

CHAPTER 6 PASTORAL GUIDELINES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The words of the former South African deputy president Jacob Zuma are worth mentioning here. He said:

“When you educate a man, you educate an individual, but when you educate a woman, you educate a nation.” (SABC 2, 19h30 News on 31 August 2004).

If all African men understood and dignified women, then there would be neither problem of inequality nor subordination between women and men. The value of woman must not be restricted only to her household, but also to the whole country, since they also have a role to play in our country. It is my belief that if women have been treated as better people from long ago, the movement of feminist theology would have been of no value at all. They would have contributed to a healthy society if their criticism were observed and implemented.

6.2 BIBLICAL MEANING OF “IMAGO DEI”

Many references to the image of God have been discussed by theologians, but Mouw emphasizes that to understand that, we need to understand the purpose of God in creating human beings. (1979:27) Borreson says:

“According to Genesis, human nature as such has been made in the image of God, a nature which exists in both sexes and which does not allow of our setting woman aside when it comes to understanding what the image of God is. As regards to ‘homo interior’, the woman possesses the quality of the image of God through her soul, which is identical with that of man, for souls have no sex.” (1986:28)

In agreement with Folwer, human beings are distinguished from all other creatures as the “image of God”. (1991:4) It is God-relatedness that sets the human person apart from all other creatures. Amongst all the created things of the earth, only human being is said to have been created in God’s image. If there is something we need not make any mistake about, it is to try dealing with issues that pertain to man on the level of any other created thing. Human beings are different from every creature; hence we must look at him or her alone as an image of God.

Various people have come up with various interpretations of what the “*image of God*” means. We need to understand that a symbol of an image is something that reflects the thing that is absent. According to Nyirongo the term should be understood in terms of man’s relationship with God as his Creator and Father. (1994:32) Humankind was created to glorify God in all areas of life (for example, in marriage, social life, economically, etc), but human being lost the privilege of *imaging* God when he or she sinned. This is the same message that is echoed by Anderson (1982:78) in his “On being human” when he said:

“Human persons cannot be complete without glorifying or enjoying God, for that is their nature and their destiny as God created in the image and likeness of God. Being in the image of God entails freedom, independence, responsibility and hearing.” (1982:78)

This image was violated and dented when human beings disobeyed God. This means that anyone who is not obeying God cannot reflect this image; therefore it takes salvation by Jesus Christ to be back in the original image. That is what Nyirongo argues when he reasons that he or she can be reinstated as an *image* only when he or she is redeemed from the fall by Jesus Christ. (1997:107) Therapy must help the abuse in changing the conviction that they are forsaken by God. Many people,

while in crisis, think that Jesus is no longer of help in their lives.

Wimberly has this to say:

“Many people bring to church and pastoral counseling a belief that God has abandoned and forsaken them. Deep down inside they harbor a thief who is robbing them of their self-esteem and hopeful outlook on life. Therapy must help them revive the feeling of God’s presence in their lives through Jesus.” (1999:54)

In other words, for them to realize that their image is violated they need to be helped therapeutically to know who is bad between God and devil. That will open their minds to know and understand that Jesus can bring restoration to their lives.

On the other hand, Needleman, Bierman and Gould agree on the opinion that “the image” is man (sic) in his natural state. They go on to explain that man comprehends what we call intellectual life (the nous) and the spiritual life (pneuma), and it is these two realities which constitute the true and the basic man. (1997:307)

That is why Van der Walt is also correct when he says that it is not easy to reflect God’s glory in our present state of corruption and imperfection. God’s image is reflected in man (sic) when he lives in correct relationship

with his Father, and this can only be corrected through the renewal of the Spirit which is done by Christ in our lives. (1994:165)

According to Heyns the image of God in man exists mainly in representation and relation. (1970:100) In this he follows the view of Berkouwer (1957:119) and Berkhof (1969:26-31). Munroe is of the same view when he says:

“Humanity cannot reveal God’s image and likeness apart from a relationship with Him. God created humanity to reflect His character and personality.”(2002:30)

In full agreement with the scholars above, the author says that representation means that every human being is God’s representative on earth. Relation means that something of the infinite greatness and glory of God’s existence and conduct is also found in man (sic) - even in the very limited sense. In the conduct the image of God is found in man in deeds that are found also with God. (Heyns, 1974:88)

Thieme makes the argument more interesting when he says that for as much as the man (sic) is the image and glory of God, the woman is the glory of man. His argument is based on the issue of women covering their heads as Paul taught in 1Cor.11:7-17. (1970:3) The author views his

argument as a shallow one because it would bring us to a point where we see women as people who can not be the images of God apart from men. Then this will mean that all unmarried women cannot reflect the image of God, because they must first reflect the image of their husbands before reflecting that of God. Readers must therefore not be taken by his view since it still brings us back to say that women are not important but men are.

The researcher agrees with Moltman who believes that the starting point for an individual is to know that the dignity of man (sic) has its roots in the fact that every human being is an image and reflection of God. (1984:11) The “*imago dei*” (image of God) concept is one that comes up in this discussion. It is as women and men together that we express most fully the image of God (Keane, 1988:7-12). This, according to Keane raises the concern - again following the undermining of the image of God in women, by saying:

“The move to ordain women has caused ministry, sacramental life, liturgy, ecclesiology and the doctrine of Trinity, among other fundamental aspects of Christian life, to be re-examined. Far from fostering unorthodox thinking, feminist theologians claim that such re-thinking will play a significant role in the renewal of the church.” (1988:62)

Warunta and Kinoti see women, just like men, created in God's image, hence they say:

“They are fully human beings entrusted with giftedness, potentialities and talents. They were intended by God to be co-creators on earth in community and interdependence with other people. Women are called by God to be responsible persons, accountable to God for the stewardship of their giftedness and talents.” (2000:130)

In agreement with the two scholars above, it is the researcher's conviction that women are not objects but a subject who are to be treated with respect and honor. It is important for both men and women to constantly be aware that as human beings we are born incomplete and in a distorted and pervasive world of humanity. The human task is to struggle towards wholeness and completeness.

The researcher believes the women's dignity and worth mean a right to personal integrity of their mind and body. They must have the right to express their own thoughts, forms and opinions. That is in line with the fact that women, just like men, have the right to privacy, self-determination and self-realization (Warunta & Kinoti, 2000:131).

McGrath admits that the way things are today is not the way things were meant to be. (1992:214) That is why he agrees that men and women were created in the image of God, but on account of the fall the relationship between men and women has been disrupted and distorted through sin. On the other hand Van der Walt emphasizes the same point when he says:

“Scripture is far richer than our generally male representation of the figure of God. In the Bible there are clear examples of God also revealing Himself to us in female terms. But it should be remembered that since God is not an earthly creature, we must take these as simple images because God cannot be a being with gender.” (1990:80)

The researcher thinks this is the right way to portray God since the meaning of “in the image of God” should not be understood very much in the literal sense, but in essence of qualities and abilities. We can of course not think God as either a male or female figure since He is omnipotent. The emphasis of God as father does not help us to point to Him as a male, but it is another way to portray His responsibility towards our lives. As we work with women through these images therapeutically, we will be restoring their dignity, and healing their inferiority complex.

