjected to sexual abuse by lustful relatives in unstable marriages, Ngora District Police Commander Apollo Kyangungu has said. He said mothers do not report cases of incest to the police for fear of being battered by their husbands. “When couples break up, the children are sent to relatives who may not be friendly to them,” Mr Kyangungu said. A 12-year-old girl, who has been forced into early sex by her guardian, narrates her ordeal. “The first time he forced me into sex I bled profusely and cried a lot but he threatened to kill me if I ever disclosed a thing,” she said. She said from then it became a nightmare whenever the grandfather returned from drinking: “I developed sores in my private parts. One day one of my uncles asked what was wrong with me. I picked courage and confessed everything.”

Reflecting on the story above. Today there are many girls out who are silently suffering or sexually harassed by their own relatives (brothers, fathers, uncles and guardians).

Problems with incest are cross generational sex, sexual abuse of minors, sexual harassment, non-consensual sex, rape, disease, mental health issues, deformities and other abnormalities in children who are a result of incest through recessive genes.

The book of Leviticus from chapter 18:6-18 clearly points notes that none of you shall approach anyone who is near your kin, to uncover his or her nakedness. As God was guiding the children of Israel in the Promised Land to leave the cultural practices of the Egyptians, laws to deal with such crimes were therefore given to guide Israel. To the present day this would be referred to the existing laws as per the constitution of Uganda. Chapter 20 from verse 17- 21 God is giving the kind of punishments equivalent to the nature of the sin committed. I would refer this to the penal code act that points out the kind of punishment given to people whenever they commit a crime. Incest is a universal taboo in human culture.

Incest is a statutory crime, often classified as a felony. The purpose of incest statutes is to prevent sexual intercourse between individuals related within the degrees set forth, for the furtherance of the public policy in favor of domestic peace. The prohibition of incest is also based upon genetic considerations, since when excessive inbreeding takes place, undesirable recessive genes become expressed and genetic defects and disease are more readily perpetuated.

Incest according to the bible attracts curses Leviticus 18:9. Deuteronomy 27:22. One can be put to death. In the present day once caught with clear evidence one can be imprisoned. “A daughter is the most precious thing that the father can ever ask for”

CONVERSATIONS.

- * With the knowledge of the dangers of incest. How can we prevent incest in our families and communities today?
- * Why do you think scriptures are instructing us in that direction?
- * How can the Church participate in changing this objectionable custom?

ACTION

1. Let's join hands to prevent sexual harassment in our families and community.
2. Encourage girls, women and families speak out on any violations so that the perpetrators are reprimanded according to the laws of the country.
3. Prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in our families and communities
4. Provide environments for respect of human dignity. Accord women the due respect and human dignity they deserve.
5. Give children the chance to grow and make their choices in marriage appropriately.

End incest now. Together we can end incest



DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER. THANK YOU FOR CREATING HUMANS
FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY, WE PRAY THAT YOU HELP US TO
DESIST FROM THE EVIL SIN OF INCEST.

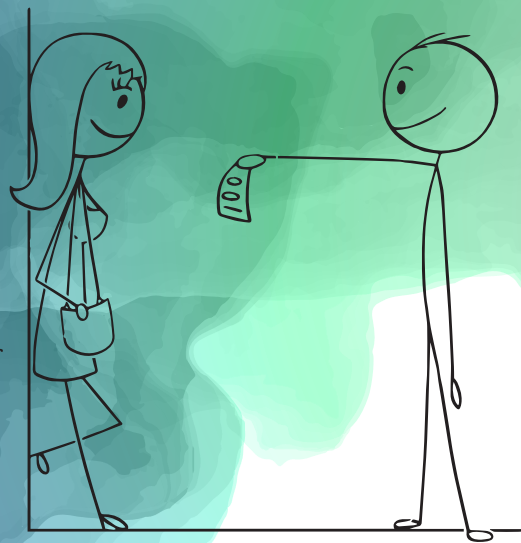


PROSTITUTION, A LADY OF THE NIGHT FORGIVEN.

Luke 7: 36-50

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?"



