

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Foreword



I am very excited to present this excellent resource to churches in South Africa.

I am one of many South African's across the country that is either directly or indirectly affected by sexual and gender based violence in our communities on a daily basis. We live with the constant reality of Gender Based Violence (GBV) taking place right now in our families, in our communities and in our churches.

It is estimated that 80% of South African's consider themselves Christians. Research has shown that 3 out of 4 people are experiencing some form of sexual and gender based violence in our churches across South Africa. This is a hectic statistic to deal with. What are we to do as churches in South Africa? The time has come for the church to rise up, to speak out and to act.

It's one thing to recognize that it's time to speak out and to act. Do we as the church have the necessary resources to address GBV? I applaud the many South African churches that are starting to speak out, but more needs to be done. Even though churches are eager to do something, they do not feel adequately equipped to address GBV.

It is my firm belief that this resource will help envision, enable and support the church to be a relevant and transformative force in South Africa. This book is an excellent bible study tool that has drawn on the many rich experiences of churches across the world and in South Africa who grapple with how to address GBV.

The objective of this resource is to equip churches to have a positive impact in preventing and responding to sexual violence in their church and community. It is my sincere hope and prayer that this resource will help you to study the scriptures, to know and understand the times we are living in and to know what to do.

May God grant us all the wisdom, discernment, boldness and courage to speak out, to act and to support those who have and continue to experience great trauma. We are greatly encouraged by the many survivors who are speaking out and leading a movement to end Sexual and Gender Based Violence in our country. It is them who have emboldened us to draft this resource.

**Marcus Van Wyk**

South African Christian Leaders Initiative (SACLI)

**Secretariat for the We Will Speak Out South Africa Coalition**

Working together to see an end to Gender Based Violence

[www.wewillpeakout.org](http://www.wewillpeakout.org)

This book has different Bible studies, chosen by individuals who have worked on contextual Bible studies and are aware of the issues of sexual violence and gender (SGBV) justice that churches are grappling with in 21st Century South Africa. A self-discovery tool helps you identify which areas you may benefit from addressing first. If you score low in a particular area during the self-discovery, you can then use the relevant Bible study to look at this issue in more detail. The Bible studies follow a clear layout. You may wish to photocopy the self-discovery pages and Bible study pages to give to others in the group.

**Objective:** To equip churches to have a positive impact in preventing and responding to sexual violence in their church and community.

The **aim of the resource** is to provide information and tools to enable individuals, local churches and communities to:

- create an awareness of sexual violence and its impact
- explore what the Bible says about it and how its teaching can be applied
- identify if sexual violence happens in their own church and community
- understand their role and responsibility in relation to sexual violence
- create 'safe' environments in churches for survivors of sexual violence
- advocate for appropriate support for survivors as they struggle to come to terms with the consequences of sexual violence

## Why is this resource important?

Sexual violence and gender-based violence (SGBV) are forms of violence that occur when an individual uses their power against individuals who are often more vulnerable. Sexual violence is any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act. This includes rape and/or coercing or physically forcing anyone to have sex or perform sexual activities. Violence can happen within marriages, homes, churches and communities. Violence can be caused by someone known to the survivor or by a complete stranger. Violence can be experienced by anyone, regardless of ethnicity, age or social standing.

There is often shame and guilt felt as well as fear of stigma, discrimination and further violence, which leads to the issue not being reported or spoken of openly. It is important to create an environment in which men, women, girls and boys feel able to speak about these issues and share their own personal experiences. This resource seeks to empower all members of the church and community and enable them to understand the issues together.

Gender is a term used in speaking about men and women and the biological differences between them. Gender is also the way society has defined human beings and their roles. In this way, different behaviour and qualities are thought of as specific to or appropriate for one or other gender. For example a culture and society may say that women should be compassionate, gentle and nurturing, while men should be forceful and strong and take leadership. *But is this always true for all men and women in all cultures?* It is important to understand that gender as a construct is not static or monolithic but dynamic and changes with time and circumstances. Therefore, gender as an identity refers to the way an individual perceives themselves as male or female or both or even none.

## Unequal power relations

Men and women relate in different ways, experiencing power differently in their relationships. These different power relations occur within the church too, as can be clear in the way particular Bible passages are taught. It is important to note there are conflicting messages in the Bible on the issue of gender roles, for example, in the verses below:

- In Galatians 3:28, the opposite is demonstrated where the full equality of women is affirmed: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all equal in Christ Jesus.'
- 1 Timothy 2:11–12: 'A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman domineer over man; she should be quiet.'

Unfortunately, relationships between men and women are not equal, because most societies give men more power over women. These influences shape the way women and men relate to one another in society. Individuals in positions of power can abuse their power leading to psychological, emotional and physical violence. For example, a teacher may entice a student to have sex with him in exchange for good grades.

## 2 WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Sexual violence is a form of gender-based violence. Sexual violence is one of the most destructive and yet least-recognised human rights abuses in the world. As many as one in three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in some other way – most often by someone she knows, including by her husband or another male family member. It is important to know that sexual violence is more often experienced by women and children, however men can also experience sexual violence.

*Sexual violence refers to any act, attempt or threat of a sexual nature that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, psychological and emotional harm.*

Sexual violence refers to “any unwanted sexual act or activity. There are many different kinds of sexual violence, including but not restricted to: rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, rape within marriage / relationships, forced marriage, so-called honour-based violence, female genital mutilation, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and ritual abuse. Sexual violence can be perpetrated by a complete stranger, or by someone known and even trusted, such as a friend, colleague, family member, partner or ex-partner<sup>1</sup>.” It is a form of gender based violence as too often it is directed on an individual because of their gender or sex or sexual orientation.

Sexual violence happens when one person (the perpetrator) abuses the power that they have over another person (the survivor or victim), in a sexual way. In most instances, this takes place in a private or isolated location where there are no witnesses. Evidence of an attack can be blood stains, semen or any physical injuries from the attack. The survivor can experience physical, mental and emotional wounds from a sexual attack.

In most communities, there are very limited resources available to support survivors after the trauma has occurred. If there are no witnesses to the sexual attack, then the survivor may feel that no one will believe them if they report the matter to the police.

It is important for the church and community to understand more about sexual violence and what can cause attacks to happen. The survivor is **NEVER** to blame for the attack. Survivors require care and support as they seek to recover from the trauma. In some countries, sexual violence is a criminal offence and it is important that survivors are supported so they feel able to report the attack to the police and local authorities if this is the case.

Only by discussing sexual violence openly will individuals understand that sexual violence is not

acceptable and see that it is possible to prevent attacks from happening.

