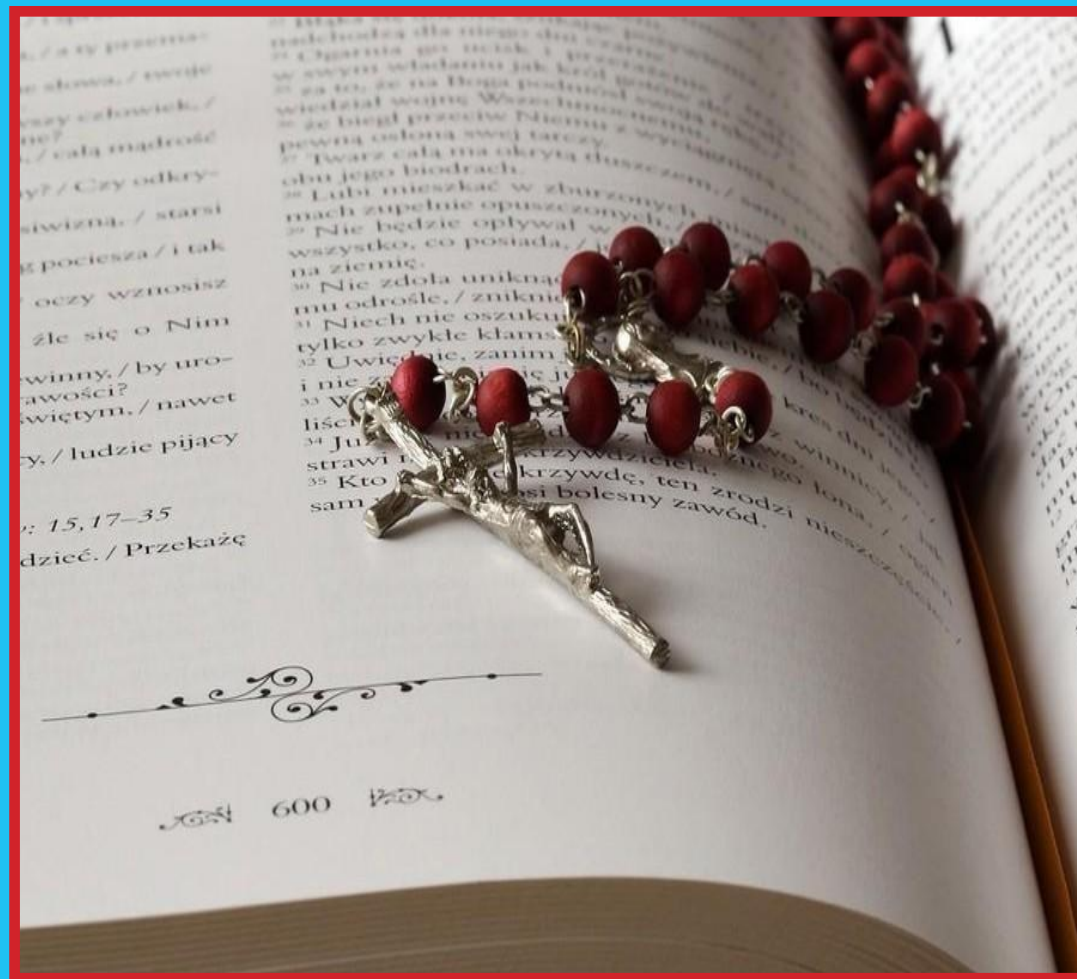


# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## SERMON GUIDE



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This comprehensive guide on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) sermons is the culmination of collective effort, dedication, and collaboration. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the individuals and organizations who played pivotal roles in shaping this guide and making it a valuable resource for religious leaders.

First and foremost, we express our gratitude to the numerous individuals who participated in workshops and meetings, providing constructive feedback and insights that contributed to the refinement of this guide. Your commitment to addressing GBV is truly commendable, and we thank you for your valuable contributions.

Special thanks go to Corus International for their expertise, which proved invaluable in the development of this guide. Your commitment to improving the health and well-being of individuals and communities resonates with our mission, and we are honored to have collaborated with you.

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Lastly, we extend our gratitude to the contributors of sermons and Khutbahs whose work is quoted in this guide. Your insights have enriched the content and provided practical guidance for religious leaders addressing GBV.

May this GBV Sermon Guide serve as a powerful tool in promoting awareness, dialogue, and action to combat gender-based violence within our communities. We look forward to continuing our partnership with all stakeholders in the future.

May God bless you all.

# CONTENTS

The Development of The Sermon Guide .....	ii	Chapter 7:	
Executive Summary .....	iii	Confronting Sexual Violence: Lessons from Tamar's Story .....	8
Introduction .....	iv	Chapter 8:	
Addressing Gender-Based Violence .....	vi	The Dignity and Honor of Women: Lessons from Esther .....	9
Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence .....	viii	Chapter 9:	
The Effects of Gender-Based Violence .....	ix	Mercy and Forgiveness: The Story of the Woman Caught in Adultery ....	10
List of Sermons .....	x	Chapter 10:	
Chapter 1:		Joseph's Compassion and Trust in God .....	11
The Divine Blueprint for Equality and Respect .....	1	Chapter 11:	
Chapter 2:		The Samaritan Woman: Finding Healing and Purpose in Christ .....	12
The Dangers of Unchecked Emotions: Lessons from Cain and Abel .....	2	Chapter 12:	
Chapter 3:		The Ideal Family Relationship .....	13
God Sees and Cares for the Oppressed: Lessons from Hagar .....	3	Chapter 13:	
Chapter 4:		The Power of Commitment and Sacrifice in a Christ like Marriage .....	14
Justice for Dinah: Confronting Sexual Violence in our Communities .....	4	Chapter 14:	
Chapter 5:		The Church as the Bride of Christ .....	16
Breaking the Silence: Confronting the Reality of Sexual Violence .....	5		
Chapter 6:			
The Dangers of Manipulation .....	7		

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERMON GUIDE

This guide is the culmination of a rigorous and collaborative process that involved various stakeholders, whose collective wisdom and concern for the welfare of their communities became the backbone for its creation. The primary goal of this guide is to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV), a prevalent issue that continues to afflict our societies in the most severe ways, hindering the progress and prosperity of our communities. We sought to bring the healing and transformative power of faith into this issue, recognizing the influential role religious leaders can play in effecting positive change.

Our process began with a community consultation that drew participants from different sectors, including local community leaders, religious figures, and government officials. These individuals are the heartbeat of our communities, so it was essential that their voices, insights, and experiences were heard, acknowledged, and integrated into the guide. The consultation was designed as a forum for these key stakeholders to discuss and dissect the complexities of GBV in our societies. We sought to understand its root causes, its implications, and most importantly, the strategies through which it can be eradicated. It was unanimously agreed that the messages of our faith communities could be instrumental in transforming attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that perpetuate GBV.