Prostitution

43 Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” 44 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” 48 And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say amongi themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” 50 And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.

DEUTERONOMY 23:17-18 ESV / 10 HELPFUL VOTES

“None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, and none of the sons of Israel shall be a cult prostitute. You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.

There are two different kinds of prostitute mentioned in the bible . First are those who offered to have sex with men to earn money or to get some personal favor. A second kind of prostitute, often called a “sacred” or “temple” prostitute, was a female or a male who had sex with worshipers of a god or goddess in a temple. Most people in Uganda do not differentiate between prostitution and adultery. Prostitutes are thought of as primarily female who do it out of their wickedness to break up marriages. However they are both male and female prostitutes, male prostitutes known as gigolos who are paid by a female to be an escort. Rahab Uganda is a Christian non-profit founded in 2005 on a mission to restore the self-image of girls affected by sexual exploitation and human trafficking.. We have discovered that girls are escaping extreme poverty while others have lost all sense of dignity due to being sexually assaulted and abused and therefore they fall easy prey of the web of prostitution.

As we ministered to some girls who had been rescued out of prostitution I was horrified and hurt when I got feedback that I had defiled the altar by allowing them to address the congregation. So many angry thoughts went through my mind as I recollected the brave testimonies they shared and how they had been abused by men before they had been drawn into prostitution in their woundedness and then rescued by God's grace through Rahab.

I asked myself a myriad of questions;

- * Who was the true prostitute, the innocent girl that had initially been violated or the older man who willingly drove to the venue invited her into the car and paid her for his lustful gratification.
- * Who should be labelled prostitute? The under aged girl or the 'pimp' who traps the most vulnerable and uses them for monetary gain.
- * Is God's grace powerless to forgive and redeem a prostitute who has sought his mercy and forgiveness?
- * Why are the men who use the prostitutes excused as being exploited by women and not the other way round?
- * Why is sexual immorality in men overlooked and yet the person he uses should be condemned to death?
- * There is a double standard among Christians when it comes to sexual immorality, the blame is usually put on the woman whom they see as the temptress.

Matthew 26: 13 But however uncomfortable and indignant the disciples were Jesus instead, through his words, restores her total dignity by saying: 13 Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

ACTION

1. Redefine prostitution to label the real perpetrator. For example who is 'the bastard' the child born out of wedlock or the parents who committed the act.
2. The church exists to redeem the sinner and not for the self-righteous. We need to set up intentional ministry to those victims led into prostitution.



FATHER YOUR GRACE IS ENOUGH TO REDEEM, HEAL AND RESTORE ALL
YOUR PEOPLE. HELP US BELIEVE IT AND ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE WE JUDGE
WITH A LARGER HAMMER. THROUGH JESUS CHRIST THE REDEEMER.

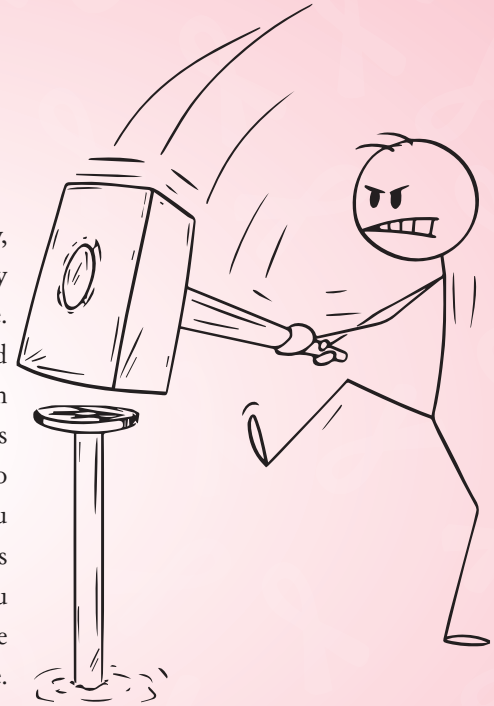
AMEN.