### Examples

Anyone can fall prey to sexual violence and it can take place in many different settings. Examples of sexual violence can include rape, unwanted sexual advances, forced marriage/abortion and trafficking for sexual exploitation.

- **Inter-personal violence:** sexual violence can happen within a marriage or relationship. Such instances are often hidden because they happen within the home, away from public view. This can often be a difficult cycle to break, even if the survivor wants the violence to stop.
- **Harmful cultural practices:** some cultural rites of passage or practices can be harmful. Culture is very important but, if a practice is harmful, it is important to observe closely and try and suggest alternative practices. An example of this may be female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)
- **Stranger violence:** violence carried out by someone who is not known to the survivor.

### Effects

The effects of sexual violence can be both visible and invisible, affecting people from all parts of the community. Sexual violence can happen anywhere within the community, and to anyone. Sexual violence leaves its victims with long-term psychological and physical trauma, results in damaged relationships within families and communities, and is found within communities in all contexts, including those experiencing conflict.

<sup>1</sup> Rape Crisis England and Wales, “Rape and sexual violence,” <http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/> [18 Nov. 14].



This book takes a look at many passages from the Bible in order to help Christians gain helpful insights into the impact of sexual violence on our communities and churches, and to suggest ways we can respond.

## Using this book – the role of the facilitator

These Bible studies can be used by individuals but more learning is likely to come if the studies are used in small groups such as Bible study groups, Mothers' Union meetings, youth groups or other church groups.

These studies are designed for group discussion and learning. They do not require there to be a 'teacher'. Instead, a facilitator is needed. A good facilitator can help to create a relaxed and open atmosphere where people feel safe and can share their personal thoughts and experiences. The facilitator should seek to build up relationships within the study group. This helps sensitive or difficult issues to be raised and discussed.

The facilitator is likely to be in some kind of leadership role within the church. However, the pastor or minister may not be the best person to facilitate these studies. People might expect them to 'teach' and provide the 'right' answers. The facilitator needs to be comfortable with discussing openly issues that people often shy away from; sex, for example, is not often discussed openly in a group.

The facilitator may require additional support throughout the use of this process, as they are providing support to participants who have experienced sexual violence personally. It may be that the facilitator is reliving their own experiences throughout the sessions.

## The structure of this book

This book has a clear layout. Everyone starts by completing the self-discovery tool: this highlights the areas of which people may have limited knowledge or understanding. Each of the self-discovery sections are linked to a Bible study. Ideas are suggested for practical responses, for individuals and churches, but these are by no means exhaustive. There are no doubt many other possible responses. It is important at all times to make sure that survivors are included in planning the response so that it meets their needs properly.

*'Go to the people. Live with them. Learn from them. Love them.  
Start with what they know. Build with what they have.  
But with the best leaders, when the work is done,  
the task accomplished, the people will say,  
"We have done this ourselves."  
Lao Tsu, China (700 BC)*

## Facilitating group discussions

Well-led group discussions can allow deeper issues to come to the surface and be discussed openly in a more productive way than through a number of individual conversations. Ensuring that all the community have the opportunity to participate is very important and a real skill.

Facilitation is about...

### Ensuring:

- everyone has a voice
- everyone is valued for their contribution

### Enabling:

- each person to discover their potential
- everyone to work together to tackle common problems

## Guidelines for facilitating discussions on sensitive topics

Sexual violence is a sensitive topic and it is important for the facilitator to create the right environment for people to discuss the issue. Consider the following tips when facilitating groups:

- Be aware of the culture of the group. Be aware that some issues may be difficult to talk about openly or in mixed groups.
- When introducing a sensitive topic, think about different ways to present it to the participants, such as through using a role play, telling a story, showing some pictures to demonstrate a problem or asking groups to discuss particular issues. Some people may find it easier to talk about their experiences as if it was a story about someone else. Perhaps suggest that no names are used to enable confidentiality to be maintained.
- Consider breaking up large groups into smaller groups of five or six people. This may need to be done on the basis of gender and age (for example, a group of men who are over 18 years old).
- Nominate a leader for each group who is confident enough to give feedback to the larger group if necessary.
- Ask groups to agree on ground rules so that each person feels free to share their ideas.
- Where possible, ask groups to record people's feedback on paper – through pictures or words. This is a useful record of discussions. Be sensitive to the literacy levels within the group, try and ensure inclusion of everyone regardless of whether they can read and write.
- Use different techniques to make sure one person does not always talk too much. For example, a person can only speak when holding a certain object.
- Ask small groups to present and share their discussions with the wider group using

drawings and role play. This enables others to hear their thoughts.

- Try and summarise what has been said frequently, for example after each group has **spoken to the wider group. Check that everyone has understood what has been shared.**
- **Ensure there are plenty of breaks and fun activities to relieve any tension from the sensitive discussions.**

#### Creating a 'safe' space

It is important to create a space where people feel free to discuss their understanding of sexual violence and talk openly about their experiences. Sexual violence is a traumatic experience and it may take a long time for survivors' trauma to heal. It may take time to create an environment where survivors feel accepted and listened to. It is therefore important to continue to listen humbly to survivors and include them in all aspects of discussion. Try to ensure that separate counselling is available for survivors and that at all times you work to create a 'safe' environment for the survivors and protect them in public discussions.

#### Guidelines/practical tips:

- Offer support and counselling to any person who would like to talk about their experiences.
- Focus on creating an environment where all individuals feel confident about being involved in discussions. If some people are not participating, ask them privately if there is anything that can be done to help them participate.
- A non-judgmental attitude is important so survivors are encouraged to be open and share their experiences, without fearing what people think of them.
- Listen to survivors: let them know they are being heard. Once they are able to speak about their own experience, survivors can also help care for and support other survivors.
- The survivor may feel unable to express themselves for some time after the attack and may only do so when they feel safe and they trust the person listening.

#### The facilitator's own awareness and understanding of sexual violence

There are key things that each facilitator needs to be aware of when leading discussions on sexual violence.

- A.** *The facilitator needs to be aware of his/her own attitude to sexual violence*  
This means the facilitator should be aware of his experience personal growth and learning.

**Confidentiality** is an important principle in many fields, and especially when working with survivors of sexual violence. It is important to make sure that any personal information is not shared with others, unless the survivor gives you permission to do so. There are circumstances in which you may need to tell a third party about the attack, for example when someone is reporting sexual violence.