The next stage was a two-day theological reflection attended by esteemed religious leaders from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Congo, among others. This gathering was a critical component of our process, as we sought to align our efforts against GBV with our theological understanding and teachings. The religious leaders delved deeply into their respective religious texts and doctrines, seeking wisdom and guidance on how best to approach GBV. The discussions were enlightening and enriched our perspectives on faith's role in addressing GBV. The leaders brought a wealth of experience and knowledge, helping us to understand how our shared

values of compassion, justice, and respect for human dignity can be harnessed in the fight against GBV.

The outcome of these theological reflections was an enriched understanding of the common principles in Christianity and Islam that promote peace, respect, and equality. With these shared values, religious leaders from different faiths were able to see beyond their differences and focus on the shared mission to confront GBV. They highlighted the importance of recognizing and affirming the inherent worth of every individual, irrespective of gender, and the critical role this plays in eliminating GBV.

Drawing from the insights gathered during the community consultations and theological reflections, we then embarked on developing the messages contained in this guide. These messages reflect the essence of our shared religious values and beliefs. They are designed to resonate with individuals, communities, and societies, and inspire a shift towards more equitable and respectful attitudes and behaviors. The messages were carefully crafted, with the understanding that our words have the power to either perpetuate harmful stereotypes or dismantle them and foster healthier, more respectful relationships.

The development of this guide has been a journey of collaboration, learning, and growth. It is our hope that it will serve as a beacon of wisdom, offering guidance to religious leaders and community members alike as we strive to build societies free from GBV. As you read through the guide, we encourage you to approach the messages with an open mind and heart. We invite you to join us in this mission to eradicate GBV and to create a world where each person is respected and valued for their inherent worth.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The issue of gender-based violence (GBV) is a global human rights violation that affects millions of people and is of utmost concern for both Christians and Muslims. The GBV Sermon Guide is a valuable resource that provides guidance to religious leaders on how to address this issue in their communities. The guide consists of two parts: Christian sermons and Muslim Khutbahs, emphasizing the inclusivity and recognition of the diverse faith communities affected by GBV.

More importantly, this is not just a collection of sermons and Khutbahs. It is a powerful tool in messaging that can be used to raise awareness and promote dialogue about GBV. The guide draws from scripture and provides practical guidance on how to prevent and address GBV, making it an invaluable resource for religious leaders who seek to create safer communities. By utilizing the guide, religious leaders can promote a message of non-violent, equitable relationships and provide comprehensive support for GBV survivors. Additionally, the guide serves as a call to action for the wider community, encouraging individuals and groups alike to work together to address the issue of GBV and support those affected by it.

Each message in the guide focuses on a specific topic related to GBV, including sexual violence, breaking the silence on GBV, and promoting non-violent and equitable relationships. The sermons and Khutbahs draw from religious teachings to provide practical solutions and community involvement strategies to promote awareness of GBV, support victims, and hold perpetrators accountable. Additionally, the guide emphasizes the critical role of religious leaders in challenging harmful cultural practices that contribute to GBV and collaborating with community organizations and state and non-state partners to create a world where everyone is safe and free from violence. The GBV Sermon Guide is a call to action for religious leaders and faith communities to break the silence about GBV stigma and promote the well-being and safety of all members of society. Religious leaders must recognize their critical role in addressing GBV and promoting non-violence and equitable relationships. Leveraging the power of

the pulpit, they can raise awareness of the hardships that GBV survivors endure and foster empathy and understanding. To accomplish this, religious leaders must sensitize themselves and their congregations about GBV and its impact and promote community involvement in GBV prevention and support services.

Survivors of GBV face numerous challenges, including the physical, emotional, and psychological scars left by violence. Additionally, they often experience stigma and discrimination, which can exacerbate their suffering and impede their healing process. By providing safe spaces within congregations and offering comprehensive support services such as shelter, food, medical treatment, and referral services for legal and psychological support, religious leaders can contribute to creating a safer environment for those affected by GBV.

Working with state and non-state partners, religious leaders can spearhead advocacy efforts for safer and healthier living, including advocating for funding of GBV safe houses at national and county levels, supporting the scale-up of GBV services among faith-based institutions, and engaging media houses in GBV prevention messaging and raising public awareness. Additionally, addressing the underlying cultural and societal issues that fuel GBV, including harmful practices such as early marriage, dowry payment, female genital mutilation, and forced wife inheritance, is crucial to restoring the dignity of girls and women.

In conclusion, GBV is a manifestation of social injustice that affects us all. The GBV Sermon Guide provides practical solutions and community involvement strategies for religious leaders to address GBV and support survivors. By recognizing their critical role and collaborating with community organizations and state and non-state partners, religious leaders can promote non-violent, equitable relationships and provide comprehensive support for GBV survivors. It is hoped that this guide will empower religious leaders to break the silence about GBV and promote the well-being and safety of all members of their communities.

# INTRODUCTION

**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)** is a global issue that transcends culture, religion, and socio-economic status. It affects millions of people worldwide, primarily women and girls, but also men and boys. This sermon guide aims to use the sacred writings of both Christians and Muslims to shed light on the importance of addressing GBV and the unique role that religious leaders and faith communities can play in combating it. It relies on the text and context of Christian and Islamic writings to offer insights, guidance, and practical solutions for tackling GBV. It is intended to provide standard messages for addressing GBV in faith congregations.

The rationale for this is that religious leaders hold significant influence in their communities, often shaping societal values and beliefs. As a result, they have a moral responsibility to address GBV, a pervasive issue that affects countless lives. Faith communities can leverage their existing resources, outreach capabilities, and moral authority to create a safer environment for those affected by GBV.

Survivors of GBV face numerous challenges, including the physical, emotional, and psychological scars left by violence. Additionally, they often experience stigma and discrimination, which can exacerbate their suffering and impede their healing process. By leveraging the power of the pulpit, we can raise awareness of the hardships they endure and foster empathy and understanding.

It is hoped that by recognizing the critical role they play in addressing GBV, religious leaders and faith communities shall break the silence about GBV stigma. This can be done through reviving dialogue and sensitizing religious leaders about GBV and its impact and promoting community involvement in GBV services, including prevention, support, and recovery. The way religious leaders and GBV survivors

relate is also expected to change. This will lead to the creation of safe spaces within congregations where survivors can speak up about their problems and receive services. These services include the provision of shelter, food, medical treatment, and referral services for legal and psychological support.

Additionally, an opportunity exists to address the underlying cultural and societal issues that fuel GBV. This includes addressing the education system to ensure that children are empowered to deal with GBV. Harmful practices such as early marriage, dowry payment, female genital mutilation and forced wife inheritance, among others must be revisited with a view of restoring the dignity of girls and women.

Religious leaders do not work in isolation. Working with state and non-state partners, the religious leader can spearhead advocacy efforts for safer and healthier living. This includes advocating for funding of GBV safe houses at national and county levels and supporting the scale-up of GBV services among faith-based institutions. They should also engage media houses in GBV prevention messaging and raising public awareness.