DOMESTIC WORKERS

Isaiah 58:1-9 Good News Bible

1 The Lord says, “Shout as loud as about their sins! 2 They worship me every day, claiming that they are eager to know my ways and obey my laws. They say they want me to give them just laws and that they take pleasure in worshipping me. “3 The people ask, “Why should we fast if the Lord never notices? Why should we go without food if he pays no attention?” The Lord says to them,” The truth is that at the same time as you fast, you pursue your own interests and oppress your workers. 4 Your fasting makes you violent, and you quarrel and fight. Do you think this kind of fasting will make me listen to your prayers? 5 When you fast, you make yourselves suffer; you bow your head’s low like a blade of grass and spread out sackcloth and ashes to lie on. Is that what you call fasting? Do you think I will be pleased with that? 6” That kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice and let the oppressed go free. 7 Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives. 8” Then my favour will shine on you like the morning sun, and your wounds will be quickly healed; my presence will protect you on every side. 9 When you pray, I will answer you. When you call to me, I will respond.



Domestic Worker

Colossians 4:1 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15 Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

Deuteronomy 24:17-18 Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.

THE QUESTION:

WHY ARE MOST DOMESTIC WORKERS MISTREATED IN THE HOMES IN WHICH THEY SERVE?

A LOCAL STORIES OF DOMESTIC WORKERS IN NEBBI TOWN.

Adong (not her real name) narrated what she calls a nightmare. My boss's husband knows his wife's program for the day. He drops her off at office and the older children at school and then he comes back home without her knowledge and demands sex from me. I resisted for some time but he threatened to make me lose my job. He says, that every house girl does it with him. He also promised to rent me a house in case I got pregnant, so I accepted, even though I knew it was wrong. On the other hand Akello (not her real name) works for lady who has 4 children. She takes care of a baby, washes clothes and cooks for the family. The employer does not want the baby to cry, so the house help has to carry the child on her back while she does the house work. She gets paid 20,000 Ugx shillings monthly with no official leave and very little sleep

THE ISSUES

Sexual exploitation is mainly as a result of a power imbalance; The case of Adong tells that she assented to the sexual relationship. It's however imperative to understand that the unequal power relationship, coercion, lack of options and limited exposure contributed to the concession. Many of these women are coerced in to sexual relations and are forced to get involved with the male relatives in the household.

No Contract; None of the house helps have a binding contract stating how much they earn and terms of service. As a result, employers exploit them especially by paying them less than originally agreed. Employers who break the agreement often site poor performance and breakages or damage of items making it hard for house helps to speak out on such issues since they are afraid of losing their jobs.

Unequal power relations; Most employees refer to their employers as 'aunties', which is meant to create a sense of family bond. The house helper therefore should be grateful and suffer in silence. Silence has been identified as one of the major favors heightening domestic violence. This explains the constant call for breaking the silence especially in domestic spaces.

In Isaiah 58, God condemns oppressing our workers and discourages fighting, quarrelling and being violent towards them. God encourages us to share the little we have with them food, clothes and shelter and then God will listen to your prayers as a person. "The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you." Or we reap what we sow. Therefore, we should treat house helpers with equity because we are all created in God's image and we are equal before the Lord regardless of our economic status.



HEAVENLY FATHER, I THANK YOU FOR CREATING THE WHOLE
UNIVERSE AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, FOR THE GIFT OF LIFE
OF ALL HUMAN RACE. TEACH US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER
SELFLESSLY AS YOU COMMANDED US TO.



CONVERSATION:

How best can you support domestic workers to ensure that they are equally treated, protected and taken care of by their employers?

ACTION POINTS

- * Add value to your domestic assistant- train domestic workers basic skilling in their free time like making liquid soap, making table cloths and candles for an extra source of income.
- * Advocate and protect the human rights of a worker for example right to practice and carryout any lawful occupation, right to an equal pay for equal value and a right to fair treatment while at work.
- * Legislate that domestic managers must have proper contracts with fair pay.
- * Provide a toll free number for workers to report in case of sexual exploitation or harassment.
- * Join hands and carryout campaigns to end sexual exploitation of workers in different places of work and in communities.

CO-WORKERS IN THE BOARD ROOM/ WORKPLACE

Luke 10:38-42, Mary and Martha

The Mary Martha scenario is so familiar that we often misread it.