The self-discovery tool (on pages 10-14) is a tool that enables the facilitator to reflect on and understand their personal attitudes and behaviour around issues of sexual violence. It is important to understand that we all have different views and attitudes to sexual violence. The facilitator may learn from members of the community and be challenged as they listen to individuals' experiences.

#### *B. The facilitator needs to be aware that group discussions may involve survivors of sexual violence.*

The facilitator needs to be sensitive in facilitating discussions about sexual violence as some participants may have had painful experiences and may not have received support and treatment to enable healing. It is important to have a trained counsellor at hand or be able to refer survivors to expert care and support.

#### *C. The facilitator needs to be aware of recent incidents of sexual violence in the media.*

These events may have been reported in the newspapers, or talked about in the community or on the radio. The way these events have been reported will also affect an individual's thoughts and beliefs about sexual violence.

These Bible studies are designed to equip pastors and church leaders with the resources and knowledge they need to be able to help their congregation have a deeper understanding of sexual violence. They will help everyone have a true, unbiased, biblical perspective of the issues around sexual violence.

*'You must be the change you want to see in the world.'*  
Mahatma Gandhi

## 4 ADAPTING THE BIBLE STUDIES TO USE AS SERMONS

Each of the topics considered for group Bible study would also provide an excellent basis for sermons. The church has a clear biblical mandate to work among the poor and those who are marginalised in our societies. Often this will include people who have been impacted by sexual violence in a variety of ways. The church has a key role to play in informing its members about sexual violence through teaching which is biblically inspired. Church leaders command respect and have authority, not just within their church communities but usually in society at large as well. They are well placed to challenge stigma, unhelpful attitudes and damaging myths, and to advocate for the most vulnerable within society.

Often, church leaders are reluctant to discuss and preach about sensitive issues about sexuality, family relationships, sexual violence and harmful cultural practices. This reluctance allows ignorance to persist, which damages so many lives, and particularly the lives of young people. We need courageous leaders who can speak biblical truth in love and inspire their members to share the love of Christ within their communities.

This book takes a fresh look at many Bible passages and the studies here can easily be adapted as a source of sermon materials. Begin by using the background information and the introduction to each Bible study proper to refresh your own thinking and understanding. You may want to research the ideas in greater depth by using the references provided.

When using the Bible studies as the basis for sermons, we recommend careful reading of the passages, followed by reflection. The additional Bible passages given at the end of each Bible study may also prove a rich source of ideas. Consider the likely answers to the discussion questions relating to the biblical passages and use these to provide an introduction to explain the Bible passage and underline the key learning points.

Then consider the discussion questions that relate to today in the context of sexual violence. What key points would come out of these? Use the key findings as a checklist to ensure all the main points are covered in your sermon teaching.

When concluding, look at both the learning objectives and at the practical response. Revisit your sermon notes – what changes do you want to make...?

- in people's understanding and knowledge?
- in people's attitudes and hearts?
- in people's practical response to your preaching?

What are the challenges you will leave with people? How do you hope they will respond?

Can you include some case studies, stories and personal experiences in the service that will bring your sermon to life and make it really relevant to the congregation?

## 5 SELF-DISCOVERY TOOL ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

This tool enables individuals and groups to reflect on and understand their personal attitudes or behaviour while also reflecting on the current situation within their church and community. It serves as a mirror that enables individuals and churches to discover what they know about particular subject areas. It will also help them decide which Bible study might have the most impact on them, individually and as a church, as they seek to prevent and respond to sexual violence.

How to use the tool

There are ten key areas that the tool helps users to reflect on. Each area has a level of 0 to 3. Read each of the descriptions in the boxes for each topic and circle the response that best describes your current knowledge and attitudes. Write the score associated with that description in the space provided.

For example: for the topic 'understanding of sexual violence', you feel the description 'I discuss the issue with others' best describes your knowledge and actions. This is under 'level 2', therefore write '2' in the space provided.

Each section of this tool has a Bible study associated with it (see page numbers in the table below for the relevant study). We recommend that you start with the Bible study related to the 'key topic' where you scored lowest. Then, when you have completed that Bible study, return to the tool to monitor the impact the Bible study has had.

There are no right or wrong answers: it is important to ask people to answer truthfully. The tool can be repeated as often as people want. Using it more than once enables people to reflect on how much they have learnt and what changes have occurred in their church and community.



# SELF-DISCOVERY TOOL ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE<sup>2</sup>

	KEY TOPIC	LEVEL 0	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	What level did you identify with?	Related Bible study page
1	<b>Understanding sexual violence</b>	I do not understand what sexual violence is	I know the basic facts and statistics about sexual violence	I discuss the issue with others	I am able to teach and train others about sexual violence		12
2	<b>Inclusion of survivors of sexual violence</b>	I do not know any people who have experienced sexual violence	I am aware of survivors of sexual violence but make little attempt to include them in activities	I actively seek to include survivors in activities that I facilitate	Survivors of sexual violence are actively involved in discussions, activities and church responses to sexual violence		14
3	<b>Preaching and prayer on sexual violence</b>	There is no preaching or prayer on sexual violence	Sexual violence is mentioned in church occasionally (from the pulpit and in prayer)	Sermons and Bible studies mention sexual violence on a regular basis	I continue to study the Bible in relation to what it says about sexual violence  I respond to issues of sexual violence based on these Bible studies		16
4	<b>Gender equality</b>	This is not an issue: men were created to rule over women, and women to serve men	I think that women need to be equal in some spaces in our lives	I believe that men and women are created equal, in God's image, the image of the Trinity	I'm an advocate for gender equality: I speak against inequality in all spaces which leads to sexual violence		18
5	<b>Church leadership</b>	Church leaders show no interest in responding to sexual violence	Church leaders have some understanding of the issues relating to sexual violence	Church leaders actively discuss sexual violence in their church and community	Church leaders listen to survivors of sexual violence and encourage the church to speak out about sexual violence and respond to the needs of survivors		20

