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**Whoever does not
receive the kingdom
of God as a little child
will never enter it.
Mark 10:15**

Introduction

This material is aimed at spiritual leaders who would like to add Bible studies and reflections about an issue that can be difficult to address in a religious context: the impact of child sexual abuse, and how we as a church must help protect children from harm.

The content of this booklet is divided into three focus areas, as shown below. For each focus, a biblical reflection is accompanied by a prayer and a song to sing together with your congregations, your Bible study groups, your Sunday School groups and more.

The materials focusing on Jesus' ministry to children and the church as a refuge can be adapted for adults or children. For Tamar's story, which can be disturbing for younger audiences, a version for children age 5 and older is included.

Please note that the materials included in this booklet are suggestions. Each church is best placed to decide which materials to use, and you are welcome to use, add or adapt your own materials.

1. Jesus' ministry regarding children

In this part, we learn that we can gain much valuable insight into how children should be treated from the ministry of Jesus, who treated children with utmost respect. Every Christian has a duty to help give children the support they need to grow up in a loving, caring environment, free from fear.

2. Tamar: a story of child sexual abuse in the Bible

On these pages, we hear of the sexual abuse of a child in the Old Testament. Samuel tells the story of Tamar, who was raped by her half brother, Amnon (2 Samuel 13). Her father, David, neglected to take action, which led her brother Absalom to exact revenge on his half-brother. Sadly, those who abuse children are often those closest to them. We can all learn a lesson in listening to others, and taking responsibility before we regret our actions.

As mentioned above, a version for children age 5 and older is included.

3. The church as a refuge

The Bible is explicit: the church needs to be a place of refuge, where everyone feels welcome and there is trust. Children should not feel fearful of adults within the church. On the contrary, if they are being subjected to sexual violence, children should be able to confide in the church. Here, we talk about how the church should be a safe place for everyone.

This booklet ends with two bonus songs, specifically written and composed for this campaign, "Yo quiero ser (I want to be)" and "Danos tu gracia (Give us your grace)".

Biblical reflections: Jesus' ministry to children

Christians believe human beings are created in the likeness and image of God, and they look to the example of Jesus to live their lives. All the recorded encounters between Jesus and children were kind, gentle and respectful. Children were central to the new social order Jesus initiated. By blessing and laying his hands on them, Jesus received children as people in their own right; he gave them status, respect, time and dignity (Mark 10:13-16).

In Mark 9:36, Jesus is shown taking a little child and placing the child among the disciples and saying, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me." And in Mark 10:14 Jesus says, "Let the children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

He also says in Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2 and Matthew 18:6 that we are not to put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in him, because it would be better for such a person to be thrown into the sea with a millstone around their neck.

This great concern for the spiritual formation of children and the care that Jesus shows children in a crowd speak of his great affinity with children and an implicit gentleness and respect. Jesus taught us how to make the world more compassionate for children; he also taught about a social world in part defined by children. In his words and actions Jesus turned the first-century view of children as the property of adults, upside down.

- How do we demonstrate respect for children as people, in the home, church and community?
- What steps do we need to take to raise the status of children?
- How can we learn from children?

Prayer: Speak out for children

God of Peace

Forgive us for the times when disrespect of children leads to abuse.

As you cared for children, may we who have responsibility for children value, love and care for each child entrusted to us.

Open our eyes to see abuse where it is happening;

open our lips to speak out for children;
open our minds to wrestle with the issues of nurturing young people;
open our hearts to the way of peace.
In the name of our loving Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Elizabeth Welch

1 Song: Bless the little child

Shirley Erena Murray

Jilian Bray

♩ = 80

1. Bless the lit - tle child who was cho - sen by Je - sus,
2. those who are the least will be great in the king - dom,
3. Bless the child in us who learn love as our lan - guage,
4. Bless the lit - tle child who will smile up in wel - come,
set in the cen - ter of the scene, lis - ten to the words that were
those who give cild - ren prop - er place, those who do not fight to be
trust in God's good-ness ev - ery day, mar - vel at the stars and the
6 o - pen to laugh - ter and de - light, bless us when we see in the
spo - ken by Je - sus, hear what the king - dom val - ues mean:
first for a fa - vour, those who would serve with will - ing grace.
won - ders of find - ing signs of the king - dom on the way.
per - son of Je - sus hope and hu - man - i - ty and right.

Music: Jilian Bray. Words: Shirley Erena Murray (1931-2020), New Zealand © 2009 Hope Publishing Co., USA.

Bible study: Tamar, a rape survivor

The story of Tamar in the Old Testament tells of the beautiful daughter of David and sister of Absalom. In this story, Amnon, Tamar's half-brother, was consumed by lust for his sister. Advised by his shrewd and manipulative friend, Jonadab, Amnon pretended to be ill, asking for his sister to come and care for him. David, being blind and oblivious to his son's temperament and lust, sent Tamar to her brother. When Tamar arrived, Amnon proceeded to rape her (2 Samuel 13).