In this text we have three main characters Jesus and his disciples then Martha and Mary.

Jesus was visiting Martha home. Mary, Martha's sister, was also there she chose to sit at the feet of Jesus' listening to what he said. Martha on the other hand was in the kitchen and she was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. Her main distraction was that her sister seemingly got to sit at Jesus feet while she laboured in the Kitchen.

R Kent-Hughes says Women were not forbidden in Judaism to receive instruction in the Torah. However, it was unheard of for a rabbi to allow a woman to sit at his feet. Therefore, Jesus had broken the rule for Mary, surprisingly the disciples had nothing to say about it but probably they had learned that when Jesus broke the cultural rule he had a lesson in it for them.



Co-Workers

Martha is not reprimanded because her hosting efforts are not appreciated, but rather because “she is worried and upset about many things”.

‘Many things’ being;

- * Why is Mary allowed to sit at the feet Jesus while she slaved away in the kitchen. “Lord don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work all by myself.”
- * Irritation at Mary doing something she possibly wanted to do but it was not culturally accepted
- * Distracted by all the preparations that had to be made, taking on too much in order to impress Jesus and the disciples
- * Distracted by her envy towards Mary who was doing what she enjoyed.
- * The young people call it “FOMO” or Fear Of Missing Out and perhaps there were many other things going on in her mind as she laboured away in the Kitchen.

On the other hand Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and Jesus says she chose the one thing, she has chosen what is better. Sitting at Jesus feet means to Love, worship, listening, serve, submit. She was giving Jesus her undivided attention so she could learn what he wanted her to do. What was going on in the minds of the disciples is not articulated and one can only guess they had learnt to keep silent even if they disapproved of what was happening because Jesus often had a new lesson for them e.g eating with sinner, allowing the woman with an alabaster jar to anoint his feet Luke 7:36-40

Most cultures in Uganda similarly do not encourage women to sit with visitors in conversation, especially those that are male. They are supposed to go to the kitchen, prepare refreshments for the visitor, wash dishes etc. But Jesus, without dismissing the importance of what Martha was doing, broke with tradition because Mary knew what she needed and it was to add value to her for all time.

Often women are kept out of decision-making conversations in the home and in the workplace. Women have been placed in the kitchen and even in the boardroom and often she is the appointed 'tea girl' or secretary/ note taker because there is an assumption that she does not add value to the agenda under discussion and many times the addition of a female in the boardroom, what we call gender sensitivity, is simply ornamental and not because she could add value to the work.

In Uganda today there is a women quota that must be filled in parliament known as the Women MP which means she can only represent women and children's issues. Very few women compete for the position of Member of Parliament because it is having been the reserve of men. In other positions women aspire for there has been abuse by men because they seek for sexual favours or there is sexual harassment once one is appointed.

Jesus' actions cause us to rethink what has always been believed to be true, that women should only hold positions set aside for them. (Affirmative action or positive discrimination). Through this kitchen dispute Jesus affirms that there is more than one way a woman can serve. Learning, earning, concerning yourself with life transforming ideas (teaching) does not remain the domain of the men. Women can also sit at the feet of Jesus (at the altar) listening, reflecting, deciding, learning what Jesus wants them to do. Whatever way one is called to serve, it is honourable and should not be frowned upon or limited by tradition but should be done with sincerity and with joy as service to the Lord.

CALL TO ACTION

Work place policies to protect women at work.

Colossians 3:23-24 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; [24] knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. [25] But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Food for thought: Why would God gift a woman with an ability and then deny them to serve society with the God-given gift?



LORD HELP US TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER WITH SINCERITY AND
INTEGRITY AND NOT IN UNHEALTHY COMPETITION BUT BY
HONOURING YOU IN ALL THAT WE DO.

AMEN.