6	<b>Prevention</b>	I do not know what causes sexual violence to happen	I understand that sexual violence happens because of an abuse of power in a relationship	Abusive actions and misuse of scripture are challenged within the church and community	The church promotes loving and respectful relationships in the church and community		22
7	<b>Engaging men and boys</b>	Working with men and boys is irrelevant to ending violence against women (including sexual violence)	I understand there is a need to work with men and boys too, but do not know how	Men and boys must be engaged in all spheres to end violence against women. I make an effort to include them sometimes	Men and boys are included in the conversations on violence against women. We work with men on changing their behaviours, attitudes and practices, and also provide the space for them to become advocates for change		24
8	<b>Care and support (including counselling)</b>	There is no practical counselling or treatment for survivors of sexual violence	There is some knowledge about what treatment and counselling survivors need	I fully recognise the need to support survivors of sexual violence and ask them what support they need	There are established support groups and initiatives to support survivors of sexual violence		26
9	<b>Justice (see note below)</b>	I am not aware what legislation exists in our country regarding sexual violence	I understand the need to seek justice for survivors and report sexual violence to the police	The church engages with the police and courts to ensure perpetrators are prosecuted	The church works in collaboration with others to ensure that laws are enforced and survivors are able to be heard		28
10	<b>Economic empowerment for survivors</b>	I do not think survivors require any additional financial support	I understand that survivors may have to leave their home when they report sexual violence and may require support to gain a secure livelihood	The church provides some economic support to survivors if they ask for support. This is a one-off gift	The church works to include survivors in savings and loans groups – seeking to provide holistic support		30

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Integral Mission, "GBV – Self Discovery Tool", <http://integralmission.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/GBV-Self-Discovery-Tool-extended-version-for-C2C.pdf>. [19 Nov. 2014].

**Note:** Justice is the responsibility of the legal system (police, courts) within the country. However, it is important that the church and community understand the laws of the land and work with the government to strengthen the legal system with regard to tackling sexual violence effectively.v

#### Questions for personal reflection

- In which 'key topic' did you get a low level?
- Reflect on why you may have a low level.
- What change can you make to improve this low level?
- In which areas did you gain a high level?
- Reflect on whether you could serve the church and community within these areas?

After individuals in the church have used the self-discovery tool, organise church members into small groups for discussions where they can share their experiences of using the tool.

#### Questions for group discussion

- In which 'key topics' did most people get the lowest level?
- Which area do church members want to focus on first?
- In which key areas did most people get the highest level?
- Discuss some examples of how the church or individuals are responding currently to key areas in which they identified with a high level.

Following discussions, the group can decide which Bible study they would like to do first. The page numbers related to each area are given in the table above.





The Bible is the foundation of Christian teaching and so it is important to understand what it says on the issue of sexual violence. This resource uses Contextual Bible Study methodology to help churches understand more about the issue and about their role and responsibilities in responding to sexual violence. The CBS methodology is underpinned by liberation theologies. It utilizes a dialogical approach to reading the Bible, which allows the context of the reader to engage in mutual dialogue with the context of the Bible. The study questions follow the 4 Cs mnemonic identified as: Reading the Bible in cultural context of the reader; community – reading the Bible together; critical – raising questions that reflects the challenges and contextual challenges of the reader; and change (transformation) – the goal of CBS is transformation.

Bible studies are very important:

- for the church to reflect on what the Bible says about key issues
- for people to be challenged and encouraged to grow in their faith
- for small groups to learn and share understanding
- for raising critical awareness - conscientization and empowering for praxis

Dealing with concerns

In some cases, there may be some initial resistance to starting the process, for any number of reasons. It is really important to address any concerns at the start and emphasise the benefits of going through the process.

Time-keeping

It is important that you plan the Bible studies to make sure you allow enough time for people to participate fully in the discussions. We have included the full Bible readings referred to in the studies at the back of this book (pages 64-73) to help your planning.

Prayer and worship

It is important to ask participants to be involved in prayer and worship during each session, in order to give them opportunity to 'own' the process. You may wish to ask the church leaders present to lead prayers at the start and end of each session. This will set the appropriate environment, preparing participants for a critical engagement with scripture.

STRUCTURE OF BIBLE STUDIES

Every Bible study contains a first page of information, guidance and tips for whoever is leading the session. This page is not to be read out to the group, but the facilitator should take time to read it and think about the study before the group meets. The facilitator's pages are set out in to the following format:



### THE STORY OF TAMAR

#### Facilitator's notes

The Bible study is used as a tool to engage churches and communities with the issue of sexual violence. Please allow participants to relax, be themselves and express themselves freely without being judged. Often, broaching the subject of sexual violence meets with deafening silence, so this session is aimed at breaking that silence. The key is allowing free expression and opening a way to restoration for those affected by sexual violence.

#### How will this study change us?

##### We will EXPLORE...

- that sexual violence does not symbolise a lack of God's love
- that sexual violence is not a curse and can happen in our homes, churches, schools and workplaces
- that sexual violence can happen to anyone and it is NOT the survivor's fault
- that sexual violence can be challenged and prevented
- that restoration is possible for survivors of sexual violence

##### We will BE...

- more caring, compassionate and supportive towards survivors of sexual violence
- available to listen to survivors' experiences, providing a safe environment for them to be open and vulnerable
- non-judgmental, offering a helping hand where needed

##### We will ACT....

- in solidarity with those who have experienced sexual violence
- prudently and justly in providing care and support for survivors of sexual violence, including accompanying them to access medical and legal services
- with perseverance to advocate justice and restoration of human relationships, without stigma and discrimination.

### *How could this study change us?*

First, we list the objectives of the study – what the participants should gain as a result of the Bible study – which fall into three categories:

**KNOWING** – these describe the practical knowledge and learning to be gained

**BEING** – these describe changes to our thinking and understanding, changing our heart and our responses

**ACTING** – these are the practical responses we can make as a result of our learning

### *Background information*

Before the study, the facilitator needs to read this useful background information and remember the key points.

### *Tips for the facilitator*

These tips can help the facilitator draw out relevant discussion points and experiences. Some of the studies tackle sensitive subjects and it may help, for example, to divide men and women, or girls and boys, into separate discussion groups.

### *Ideas for practical response*

These studies may change how we feel about certain issues – but, ideally, they should lead to action too. As the discussion draws to an end, use the ideas included here to help people focus on practical responses.

### **BIBLE TEXTS**

You can photocopy the Bible texts on pages 64-73, which are all from the New International Version. You may like to have several Bible versions at hand for comparison, especially if people are using other versions. Encourage people to bring their own Bibles.

### **Background information**

The story of Tamar is an explicit account of orchestrated sexual violence taking place in the house of a God-fearing man, David. The blame lies with a half-brother who is full of lust towards his half-sister, Tamar. He admits to his passion for Tamar and is advised to create a story that would make it easy for him to have access to Tamar. The sexual violence that results has a severe effect on her. She tears her dress and covers herself with ashes as a symbol of mourning that she has been violated.

### **Tips for the facilitator**

Allow participants to express themselves openly about similar experiences in their own lives. You may facilitate this by inviting people to share similar stories to Tamar's from your own community. This may trigger memories of unreported cases of sexual violence or gender-based violence, leaving participants feeling very vulnerable.