From the beginning the Bible explains it clearly that human beings were created in the image of God, irrespective of gender, abilities, failures and so on. Genesis says:

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”
(Gen.1:27)

When emphasizing that man and woman are created in the image of God Snyder says:

“Man and woman were created for God and for each other. Neither one fully express the divine image, it takes the partnership of man and woman, and their community together to fully express God’s glory.” (1983:27)

Why did God create human beings as a male and female? This is one of the things that troubles people to an extent of thinking that may be the female were created for unimportant reasons, hence she is to be oppressed. Firstly, sexual differences intimately connected to the divine image and to the intended fellowship between man and woman with God. Secondly, the ruling, stewardship commission is given jointly and equally to man and woman. Genesis says to *both* man and woman:

“Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature.”

(1:26)

Man rules together with the woman. There is no question of autocracy nor is authority as far as ruling concerned. Both are stewards in ruling. Because of this equal status, the only way man and woman can possibly relate fully and harmoniously together as God intends is through mutual submission. While mutuality was undercut by the fall, Snyder (1983:228) indicates that it has been restored in Jesus Christ.

Therapy must also concentrate on the above, restoring *ubuntu* (humanity) to both man and woman. Helping men to explore what their concept and the role of women are.

It is wonderful that the creation of a human being was very different from the creation of all the other animals, hence in the above verse God speaks to His divine council and says: “Let us create...” which was not the case with the creation of the other creatures. We were created in His image, irrespective of gender, color or sex. The Bible emphasizes that both the male and the female were created in His image right from the beginning. There is no discussion about inferiority in this passage. So therapy must also concentrate on the concept view by women of submitting to men.

Being created in the image of God cannot be restricted nor changed because of the situation we find ourselves in, but we remain God's images even when we are living in marriage or as single people. That is why Clinebell says:

“In the anthropology of the Jewish Bible, all aspects of persons, not their minds or spirits, are seen as created in the divine image. To develop our unique personhood in the likeness of the divine is the goal of the Christian life.”
(1966:51)

The above process in therapy will help correct the mentioned wrong images in relationships.

We need to understand that even when human being fell into sin as recorded in Gen.3, God did not give any human being power to no longer see others as His images on earth. That is why He continued to bring Salvation through Jesus Christ because He wanted us to remain in His image. Therefore, counseling must help people to remove the fear, hatred, low self-esteem and pride, because those are the results of lack of understanding of man's image of God. That is why Mokgotho says:

“Realizing one another’s plight is to help to handle the problem one has, thus building healing to brokenness. This will be restoring the image of God to its fullness.” (2003:69)

Being a woman does not mean that one is not created in the image of God, hence the treatment she receives from fellow creatures must not be harsh. If all human beings could treat each other as fellow beings created in the image of God, then the concepts like “abuse, rape, wife-beating” and so on would not be found in the world’s vocabulary. Both men and women deserve harmony and living together as equal partners of different responsibilities in the same world. Therapy will deal with broken relationships that lead man to destroy God’s image. No one is a lesser image of God. The other important thing to keep in mind is that God is not the Father (masculine form) in an earthly sense, but in a spiritual sense. Likewise, God the Son is not the son in an earthly sense, but in a spiritual sense. On earth there is no son without mother and father and the son is always younger than the father. However it is not the case with Triune God because Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of “equal eternity” concerning their Names and Work. (De Vries, 1978:90)

The importance of man’s existence in this world is very equal to the importance of woman’s existence; hence we need each other in order to

face the challenges of life. The term “helpmate” as in Gen.2:18 also emphasize that equality. McFadyen says:

“Eve’s designation as Adam’s helpmate did not mean that she is a subordinate assistant, but a help-corresponding-to-him, denoting the closest physical and spiritual of help and understanding, joy and contentment in each other.”(1990:33)

Therapy will have to help partners work on the above images, so as to correct broken relationships. Seeing a woman as an inferior person is foreign to the Bible, and by so doing the creation order of God which proclaims the “image of God” is being tampered with. As a result it needs therapeutic work, for instance, God’s command to rule and subdue the creation in Gen.1:28 was given to both male and female, and this is one of the characteristics of image ship, which an inferior woman cannot be. Let us go back to basics, i.e. take care of each other in God’s way, without making unnecessary hierarchical structures that break down God’s intended plan with the creation of human beings. Counseling must encourage those who feel undermined and tormented by being put up as doormats for men, to stand up and fight in order to restore their images, instead of folding their hands while men tremble over them time and again. Pastors must also take it upon their shoulders to educate people from homes, tribal institutions, churches, schools and other institutions

which are still holding on to the wrong message of inequality while dealing with their respective issues. Inequality in therapy means teaching with the issue of power, helping couples to deal with this issue.

The author is arguing that pastors must be involved with their community structures where they can be of help with this message. For instance, if pastors are not involved when the community gathers in the form of “indaba” or traditional council and tribal councils, the message of “imago dei” will remain only in the pastor’s home and not get to the people that God wants us to reach. Group therapy will also be helpful when dealing with the community, working out their understanding of “imago dei” and the relationship between man and woman. Sermons and preparation of liturgy are other ways of working with imbalance issues. This can be done in house visitations and involvement in the societal gatherings and meetings.

6.3 CHRIST BROKE THE BARRIERS OF GENDER

Driver clarifies these when he mentions that the theories of atonement have tended to concentrate their attention on the removal of barriers between individuals and God. He says:

“The concrete barrier which separated human groups from each other (males and females) was removed by Christ’s death.” (1986:220)

Therefore, a therapist represents God as he or she works with the couple.

This is a simple statement to indicate that all forms of barriers and separation between human beings are only conquered by learning from how Jesus Christ treated women. That is why we cannot separate Jesus and the issue of atonement.

According to McGrath Jesus treated women as human subjects, rather than as objects or possessions. (1992:215) A male therapist can help to handle abused woman in a way that they may learn to relate to other men equally. Throughout His ministry, Jesus can be seen engaging and affirming women, especially women who were treated as outcasts by the contemporary Jewish society on account of their origins (e.g. Syro-Phoenicia or Samaria) or their lifestyle (e.g. prostitutes). Even the traditional view that a woman was “unclean” during the period of menstruation was dismissed by Jesus, who made it clear that it is only moral impurity which defiles a person (Mark 7:1-23).

In Jesus’ life and ministry both women and men were seen as people, irrespective of their gender. That is exactly what Jesus says:

“After this, Jesus traveled about from one town to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out, Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household, Susanna, and many others. Those women were helping to support them out of their own means.” (Luke 8:1-3)

We find in Jesus’ ministry women from different situations, for instance, those serving in the palace, married ones and so on, all treated as equal partners with the disciples. Only faith, and not sex, was a condition for discipleship. The Bible never teaches us that in this group, women were treated as inferior to men.

