



KWAZULU-NATAL
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KZNCC on Theology of sexual gender based violence

Introduction

The situation at the present moment about the Sexual Gender Based 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. SGBV has affected our society and increased orphans in our families. It has violated the rights of women. Women are not empowered to exercise their right in dealing with this issue. It has created stigma and abuse of the rights for women. Most women are inferior and forced to accept it because they are bound by the culture and beliefs which states that if a man hits his wife that is a sign which demonstrates the affirmation of love. Some church leaders quote the Bible verses out of context when addressing the issues of status of women. There is a need for biblical contextualisation about SGBV. Cultural beliefs and practices are disempowering and humiliating the dignity of women.

There are many biblical texts of sexual gender based violence we found in the in the scripture for example, the one which is found in the book of 2 Sam. 13-33. The story of Tamar is an explicit account of orchestrated sexual violence taking place in the house of God fearing man, David. The blame lies with half-brother who is full of lust towards his half sister, Tamar. He admits to his passion for Tamar and 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 symbol of mourning that she has been violated.

Unequal power relations

Men and woman relate in a different way, experiencing power differently in their relationships. These different powers occur within the church too, as can be clear in the way particular 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 woman is affirmed: 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all equal in Christ'.

1 Timothy 2:11-12: 'a woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission .I do not permit woman to be a teacher, nor must a woman dominate over man, she should be quiet.'

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

Gender and socio-political, religion-cultural inequalities

"What about gender issues in the time of Jesus? His society was patriarchal; male and female roles were sharply differentiated, with women's roles centering on the family and home. A woman who could not have children felt deep shame (as in I Sam. 1: 12) Widows were especially vulnerable. Divorce was easy (for the man)".

"A rabbinical custom was to thank God daily, as a man, that you had not been born a woman, slave or foreigner. Religious leaders were not permitted to speak to women in public; religion did not value women's spiritual contributions" (initiative). "Jesus broke with these assumptions and traditions. He extended honour and respect to all women. Women experienced the power of His miracles. He taught that women were equal to men in the sight of God. Jesus taught that women could also receive forgiveness of sin and the gift of salvation by grace. Jesus taught that women can be his followers and fully participate in the Kingdom (sic) of God. In an era where women could not be legal witnesses Jesus caused that they be his witnesses (Lk. 24: 9 – 11).

Gender Based Violence: A Problem

Gender Based Violence is: “Domestic violence (also domestic abuse, spousal abuse, intimate partner violence, battering or family violence) is a pattern of behavior which involves violence or other abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation. Intimate partner violence is violence by a spouse or partner in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner. Domestic violence can take place in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, and sometimes also involves violence against the children in the family.

Domestic violence can take a number of forms including physical, verbal, emotional, economic and sexual abuse, which can range from subtle, coercive forms to marital rape and to violent physical abuse that results in disfigurement or death. Domestic murders include honor killings and dowry deaths” (Wikipedia).

Gender Based Violence has crossed the traditional boundaries as mentioned above. Observation is made that misogynic attitudes display themselves in public spaces where men in most cases abuse women for the sake of their gender. Some just stop women they do not know for some reason and when they do not respond react violently on them. Our society must get rid of Gender Based Violence as well.

Approach

To avoid and to manage conflicts and deep misunderstanding among churches, this project should be introduced in phases.

A). the first phase:

- The Ecumenical Movement together with strategic partners should convene Church Leaders Consultative meeting to discuss and find each other on this subject.
- The purpose of the dialogue is to get inputs from the clergy and Christians in churches in the three provinces namely; KZNCC, Western Cape SACC and SACC Gauteng.
- Provinces should facilitate dialogue sessions, to listen with open mind, listening to people in and outside the church that are directly or indirectly affected.

b). Second phase:- - Follow up to dialogue sessions, we should establish if churches can serve as a sanctuary where both men and women can feel to be loved as they are; to make them feel accommodated, loved and not being judged for who they are.

- To establish if there is a need for the Ecumenical Church to teach and discourage individuals who would simply want to switch or change their sexual orientation to male or female for the fun of it.

c) Have biblical studies

The Bible study can be used as a tool to engage churches and communities with the issue of sexual violence. In those gatherings we must allow participants to relax and express themselves freely without being judged. Often, broaching the subject of sexual violence meets with deafening silence, the aim is to break the silence.

The Key is allowing free expression and opening a way to restoration for those affected by sexual violence.

Create an awareness of sexual violence and impact

Explore what the bible says about it and how its teaching can be applied

Identify if sexual violence happens in their churches and communities

Understand their role and responsibility in relation to sexual violence

Create a safe environment 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.