### **Ideas for practical response**

It is important to acknowledge that it often takes time for survivors to go through a healing process. Do not be intimidated by fear of explosive and highly charged emotional responses. In most cases, these experiences are not easily expressed and there are few safe spaces or loving environments that allow free expression of these emotions. For some participants this may be the first time they have confided in anyone about a painful experience: this calls for extra care and counselling depending on the severity of the case. It is therefore recommended that a trained counsellor should be present to help deal with cases that may need individual attention.

Sexual violence is not just something that occurs in society today. It has occurred throughout history. The story of Tamar illustrates a chain of events that leads to a devastating act: the rape of Tamar. This story is in the Bible as a constant reminder that sexual violence is an abuse of human rights and we need to speak out against it. Together, in partnership with all survivors of sexual violence, we need to stand firm, holding hands in prayer for strength and restoration of broken relationships. We need to say together **‘WE ARE SILENT NO MORE!’**

### Discussion

#### *In biblical times...*

1. Read 2 Samuel 13:1–22 in small groups. Share with each other what you think the text is about and summarise your understanding of the story to the group.
2. Who are the characters in this story and what do we know about them?
3. What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?
4. Why does Tamar acted in that way?

#### *In the context of sexual violence...*

5. What are your experiences of sexual violence in the Christian homes and churches?
6. What does God say about sexual violence?
7. What impact does sexual violence have on the survivor?
8. What does God say to men and women who have been raped?
9. In what ways does certain cultural beliefs and practices contribute to the vulnerability of women and children to sexual violence?
10. Where can a survivor of sexual violence find support in your community?
11. What are your expectations from the church leaders concerning the issue of sexual violence?
12. What will you now do in response to this Bible study?

The small groups can present their discussion to the plenary group. Creativity is particularly vital here, as individuals may struggle to articulate their responses. A drama or drawing may be the best method for some group.

### Key learning points

- Sexual violence can take place anywhere and it is important to create more awareness that survivors are NOT to blame for the violence.
- The process of reclaiming life, healing and restoration after facing traumatic life experiences is not always easy and may take long.

<sup>3</sup>See, pages 64-65 for the full text.

### Facilitator’s notes: How will this study change us?

#### We will EXPLORE...

- and understand as a church the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment where people can trust each other and all people have the opportunity to serve each other
- and reflect on the concept of what full participation means
- and explore how survivors of sexual violence can participate fully in effective prevention and the response to sexual violence

#### We will BE...

- able to understand how inclusive Christ is towards all of humanity
- able to seek humbly to understand God’s purposes for his church

#### We will ACT....

- to encourage the full participation of people who have experienced sexual violence
- to restore the dignity of people who have experienced sexual violence
- to bring equality among God’s people by fighting injustice in society

### Background information

Our cultural and religious beliefs often shape our attitudes. This affects how we behave and how we treat other people. In some communities, churches have spoken out and responded to sexual violence. However, there are many cases where the church has been responsible for encouraging judgmental attitudes and fuelling stigma. This has prevented the full participation of those who have experienced sexual violence. The church has great potential to transform attitudes and lead the way to end stigma.

It is also important to understand that survivors of sexual violence often struggle with self-stigma. This is the feeling that people are avoiding you or pointing ‘accusing’ fingers due to a particular reason. It is as if we are to blame, that we are somehow ‘unworthy’. This causes low self-esteem, mental suffering and prevents us living life to the full, and becoming all that God intends for us.

### Tips for the facilitator

The facilitator needs to explain the concept of ‘unclean’ in the Old Testament (see Leviticus chapter 15). To be ‘unclean’ or ‘impure’ is to threaten others’ ‘holiness’ through contact. ‘Unclean’ or ‘impure’ objects or people must be kept separate from holy places or people. Uncleanliness or impurity can arise from sin or from natural conditions such as bodily discharges, illness or touching something that is dead.

Examine Jesus’ response towards ‘unclean’ people (such as those with leprosy, female bleeding or



### Prayer points

- Pray for healing of the pain and suffering caused by sexual violence (both physical, mental and emotional).
- Pray for the protection of girls such as Tamar who are vulnerable to sexual violence.
- Pray that the perpetrators of sexual violence will repent and change their behaviour.
- Pray for caring and godly men and women who will speak out against sexual violence and seek to protect the most vulnerable
- Pray for justice system that they may be human and compassionate.

### Further passages for reading

Here are some more texts that can be read and understood in the same way that Tamar's story has been:

- Genesis 19: 1–12. Sodom and Gomorrah
- Genesis 34. The rape of Dinah
- Judges 19: 1–30. A Levite and his concubine
- Mark 5: 24–34. The woman healed from internal bleeding
- 2 Samuel 11: 1–26. David and Bathsheba

## Full inclusion of survivors of sexual violence

who were dead). Be sensitive to people in the group who may experience self-stigma, for example survivors of sexual violence or people living with HIV.

Explore the different kinds of participation that we may experience, such as agreeing on decisions together and planning activities together. Consider how participation is encouraged from those of us who have experienced sexual violence.

Discuss how the church can change its judgmental attitudes and fully understand that survivors are NOT to blame for the sexual violence that they experience. Judgmental attitudes are a huge barrier which prevents the church from benefitting from the full participation of survivors of sexual violence, and prevents people from seeking the support they need.

### Ideas for practical response

How can we understand the feelings that people who have experienced sexual violence feel?

How can we help those of us who have experienced sexual violence to feel we can make a contribution and use our skills and experiences to help others?

In this study, we learn how easily incorrect attitudes can pull families apart. Unhelpful attitudes about sexual violence can pull apart the family of the church in just the same way. We have to change our attitudes if we are to enjoy the full participation that God wants for all of us as his family.



Jesus deliberately chose to travel through Samaria on his way to Galilee. Other Jews would not have used this route due to the difficult relationships between Jews and Samaritans. They would choose a long route. The meeting with the Samaritan women was not just by accident but because of God's will. The woman comes to draw water at noon during the midday heat in order to avoid others, due to her past life. When Jesus confronts her about her past and her various husbands, she does not deny it. Her difficult past makes her spiritually thirsty and in need of salvation. All of us are in need of salvation, regardless of our past life. We all need to stand before Christ and ask for forgiveness in order to receive the living water.