Jesus Christ understood that men and women were equal before God. Maybe it is important that the concept of “equality” be exposed in this context. The author knows of men who feel undermined whenever this concept is mentioned. The reality is that “being equal” does not merely mean to be identical. People do not become similar because of being equal; man will remain male while woman will remain female. That is what Sachs says:

“Being equal does not mean being identical. Affirmative action does not require that unqualified women be given preference over qualified men, but it would permit special opportunities for women in the same general qualification bracket as men. Constitution should clearly affirm the equality in rights, status and dignity of men and women.”(1990:55)

The researcher strongly supports Sach’s idea because if we want to make women better people in South Africa, we are not actually replacing men by women in the society; men will remain as they are.

Jesus used to break Jewish rules by accommodating women in His ministry and having time to focus to women’s individual problems, which was a taboo according to the regulations and laws of that time. Maybe this was one of the reasons why the Jews disliked Jesus, since their tradition did not allow them to treat women with respect, humility and love. This way of thinking requires a therapeutic way of changing their minds, since Jesus was the only man able to break down the barriers caused by the sins of human beings. Hession emphasizes that only by the washing and cleansing of His blood will every barrier be removed. (1978:199)

6.4 MY HELPMATE, MY PARTNER

The Biblical message about the helpmate is not very common amongst Africans; hence we are reaping the fruits of the lack of this beautiful message. It is quite interesting to note that the answer to the question what the meaning of “helpmate” is, will also help us to solve this whole problem. In Gen.2:18 the Hebrew word “kenegedo” which literally means “fit or suitable,” clarifies that the author has had enough time to evaluate what was lacking so that the “suitable helper” may be found. According to Van der Walt this happened when all animals were brought to Adam so that he could name them, so they all passed in pairs, and he said:

“Adam seems to have said that every animal has its partner
but I have none.”(1988:48)

It would have been of no help if God created another man to be a helpmate to Adam, since the same qualities that are lacking in Adam would remain lacking in the other man. It was more than wise for God to create just the opposite sex to complement that which was lacking in Adam. This means that the man was given responsibilities, gifts and talents to execute what he was told by God, but then he needed a helper to do so. On companionship, Hocking and Hocking say:

“The intimate friends must spend time with each other. Close friends who have been apart from each other for any length of time have found that it takes time to rebuild the intimacy closeness that they once enjoyed.” (1984:115)

The author agrees with Van der Walt saying that the biblical concept of *helpmate*, used for the woman, is also used of God (God is our helper), so that the woman is not a (weaker) servant of man, but is the supportive one who has to support the (weaker) man. (1990:78) People must be careful not to confuse this helper with the “Divine Helper” that Jesus promised to His disciples after the resurrection. That is why McArthur emphasizes the importance of “*allos*” which means “another helper” who would come in His place. (1994:134)

In therapy, the helper is not only important, but his presence is also a necessity. Egan, in his book “*The Skilled Helper*” says:

“Throughout history, there has been a deeply embedded conviction that, under the proper conditions, some people are capable of helping others to come to grips with problems in living. Counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers are expected to help people manage their social-emotional problems.”(1986:3)

In other words, for therapy to be successful, a helper or helpers are needed.

If it is said in Genesis 2:24 that the man will cleave unto the woman, it clearly indicates a dependent taking sanctuary, as Israel does in God. Therefore the helper is a true friend.

Whenever we speak about true friendship in marriage, many Africans may be tempted to think that it is an unequal friendship. This type of friendship is where agreements are reached in consultation with each other. Van Belle says:

“A marriage in which one partner dictates the terms of agreement and where the other obeys without questions lacks intimacy. Marriage is two individual personalities with differing ideas, needs and expectations of life constantly recommitting themselves to do things together in a complementary way.”(1999:44)

The friendship and fellowship between husband and wife gets a stronger impact when we also understand it in terms of being complementary to each other. That is what Snyder contends:

“Man and woman were created for each other. God intends a relationship between men and women of equality,

complementary and mutual submission, not one of domination.”(1983:227)

The researcher totally supports Snyder because the reason why women are abused and victimized is because their values are not as well explained by former theologians; hence they are seen as people without value. Therapy must also deal with theological understanding of the concepts. The value of women as complements of men was taught as Snyder and other scholars explained it from the beginning. The problem of women as inferiors would have not been here with us today. Even from the fact that Eve was created after Adam, does not imply that she was inferior. Whoever uses this kind of argument, will also have to accept Adam inferior to plants and animals which were created before him. (Van der Walt, 1994:153)

A married couple is meant for friendship. A friend is someone you like to be with. You enjoy his or her company, you like his or her personality; you can play and work together. You have shared interests. It involves companionship, communication and co-operation. This friendship is based on love which is based on decisions, promises and commitments. That is why Wright says that friendship is part of God’s intention for marriage. (1995:14)

In the Gospel of John, Jesus takes everyone to the level of being a friend, women included. He says:

“And you are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.” (John 15:14-15)

If we may live with the friendship spirit that Jesus teaches in this passage, we will not have problems when treating women, since it will be obvious that we will recognize them as friends also. It was not fit for us to be called friends to Jesus Christ since our sins caused His death. But since He came to save us, He continues to call us friends, brothers and partakers of the kingdom. Therefore we must ask ourselves who are we to treat others as slaves and inferior people, while He gave us what we do not deserve at all. That is why the author says that it cannot be an easy thing to understand this equality of men and women without understanding the biblical teachings about the creation of man and woman.

The other thing to share about restoring a relationship which has been destroyed by male dominance, the following can be used as advices from Rush:

“Recognize the need for the relationship (Eccl.4:9-12)

Admit your contribution to the problem (Matt.7:3-5)

Ask for forgiveness (Col.3:12-13, Matt.6:14-15)

Decide to put the other person’s needs first (Phil.2:3-4)

Begin acting out the qualities of love (1Cor.13:4-8)

Decide to focus on the positive (Phil.4:8)

Trust God for help instead of self (Jer.17:5-8).” (1989:96)

According to Egan it is the social relationships mentioned above that help a client therapeutically. He says:

“It is very necessary to help isolated clients to develop the resources for the social support.”(1986:347)

One of the mistakes that human beings commit is to understand men and women as helpers only in a physical sense like cooking, cleaning, etc. Men and women are created that they can mutually also be spiritual helpers. That is why even though they differ so much from each other in body and soul, they definitely can supplement and enrich each other in meaningful relationships. According to Brillenburg, in this way they can make each other into “complete responsible” human beings. (1951:63) In other words we need to change all systems that promote the subordination

of women therapeutically and theologically. Being a helpmate means being equal. That is emphasized by Genovese who says: “Justice is required that women enjoy equality with men in all spheres of life. The promotion of equality between men and women appeared natural and overdue”. (2000:26)

6.5 REMEDY TO LONELINESS AND SOLITARINESS

According to Hocking and Hocking people from all walks of life have experience of the problem of loneliness. They say:

“Like the hurt child who is soothed in the arms of his mother, so we often find encouragement through the physical affection that others show to us.”(1984:124)

The Hebrew “*lebed*” which means “alone or in solitude” does not only have a sense of alienation, but also being on one’s own and a feeling of loneliness (Eldwolde, 1998:505).