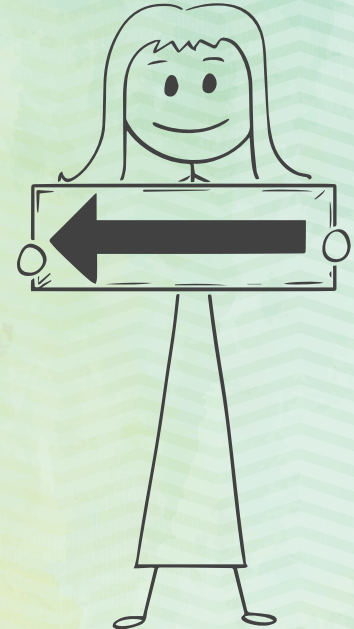
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Romans 16: 1-16 & Judges 4:5

Women can be called to leadership. (Leadership is God's call)

- * The place of a woman at the altar. (Anna and Simeon)
- * Women were civil and spiritual leaders, like the prophetess Anna and Deborah
- * Women had a significant role in evangelism. Bearers of Good news 'I have seen the Lord!' John 20:18 and 'Come and see John.' 4: 29 & 39-42
- * Paul recognizes women as co-workers in the vineyard. Rom 16:1-17

Although Israel was a patriarchal society, there are examples of women whom God gave leadership roles. God chose Deborah to be a prophetess and a judge; the people "came to her to have their disputes judged. She gave orders from God, to the leader of Israel's army. God gave Deborah authority both religious and civil.



Women in Leadership

Although women are priested in the Church of Uganda, the Roman Catholic and Islamic faiths are still hesitant about the place of women at the altar. Several reasons are cited including the belief women are unclean and women must submit to men and therefore cannot lead men. God did not look at gender but anointed and used both men and women at times in the history of Israel to accomplish his purpose. Neither are all men, necessarily, called to leadership. Women had important roles in Jesus ministry, traveling with Jesus and providing for him. Indeed, there were the twelve apostles but by the time of the resurrection there were over 120 disciples in the upper room who were filled with the Holy Spirit for witness and service.

1Tim 2:15 A woman will be saved through childbearing is a text that has been commonly used to mean women are called to only bear children, which is their salvation. But this excludes the single woman. The scriptures clearer remind that all are saved by faith through Christ Ephesians 2:8-9

Do not tie a woman's worth to child bearing alone. To be a mother is honourable and a most noble calling that has been belittled over the centuries because there is no monetary value attached to it. The saviour did not abhor a woman's womb and chose an insignificant girl called Mary to come into the world. However, many women in the scripture were used of God in other leadership positions. For example, Deborah was a judge and a prophetess, Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena and Tryphosa, Julia, Persis, all women co-workers in the service of Christ as Paul says and lists them in Romans 16:1-15

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9 not by works, so that no one can boast. God calls whom he wills and uses those who will serve to fulfil his purpose of redeeming humankind.

Rev Florence Li Tim Oi, a Japanese lady was the first woman ordained to the priesthood in the Anglican Communion ordained 24 January 1944

Florence Li Tim-Oi graduated from Canton Union Theological College, located on the southern coast of China, in 1938. She was a lay worker at All Saints Church in Kowloon where she worked with the refugees who left mainland China during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Li Tim-Oi came to the attention of Bishop Ronald Hall, who sent her to Macau to work with refugees.

After six months, she returned to Hong Kong, where Bishop Hall ordained her a deaconess at St. John's Cathedral. She then returned to Macau to take charge of the Anglican congregation there and continue working with refugees. When Hong Kong was invaded and occupied by Japan, Anglican priests could not travel to Macau to celebrate the Eucharist because of Macau's neutrality. There was no Anglican priest on Macau, but Li Tim-Oi, the deaconess, was there.

Bishop Hall made the stunning decision to authorize Li Tim-Oi to provide Anglicans access to the sacraments considering the extraordinary circumstance of Japanese occupation. In 1944, Bishop Hall and Li Tim-Oi travelled to meet in a nearby town not yet occupied by the Japanese, and there Bishop Hall ordained Li Tim-Oi a priest. Not a woman priest. Not a temporary priest. Not a special priest. A priest, like any other priest. (An excerpt taken from sermon by president Jennings on the Commemoration of the Rev. Florence Li Tim-Oi January 31, 2019.)

A UGANDAN STORY

Similarly Rev Florence Septume Njangali (1908-1984) championed the priesthood of women in the Church of Uganda.