### Discussion

#### *In biblical times...*

1. In your own words, describe the scene from the Bible passage that you have just read.
2. Who are the people in the story?
3. Why do you think the woman came alone to draw water from the well at noon when it was very hot?
4. Why was the Samaritan woman so surprised that Jesus asked her for water?
5. What does Jesus mean when he tells the women he will give her 'living water'?
6. What sort of things do our societies consider as unclear?
7. What lesson do we learn from the passage about Jesus' contact with the Samaritan woman who the Jews considered as 'unclean'?

#### *In the context of sexual violence...*

8. How does self-stigma act as a barrier to providing care and support for survivors of sexual violence today?
9. In what ways can the church make people who feel unworthy and excluded, feel personally welcomed?
10. What do think are the reasons why survivors of sexual violence don't report?
11. Mention some of the ways in which certain cultural beliefs and practices contribute to dehumanization of sexual violence survivors.
12. What are some of the things that we do in the church that exclude others? How can we change these?
13. This is an example of Jesus reaching out to the marginalized and bringing acceptance and healing. What can we do to help survivors of sexual violence feel accepted and loved?

### Key learning points

- Jesus clearly shows us that he considers all people equal and that no race or group of people is inferior to others.
- Our attitudes as individuals many prevent our church from being the safe and welcoming

### Facilitator's notes: How will this study change us?

#### We will EXPLORE...

- that we are created in the image of a loving God
- that we are all one in Christ's body: people who have experienced sexual violence and those who have not
- that God considers everyone equal and so should we

#### We will BE...

- more understanding of how easily people who have experienced sexual violence can feel excluded
- aware of specific needs, not necessarily practical ones, of those who have survived sexual violence. We will not assume we know how it feels to have experienced sexual violence
- more loving of others within our church family

#### We will ACT....

- with empathy (empathetically)
- with the compassion of Christ
- to challenge unhelpful attitudes against sexual violence
- to encourage a positive church response to embrace the practical, emotional and spiritual needs of those who have experienced sexual violence

### Background information

Sometimes the church ignores the fact that sexual violence can happen within the church or that the church family may include survivors of sexual violence. This can cause pain and division and allow ignorance about sexual violence and its impact on the body of Christ to go unchallenged.

It is estimated that one in three women will experience violence during her lifetime. Therefore, this is not an issue the church can avoid.

### Tips for the facilitator

People who have survived sexual violence are valued and important members of our church and have much to contribute as part of the body of Christ.

It's important to help people assess critically their own church's attitude towards sexual violence and towards those in the church family who are survivors. What is the ideal situation within a church? What changes need to be made to create this place of welcome, warmth, support and inclusion?

<sup>4</sup> See pages 65-66 for the full text.

community that God intended it to be.

- Judgmental attitudes within the church can lead to a culture of silence and stigma, which prevent those who have experienced sexual violence from participating fully. It can also hinder efforts to prevent those who have experienced sexual violence from finding the care and support they need.
- Sometimes, those who have experienced sexual violence may feel that they have nothing to offer, because of self-stigma. Yet each of us is called to contribute as part of the body of Christ.

### Prayer points

- Pray that we can really love everyone as Christ did, following biblical principles, and be a good witness in representing God and sharing his unconditional love with all people.
- Pray that judgmental attitudes in the church will change, so that people who have survived sexual violence can find love and support and share their gifts within the church.

### Further passages for reading

- Psalm 139:13–16. Each of us is precious and valued by God
- 1 John 4:7–12. God's love and our love for each other

## The body of Christ has experienced sexual violence

### Ideas for practical response

Help the group to imagine that they or someone close to them (wife, daughter, sister, brother etc) experiences sexual violence.

Consider the different needs of those who have experienced sexual violence or those who are trying to support someone who has experienced sexual violence.



The body of Christ has experienced sexual violence. The body of Christ is starving. The body of Christ has no proper home. This is because, when one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. There is no 'us' and 'them'. We are all affected. Our lives are all connected and woven together and we must build on this sense of being connected.

This passage follows a wonderful description of the spiritual gifts God has given to his church. These gifts are given to individuals but used to benefit the whole church.

## Discussion

### *In biblical times...*

1. Explain in your own words what you think the text is about.
2. What are the most important parts of the human body? What happens to the rest of the body when one part of the body is damaged or in pain?
3. How does the church form one body from its many parts? Are verses 12 and 14 referring to one church or to the whole church family – or both?

### *In the context of sexual violence...*

4. Why do our churches sometimes not work together well as one body?
5. Paul's words in verse 13 challenged discrimination against slaves in his day. What would he challenge us about today in the way we discriminate between different groups of people?
6. How can we identify more with sexual violence survivors in our local church and community (verse 26)?
7. Read verse 13 aloud together, changing the words 'Jews' to 'survivors of sexual violence' and 'Gentiles' to 'people who have not experienced sexual violence'. What does it mean to share in the one Spirit?
8. How does this picture of the church as one body challenge us about our relationships with those who have survived sexual violence?
9. How would we like the church and community to respond to us or those close to us?
10. How would Jesus welcome those who have survived sexual violence?

## Key learning points

- As God's people, we are all one body – sharing the gifts that God has given – not for our benefit but for the benefit of his whole church body.
- God sees only precious children when he looks at us – not poor or rich, not slave or free, not survivors of sexual violence or those who have not experienced sexual violence. We should see people with God's eyes too and love each other equally.

<sup>5</sup> See pages 65-66 for the full text.