God foresaw that man was not going to enjoy the beauty of the nature of God in Eden because of lacking someone to share those joys with. All animals in the garden were created in pairs, perhaps with their own language in order for them to communicate about the joys of Eden, but the man was left in solitude. That caused God to perform the first surgical operation in order to make man feel at home with a companion. In other

words, Adam's loneliness worried God to an extent that God created a second person.

The suitability of this partner prompts an idea that the help she was created for would be like to overlap or supplement. If this message can clearly be understood by African men or husbands, then women will be treated as they deserve, that is to be companions and not slaves of men. The Garden of Eden was filled with everything that man would need for survival as well as for pleasure, but only a suitable helper for Adam was missing (McDonald, 1975:19). The word "companion" is important because it introduces company with each other on equal level.

Men must be counseled to understand that it took God time and concern to create helpers for them, so they need to keep in mind that those important gifts that God gave them must be taken care of.

Then counseling and confession must be used in order to repair broken relationships subsequently. This is what Koehler (1982:46) means when saying: "In counseling confession brings sin or guilt to light where it can be judged as such".

In other words, when counseling men who abuse women, it should be made clear that women-abuse is not in line with the scriptures and must be denounced. Sometimes we need to try to imagine how the world

would be without women, then we will acknowledge what they are worth in our lives, irrespective of whether she is married to me or not.

The idea that God was not happy with man's solitude does not mean that the creation of the woman gave him something else to keep him busy, but he was given someone who also needed to be respected while sharing life with him. In fact it must be emphasized that man would not enjoy everything that God created without a helper. It is important to give women special places in our lives. That is the responsibility that God has given us men towards women.

6.6 THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND IN THE HOME

The biblical message as to the primary responsibility of the husband in the home is to love his wife. That is what Paul urged to the Ephesian church when saying:

“Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it” (Eph.5:25).

In his *“Heaven help the home”* Hendricks asks a serious question:

“Wives, are you making it easier for your husband to lead you, and to love you?”(1973:35)

This question clarifies very well that sometimes women are responsible for the abusive attitude that the husbands have towards them. They are, as

women, responsible to play their role so that husbands will have no alternative but to love them. In other words, wives can help in shaping men the right way instead of making them as rough as possible. There are men who always say that their mistreating and wife-beating is a result of women's behavior, so the researcher wants to highlight this before getting to discuss what the role of the husband in the home is.

It is wonderful to understand the responsibility that God gave to men or husbands. Unfortunately, some husbands are used to shift this responsibility to women or their wives. But if we do not misinterpret the scriptures here this command was given directly to man alone. Well, the wife was also given her responsibilities, but this one is for men or husbands. Maybe to understand this clearly, we need to explain some Greek translations of the concept of "love". There is more than one meaning of love in the New Testament. The author selected from the Greek three kinds of love, which are: "*Agape, Philia* and *Eros*."

The first one, "*agape*", means, "to love with appreciation or loving concern, or the love that gives." (Louw and Nida, 1988:293) This kind of sacrificial love was demonstrated on the cross where Jesus offered His own life for our sake. With this love one can volunteer to shed his own blood for another person. Wright discusses the manifestations of "*agape*" love in the following way:

“First it is an unconditional love. Agape love is also a transparent love that involves honesty, truth and sharing both negative and positive feelings. It is the readiness to move closer to another and allow him or her to move closer to you. It is the heart of marital love and a healing force. It has a deep reservoir to draw from, so no matter what occurs, the love is felt and provides stability during times of stress and conflicts. It is when things get tough that the true level of commitment is evident.” (1995:15-25)

The second love is “*philia*” which can be defined as “love with affection or kindness” (Vine, 1981:21). Wright says that it is an unselfish dedication to your partner’s happiness. He goes on to say:

“True friends do not attempt to control each other, because they respect each other too much. Friends try to understand the other’s preferences. They can disagree and it does not damage the relationship.” (1995:15)

This type of love is read in the book of Acts which says:

“The natives there were very friendly to us. It had started to rain and was cold, so they lit a fire and made us all welcome.” (Acts 28:2)

It is also read in Titus:

“But when the kindness and love of God was revealed, He saved us.” (Titus 3:4)

This type of love is what other people call “compassion” and a brotherly feeling for someone affected by something. It is not necessarily the one that is used for married couples. This has much to do with humanity.

The last one is “*eros*” which refers to the physical nature of man or sexuality. In other words, it is a desire and attraction, which draws two people of opposite sexes together. It is found from Matt.5:28, 1Cor.7:2 and Prov.5:15-20. Baloyi said that this type of love is dangerous when practiced outside marriage because it can open a door for adultery and fornication. (Baloyi, 2001:30)

Therefore the love that God commands a male to have towards his wife in Eph.5: 25 is “agape”. The love with appreciation and concern is the one that must prevail between husbands and wives. If every man loved his wife with this kind of “sacrificial love”, then the problem of having women as people of less value would not have been with us today. The author wants to suggest to all those who are still going to marry that this message must form a greater part of their pre-marital counseling in

strongest terms. Working on the meaning of love will help couples to deal with their relationship before it is bad.

Hocking and Hocking use six metaphors to answer the question; “What does it mean to love your wife, according to Eph.5:25?” In answering the above question he says that this love means that:

“Next to Jesus, she is number one in your life

The husband will give to his wife as much as he would give to himself

You never resent her presence or her opinions

You do not make her live in fear

You are sensitive to her needs

You are willing to sacrifice your own interests on her behalf.” (1984:129-133)

In this way, the headship of man is not oppressive, but it is a service with responsibility towards the wife or woman.

But above all these meanings, “*eros*” is used for the relationship of man and woman. If we try to substitute or replace this type of love with either one of the others, everything is not going to connect. We may love

animals, birds, mountains and so on, but not with the same love as we love our wives.

This is the only kind of love that can be exemplified by the love of Christ that was demonstrated on the cross. In other words, before we understand how the episode of the cross communicates the love of Jesus to us, it will always be difficult for us to understand how men should love women or their wives. If this type of love can be practiced in the home, no one will feel undermined or subordinated because the family will be ruled by love and not domination.

The other thing the researcher would like to mention is the fact of man being the head of his wife. It suggests responsibility that leads to the following issues:

- Leading her in faith to Christ
- He must know that his authority is not his physical strength, psychological, or intellectual, but because God placed him in the position of authority and for His Kingdom's sake. He is therefore going to account before God for his conduct toward her.
- Being responsible for her material and spiritual well-being, just like when Jesus Christ accepted the responsibility for the salvation, sanctification and glorification of His church.