GBV is not just a private matter; it is a public health and human rights issue that affects us all. It is a manifestation of social injustice and systemic inequalities that perpetuate discrimination and oppression. As a collective, we must address GBV and work toward creating a world where everyone is free from violence and abuse. By supporting the commitments made by religious leaders and faith communities we can foster a culture of respect, understanding, and empathy.





# ADDRESSING GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE: A CALL TO ACTION FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global issue that affects people of all cultures, religions, and societies. As religious leaders, it is our responsibility to address this issue and to lead our communities in the fight against GBV. This chapter will define GBV, identify its various forms, discuss the effects of GBV, and provide a rationale for why religious leaders must respond to this pressing issue.

## Defining Gender-Based Violence

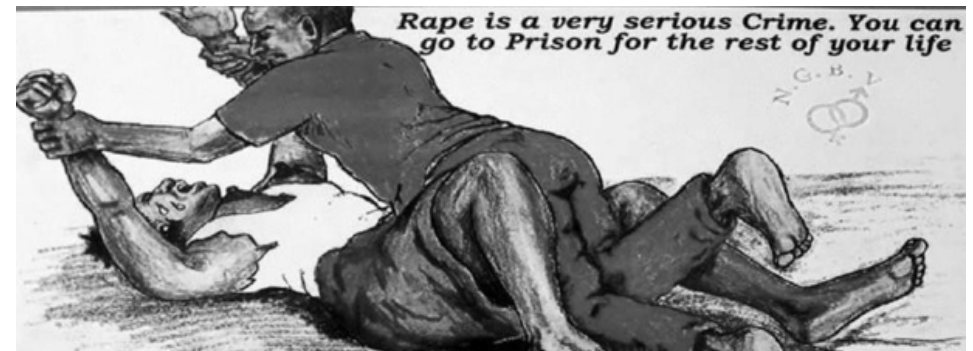
Gender-based violence is any act of violence or harm directed at an individual or group based on their gender. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and economic abuse, as well as threats, coercion, and deprivation of liberty. GBV can occur in public or private settings and affects people across all ages, races, and socio-economic backgrounds.



## Forms of GBV

**1. Physical violence:** The intentional use of force to inflict injury, pain, or discomfort on someone. Examples include hitting, slapping, kicking, choking, or using weapons.

**2. Sexual violence:** Any non-consensual sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or unwanted sexual comments or advances. Examples include rape, sexual assault, defilement, and harassment.



**3. Emotional or psychological violence:** Inflicting emotional harm through manipulation, control, or humiliation. This may include verbal abuse, belittling, or isolating a person from their support network.





4. **Economic violence:** The control or exploitation of an individual's financial resources, making them financially dependent and vulnerable. Examples include withholding money, controlling household finances, or preventing someone from obtaining employment.



5. **Harmful traditional practices:** Cultural, religious, or social practices that perpetuate gender inequality and cause physical or psychological harm. Examples include female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage, and honor killings.



# PREVALENCE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Global statistics on gender-based violence can help provide a broader context for understanding the pervasiveness of this issue. Here are some key global statistics and their sources:

1. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.
2. The United Nations reports that 18% of women and girls aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner in the past year (as of 2021).
3. Globally, around 650 million women alive today were married before their 18th birthday, and more than 150 million girls are at risk of child marriage by 2030.
4. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) in 31 countries where the practice is concentrated.
5. Gender-based violence is a pervasive issue in Kenya, as it is in many countries around the world. While accurate and comprehensive statistics can be challenging to obtain due to underreporting, the available data provides a snapshot of the prevalence and impact of GBV in Kenya.
  - a. According to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) 2014, 45% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and 14% have experienced sexual violence.
  - b. The same survey revealed that among every-married women, 39% have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their spouse, with 25% having experienced spousal physical violence.
  - c. In Kenya, approximately 21% of women aged 15-49 have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), a harmful traditional practice that is recognized as a form of GBV (KDHS 2014). The prevalence of FGM varies greatly among ethnic groups, with some communities reporting rates as high as 98%.
  - d. Early and forced marriage is another form of GBV in Kenya, with 23% of girls married before the age of 18, and 4% married before the age of 15 (UNICEF 2020).



<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>  
<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/#status>  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>  
<https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR308/FR308.pdf>

# THE EFFECTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

GBV has far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, communities, and societies. Some of the effects include:

1. **Physical and mental health issues:** Survivors may experience long-term health problems, such as chronic pain, reproductive health issues, and mental health disorders like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.
2. **Economic impact:** GBV survivors often face reduced productivity and earning potential, which can contribute to poverty and economic dependence.
3. **Social consequences:** GBV can lead to social isolation and stigmatization, further exacerbating the trauma and limiting access to support and resources.
4. **Intergenerational effects:** Children who witness or experience GBV are more likely to become victims or perpetrators of violence later in life, perpetuating a cycle of violence.

Religious leaders hold a unique position of influence within their communities. They can play a critical role in preventing and addressing GBV by:

1. **Promoting gender equality:** By advocating for equal rights and opportunities for all, religious leaders can help dismantle the patriarchal systems that perpetuate GBV.

2. **Providing spiritual guidance and support:** By offering counsel and resources to GBV survivors, religious leaders can help them heal from trauma and rebuild their lives.
3. **Challenging harmful beliefs and practices:** Religious leaders can work to change cultural norms that contribute to GBV by denouncing violence and promoting non-violent, equitable relationships.
4. **Collaborating with community organizations:** Religious leaders can partner with local organizations and agencies to provide comprehensive support for GBV survivors and to develop prevention initiatives.

## Conclusion

Gender-based violence is a grave violation of human rights that affects millions of people worldwide. As religious leaders, we have a moral obligation to address this issue and to protect the most vulnerable members of our communities. This sermon guide is designed to help in GBV messaging and motivating the faith communities to not only break the silence on GBV but to take action.

## List of Sermons

1. The Divine Blueprint for Equality and Respect
2. The Dangers of Unchecked Emotions: Lessons from Cain and Abel
3. God Sees and Cares for the Oppressed: Lessons from Hagar
4. Justice for Dinah: Confronting Sexual Violence in our Communities
5. Breaking the Silence: Confronting the Reality of Sexual Violence
6. The Dangers of Manipulation
7. Confronting Sexual Violence : Lessons from Tamar's Story.
8. The Dignity and Honor of Women: Lessons from Esther
9. Mercy and Forgiveness: The Story of the Woman Caught in Adultery
10. Joseph's Compassion and Trust in God
11. The Samaritan Woman: Finding Healing and Purpose in Christ
12. The Ideal Family Relationship
13. The Power of Commitment and Sacrifice in a Christ-like Marriage
14. The Church as the Bride of Christ



## CHAPTER 1

## THE DIVINE BLUEPRINT FOR EQUALITY AND RESPECT

## Text: Genesis 1:27

The book of Genesis forms the foundation for understanding relationships. In the beginning, we see a perfect relationship between Adam and Eve, their equal status as image-bearers of God. We also see the tragic fall that fractured their relationship and introduced sin and violence into the world. As we study these chapters, we will gain insight into how to prevent and address Gender-based violence in our communities, families, and churches. Genesis 1:27 states: “So God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” This powerful verse affirms the equal value and dignity of both men and women as image-bearers of God. God did not create one gender superior to the other; instead, both were created with unique gifts and purposes to glorify God and serve others.

