

## **16 Days of Activism Bible reflection: Let's talk about it**

**During 16 days of Activism it can be helpful to spend time thinking about and reflecting on the taboos felt by many victims and survivors of violence against women and girls. These include the stigma and unwarranted shame often put upon them by both the perpetrators and others. We highlight this to raise awareness, confront the stigma and break the power of silence.**

**This Bible reflection could be done together if possible, individually or via a zoom meeting.**

The Old Testament account of the rape by Amnon of his half-sister Tamar in **2 Samuel 13** is, for obvious reasons, often used as an example of the evil of gender-based violence and God's condemnation of it.

One specific aspect of the story illustrates starkly this negative response from perpetrators and others to the victim herself, which compounds the initial wrong.

Firstly, the perpetrator, Amnon, having violated Tamar, then turns on his victim, as though she is to blame for his actions, with a further expression of aggression and banishes her from his home.

*Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, 'Get up and get out!' 16 'No!' she said to him.*

*'Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.' But he refused to listen to her. 17 He called his personal servant and said, 'Get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her.' 2*

*Samuel 13:15-17*

Secondly, her brother Absalom responds to her distress by apparently belittling the incident, excusing the perpetrator, and calling for her to keep silent about her ordeal. (Later, we find that he exacted his revenge on Amnon, and thus the serious consequences of the original evil continued with more bloodshed and family conflict.)

*Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went. Her brother Absalom said to her, 'Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart.' And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman. 2*

*Samuel 13:19-20*

Reflect for a while on this biblical story and how it mirrors the experiences of many in the 21st century. Then consider together:

- How did Amnon's abuse of his victim trigger his hate for her after his actions? What does this show us about the ongoing risk that victims are at from their perpetrators?
- Consider Absalom's initial reaction to Tamar's ordeal. How can we counter similar attitudes in our day?
- In what ways does our society make it hard for those who have experienced gender-based violence to speak out about their experiences?
- Consider the impact of stigma and silence on victims of gender-based violence today. How can we raise awareness of these issues?

If there is time, consider further: How God views gender-based violence. What do you think is His response to the plight of the victim, the sin of the perpetrator, the responsibility of the bystander? In the light of your discussion consider what response God expects from His church to the evil of gender-based violence.

**Forgive us Lord  
when we hear neither your plea,  
nor the cries of your people.**

**Free us Lord  
from the fears that bind us,  
or from any sense of powerlessness.**

**Fill us Lord  
with your dream of a just world  
and the tenacity to keep going  
in playing our part,  
in your name, Amen**

*Maggie Lunan*

*It may be that there are those in your group for whom this reflection brings back memories of personal experiences, and causes a measure of distress, particularly if help was not sought or forthcoming at the time. The do's and don'ts for supporting survivors and support contact list, which can be found in this pack, may be helpful.*

## 16 Days of Bible Verses and Prayers

### Day 1

God created human beings in his own image.  
In the image of God, he created them;  
male and female, he created them.  
Then God looked over all he had made,  
and he saw that it was very good!

*Genesis 1:27, 31 (NLT)*

Creator God, thank you that we are all made in your image, and equally loved by you. Open our eyes to see your face in those of our sisters and brothers. Amen

### Day 2

He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,  
that the blind will see that the oppressed will be set free,  
and that the time of the Lord's favour has come.

*Luke 4:18-19 (NLT)*

Compassionate God may those experiencing all forms of violence be given courage, hope and practical help to break free from their abuse. Amen

### Day 3

Let us not become weary in doing good,  
for at the proper time we will reap a harvest  
if we do not give up.

*Galatians 6:9*

Steadfast God, give us resolve to work tirelessly to change attitudes that promote, accept and perpetuate all forms of violence and abuse. Amen

## **Day 4**

The Lord God has told us what is right and what he demands:

“See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God.”

*Micah 6:8 (CEV)*

Righteous God help those who administer justice for victims and survivors of gender-based violence to make decisions with integrity and compassion. Amen

## **Day 5**

Remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison,  
and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering.

*Hebrews 13:3*

Righteous Saviour, who came to free the oppressed, use us to challenge social injustice with a clear voice, in a world where the vulnerable strive to be heard. Amen

## **Day 6**

The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life — life in all its fullness.

*John 10:10*

Lord of life, thank you that many women and girls are now free from abuse and violence. Thank you for your healing power which brings hope to survivors. Amen

### **Day 7**

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul  
and with all your mind and with all your strength  
and love your neighbour as yourself.  
There is no commandment greater than these.  
*Mark 12:30-31*

Loving Lord, you have called us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Help us to treat all with dignity and respect as we follow Christ's example of selfless love. Amen

### **Day 8**

Do not fear, for I am with you.  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you.  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.  
*Isaiah 41:10*

God of righteousness, we pray against regimes that endorse violence against women and girls. Replace their evil influence with a rule of justice and decency. Amen

### **Day 9**

God will give a crown of beauty for ashes,  
a joyous blessing instead of mourning,  
festive praise instead of despair.  
*Isaiah 61:3 (NLT)*

Transforming God, we pray for all who live in fear of violence and despair that life will ever change. Bring to an end their suffering; restore their sense of worth.  
Amen

**Day 10**

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,  
'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'  
And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'

*Isaiah 6:8*

Holy Spirit fill us with new resolve to challenge unacceptable mindsets and actions and to champion the cause of righteousness in the name of Christ. Amen

**Day 11**

Then the king will answer,  
"The truth is, anything you did for any of my people here,  
you also did for me."

*Matthew 25:40 (ERV)*

Lord Jesus be with those who work with survivors of gender-based violence. May they be given the resources they need to offer long lasting support. Amen

**Day 12**

Jesus said: Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

*Matthew 18:3-5*

Heavenly Father protect children who witness violence in the home. May they be given support to enable them to lead positive lives, in freedom from fear. Amen

**Day 13**

Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.

*Romans 12:2 (NLT)*

All-powerful God break the patterns of abuse committed down the generations. Transform attitudes and behaviour for current and future relationships. Amen

**Day 14**

Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness.

May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.

*Psalms 72:1-2*

Lord of the nations, we pray for governments as they deal with gender-based violence. May they make policy and law with wisdom and discernment. Amen

**Day 15**

Don't take part in doing those worthless things that are done

in the dark. Instead, show how wrong they are.

The light will show what these things are really like.

*Ephesians 5:11, 13*

Merciful God bless those working with perpetrators of gender-based violence. Give them your resources to bring about lasting transformation of lives. Amen

**Day 16**

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free,

nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

*Galatians 3:28*

Lord of heaven and earth, we pray for all to follow Christ's example of treating women with equality and respect. We pray for the dawn of a better world where justice and peace may flourish. Amen

*Notes:*