- Headship is a calling to service, where man will take care of the wife, like Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. (De Bruyn, 1988:54) Even if we can not say that men should wash women's feet, but their support and help must aim at promoting their status in the church and community. Therapeutically, men must be taught to accept and assist women as their equal partners.

Jesus Christ through His loving care, healed all the spiritual wounds that the devil created in the lives of many. Love must bind all the people among themselves. That is why Boff says:

“The conversion sought by Jesus and the liberation he won for us are related to a love that knows no discrimination.”(1978:69)

This love expresses itself in radical formulas as, for example, in the sermon on the mountain: “Not only one who murders, but also one who is angry with a brother or sister will answer for it before the judgment” (Matt.5:22). In this sermon Jesus announces a fundamental equality: All are worth of love. Hendricks (1973:151) reasons that because God's love is shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, human love, which is conditional, should be unconditional just like the divine love that is unconditional.

Although polygamy is not part of this study, but since it is another form of abusing women, the author will highlight it so that other people can make a study on it in the future. For instance, Dwane puts it clearly that polygamy is another form of subjecting women, hence he mentions:

“Men may not easily appreciate what it costs a woman to share her husband and the father of her children with several wives. When wives of a polygamist compete with each other and quarrel frequently, this is not a manifestation of petty jealousies, but a loud reminder, for the realization of basic human need and right, especially on gender equality.”
(1989:127)

The relationship between wives can lead to oppression and abuse.

This statement makes it clear to understand that polygamy is another form of discrimination against women since one’s wife is bound and forced to share what she is supposed to receive alone.

6.7 SEXUAL DIFFERENCES HELP US TO COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER

If people learn how nice the Godly-lead conversation between men and women is, the importance of women in our communities would be realized. Smalley and Trent summarize this by saying: “It was not until

we understand why males and females think and speak so differently that we began maximizing our communication.” (1988:32)

Therapy can work with men who abuse their wives in a way that will teach them to relate better.

God created us male and female (Gen.1:27), and that is why Hocking and Hocking say:

“God want us to maintain our sexual differences. Men are unique from women, and women from men. Our emotional and physical responses function differently. As a result of the difference, men will sense friendship with women in a different way than they do with men, and vice versa.”(1984:125)

There are people who take it for granted that sexual differences between man and woman imply inferiority and superiority. Another responsibility for a man towards his wife is to understand and recognize the feminine difference of the wife; that he must have insight that she is weaker than he in some respects and he must not reproach her for it, but he must recognize and help her in it (1Pet.3:7). That is what Habermehl means when he says that there are biological differences, males and females have inborn differences, independently or mathematically. (1976:260)

But these differences are not there to enforce the inferiority of one by the other. It is very important to note that man and woman differ practically, because the man turns to the outside world, when the woman turns into the inside realm; the man inclines to be objective, the woman to be subjective, etc. Therapy must concern itself with inner and outer emotions. That is why the author fully supports the idea that the differentiation of the biological sexual function in the man and the woman has its counterpart in the mental and spiritual nature of both sexes. (Brunner, 1939:353)

Van der Walt sums up some differences between males and females as follows:

WOMEN ARE

Weaker

Soft, tender, sensitive

Submissive, dependent, shy

Followers

Open, giving

People oriented

MEN ARE

Strong

Harsh, course, without
feeling

Dominating, aggressive

Leaders, decision makers

Closed, self-centered

Task oriented

Concrete thinkers

Abstract thinkers

Subjective, impulsive, emotional

Objective, calculating,
rational

Aware of beauty

not aware of beauty

(Van der Walt, 1990:80)

Van Belle suggests :

“This blurring of sexual differences is not all bad when its concern is to stress the equality of men and women before God. Christians who know that both Adam and Eve were created in God’s image and that there is neither a male nor female in Christ will recognize the kernel of truth in today’s relativization of sexual distinctions. Men and women are always more than men and women because they are also people. Created in God’s image, people were made to stand in his presence. Therefore, before his face, men and women are equal, for God is no respecter of persons.” (1999:2)

God created two different sexes for a purpose, hence Rock laments:

“How wonderful that God made each of us different. All of us have different skills, talents and personalities. A wise

couple will take advantage of this diversity and not get into conflicts over roles.” (1978:59-60)

The author completely agrees with Rock, because each of us has his or her separate and interchangeable role, but they should always be subordinate to our common goals.

With this information about the position of women in God’s creation, one can understand that undermining or subordinating women is not only wrong, but it can also be rated amongst one of the sinful acts of males. The author believes that if God created a second man to be a helper of the first, there would be have been a lot of confusion on earth today. But God wanted a different sex to supplement what is lacking in the first one, which makes them a very wonderful combination of the creation.

Why did God create male and female differently? One should look at Genesis 1:26-28 with the possibility in mind that sexual differentiation may have more significance than mere biological reproduction. According to Snyder, two reasons are outstanding: Firstly, the stewardship in Eden was a joint responsibility. Secondly, the sexual difference is connected to the divine image and to the intended fellowship of man with God. (1983:226)

There is no way in the Bible in which we can use sexual differences to observe who is weak and who is strong, inferior and superior, clever and stupid, and so on.

6.8 THE CHURCH AND WOMEN

It will be useless if the church continues to preach the Gospel without taking into consideration the culture and the circumstances of its audience. The cry and problems of the very same people who are to listen to the Gospel of God must be accounted for, especially by those who preach it, the church in particular. That is what Kritzinger is referring to when saying that the Gospel has to be translated and adapted to the culture and thought processes of the people.(1994:10) If the church ignores the cry, for instance of women who are being oppressed in the community, then its Gospel will always be irrelevant. The author supports Cook when saying:

“The church should be the place of greatest freedom for all God’s people (males and females), to be and to become part of a royal priesthood that we may declare the mighty deeds of God.” (1985:242)

The above quotation emphasizes that the priesthood of believers has no gender barriers; hence the proclamation of the good news must include both genders equally.

When Peter speaks about priesthood of believers in 1Pet.2:9-10 he does not make any mention of men or women, but he only speaks about *believers*, which includes both males and females.

Patriarchal theology that has prevailed throughout most of Christian history in most Christian traditions, had rigidly barred women from ministry. Women are denied leadership in the churches for the same reasons they are denied leadership in the society and in marriage. The first and most important point for the reader is that the church must realize that God created everything, but before the woman was created, the creation was incomplete. Before the church understands and accepts this reality, there will never be any effort to make women important people in the church and community. It took God an extra mile to create a woman so that the creation could be a complete reality. (Westermann, 1974:86)

The very first advantage that the churches in South Africa must acknowledge is the “bill of rights” as stated in chapter two of our constitution which says:

“Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.” (SA constitution, 1996:7)

It is just disturbing when some church leaders criticize this bill because of lack of understanding while in the end they find themselves wanting to continue in the footsteps of those who saw the rights of life belonging only to them while they restricted it for others. Like Novak, the first thing church leaders must do is to accept and embrace the bill of rights as a way that opens reality to mankind. (1986:51) Thereafter the church must task itself to study and explain the bill of rights in the eyes of the Bible. He argues that the American bill of rights is not a piece of eighteenth century rationalist’s theory, but it is far more the product of Christian history. He says that behind it one sees the philosophy of the enlightenment.