## Facilitator's notes: *How will this study change us?*

### We will EXPLORE...

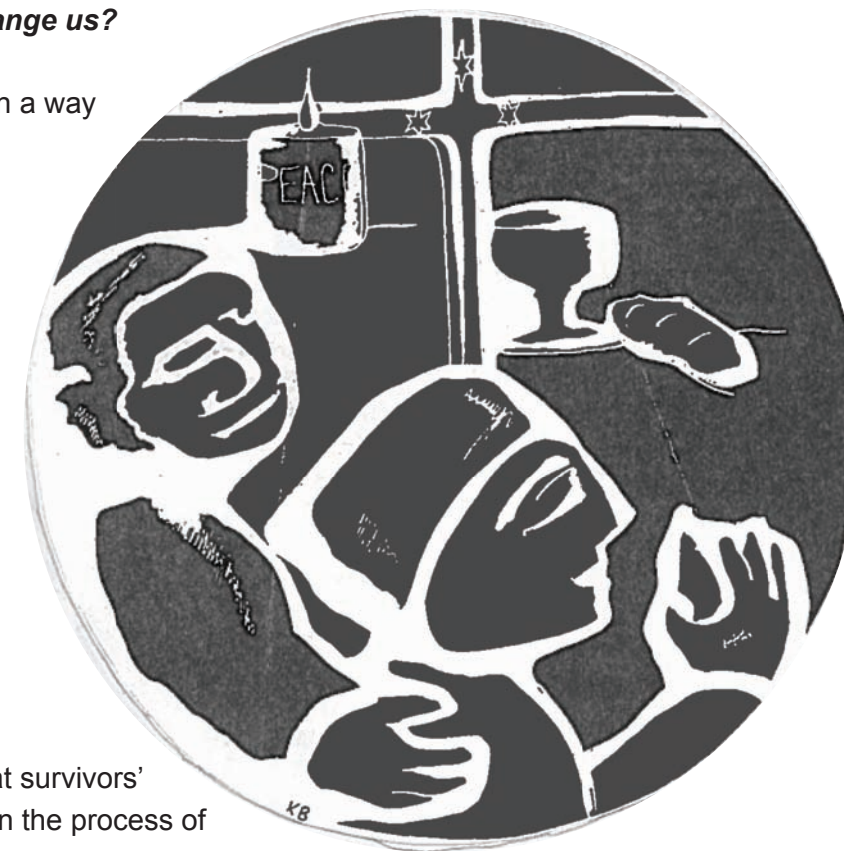
- the importance of celebrating difference in a way that promote equality
- ways of addressing gender equality and injustice in the church and society
- how to acknowledge and enhance each other's leadership in dealing with sexual violence

### We will BE...

- able to work in partnership with each other in preventing and responding to sexual violence
- able to understand God's desire for restored relationships

### We will ACT...

- to acknowledge and deal with the fact that survivors' experiences and skills are often ignored in the process of planning sexual violence prevention and care programmes
- to reclaim the roles of women in leadership
- to challenge relationships of power that reduce human beings to mere objects of pleasure



*'After attending a marriage training workshop, many things have changed in my family. I sit together with my wife, and it has become easy to discuss things. This changes what we do. It creates agreement and harmony. Lots of things have changed with our intimate relationship. Before, there was no discussion about sexual needs: it was the man who decided. Now, needs are expressed without shame as it concerns us both.'*  
Pastor Daniel, Burkina Faso.

## Prayer points

- Pray that our church will be a place of welcome and hope for all who come into it.
- Pray for people who feel our churches do not understand their needs that they may they know that God understands their needs and cares.
- Pray for the change of attitude by church leaders and members towards sexual violence.
- Pray that churches around the world will seek to understand the needs of those who are hurting and become places of shared understanding, where the needs of all are met.

## Further passages for reading

- Galatians 3:26–28. We are all one in Christ
- Luke 10:27. Love your neighbour as yourself



## Background information

Over the centuries, women and girls have been discriminated against throughout the world, in different ways. In most cultures, this system is reflected in value systems where sons are valued more highly than daughters. We accept that men and women can be treated differently based on their gender. We justify the fact that men hold positions and power over women. However, the misuse of this power is not what God intended.

Many societies today are characterised by divisions between people, especially between men and women. These divisions have led to poor relationships between men and women. The consequences of this include subordination, oppression, violence and the tendency to treat human beings, especially women and children, as possessions.

## Tips for the facilitator

Inequalities between men and women increase people's vulnerability and are an underlying cause of sexual violence. Who needs to take the initiative in breaking down stereotypes relating to gender – men or women, or both? Explain why our response to this question may reflect stereotypes we promote ourselves. The term 'gender' means both sexes should be equally involved – not just women!

Encourage discussion of how Jesus viewed issues of gender. How did he treat his followers, both men and women, given the cultural views of his day? Share success stories where gender stereotypes have been overcome.

## Ideas for practical response

- Encourage the participants to write three or four steps they would take in order to promote gender equality in their local church and community

This passage from Genesis 1 shows an equal partnership of man and woman, while Genesis 2 presents a God-given order of precedence of male over female, with separate roles accorded to each. Paul draws on this second version in 1 Corinthians 11:7–9. This may appear to be a contradiction, however the roles in Genesis 2 are designed to show the compatible, partnerships of man and woman.

In reading the Bible, we recognise that men and women are intricately interconnected. We can reflect on how to relate to each other in a positive, interdependent and mutually supportive way.

Further reading

Add: Gal 3:28

## Discussion

*In biblical times...*

1. In reading the story of the creation of man and women, what are some of the roles for male and female?
2. How are these gender roles to be understood in contemporary society?
3. What does God empower human beings to do (verses 26 and 28)?
4. What does this passage from Genesis 1 reveal about the importance of men and women working alongside each other in relationships of equality?
5. What does this tell us about the relationship between men and women?

*In the context of sexual violence...*

1. How is the Genesis passage in this study helpful in working out solutions to respond to sexual violence in our society?
2. How do you view the church structures in terms of gender justice?
3. Name five things you will do to restore relationships within your family and church.
4. How can we encourage our churches to challenge gender stereotypes?
5. In what ways can the structures and power relations in our churches be changed in order facilitate for the equality of women and men? List some practical steps that could be taken in Sunday school, youth group, women's group, men's group, church leadership etc.

## Key learning points

- God created human beings in God's own image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). God is beyond gender.
- The image of God can be reflected in inclusive human relationships, showing God in

**Facilitator's notes:** *How will this study change us?*

**We will EXPLORE...**

- that we are equal in the eyes of God, regardless of what we have done and who we are
- that no one deserves to be treated harshly and there is no justification for sexual violence
- that Jesus is not vindictive but calls for justice where sexual violence occurs
- that Jesus is compassionate and seeks to restore individuals

**We will BE...**

- more sensitive and compassionate towards other people's vulnerability
- more accommodating and accepting of people who have experienced sexual violence, without judging them
- more understanding and allow everyone to be heard and understood without being subjected to stigma
- less judgmental – by recognising our own lack of understanding or embarrassment – and we will provide safe spaces for transformation to take place

**We will ACT....**

- like Jesus to those in our community and church who have experienced sexual violence
- as messengers of hope and love to create an environment in our church where ongoing care and support is offered
- as agents of change in creating meaningful campaigns aimed at speaking out against sexual violence and seeking to prevent it
- in a supportive way and journey alongside those affected by sexual violence as they seek to find healing and hope after trauma

## Background information

Stigma, discrimination and silence can all worsen the pain caused by sexual violence. These are not often challenged or confronted in public. Talking openly about sensitive issues is often difficult within churches and communities, especially if people do not have correct information about the issue and about what the Bible says. The church can play a vital role in reducing stigma and discrimination and talking openly about the issue of sexual violence.

