

Gender and Biblical Reflection

For an NGO whose identity, history and core values are Christian, a biblical and theologically sound grounding is essential in determining priority, strategy and response at every level of our daily work, particularly regarding Gender and Development. World Vision affirms that Scripture is to be interpreted holistically and thematically, and also distinguishes between inspiration and interpretation. Inspiration relates to the divine impulse and recognises the whole canon of Scripture as the Word of God. Interpretation is our human activity as we seek to discern revealed truth in harmony with the totality of Scripture and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

To be truly biblical, followers of Jesus must continually examine their faith and practise under the searchlight of Scripture. In humility, we acknowledge that Christians through history have erred in interpretation at various times and have had to rely on the grace of God in resubmitting to the authority of Scripture in light of new understanding. Just as we now recognise that Copernicus was correct despite condemnation by church authorities, and just as Jesus had to rebuke

Nicodemus, his own disciples and religious leaders of his day for not understanding Scripture accurately, so we followers of Jesus today need to be humbly willing to re-examine our assumptions regarding God's words to us about gender relations and reconciliation.

Module 2 explores central biblical passages, concepts and imagery related to gender dynamics. Activities allow staff to reflect on what the Bible says about gender relations, discrimination, women, injustice and cultural issues in gender relations. Actual historical context of the life of women in the New Testament illumines Jesus' response to harmful traditions and cultural constraints faced by women at that time.

Jesus' own transformation of gender dynamics – the cultural and religious norms during New Testament times – is presented as our deepest motivation to work for justice, empowerment and transformed gender dynamics in the 21st century. This module can also be used as devotional material or as a one-day, in- depth study on gender and the Bible.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

1. **From Genesis to Galatians**

New insights are encouraged during small group discussion and reflection as participants re-examine key theological concepts in Genesis with a gender lens. Additionally, participants examine gender equality, diversity, unity and complementarity in light of Genesis 1:26-28 and Galatians 3:26-28.

2. **Incarnational Power: The Magnificat**

A dramatic reading of the Magnificat highlights the poetry, socio/political/historical realities and implications of this passage for gender equality. Participants work in pairs or small groups to explore how the Magnificat speaks to God's order and point of view regarding gender dynamics and social structure. Further questions address intergenerational implications for nurture and support of girl children's potential and consequences of this provision or lack for whole communities.

3. **Jesus Challenges the Gender Dynamic**

A thorough grounding in the gender dynamics that Jesus lived and modeled is essential for any Christian understanding of gender. In this session, participants are introduced to the historical and textual evidence of constraints women faced in New Testament times. Participants work in small groups to prepare and present a narrated role-play of two biblical stories: The Samaritan Woman, and Mary and Martha. Narrative and dramatic role-play help participants examine ways in which Jesus engaged with harmful traditional and cultural patterns.

4. **Gender Imagery in the New Testament**

In this session, participants examine familiar passages and imagery in the New Testament with a gender lens. Discussion and activities heighten awareness of "gender mainstreaming" throughout the New Testament and the challenge this raises for all Christians working with GAD.

5. **Scripture Search in the Community: Using a Gender Lens**

This session outlines Scripture search methodology and its effectiveness in introducing and developing gender equity. Participants use role-play to explore practical and powerful ways in which Scripture can be applied to resolve conflicts in gender dynamics.