It is a pity that we, at this moment, have churches which are still having problems in addressing the issue of women in the office. These churches include the Reformed Churches in South Africa in which the author is also serving. According to Macquarrie the Anglican churches are also divided on the issue of women in the church office. Some tried to ordain women while others rejected the idea. (1986:188)

It is the author’s stand that this is the time that we are supposed to give women a chance to prove what they are worth in the church. It is unfortunate that the book is being judged by its cover while his belief is

that there are certain women (like men) who have a God-given talent to lead in the offices of the church.

The author joins Mosala and Tlhagale in saying that the black church, like all other churches, is a male dominated church. (1986:130) The difficulty that male ministers have in supporting equality of women in the church and society stems partly from the lack of clear liberation-criterion rooted in the Gospel and in the present struggles of the oppressed people, hence, women have no role models who are leading in the churches. This type of leadership will help women build their confidence.

An educational strategy is needed to create more workshops for the ministers and pastors so that they may learn to deal with the problem, because before the pastors accept women as they are, we cannot expect the church members to accept them.

According to Lopez, all women are bedeviled by male-dominated institutions, particularly Catholic and Orthodox Jewish communities. (1979:175) That is why Mosala and Tlhagale go on to emphasize:

“Priestly traditions also define women’s uncleanness in religious terms. The most used expression to deny women in the Orthodox thinking is typified by their usual

question: “Can you imagine a pregnant woman at the altar?” (1986:131)

This is very humiliating and oppressing to women.

On the other hand Brown is saying:

“The demeaning still persists in the Roman Catholicism today, where women are still excluded from leadership roles.” (1988:101)

These statements could easily steer up male figures to aggressively debate against women’s leadership in the church. This shows the extent to which the rejection of women as maternal flesh adds another dimension beyond the simple negation of women.

These statements indicate how much the church has helped in the marginalization of women in the church. But what are we supposed to do when churches act in the above way towards women who were created as equal partners in the Kingdom of God? The main danger is when the church pretends as if this issue is not important and remains quiet while some of its members (especially women) are being traumatized. It is also ironic that the church that preaches and teaches about love, is reacting in a negative way towards its message. In short, the message of love between males and females must also become the central point in caring

for human beings. If there is a strong message that can heal the wounds of all forms of domination in the church, love is the basic one and the central message of caring.

If members of the church can be taught about the importance of love towards a fellow human being, that can open a way to start healing these problems, as a result that people will start accepting each other. Mott says:

“Love is the basis for any form of justice.” (1982:50)

Justice is a virtue, as it is present in love, and it also articulates love completion. All forms of discrimination and exploitation plus religious harassment are a result of lack of love.” Every Christian healing process must start with the teaching of love. That is why Paul insists that the biggest and the most important thing above all is love in 1Cor.13:13. In other words, the church should include among its educational programmes a process of love as a caring element of teaching.

A researcher personally thinks that this is the reason why it is so much easier for church members to go and join liberal churches than those from liberal churches to join mainline churches. One of the reasons is that women are not given equal opportunities to share with men in the church, especially are they not allowed taking leadership roles. If this is a result

of dogmas and doctrines, we must understand that such dogmas must be revisited because those who wrote them at that time did not have to face the challenge of injustices, subordination and oppression of women. In those days it was a norm to take women as second class citizens. Young quotes an angry woman denied to pray at the same place with men because of the above problems saying:

“When you men pray, I must go outside. I cannot pray with you because you do not consider me as an equal before God. You talk about the white men, but it is you black men that oppress me.”(1986:80)

Therefore it is true that people may use the same Bible and even worship the same God, sometimes in the same sanctuary, but their experience will differ as a result of who is dominating who (Muzorewa, 1989:54). The church must close every possibility of seeing women being doormats in our churches, homes and communities; instead, it must help them to realize that the church is a home for equal individuals. Members of the church in this instance must be taught the biblical message of love and acceptance of all people regardless of gender in all its activities.

The church must join the bishops who once wrote a statement in their church:

“The human being - every human being is God’s beloved creature, made to his image and likeness, endowed with intelligence and will, and therefore called to be free and live in community.” (Berryman, 1987:112)

Hofmeyer says that the mainline churches of South Africa, for example Dutch Reformed, Methodist and others played a pivotal role in fighting against apartheid (Rustenburg conference in November 1990), but they did not do enough to challenge the women oppression especially in the church. (1994:377)

One of the mistakes the church has made in the past, according to Mace, has been to treat marriage theoretically and legally and to make rules and regulations, often put together by celibate monks and priests, which simply do not relate to the interpersonal realities of the everyday lives of husbands and wives. (1980:100) Although his view of women was wrong, in marriage Mace quotes Tertulian saying that the church must see Christian marriage as a couple of equal companions in every respect. It is important to understand how the church views the marriage itself, before dealing with its view on women, because the treatment of women by men starts in the marriage. God calls on every church member to fulfill the God-given task irrespective of gender (De Bruyn, 1996:237).

Snyder says:

“It is impossible to estimate the extent to which humanity has suffered by the unreasonable and unscriptural restrictions which have been put upon women in the churches of Jesus Christ. If women were given the same rights as men, since the days of the first Apostle, this world would be quite another world.” (1983:225)

The church has a mission to be a visible sign of Christ’s presence in the world. The presence of Christ which is aimed at salvation and restoration of mankind is very important here. Osterhaven emphasizes this by saying that John Calvin was of the opinion that the destructive tendencies of sin which resulted in equality and oppression can only be overthrown by the salvation and restoration of modern man. (1982:168)

The vitality of the Church depends to some extent on the health and integral well-being of the society and the culture within which the people of God live. The same view is shared by McGrath who sees the church as an institution which has oppressed women in the course of its long history. She says that we must begin as a church to note the fact that sin affects the structures of the church as much as it does the personal lives of the individual believers. (1992:214)

The lives of women, even in the church, are those of inferior people. They are not only undermined, but mistreated and marginalized. That is why Warunta and Kinothi say:

“Salvation in its fullness includes care for the wholeness and health of persons and of public life. Following in the example of Jesus Christ the Church is committed in solidarity to heal and to challenge evil irresponsibility. The Church attitude in all these evil conditions especially those caused by abuse, exploitation and irresponsibility. The Church’s attitude in all these evil conditions is one of therapeutic and loving liberation rather than that of a judge.”
(2000:134)

Whenever people speak about salvation and redemption the mind of the author is overclouded by Buthelezi’s expression as quoted by Muzorewa when he mentions that black liberation theology in South Africa, like women liberation on the African continent, must begin where the people are today (situation analysis) and seek redemption in Christ from that point. (1989:63)

When Pobee understands that male is the source of the woman’s spiritual protection, the author wants to add that men and husbands are supposed

to be taught on how they can become women's protectors instead of being a threat to them. (1979:131)

The church must treat the problems of the abused as its own problems. It is advisable that men as oppressors must join the campaign against female domination because women may feel encouraged when they hear their former abusers denouncing what they once thought was good. That is why Cone says that it will make women more enraged if men continue to say that there is no oppression in the black church. He says the statement will sound like white people saying there is no racism in the white church. (1982:121) Therefore the question would be how we can observe racism where one race is not mixing with others?