In Genesis 2, we read how God formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone, so he created Eve from Adam’s rib. Adam recognized the special bond between him and Eve, saying, “*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man*” (Genesis 2:23). This powerful statement highlights the intimate and equal relationship between man and woman.

However, the perfect relationship between Adam and Eve was shattered in Genesis 3 when they disobeyed God and sin entered the world. The fall not only affected their spiritual relationship with God but also their relationship with each other. Instead of mutual respect and honor, there was blame-shifting and conflict. In verse 16, God tells Eve, “*Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.*” This is not a command or a blessing but a statement of the brokenness and injustice that would plague the relationship between men and women throughout history.

We acknowledge that gender-based violence is a painful reality in our society today. It is important to recognize the signs of abuse and provide resources to those who are experiencing it or who want to learn more about how to prevent it. There are organizations and professionals who specialize in helping those who have experienced gender-based violence. We encourage everyone to learn about the signs of abuse and how to get help if they need it.

However, the promise of a redeemer, in the person of Jesus Christ, offers us hope. The redemptive work of Christ forms a basis upon which we hope and work for restored relationships, where men and women are treated with dignity and respect, free from any form of violence.

So, how can we work towards preventing and addressing gender-based violence in our communities, families, and churches? It starts with recognizing the equal value and dignity of both men and women, as image-bearers of God. We must reject any form of gender-based violence and promote healthy and respectful relationships.

Here are some practical examples of how we can do this:

1. **Education:** Education is a powerful tool in preventing gender-based violence. We must teach our children, teens, and adults about healthy relationships, boundaries, and consent. We must also educate ourselves on the signs of abuse and how to intervene if we suspect that someone is experiencing it.
2. **Support:** We must create safe spaces where individuals who have experienced gender-based violence can receive support and care. This can include counseling, therapy, and support groups.
3. **Accountability:** It is essential to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. We must not tolerate any form of gender-based violence, and we must speak out against it when we see it happening.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE DANGERS OF UNCHECKED EMOTIONS: LESSONS FROM CAIN AND ABEL

**Text: Genesis 4:1-16**

The story of Cain and Abel is one of the earliest stories in the Bible, but it remains a powerful and relevant story for us today. At its core, this is a story about the dangers of unchecked emotions - jealousy, anger, and violence and the devastating consequences that can result. As we reflect on this story today, we will consider how it relates to the issue of gender-based violence, and the lessons that we can learn from it.

According to statistics, one out of three women face gender-based violence. This is an alarming number that highlights the urgent need to address this issue. As we delve into the story of Cain and Abel, we will consider how it sheds light on this pervasive problem and how we can work towards a world where all are treated with dignity and respect.

The story begins with Cain and Abel, two brothers who offer sacrifices to God. God accepts Abel's sacrifice but rejects Cain's. This rejection triggers Cain's jealousy and anger, and he becomes obsessed with the idea of getting revenge on his brother. This is a common pattern in cases of gender-based violence - a perpetrator feels threatened by their partner's independence or success and tries to exert control over them through emotional manipulation or physical violence.

Cain's jealousy soon turns to deception, manipulation, and deadly violence. He invites Abel out into the fields and kills him, then tries to cover up his crime. He lies to God when asked where Abel is, saying, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" This kind of deception and manipulation is also common in cases of gender-based violence. Perpetrators may try to isolate their partners from friends and family or use gas-lighting and other forms of emotional manipulation to maintain control.

The story of Cain and Abel ends with God punishing Cain for his crime. God says, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." Cain is condemned to a life of wandering, with the mark of his sin upon him. This serves as a warning about the consequences of violence - it can have devastating effects not only on the victim but also on the perpetrator.

Finally, we see that Cain is not truly remorseful for his actions. He asks, "My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." This lack of accountability and remorse is unfortunately common in cases of gender-based violence. Perpetrators may blame their partners for their violence, or external factors like stress or substance abuse, rather than taking responsibility for their actions. We need to reject violence and manipulation and seek healthy, respectful relationships with our partners. It is important to recognize that gender-based violence affects not only the victim but also the perpetrator and society at large. By taking accountability for our actions and rejecting violence and manipulation, we can work towards a world where all are treated with dignity and respect.

Let us pray for those who have been affected by gender-based violence, and work to create a world where everyone is safe and free from violence. There are resources available for those affected by gender-based violence, including hotlines, organizations, and local resources. Let us commit to doing our part in ending this pervasive problem and promoting healthy relationships based on mutual respect and understanding.

## CHAPTER 3

# GOD SEES AND CARES FOR THE OPPRESSED: LESSONS FROM HAGAR

**Text: Genesis 16:1-16; Genesis 21:8-21**

The story of Hagar is one of the most poignant tales of the Bible. She was a slave, an Egyptian maidservant, who was taken by Abraham and Sarah to be their surrogate mother. Hagar's story is one of pain, exploitation, and oppression. But it is also a story of hope, perseverance, and God's care for the oppressed.

The story of Hagar teaches us several lessons that are relevant to us today, especially as we seek to address issues of gender-based violence in our communities.

## I. The Plight of the Oppressed: Hagar's Experience

Hagar was a slave who was forced to have a child with her master, Abraham. She was treated as a mere object, a means to an end. When Hagar became pregnant, Sarah, Abraham's wife, became jealous and mistreated her. Hagar fled into the wilderness, alone and vulnerable.

But even in her despair, Hagar was not forgotten. An angel of the Lord appeared to her and gave her a message of hope. The angel told Hagar that she would have a son and that he would be a great nation. The angel also gave Hagar a name for God: "El Roi," which means "the God who sees me."

## II. God's Care for the Oppressed: Hagar's Encounter with God

Hagar's encounter with God is a powerful reminder of God's care for the oppressed. God saw Hagar in her distress and came to her aid. God promised to be with Hagar and her son, even in their difficulties. Hagar responded by naming the place where she met God, "Beer-lahai-roi," which means "the well of the Living One who sees me."

The story of Hagar speaks to contemporary issues of gender-based violence. Today, we still see women and other marginalized groups being exploited, abused, and oppressed. It is important for us to learn from Hagar's story and to work for justice and equality.

Hagar's story can help us better understand the experiences of survivors of gender-based violence. Like Hagar, survivors often feel alone, vulnerable, and forgotten. They may be forced to endure abuse from those who are supposed to care for them and may feel like they have nowhere to turn.

The church has a vital role to play in addressing issues of gender-based violence. We must create safe spaces for survivors to share their stories and receive support. We can also raise awareness about the issue and advocate for policy change.

As Christians, we are called to stand with the oppressed and work for justice. This means speaking out against gender-based violence and supporting organizations that work with survivors. We can also educate ourselves and others about the issue, and challenge societal attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence.

