House Sarah Resource

…..transforming the lives of those who come seeking help… 6 Desvouex Road, Suva 6793100665

Of

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**10. Using the Bible to Challenge**

**Family Violence.**

**Introduction**

Throughout history the Bible has been used to justify, perpetuate and propagate the abuse of women. The misuse of the Bible in this way not only gives perpetrators the ability to start and continuing abusing, it can cause those who are experiencing domestic abuse to be plagued with spiritual dilemmas about the abuse being inflicted on them. The Bible should never be used to justify violence against another human being.

This section is aimed at ascertaining some of the helpful ways of understanding Scripture and also identifying some of the Scriptures or belief systems that have been used in an unhelpful way, and re-examining them.

1. It is important to recognise the Bible as the Word of God; “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:16). However it also true that God did not dictate the Bible to those who wrote it. It was written by men who reflected the culture and beliefs of their times

2. The Word of God that is the Bible must be understood in relation to His incarnate Word, Jesus; “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

3. All this must be understood within the context of love; “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13)

4. That for any and all actions we take, an account will be required of us; “Each of us will give an account of himself before God.” Ro­mans14:12

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| **Bible Passage** | **Unhelpful Interpretation** | **Helpful Interpretation** |
| **Submission**  “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord”  — Ephesians 5:22 | **Obedience**  The wife must obey her partner  **Not submitting causes abuse**  If a man abuses his partner it is because she is not being submissive enough. | **Equal Submission** to each other  The previous verse (5:21) says ‘Submit yourself to one another and verse 5:22 must be read in light of the mutual submission we should be giving to one another. To submit does not mean to obey.  Because the fledgling church was being seen as threatening the stability of the Roman Empire’s laws and traditions by advocating the freedom of women and slaves in Christ– church leaders were urging their members to adhere to the traditional cultural ‘Household Codes ‘of the secular world they lived in which required the wife to submit to her husband in all things. This was to prevent drawing the attention of the Roman authorities to the Church and persecuting it as subversive. In this case however the writer adds some other requirements for the husband – to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. It was not meant to be advice adhered to once the threat of persecution was removed. |
| **Rulership**  To the woman he said, “…Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”  — Genesis 3:16 | **Rulership: a Right**  God determined men should rule their wives, therefore that is how it should be | **Rulership: a Result**  A consequence of sin is that a man will rule over his wife, it is not God’s best plan for humanity, before the fall men and women were equal. This passage also justifies the cultural position of men and woman in 1000 BC. But men have used it as a reason to keep their position of authority. But Jesus Christ redeemed the sin of the past and liberated women and men to follow his ways of love, respect, justice and reconciliation |
| **Creation of Woman**  “The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”  — Genesis 2:18 | **Inferior**  To help means to serve, this verse shows that God created women to serve men and sug­gests they are inferior to them. | **Equal**  The word “helper” (ezer) in the OT has to root meanings, ‘to rescue’ and ‘to be strong’. Here it refers to women, but most often refers to God in the Old Testament usage (e.g. 1 Samuel 7:12; Ps 121:1-2). The second Hebrew word ‘k e  negdo’ means equal therefore some scholars suggest the correct translation of this verse should be “I will make a power equal to him” There is no suggestion at all of female inferiority.  **Resource**  Slaves, Women and Homosexuals; William Webb and Woman a Power Equal to Man; R David Freedman |
| **Forgiveness**  “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”  — Matthew 6:12 | **Disregard**  Forgiving someone should mean disregard­ing what they have done and maintaining the same relationship with them regardless of whether they change. | **Consequences**  Sin has consequences and forgiving does not remove those consequences. Forgiveness is a process and must not nullify the consequences of abuse or mean that the situation must continue as it always has. Women should not have to stay in an abusive situation in order to forgive their partner  **Resource**  Luggage Nooma; Rob Bell |
| **Bible Passage** | **Unhelpful Interpretation** | **Helpful Interpretation** |
| **The Original Sin**  “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”  — Genesis 3:6 | **Sin: Women are weaker**  Eve took the fruit, and gave some to her husband; this shows women are weaker and more likely to be sinful. | **Sin: Equal Responsibility**  Man and woman were both participants in the Fall: No one made Adam eat the apple Adam chose to do so. Adam was no less to blame than Eve.  “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man,((or through humankind) and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned” Romans 5:12-21 |
| **Divorce**  “But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, causes her to become an adulteress…” Matthew 5:32 | **Contract**  Marriage is a contract, the one who cancels the contract i.e. files for divorce is the one who is responsible. If a woman divorces a man for abusing her, she is at fault, not him. | **Covenant**  Marriage is a covenant; divorce is the breaking of that covenant. When a man chooses to be abusive, he breaks the covenant. If his wife chooses to divorce him, she is making public his breaking of the covenant, not going against what the Bible says about divorce.  **Resource**  Not Under Bondage; Barbara Roberts  Divorce and Remarriage; David Instone-Brewer |
| **Suffering**  “In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”  — 1 Peter 1:6 | **Accept**  Women should accept abuse and use the suffering as an opportunity to grow their faith. | **Refute**  By staying in an abusive situation a woman is risking being murdered. When Jesus was tempted to risk His life, He said, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test” (Matthew 4:7) God wants abused women to be safe and protected.  Resource  http://www.hiddenhurt.co.uk/spiritual\_obstacles\_to\_leav¬ing\_abuse.html |

**Adapted by the House of Sarah (**[**www.houseofsarah.org**](http://www.houseofsarah.org) **) for the Pacific context from the Restored Church Kit (**[**www.restoredrelationships.org**](http://www.restoredrelationships.org) **)**