It is the church's ministerial service to promote humanity, enabling it to develop its full creative potential. This ministry must seek to redeem both the oppressed and the oppressor. That is what Samuel and Sugen mean when emphasizing that the church must change those systems that oppress the people (women in particular) and rob them of their dignity and freedom. (1987:225)

Victims of domestic violence, especially women, deserve much more support and comfort from the church. The church must establish centers where professional pastoral counselors will Endeavour to direct the abused and the abuser towards Christ and his reign of love and peace.

Sometimes temporal economic support must be made available in such centers so that those women, who are victimized by their husbands because of their dependence, can be helped while the healing takes its course. On the economic support of the victims Wallis stresses it by saying:

“The scriptures are not neutral on questions of economics, but they indicate that God of the Bible is clearly and emphatically on the side of the poor and the exploited.”
(1984:63)

On the other hand Isaiah taught that God delights us to be involved in breaking the yoke of oppression, sharing our bread with the hungry, and bringing the homeless into our homes (Isaiah 58:5-7). It is these institutions that Novak is crying for when he mentions that the claims that liberation theology must press its thinkers to become more concrete by making a haven of safety and restoration of the abused and abusers a reality. (1986:34) The church must affirm to battered women that they are not to blame, but they need to be encouraged to see the better side of life. According to Warunta and Kinothi battered women can be encouraged to be counselors to themselves by forming support groups. (2000:135) This is one of the points which the church must look very carefully at because we find that in many cases men (who are their former abusers) are given

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the task of counseling the broken women, which is not easy because the man does not share much in the pain of the woman. The author is of the view that if women can do it themselves, they can do it the better than men.

The church should engage itself in this fight in order to replace those negative concepts and sayings about women by positive ones that are acceptable to our communities. For instance, Lauer mentions that women were categorized as intellectual inferiors with smaller brains, acting emotionally like children. (1986:344) The language and phrases used for women tend to relegate them to an inferior place in our society.

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The church should start discouraging such phrases, categories and words not only at homes, but also behind the pulpit and teach about new and acceptable concepts which build better women for the community. Maybe another example to make women feel at home we also need to avoid those terms that promote masculine superiority like: chairperson instead of chairman, police officer instead of policeman. The traditions which

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Young says that are promoting the oppression of women were created by men and can also be abolished by men. (1986:88) The oppression which was made “*forcible*” by men needs to be revisited and corrected by the very same men who created it.

Sometimes the church must take a stand where it can advice believers who are living under the conditions of oppression in a territory held by an enemy, to migrate. The author fully agrees with Kly that the Bible condemns divorce very seriously, but when such a marriage is a life-threatening situation to the wife, a true preacher must advice her to evacuate. (1990:13)

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It is unacceptable, both in the church and society, for a woman to be abused for the sake of work or income; it may be better for her to quit and start looking for a new employment. Therapy must work with her until she decides to quit such a work. There are situations where people sacrifice their lives under oppression simply because the pastor is keeping quiet as if nothing is wrong. There are those people who believe the advice of their spiritual fathers can save their lives; hence keeping quiet is like keeping such people in those oppressive situations. Ministers and counselors must act in this regard, after a lengthy, prayerful research about the matter of course.

With regard to the fact that some women are dominated and abused because they are not financially independent, an article which can be helpful is the report of Nagwako Malatji of “*The Sunday Sun*” newspaper. Under the headline “Finance our women” the president of the

South African Women Entrepreneurs Network, Nonhlahla Mjoli-Ncube is fighting to bring women to a better financial status. She says:

“My preliminary investigations revealed that financial institutions decline to give money to women’s businesses because the woman had no collateral and also lacked negotiating skills needed to persuade the banks. Our dream of bringing the dominance of men in business to an end will remain as it was before, if women do not get aid from financial institutions. This is daunting but I will stop at nothing until it is addressed.” (Sunday Sun, 24 July, 2005:31)

If women were marginalized both spiritually and economically, the church must not turn a blind eye by helping them regain their status on the one side, while ignoring them on the other side. We must take care of them in totality.

The church also needs to repent for convincing women that they are not really, in the final analysis, equal with men in the church and in God’s sight. In his article, Forsyth implicates that women are not allowed to take a leadership role in the church. He says:

“Practically, for a woman, it means not trying to lead the man or calling him to follow. Thus a woman may not be an

elder in the church, nor lead in the form of teaching, preaching, directing a meeting, a worship service or a department where there are men present.” (2001:1)

The researcher is against Forsyth’s view on women because of the following reasons:

Firstly, Forsyth does not mention a Biblical verse that directly says that women must not do all that he mentioned above, but this is his own interpretation or perception. (2001:2) This is because he later allows them to share the Gospel with men, which is also in the form of teaching. Secondly, he later emphasizes that men and women stand as equals before God, which is directly opposite of seeing them as passive recipients in the church while only men are active. His later statement,

“Both bear the image of God Himself, women are not limited”

cannot be true in the context of what he has earlier said that women should do nothing. (2001:2)

The other argument is that if we limit women only to the household duties as their Godly mandate (like “*oikourgos*” said), then we will not need women in all church services. Lastly, Forsyth says that there are ways in which women can use the gifts of the spirit in the church, but he

does not mention the duties. His research continues to oppress women theologically.

This means that from theology to praxis, theologians must also engage themselves in searching for Biblical ways in which these wounds can be healed. Male preachers and pastors must come with the message that will ensure women that they are no longer oppressors, but helpers. From the first South African feminist conference held in Hammanskraal in 1984 (dominated by black women) and the one held at UNISA (dominated by white women) it was noted regretfully that whereas women form the majority of the oppressed, the black theology had not taken women seriously, but saw theology as a male domain. (Maluleke, 1996:10)

Snyder says that submission does not really mean inferiority or inequality. This comes from history that the church has restricted authority and leadership to the clergy, rather than to the whole people of God, and to men rather than to women. (1983:225)

The above has caused a problem for female theology because tradition kept the woman out. The Gospels frequently portray women as being more spiritually perceptive than men. For example, Mark portrays the male disciples as having little faith (Mark 4:40, 6:52), while commending women; a woman is praised for her faith (Mark 5:25-34); a foreign woman for responding to Jesus (Mark 7:24-30); a widow is singled out as

an example to follow (Mark 12:41-). These are a few of the examples to show that Jesus Christ did not follow the Jewish traditions of seeing women as inferiors; instead, He saw them with compassion. What Jesus did here is supported by the author and the authors Villa Vicencion and Gruchy when they emphasize that God, as the first creator of the universe, invited people that through their labor they could join Him in the continuous work of creation, both *men and women* (1985:128)

If the early church has done its homework faithfully in making sure that women are treated equally, then the problem of African male dominance would not have been there today. It is very painful that even some of the early church fathers were also convinced and found the Biblical justification for attributing subordinate status to women. They blamed Eve for the original sin and Tertulian called the woman “*The devil’s doorway*” while Jerome charged women with *heresy*. Women were regarded as weak and trouble markers (Maimela & Koning, 2000:127). The above encouraged men, community and church to treat women as second class citizens.