If you are listening today and have experienced gender-based violence, know that God sees you and cares for you. You are not alone, and there is hope for healing and recovery. Seek out resources and support and know that there are people who will stand with you and support you.

Let us remember Hagar's story and let us be inspired to work for a world where all people are valued and respected, and where gender-based violence is no more.

## CHAPTER 4

# JUSTICE FOR DINAH: CONFRONTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

## Text: Genesis 34

The story of Dinah is one of the most troubling and challenging stories in the Bible. Dinah was the only daughter of Jacob, but she is not known for any great deeds or accomplishments. Rather, she is remembered for the terrible violence that was inflicted upon her. In this sermon, we will explore the story of Dinah and consider how it speaks to the issue of sexual violence in our communities.

**The Story of Dinah:** In Genesis 34, we read that Dinah was violated by a man named Shechem, the son of a local ruler. Shechem was overcome by his desire for Dinah, and he forced himself upon her. After the assault, Shechem sought to make things right by asking Dinah's father, Jacob, for her hand in marriage. Jacob's sons were outraged by what had happened to their sister and they tricked Shechem and his people into a trap, ultimately killing them.

The story of Dinah is a difficult one, but it teaches us several important lessons. First, it shows us that sexual violence is a grave sin and a terrible injustice. Dinah was a young woman who was violated by a man who did not respect her autonomy or her dignity. This is a problem that still exists today, as countless women and girls continue to suffer from sexual assault and abuse.

Second, the story of Dinah also shows us that justice is important. Dinah's brothers were outraged by what had happened to their sister, and they were determined to seek justice for her. In the absence of a proper legal framework, the search for justice can be frustrating and can lead to the perpetration of more violence.

Finally, the story of Dinah reminds us that there are consequences to our actions. Shechem's violation of Dinah ultimately led to his downfall and the destruction of his community. This is a warning to all of us that our choices have real-world consequences and that we must be careful not to harm others with our words or our deeds.

As we reflect on the story of Dinah, let us pray for all those who have suffered from sexual violence. Let us also commit to working towards a world where women and girls can live without fear of being violated or mistreated. And let us remember that justice is an important value in our faith, and that we have a responsibility to stand up for what is right and to hold those who commit sexual violence accountable for their actions.



## CHAPTER 5

# BREAKING THE SILENCE: CONFRONTING THE REALITY OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

## Text: Genesis 38

In Genesis 38, we read an account of deception, betrayal, and sexual violence. The story of Judah and Tamar challenges us to confront the reality of sexual violence in our communities and to break the silence that too often surrounds it. In this sermon, we will explore the story of Tamar and Judah and consider teaching about this important issue.

The Story of Tamar and Judah: Tamar was the daughter-in-law of Judah. Tamar was married to Judah's eldest son, but he died without leaving an heir. According to the custom of the time, Tamar was then married to Judah's second son, but he too died without leaving an heir. Judah promised Tamar that she would be allowed to marry his third son when he was old enough, but he did not keep his promise.

Desperate to have a child and secure her future, Tamar took matters into her own hands. She disguised herself as a prostitute and waited for Judah by the roadside. When Judah saw her, he did not recognize her, and he slept with her. Tamar became pregnant because of their encounter.

When Judah learned that Tamar was pregnant, he was outraged and ordered that she be punished. However, Tamar produced proof that it was Judah himself who had slept with her. In the end, Tamar gave birth to twin sons, Perez and Zerah.

This story, though troubling, teaches us several important lessons. First, it shows us that sexual violence can take many forms. Tamar was not physically forced to have sex with Judah, but she was deceived and manipulated. This is a reminder that sexual violence can happen in many ways, and that we must be vigilant against all forms of abuse and mistreatment.

Second, the story of Tamar and Judah also shows us that sexual violence can have lasting consequences. Tamar was forced to take extreme measures to secure her future and to have a child, and she had to endure the shame and stigma that came with her actions. This is a reminder that sexual violence can have a profound impact on a person's life, and that we must be sensitive to the experiences of survivors.

Third, the story of Tamar and Judah reminds us that we have a responsibility to speak out against sexual violence and to hold those who commit it accountable for their actions. Tamar could have remained silent and accepted her fate, but she chose to confront Judah and to demand justice. This is a reminder that we too must be willing to break the silence and to work towards a world where all people are treated with dignity and respect.

As we reflect on the story of Tamar and Judah, let us pray for all those who have suffered from sexual violence. Let us also commit to working towards a world

where all people are treated with dignity and respect, and where sexual violence is no longer tolerated.

To help support survivors of sexual violence, it is important to be aware of local resources that can provide assistance. Rape crisis centers, counseling services, and hotlines can offer confidential support and resources to help survivors heal and recover. If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual violence, I encourage you to seek help and support.

Additionally, we must recognize the important role that men can play in preventing sexual violence. Toxic masculinity and entitlement are often underlying factors in sexual violence, and it is important to promote healthy relationships and respect for all people. Men can be allies in the fight against sexual violence by speaking out against harmful attitudes and behaviors, and by actively promoting consent and respect.

As we reflect on the story of Tamar and Judah, let us also remember that sexual violence is not limited to any community or culture. It can happen anywhere, and it affects people of all genders and ages. Let us therefore commit to breaking the silence and to creating safe spaces where survivors can seek help and support.

We must also acknowledge that sexual violence is often accompanied by shame and stigma. Survivors may feel like they are to blame or that they will not be believed if they speak out. As a community of faith, it is our responsibility to create a culture of empathy and understanding, where survivors are believed and supported. Furthermore, we must recognize that our words and actions can contribute to a culture of sexual violence. Jokes and comments that objectify or demean others, especially women, can contribute to a culture where sexual violence is normalized. As followers of Christ, we are called to love and respect all people, and to speak out against anything that devalues or harms them.

Finally, let us also recognize that sexual violence is a systemic issue that requires systemic solutions. We must work to address the root causes of sexual violence, such as gender inequality and toxic masculinity. This requires education, advocacy, and a willingness to examine and challenge our own biases and attitudes.

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*Let us recommit ourselves to breaking the silence on sexual violence and to working towards a world where all people are treated with dignity and respect. Let us pray for all those who have been impacted by sexual violence and let us work towards justice and healing for all. May God grant us the courage and wisdom to do so. Amen.*

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## CHAPTER 6

# THE DANGERS OF MANIPULATION

### Text: Judges 16:4-22

The story of Samson and Delilah is a well-known Bible story that speaks to us about the importance of guarding our hearts and being careful in our relationships. Samson was a Nazirite who was consecrated to God from birth, but his relationship with Delilah ultimately led to his downfall. In this sermon, we will examine the story of Samson and Delilah to understand how we can avoid being manipulated in our relationships.

The story of Samson and Delilah provides an important lesson about the dangers of manipulation in relationships. Delilah was hired by the Philistine leaders to find out the secret of Samson's strength so that they could capture him. Delilah repeatedly asked Samson to tell her the secret of his strength, but Samson lied to her each time. Finally, after much pestering, Samson revealed that his strength came from his hair. Delilah betrayed him by cutting his hair, which led to his capture and imprisonment by the Philistines.