Florence Spetume Njangali strived to make women's ministry in the church of the Province of Uganda a reality. Not only did Njangali seek ordination for herself but through her work and ministry she also influenced the Church of the Province of Uganda to pass a resolution allowing women's ordination in all the dioceses in Uganda.

Florence was born in Parajwoki, in present day Hoima District, on April 10, 1908 She was baptized on October 31, 1920 in Saint Peter's Cathedral, Hoima. She began school in 1920 as one of the pioneer students of Duhaga Girls' Boarding School, a church founded institution. In 1928, Florence was appointed a teacher. In 1938, she became headmistress, 1973 made deacon and 1980 priested.

On October 18, 1938, Njangali became an active member of the East African revival movement. As a result of her radical transformation and passion for discipleship, Njangali enrolled in Bishop Tucker Theological Seminary, Mukono, in 1942. She was the only female student in a class of thirty. During Njangali's time the Native Anglican Church of Uganda objected to the ordination of women. But Njangali took it upon herself to defend the rights of women as equal partners in church ministry. At the Synod, although a lay woman, whenever she was allowed to address the members she always made a passionate appeal to awaken the Native Anglican Church of Uganda to its need to abandon its patriarchal attitudes.

In 1957, when she signed up for theological training alongside men at the college, she was not easily accepted in classes by her male counterparts. While Njangali's male counterparts were ordained into the priesthood she worked as a Commissioned Worker until September 10, 1973 when her former classmate, the Rt. Rev. Yustus Ruhindi, ordained her as the first deaconess in East Africa.

In 1980, Bunyoro-Kitara Diocese decided to make the ordination of women into the priesthood an official practice of the church

EXCERPTS FROM AN ARTICLE BY CHRISTOPHER BYARUHANGA

Lord you called men and women to follow you and lead by example. We thank you for men and women who have heard your voice and have accepted to be vessels for you. Amen

CALL TO ACTION

We must not be afraid to open up scriptural conversations and readings around the calling of women to serve and to take on leadership positions according to the Lord's appointing.

THE PLACE OF A WOMAN AT THE ALTAR. (ANNA AND SIMEON)

Luke 2:21-38

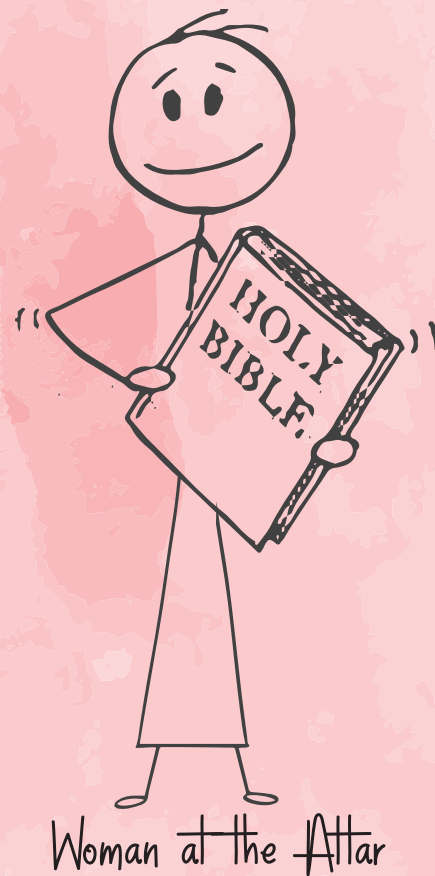
25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you now dismiss your servant in peace.

30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people,

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."



33 The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

This Luke texts deals with Simeon and Anna both devout servants of God, both praying and waiting for the redemption of Israel, both prophesying over Jesus on the day he is brought into the temple for his purification rites.

Christian tradition seems to preserve the Simeon text commonly referred to in the liturgy as the Nunc Dimittis which often recited as a central part of the liturgy. However the prophetess Anna who also prophesied over Jesus is not as emphasized. Whereas Simeon seems to just have come across Mary and Joseph as they came to the temple, Anna is said to have never left the temple and she worshipped and fasted night and day as she awaited the coming of the messiah.