- **Stigma** is a feeling of being socially unacceptable, resulting in isolation, rejection and shame. It comes through the disapproval, condemnation and rejection of survivors of sexual violence.
- **Self-stigma** means that some survivors of sexual violence are often afraid to report what has happened because of fear of being judged. Sometimes, survivors may feel unworthy or ashamed.
- **Discrimination** means to treat someone differently because of who they are and what they

<sup>6</sup> See pages 65-66 for the full text.



communion, in partnership and in community. (Genesis 1:26–28).

- From Genesis 1:26–28, we can see that the power to subdue and dominate is to be used in stewarding the earth and that we should act with care and justice rather than trying to control other people.
- The dignity of each person consists in being God-like, in caring for and nurturing creation, and in participating in the ongoing process of creation. Woman and man are different but both are created in God's image and are equal.

## Prayer points

- Pray for the courage for both men and women to challenge unhelpful stereotypes about male and female roles and to encourage biblical reflection on the subject of gender.
- Pray that the gifts of women will be fully released to benefit our churches and that they will show wisdom and leadership in responding to issues around sexual violence.

## Further passages for reading

- Luke 10:38–42. Jesus encourages Martha to sit at his feet and learn, in the same way men did
- John 4:4–26. Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman
- Mark 5:25–34. The woman healed from internal bleeding
- John 8:2–11. The woman caught in adultery
- Gal 3:28. We are all equal in Christ.



have experienced. Survivors of sexual violence can even be discriminated against (or made to feel unwelcome) within their own families and churches.

- **Denial** means refusing to accept something is true. Survivors of sexual violence may not want to accept that they are being abused, because they are afraid of the consequences.
- **Silence** means refusing to talk about something that is true due to fear, lack of knowledge or lack of support.

## Tips for the facilitator

Focus on the practical ways in which people who have experienced sexual violence have also experienced stigma and discrimination in churches and communities. Examine what impact that has had on the group, on others and on their families. If survivors have spoken openly about their experiences, ask them to share their experiences of stigma and discrimination with you, to further your understanding. Are we aware of evidence that some people deny that sexual violence can occur in our churches and families? How can we challenge such denial and encourage openness?

## Ideas for practical response

Sexual violence calls for practical interventions at both church and community level. This may be through establishing community-based support groups for survivors. Support groups can create meaningful 'safe' spaces, which allow individuals to share their experiences with people who have also experienced violence. Peer group members can offer each other healing, providing solidarity as well as psycho-social, emotional and spiritual mutual support.



This Bible story tells of a woman caught in adultery. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees set out to test Jesus concerning the Law of Moses with regard to such behaviour. The woman is alone and the whole village is against her. She is vulnerable and accused of a sexual offence, and the law suggests that she should be killed violently. She is being judged. But Jesus treats her with dignity, compassion and love. In doing so, he restores her, healing her brokenness, and asks her to return to her community as a changed person, worthy of God's forgiveness and healing. Is Jesus challenging the Law of Moses?

### Discussion

#### *In biblical times...*

1. Who are the main characters, and what are their roles in this story?
2. What do you think the story is really about?
3. Verse 4 of this passage states that the woman 'was caught in the act of committing adultery'. Why, therefore, was it only the woman, and not the man she was with, who was accused of adultery and brought before Jesus and the crowd?

#### *In the context of sexual violence...*

4. What did Jesus imply when he said, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her"?
5. Why did the Pharisees and teachers of the law walk away?
6. In what ways is the text linking culture and oppression of women?
7. What does Jesus teach us here about how to respond with survivors of sexual violence in our context?
8. How can we apply this text to our own context?

### Key learning points

- It is important not to judge others or label them according to their behaviour.
- Do not assume that you understand the whole story without listening first to those who have experienced sexual violence. Survivors of sexual violence are not to blame for the violence.
- Seek to engage men and boys to speak out against violence. Not all men are perpetrators of sexual violence.
- Jesus is our role model in being compassionate and willing to expose sexual violence and showing compassion to those affected by it.

### Prayer points

- Ask God to help you show love and compassion to all those affected by sexual violence. Pray that he will bring healing and restoration to all who are suffering.
- Pray that you will have unconditional love for those individuals who carry the pain of sexual

### Facilitator's notes: *How will this study change us?*

#### We will EXPLORE...

- how sexual violence is more common than we may realise and that both women and men experience sexual violence
- whether sexual violence can also happen within families. That perpetrators may be known to the survivors or may be strangers
- whether sexual violence is a violation of human dignity and need to be challenged at all levels

#### We will BE...

- more aware of how vulnerable young people may be to sexual violence
- encouraged to advocate on behalf of survivors of violence

#### We will ACT...

- by teaching young people how to protect themselves
- to ensure violence, particularly sexual violence, is not hidden within families
- to provide support for survivors of sexual violence

### Background information

Individuals may suffer from different kinds of violence/abuse – physical, emotional or sexual. This Bible study looks at sexual abuse/violence within the family. Many people assume that most sexual violence takes place outside the family but this is often not the case. The act of rape, deeply troubling in itself, also makes HIV infection more likely because of the violence and damage to the delicate skin of the sexual organs.

### Tips for the facilitator

- Widen the discussion by considering first the social and economic pressures that force individuals, especially young people, to consent to sex against their wishes.
- Divide people into groups according to their gender for the discussion.
- Some participants may have experienced sexual violence themselves. Allow the opportunity for people to share these experiences if they feel able to do so, but do not ask anyone directly about their own background.
- Help people by suggesting they tell their own stories by referring to someone else (for example: encourage them to say 'my friend was attacked' rather than 'I was attacked'). This allows them to talk anonymously about themselves. Treat the subject with great sensitivity.
- If possible, find someone with counselling experience to provide support if anyone wants to talk afterwards.

<sup>7</sup> See pages 65–66 for the full

violence. Pray that you and your church will be Christ's hands and feet in providing care and support amid people's pain.

- Pray for peer support groups that can fully engage with and support those in churches and the community who have experienced sexual violence.

### Further passages for reading

- Judges 19:1–30. A Levite and his concubine
- Mark 5:24–34. The woman who bled
- 2 Samuel 11:1–26. David and Bathsheba

### Ideas for practical response

- Discuss what services/resources there are in the community for survivors of sexual violence.
- Can we challenge the local police to do more?
- Can our churches provide more support and offer counselling services?
- What training opportunities are there for developing counselling skills?
- How can we teach our young people to avoid situations that place them at risk?
- Discuss whether any kind of protective network could be established to help protect vulnerable children in our communities.