The story of Samson and Delilah highlights the importance of being careful in our relationships. Manipulators often use tactics like guilt-tripping, gas lighting, and withholding affection to get what they want. These tactics can be subtle and hard to detect, but they can cause significant harm to the victim.

Guilt-tripping is when someone tries to make you feel guilty for not doing what they want. They might use phrases like "If you really loved me, you would..." or "I can't believe you would do this to me." This tactic is manipulative because it tries to make you feel responsible for someone else's feelings, even if you have done nothing wrong.

Gas lighting is when someone tries to make you doubt your own reality. They might say things like "You're just being paranoid" or "That never happened,

you're making it up." This tactic is manipulative because it tries to make you feel like you are crazy or unreliable, which can make you doubt your own thoughts and feelings.

Withholding affection is when someone uses their love or affection as a weapon to get what they want. They might say things like "I'll only love you if you do this for me" or "If you don't do what I want, I'll leave you." This tactic is manipulative because it tries to make you feel like you have to earn someone's love or affection, which can be emotionally damaging.

So how can we avoid being manipulated in our relationships? The key is to be discerning and to guard our hearts. We need to be aware of the warning signs of manipulation, such as when someone is trying to control us or make us feel guilty for not doing what they want. We also need to be willing to stand up for ourselves and to set clear boundaries in our relationships.

As Christians, we are called to love one another, but that does not mean that we should allow others to take advantage of us. We need to learn to say no when someone is trying to manipulate us or exploit us for their own purposes. We should also be willing to seek help and support from trusted friends or professionals if we are in a situation that feels dangerous or harmful.

The story of Samson and Delilah teaches us a valuable lesson about the importance of being careful in our relationships. By understanding the warning signs of manipulation and setting clear boundaries, we can protect ourselves from harm. Ultimately, we must remember that we are beloved children of God and that we have the right to be treated with dignity and respect in all our relationships. Let us pray for God's wisdom and discernment as we navigate the complex and often challenging world of relationships.

## CHAPTER 7

# CONFRONTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE: LESSONS FROM TAMAR'S STORY

**Text: 2 Samuel 13:1-22**

The story of Tamar, David's daughter, and Amnon, her half-brother, is a difficult story to read. It's a story of sexual violence and abuse, and it's a story that is all too familiar in our world today. As we look at this story, we must remember that God hates violence and abuse, and He calls us to seek justice and show compassion to those who have been victimized.

Amnon, one of David's sons, was in love with Tamar, his half-sister. He plotted to get her alone and then he raped her. After the assault, Amnon felt nothing but contempt for Tamar and sent her away. Tamar was devastated and humiliated by what had happened to her, but she refused to be silenced. She tore her royal robe and covered herself with ashes, which were symbols of mourning and humility. She then went to her brother Absalom, who was full of anger and hatred for Amnon.

Absalom plotted to avenge his sister's honor, and two years later he had Amnon killed. While this was not the right way to seek justice, it shows us how deeply Absalom and Tamar were affected by the abuse she suffered. Tamar's story reminds us that the effects of sexual violence can be far-reaching and long-lasting. We must remember that God's heart breaks for those who have been victimized by sexual violence. He desires justice and healing for them. We can see this in the way Jesus interacted with women who had been victimized in his time. He showed them compassion and respect, and He rebuked those who would their power to exploit and abuse others.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to do the same. We must show compassion and empathy to those who have been victimized, and we must stand up against those who use their power to exploit and abuse others. We can do this by volunteering with or donating to organizations that support victims of sexual violence, advocating for policies and laws that protect against gender-based violence, and educating ourselves and others on the signs and effects of gender-based violence.

We must also work to create a culture that respects the dignity and worth of every person. This means being intentional in our language, actions, and attitudes towards others. We can speak out against sexist jokes or comments, challenge harmful gender stereotypes, and support survivors of gender-based violence in our communities. We can also work to create safe and inclusive spaces where survivors can feel supported and empowered.

Tamar's story is a difficult one, but it reminds us of the importance of seeking justice and showing compassion to those who have been victimized by sexual violence. We must work to create a world where every person is respected and valued, and where violence and abuse have no place. Let us pray for all those who have suffered from gender-based violence and let us commit to working for justice and healing in our world.



## CHAPTER 8

# THE DIGNITY AND HONOR OF WOMEN: LESSONS FROM ESTHER

### Text: Esther 2:5-18

The book of Esther is a captivating story of a Jewish girl who becomes queen of Persia and saves her people from genocide. But before Esther's triumph, she faced numerous challenges, including gender-based violence. In this sermon, we will examine Esther's character and resilience in the face of oppression and explore how we can honor the dignity of women.

In Esther's time, women had limited rights and were often treated as property rather than human beings with inherent dignity and worth. They faced different forms of gender-based violence such as physical, sexual, emotional, and economic violence. Esther's situation was no different - she was taken from her home and forced to compete against other women for the king's favor.

Despite her circumstances, Esther did not lose sight of her value and her faith. In the passage we read today, we see how Esther handled herself during the beauty contest. She did not allow herself to be swayed by the opinions of others or to compromise her values. Instead, Esther found favor in the eyes of the eunuch in charge of the harem and eventually won the king's heart. This was not because of her physical beauty alone, but because of her character and integrity.

Esther's story reminds us that women should not be defined by their physical appearance or their circumstances. Every woman is created in the image of God and deserves to be treated with dignity and honor. Men are called to love and

respect their wives, sisters, and daughters, and to protect them from harm. However, we also need to acknowledge the ways in which men may contribute to or enable gender-based violence. Toxic masculinity, gender stereotypes, and the normalization of violence against women are some of the factors that contribute to this issue. We need to challenge these attitudes and behaviors and work towards creating a world where every woman can live without fear.

We can take concrete actions to address gender-based violence. We can support organizations that provide services to survivors, such as shelters, hotlines, and legal aid. We can also advocate for policy change, such as laws that protect women's rights and hold perpetrators accountable. We need to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviors in our own lives and communities, such as harmful language, victim-blaming, and bystander inaction.

Esther's bravery and faith in the face of adversity should inspire us to value and honor the women in our lives and stand against any form of violence or mistreatment. May we pray and work for a world where every woman can live without fear and with the full dignity that comes from being a child of God.

## CHAPTER 9

# MERCY AND FORGIVENESS: THE STORY OF THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY

**John 8:1-11**, records the story of a woman who was caught in the act of adultery and brought before Jesus by the religious leaders. They were hoping to trap Jesus and discredit him, but instead, he used the opportunity to show us the power of mercy and forgiveness. This story challenges us to reflect on how we treat people who have made mistakes or fallen short in their lives, especially in the context of gender-based violence.

The religious leaders brought the woman to Jesus and said, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The Law of Moses commands us to stone such women. What do you say?” (John 8:4-5). It is important to note that the Pharisees were not concerned about upholding the Law of Moses or the sanctity of marriage. They were using this woman as a pawn in their political games.