Anna the prophetess served in the temple (altar) and prophesied over the child, "she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem." At a time where there is still divergent views of women serving at the altar, Anna the prophetess is the exception and had a definite call to intercede for Israel and its redemption. Anna's receiving the Christ-child and speaking over the child is like the priestly role. She like Simeon makes a prophetic statement over the child. Both men and women recognize him as the Messiah.

The call to serve in the ordained ministry needs to be re-examined and as we reflect on biblical figures like Anna, Phoebe and Mary.

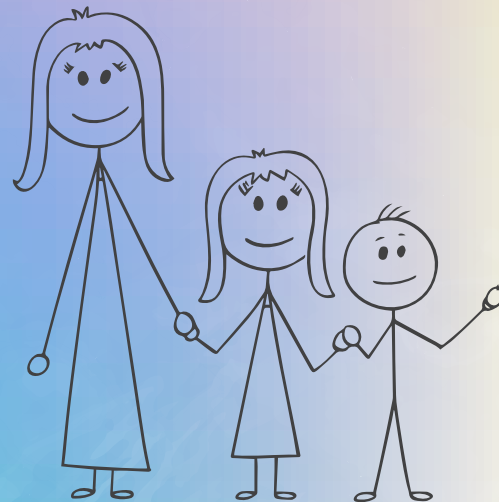
JUSTICE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)

THE PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT WIDOW

18 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

4 “For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’ 6 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”



Woman and Children

The parable above is about persistent prayer but the illustration of a judge who neither feared God nor cared for people and a widow seeking justice is a reminder however insignificant society may think we are that if we rise, persevere and never give up our voice will be heard.

Many times, our African culture prefers us to keep silent and endure our fate by accepting we are undeserving and powerless.

As women the adversaries are many, but our greatest adversary is Society's mind-set about the value, purpose and significance of its women.

Like the 5 daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 27 and the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15: 21-28, we need to rise and confront the social constructs that have been created by society that disregard justice for women.

We need to have faith that God is on the side of justice for women and not live below God's expectation for humanity.



DEAR GOD, WE GIVE THANKS FOR THE WAYS THAT YOU HAVE WORKED THROUGH FAITHFUL, STRONG AND PERSISTENT WOMEN TO MAKE OUR WORLD MORE JUST AND MORE LOVING. EVEN IF OUR VOICES MAY SHAKE, WE PRAY THAT YOU FILL OUR MOUTHS WITH YOUR WORDS, SO THAT WE, TOO, MAY SEEK RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PURSUE JUSTICE FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OURSELVES. IN JESUS' NAME WE PRAY.

AMEN.



THE PROVERBS 31 WOMAN

Proverbs 31: 10- 31

This is perhaps the most quoted text used to call women to account, often neglecting the fact that the first 10 verses of Proverbs 31 address King Lemuel and the character of men. A similar passage for men is in Proverbs 20.6 which says, 'Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?'

Proverbs 31: 10 – 31 unleashes a woman like no other. She is precious, she is praised, accomplished, valued and owns land. She heads the household and earns a living. She has the support of her husband and servant support. She is clothed in strength and wisdom. She is generous and trades also. She has everything she needs to thrive.

We long for a time women will be valued at all levels and take their rightful God given place along side the men to raise proud families call out everyone's strength, gift and dignity and serve their nation. Perhaps if we desire happier more cordial lives we will grow and mature into families and nations that value all human-beings and give women, girls and other disadvantaged members of society a space where they can live and contribute meaningfully and harmoniously. Then there would be no need for missing out on the beauty of God's fulfilled relationships. The earth would be blessed, and we would all be a blessing to one another.



Proverbs 31 Woman



AS YOU READ AND ENGAGE WITH THESE TEXTS, WE PRAY GOD
WILL WORK IN AND THROUGH YOU TO LET HIS KINGDOM
COME AND HIS WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.
MAY THE LORD RESTORE OUR UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
THAT WE MAY HAVE A CLEARER VISION OF WHO HE IS.

AMEN.







**...a safe and secure environment for holistic
and equitable development for women and men.**