The researcher’s argument against these church fathers is that we cannot use Eve’s sin as an excuse in order to get rid of women because there are a few questions that we need to ask ourselves before we reach that conclusion. We need to ask ourselves the following: Who was the initial

law-bearer between Adam and Eve? Why did he forsake Eve, and let her alone in the hands of the serpent? Was his action a responsible one? Why did he accept to take the fruit when Eve gave it to him, especially when he knew the requirements of God? With these questions in mind, there is no way a woman has to shoulder the blame alone.

These questions indicate clearly that the initial sinner is the man who left the woman who was created for him in solitude, particularly where she was unable to defend herself when the enemy betrayed her. The researcher's belief is that maybe if the man always stayed with his wife, the serpent might not have come to spoil the paradise in fear of man. It was because of man's absence that the serpent seduced the woman alone. Therefore, those who point at the woman as a cause are shifting blame to women whereas the initial responsibility was the husband's. Man must still be responsible for this misdeed, hence God judged both of them. The church fathers were men who, in this case, wanted to defend themselves with arguments that cannot hold water. In other words, they destroyed the concept of equality between husband and wife.

Therefore, the first thing that the church must do is to reach out to battered women, their children and their husbands in order to therapeutically work with them towards healing. The message of hope must be brought to their attention. The church, according to Carson must

correct what has been done wrong for many decades by teaching women to see God in pain. (1978:56)

The church should bring God's compassionate and healing presence to such families and individuals. Like Christ the Good Shepherd the church should do as Bernard Haring was quoted by Warunta and Kinoti saying:

“Jesus heals the lepers by touching them, giving them the healing experience of human love and divine presence. Similarly, he rescues men and women who were social outcasts scorned by those who did not feel their own need of healing and redemption. Jesus treats sinful women as persons and gives them back a sense of dignity.” (2000:132)

The teachings of the church must be on the side of those who are oppressed, speaking about practical issues of life, and be the voice of the voiceless, including women in their position in life.

According to Hinga women must be urged to unearth and reject conditions of marginalization that lead to their victimization. Even from the Old Testament times, there were some women who fought for the liberation of women from masculine oppression. (2000:138) To prove this, Halkes says that according to Numbers 12 Miriam and Aaron rebelled against Moses, apparently because he took a Kushite wife, but in

reality the other reason for rebellion was that women were not awarded any leading function in Israel. (1986:105)

The practical example is that there is not even one part of the human body that is less important or inferior to other parts. It is not easy for pastors to preach the Gospel truly and faithfully to abuse women who are subordinated since whenever they see a man standing before them in worship or other places, they see the oppressor. It also happened during the apartheid time in our country, especially when blacks saw a white man - they thought of him as the oppressor, even if he was not a South African.

How can we define the equality of man and woman in the church situation, while the message of “headship” remains unharmed? It is not easy, since our tradition, even in the church, is to see women under the leadership of men. But it is not because of political rights that the researcher advocates for women, it is because of the biblical message that was undermined for ages. The church must make sure that it becomes the first instrument through which the oppression of women and the headship of men are truly maintained. In the “mainline churches” men are the ones on the leadership role all the times. The church must learn from Karl Bart when saying:

“Faith is the use of freedom which is granted corporately to all Christians, both males and females, by which they may affirm the word of God, put all their trust in Him, and obey Him wholly.”(1986:116)

Montgomery also supports Bart’s view by saying:

“The very proclamation of the Gospel requires freedom to decide for or against it, and where human restrictions are placed upon man’s free choice, the result is a closing-off of the way of salvation.” (1975:215)

Because of the above freedom becomes the door through which everybody, including women can accept or deny the preaching of the word of God.

Without enough freedom it is difficult for one to make good decisions about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Those women who are gifted to be in leadership roles of the church must be given opportunity. It was interesting when women belonging to SACC began to make their presence felt when they held a meeting in June, 28-29, 1987. This was a national divisional women’s consultation where women representatives from member churches came together and looked at the position of women in the church and society (SACC:1988:126).

Pastors must first be willing to compete with women in the church as far as church activities are concerned. Another woman who used to preach over the radio (Munghana Lonene) preached better than some of the pastors of the day. The researcher is a pastor who believes that some women in the church are gifted more than he is in some areas of God's work. They only need to be encouraged and offered a chance to prove what they are worth.

The challenge for the black church is to be a presence, a sign of liberation and hope among the black people and all the peoples of South Africa. The author becomes supportive of Goba with the idea and a strong belief that the church becomes alive only when it lives up to the calling of Jesus Christ in the ministry of liberation. (1988:46) It is very long that African women have been dehumanized and marginalized, and the time is now that the church must stand up and denounce all forms of oppression of them. They deserve to be in the church where they can enjoy sharing responsibilities with their equal partners in the Kingdom of God. Today, the South African government is trying to implement strategies to fight against women discrimination and its citizens plus the church should join and support it to achieve this goal.

That is what Berger and Godsel are trying to point out when they say that although the youthful township activist mostly used girls rather than

incorporating them as equals during the times of struggle, now the issues like “affirmative action and gender equity” are on the route to take women where they belong. (1988:113)

Both the Christian church and South African citizens must support the government in mending all the wrong ways of the past so that we can have a society where both men and women equally participate for the benefit of our country.

6.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we learnt that although our tradition taught us and is still teaching us that women are minor and inferior people, the Bible instead teaches us that we should treat them with respect and dignity because they are equal partakers of God’s Kingdom. To those men out there, who still think that they dominate women and overrule them, the lesson above teaches us that such a Christmas must be over and it is time that we share the joys and sorrows of this life with women on equal basis. My personal message to men who undermine women in any way: let us start with our language, to talk not only of bad things about women, but also the good things they do. It is discouraging to hear Swindol saying:

“After an extensive survey, it was found that one positive statement was made by husbands towards their wives, and there were ten negatives - ten out of one.” (1988:63)

Women must also take their stand and fight against male dominance in all spheres of life because that is unchristian. The last lesson is that those churches which still dominate women and think that only men can run things in the church, must also look for some possible ways to involve women in leadership of their church, not only because women deserve it, but because their churches will not enjoy prosperity as women move out to the churches which will recognize them as responsible human beings.