Instead of answering their question directly, Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with his finger. When they persisted in their questioning, he said, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). One by one, the accusers left until no one was left to condemn her. Jesus then asked the woman, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She replied, “No one, sir.” Then Jesus declared, “Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:10-11).

This story teaches us several lessons that are relevant to gender-based violence. First, it reminds us that no one is without sin. We all fall short and make mistakes. Second, it shows us that we should not be quick to judge or condemn others, especially victims of gender-based violence. Instead, we should extend mercy and forgiveness to those who have experienced trauma.

Gender-based violence affects millions of people worldwide, and it often involves judgment and condemnation by society. Victims of gender-based violence are

frequently blamed for their own abuse or disbelieved when they come forward to report their experiences. This kind of treatment can be devastating and contribute to a culture of silence that perpetuates gender-based violence.

The story of the woman caught in adultery challenges us to extend compassion and understanding to survivors of gender-based violence. It reminds us that victims of gender-based violence should not be judged or blamed for their experiences. Instead, they should be supported and believed.

We can extend mercy and forgiveness to survivors of gender-based violence in several ways. One important step is to listen to and believe survivors when they come forward to report their experiences. We can also offer support and resources to those who have experienced trauma, such as counseling services or referrals to local organizations that help survivors.

The story of the woman caught in adultery reminds us that we are all in need of God’s mercy and forgiveness. It challenges us to extend the same mercy and forgiveness to others, especially survivors of gender-based violence, even when it is difficult or unpopular. Let us leave our lives of sin and follow the example of Christ, who showed us the power of love and forgiveness. May we always remember that we are saved by grace, and that same grace is available to all who call upon the name of the Lord.

In conclusion, let us work together to create a world where survivors of gender-based violence are supported, believed in, and treated with compassion and understanding. May the story of the woman caught in adultery inspire us to extend mercy and forgiveness to those who have experienced trauma, and may it help us to build a more just and equitable society for all.

## CHAPTER 10

## JOSEPH'S COMPASSION AND TRUST IN GOD

**Text: Matthew 1:18-25**

The Christmas story is one of the most popular stories in the Bible, and it tells us about the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. However, there is one person in the story that we often overlook, and that is Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. Today, we will focus on Joseph's response when he found out that Mary, his betrothed, was pregnant.

**Joseph's Initial Reaction:** We can only imagine the shock and confusion that Joseph felt when he found out that Mary was pregnant. According to Jewish law, an engagement was as binding as a marriage, and adultery was punishable by stoning. Joseph had every right to accuse Mary and bring her to trial, but he did not. Instead, he decided to divorce her quietly to avoid public disgrace.

**Joseph's Compassion:** It is evident that Joseph loved Mary deeply, and his initial reaction was not to hurt her but to protect her from public shame. He did not want to expose her to ridicule or harm. He had every reason to be angry, bitter, and resentful, but he chose to be kind and compassionate. He could have easily made Mary's situation worse, but he did not. Instead, he chose to do what was right in the sight of God.

**Joseph's Trust in God:** God, in His infinite wisdom, had a plan for Mary and Joseph. He knew that Mary was carrying the Savior of the world, and He knew that Joseph was the man He had chosen to be the earthly father of Jesus. God revealed to Joseph in a dream that the child in Mary's womb was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that he was to name him Jesus, which means "God saves." Joseph's trust in God was unwavering, and he obeyed God's command without hesitation.

**Application:** Joseph's response to Mary's pregnancy shows us what it means to love, care, and trust in God. He could have responded in anger, bitterness, and violence, but he chose to respond with love, compassion, and obedience to God. This is a powerful example for us to follow, especially when it comes to the issue of gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence is a pervasive issue in our world, affecting millions of people every day. This includes physical, emotional, and sexual violence that is perpetrated against individuals on the basis of their gender. As Christians, we must be aware of this issue and actively work to combat it.

We can learn from Joseph's response to Mary's pregnancy and apply it to situations of domestic abuse and violence. Just as Joseph protected Mary from public shame and harm, we must protect those who are vulnerable to gender-based violence. We can do this by speaking out against abusive behavior, supporting victims, and working to create a culture of respect and equality.

Furthermore, Joseph's response reflects God's character and the nature of the gospel message. God is a God of love and compassion, and He calls us to love and care for others as He does. The gospel message is one of redemption and restoration, and we can be agents of this restoration by working to end gender-based violence and supporting those who have been affected by it.

Joseph's response to Mary's pregnancy was not only an act of love and compassion, but it was also an act of obedience and faith in God. His response is a model for us as Christians to follow in our relationships. We must be kind, compassionate, and loving to our partners, and we must trust in God's plan for our lives.

*Let us go forth from this message with a renewed commitment to love and care for one another, to trust in God's sovereignty, and to work towards reconciliation and peace in all our relationships. May God bless us and guide us as we seek to follow in Joseph's footsteps. Amen.*

## CHAPTER 11

# THE SAMARITAN WOMAN: FINDING HEALING AND PURPOSE IN CHRIST

**Text: John 4:1-30**

In the Gospel of John, we are introduced to a woman from Samaria who encountered Jesus at a well. Her story is a powerful testimony of how God can heal us, transform us, and give us purpose in life. In this sermon, we will explore the story of the Samaritan woman and discover the valuable lessons it teaches us about healing, transformation, and purpose in Christ.

The Samaritan woman was a social outcast, marginalized and excluded from her community. She had been married five times, and the man she was living with was not her husband. This woman had a reputation that preceded her, and she was shunned by her own people. But despite her past and her present circumstances, Jesus saw her for who she was, a precious child of God, and offered her the gift of living water.

The first lesson we can learn from the story of the Samaritan woman is about healing. We all have areas in our lives that need healing. It may be physical, emotional, or spiritual. We may have been hurt by others, or we may have made poor choices that have led to pain and regret. But just as Jesus offered the Samaritan woman living water, he offers us healing and restoration through his love and grace. He can take our brokenness and make us whole again.

The second lesson we can learn from the story of the Samaritan woman is about transformation. When Jesus revealed to her that he was the Messiah, she was

transformed from a social outcast to a messenger of hope. She left her water jar and ran back to her town to tell others about Jesus. She became a light in the darkness, a voice of truth in a community of lies. In the same way, when we encounter Jesus and accept him as our Lord and Savior, he transforms us from the inside out. He gives us a new identity, a new purpose, and a new mission.

The third lesson we can learn from the story of the Samaritan woman is about purpose. When the Samaritan woman met Jesus, she found her purpose in life. She realized that her life had meaning and significance. She was not just a woman with a tainted past, but a child of God with a mission. Jesus gave her a purpose, and she embraced it. In the same way, when we encounter Jesus, we discover our purpose in life. We realize that we were created for a reason, and that reason is to love God and serve others.

The story of the Samaritan woman is a powerful testimony of how God can heal us, transform us, and give us purpose in life. Just as Jesus saw her for who she was, he sees us for who we are, and he offers us the gift of living water. May we all accept his offer, and find healing, transformation, and purpose in Christ.

