

Resources for Churches on ending violence against women

Draft 2, Peter Grant, 1 June 2012

Why Christianity is opposed to violence against women

- God is love (1 John 4:8) and Christians are commanded to love one another (John 15:12)
- God is a God of justice (Isaiah 30:18) and will hold all people to account (Hebrews 4:13)
- Every person is made in the image of God and has value (Genesis 1:27)
- God upholds the cause of the oppressed (Psalm 146:7)
- The essence of Christianity is sacrificial love and service, not power and domination. Jesus warned his followers not to seek or abuse power (Matthew 20:25-28)
- Jesus' purpose was to liberate the oppressed (Luke 4:18)
- Jesus brought healing and restoration (Matthew 12:15)
- Jesus respected and empowered women (eg Luke 13:10-13)
- The Bible instructs men to love their wives and lay down their lives for them (Eph 5:25)
- There is no difference between men and women in the kingdom of God (Galatians 3:28)
- Christians are commanded to do good to all people (Galatians 6:10)
- Christian cannot "walk by on the other side" in the face of violence (Luke 10:25-37)
- Loving relationships in the family and in society are at the core of Christianity (John 13:34/35)
- Those who damage other people will face God's judgement (1 Peter 4:5)
- There is always hope in God (Isaiah 60:18)
- The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are incompatible with violence against women (Galatians 5:22-23)

Scriptures and passages

These can be used as readings during the service or as passages on which sermons can be based.

- God's love and our love. 1 John 4:7-21
- Jesus' manifesto. Luke 4:16-21
- Hope for transformation. Isaiah 61
- Instructions for husbands to love their wives sacrificially. Ephesians 5:25,33, Colossians 3:19
- The equality and mutual obligation of husbands and wives. 1 Corinthians 7:1-4

- The rape of Tamar: 2 Samuel 13:1-22 (Note the complicity of the men involved in the story)
- True love. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
- God's comfort for the suffering. Isaiah 43:1-5
- You are serving or neglecting Christ as you serve or neglect others. Matthew 25:31-46
- Jesus prevents violence against a woman. John 8:1-11
- The fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23
- Jesus' compassion for Jairus' daughter and a woman bleeding. Luke 8:41-56

Points for a sermon on or around 25 November

- 25 November is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women. It is also White Ribbon Day where all men are invited to wear a white ribbon to show their commitment to ending violence against women.
- Some statistics on Violence against women in the UK: (to be completed with sources)
- Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called violence against women: "The most pervasive human rights violation in the world".
- God calls on us to act against such injustice. He takes the side of the oppressed.
- There are great examples of Christians throughout history who have taken a lead in addressing slavery (Wilberforce); racism (King) and debt (Jubilee 2000). The global abuse of women cries out for similar action in our generation.
- God will hold us to account for our actions and for our lack of action.
- Domestic violence affects one in four women in the UK and also affects women in our churches
- Domestic violence is often hidden and surrounded by stigma and shame
- The church needs to be a safe place for women affected by abuse.
- Jesus called on us to love one another. Abuse can have no place in Christian relationships.
- We need to challenge any theology or teaching in the church that demeans women or condones violence against women
- Churches can provide financial and other support to local refuges and other services supporting women and children affected by violence
- Men have a key role to model good relationships and challenge abusive attitudes and behaviour amongst their friends, including the use of pornography and prostitution.
- There are actions we can all take:
 - Thinking about and challenging our own attitudes and behaviours

- For men: Signing up to the White Ribbon Pledge and Restored's men's campaign, "First Man Standing"
- Adopting a charter for our church – see example from Restored church pack
- Drawing guidance and ideas for action from the Restored church pack and other sources