## CHAPTER 12

# THE IDEAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

### Text: Ephesians 5:22-33

The Bible provides us with the blueprint for the ideal family relationship. The book of Ephesians gives us an excellent illustration of how a family ought to relate. This text highlights the importance of submission, love, and respect in the family. By following these biblical principles, we can create a strong and healthy family relationships.

The Bible clearly states that wives should submit to their husbands as unto the Lord. This submission is not a sign of weakness or inferiority, but rather a sign of respect for the leadership of the husband. Husbands, on the other hand, are called to love their wives sacrificially and lead their families with humility and grace. This is the ideal model for marriage as presented in Ephesians 5:22-23.

However, it is important to note that submission does not mean blind obedience or tolerating abuse. No one should ever be subjected to abuse, and abuse is never acceptable in any form. If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse, please seek help from a trusted friend, family member, or professional.

In addition to submission, the text also emphasizes the importance of love. Husbands are commanded to love their wives just as Christ loved the church. This love is not based on physical attraction, but rather a decision to love and cherish one's spouse unconditionally. This kind of love seeks to build up the other person, not tear them down. When husbands and wives love each other in this way, they create a safe and loving environment in which their children can thrive.

One way to practice this kind of love is by intentionally showing affection and appreciation towards your spouse. It could be as simple as saying "I love you" or expressing gratitude for something they did. Small acts of kindness can go a long way in building a strong and healthy family relationship.

Another important aspect of family relationships is mutual respect. Both husband and wife should respect and honor each other. Husbands should honor their wives as equal partners in the family, recognizing their contributions and supporting their dreams and aspirations. Wives should respect their husbands as leaders, recognizing their strength and providing encouragement and support in their leadership role.

Practicing mutual respect can involve actively listening to one another, valuing each other's opinions, and working together as a team. It is important to remember that no one is perfect and that we all have room to grow and learn from each other.

In conclusion, the Bible presents an ideal model for family relationships based on the principles of submission, love, and respect. Husbands and wives who follow these principles can create a strong and healthy family relationship that is characterized by love, mutual respect, and a sense of purpose.

Let us all strive to model our own families on this biblical ideal, and to honor and cherish our spouses and children as precious gifts from God. Remember that no relationship is perfect, but by practicing submission, love, and respect, we can build strong and healthy families that can weather the storms of life.



## CHAPTER 13

# THE POWER OF COMMITMENT AND SACRIFICE IN A CHRIST LIKE MARRIAGE

**Text: Ephesians 5:25-29**

In Ephesians 5, the Apostle Paul shares a powerful message about the ideal relationship between a husband and wife. He calls for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church, giving himself up for her. This is a high standard indeed, but through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can live it out in our marriages. Today, we will focus on the important elements of commitment and sacrifice that are required to make a Christ like marriage work.

A Christ like marriage is built on a strong foundation of commitment. We must be committed to our spouse, to the Lord, and to marriage itself. Commitment means being faithful and dedicated, even when things get tough. It means being willing to work through challenges, to forgive one another, and to always seek the best for our spouse.

In a world where divorce is all too common, it is important for us to remember that marriage is a lifelong commitment. The Lord designed marriage to reflect His love for us, and we must honor that by staying committed to our spouse. As we read in Ecclesiastes 4:12, *“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”* When we are committed to our spouse and to the Lord, we can weather any storm.

The second important element of a Christ like marriage is sacrifice. Just as Christ gave Himself up for the church, husbands are called to give themselves up for

their wives. This means putting our spouse’s needs before our own and being willing to make sacrifices for the good of the marriage.

Sacrifice can take many forms. It might mean giving up something we enjoy so that we can spend time with our spouse. It might mean apologizing and seeking forgiveness, even when we feel we are in the right. It might mean putting our spouse’s needs before our own desires or ambitions. Sacrifice is not always easy, but it is necessary for a strong, healthy marriage.

However, we must also recognize that the principles of commitment and sacrifice can be distorted in abusive relationships. Domestic violence is a prevalent issue in our society, and it is important for churches to address this issue in their teachings. The Bible teaches us to love and respect our spouse, and this should always be the foundation of a Christ like marriage. Domestic violence is never acceptable, and it is never the victim’s fault. If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, seek help immediately. There are local resources and organizations that can provide assistance and support.

As couples, there are practical steps we can take to prevent and address domestic violence in our marriages. These include:

1. **Communication:** Open communication is essential in any healthy relationship. We must be willing to talk about our feelings, concerns, and needs in a respectful and honest way.

2. **Boundaries:** It is important to establish clear boundaries in our relationships. We must respect each other's physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries.
3. **Support:** We should seek support from family, friends, or a counselor when facing challenges in our marriage. This can help prevent abuse and provide assistance when needed.
4. **Education:** We should educate ourselves on the signs of domestic violence and the resources available in our community. This can help us recognize abusive behavior and take action to prevent it.

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*In conclusion, a Christ like marriage is built on a foundation of commitment and sacrifice. We must be committed to our spouse, to the Lord, and to marriage itself. And we must be willing to make sacrifices for the good of the family.*

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## CHAPTER 14

## THE CHURCH AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

**Text: Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 21:2**

In Ephesians 5, Paul uses the analogy of a husband's love for his wife to explain Christ's love for the church. He tells husbands to love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. This analogy highlights the importance of sacrificial love in a Christian marriage. But this analogy goes beyond marriage and applies to the relationship between Christ and the church as well. The church is the bride of Christ, and just as a husband is called to love and honor his wife, so too are we called to love and honor the church as the bride of Christ.

In Revelation 21, John sees a vision of the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. This is a powerful image that speaks to the beauty and purity of the church. Just as a bride on her wedding day is adorned with beautiful garments and jewelry, so too is the church adorned with the righteousness of Christ.

And just as a husband cherishes and honors his bride, so too does Christ cherish and honor the church. Christ's sacrificial love for the church is the ultimate example of how we should love and care for one another. Christ loved the church so much that he gave himself up for her, sacrificing himself on the cross to redeem her from sin and death. In the same way, we are called to give ourselves up for the church, to sacrifice our own desires and ambitions for the sake of the body of Christ. This means being willing to serve and care for others, even when it's difficult or inconvenient.

This analogy of the church as the bride of Christ also has important implications for how we treat women. Just as a husband is called to love and honor his wife, so too are we called to love and honor women as our sisters in Christ. This means treating them with dignity and respect and standing up against any form of violence or mistreatment.

Gender-based violence is a serious issue in our society and can take many forms, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. It is a violation of the fundamental dignity and worth of women, who are created in the image of God and are valuable members of the body of Christ. As followers of Christ, we are called to stand up against gender-based violence and work towards a world where all people are treated with love and respect.

We can do this by taking specific actions in our daily lives. For example, we can speak out against harmful attitudes or behaviors towards women, we can support organizations that work to combat gender-based violence, and we can strive to treat all women with dignity and respect in our interactions with them. By doing so, we can help to create a world where women are valued and respected for who they are, as beloved children of God.