Scripture then says that. "Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her... He said, 'Now throw this woman out of my presence and lock the door behind her'" (2 Samuel 13:15-17). Tamar remained "a desolate woman" in her brother Absalom's house (2 Samuel 13:20).

Understandably, when Absalom found out that Amnon had raped his sister, he was furious. David also was very angry but neglected to address Amnon's sin or provide justice for his daughter. In not doing so, David failed his daughter and further failed to temper Absalom's rage. "For Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar" (2 Samuel 38:22).

Consumed by hatred, Absalom plotted against Amnon and eventually had him killed two years later. Absalom then fled to Geshur and was gone for three years (2 Samuel 13:34-38).

Scripture says that David mourned for his sons (2 Samuel 13:37), but in failing to confront Amnon for his sin, he had opened the door for Absalom to avenge Tamar and sin also. So, in the end, David lost two sons and a daughter, watching as his family disintegrated before his eyes.

Upon being recalled to Jerusalem following his exile, Absalom returned with his own family, which included three sons and one daughter, whose name was Tamar (2 Samuel 14:27), no doubt named in honour of his sister.

Absalom would later rebel against his father and plunge the kingdom of Israel into civil war. Absalom was eventually killed by Joab, David's general (2 Samuel 18), to the further grief of his father.

- In what ways did the people in this story fail each other and God?
- What are some of the motives people have to act the way they acted in this story?
- Do you know women or girls like Tamar in your community? How are they treated?

Prayer: Living without fear

Living God and strong protector,
Send love into lives ruled by fear,
Heal those who are wounded by violence,
Speak gently to those troubled by painful memories
And sow the seeds of hope and peace in their hearts. Amen

2 Song: Every hair upon your head

Colin Gibson

♩ = 168

1. Ev - 'ry hair u - pon your head has been count - ed, Je - sus said, though it's
curl u - pon your mount has been count - ed in the count, though it's

5 D/F# 1. C A 2. Em A D G/D D *Refrain*
black or white or red or in be - tween; ev - 'ry blue or e - ven green. We're the
beige or blonde or

12 G A F#m Bm 1. Em Em7
fa - mi - ly of God, who finds noth - ing strange or odd, who de - lights in in - di -
bald or rich - ly blessed, be we shag - gy, shaved or tressed, we're the

17 A Bm7 A7 D A7 D 2. Em A7 D G/D
vi - du - a - li - ty, be we fa - mi - ly of God, yes, you and me.

Music and words: Colin Gibson, New Zealand © 1998 Hope Publishing Co., USA.

2. Ev'ry tuft upon your top
is selected from the crop,
though it's knotted in a knot
or left to flow;
whether Cherokee or shorn,
maybe lonely and forlorn,
though it's only just been born,
it's in the know.
Refrain

3. Though it's turning old and grey,
though it's like a field of hay,
though your friends and neighbours
say it will not do;
though it's frizzy, though it's lank,
though it stands up like a bank,
it is loved and counted precious,
'cos it's you.
Refrain

4. Ev'ry follicle is named,
not a split-end will be blamed,
not one hair need be ashamed
to show its head;
and the colour will be right
in a loving parent's sight,
though it's dull, or dark or bright -
so Jesus said.
Refrain

Bible study for children: Tamar's story

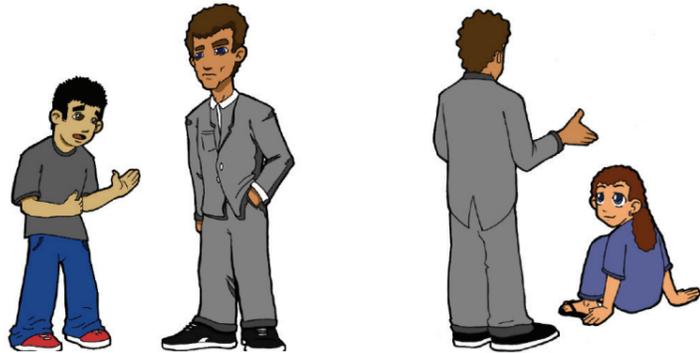
The below is taken from an article written by Genevieve James of the University of South Africa titled "Tell it like it is! The Case to include the Story of the Rape of Tamar in Children's Bibles as an Awareness Tool." *Journal for Semitics* 16/2, 2007, pages 312-332.

Introduction: Long ago in the land of Israel lived a king whose name was David. King David had many children. This story is about three of his children: Amnon, Tamar and Absalom. (At this point, if using dolls, repeat the names of the characters and get the children to say the names on their own as you point to the dolls.)

1. One day Amnon was behaving sick and sad. His cousin Jonadab, who was very sly, asked him why. Amnon answered, "I am in love with my sister Tamar!" Jonadab said, "Lie in your bed and pretend that you are sick. When your father comes to see you, tell him to send Tamar to cook food and feed it to you."



2. So Amnon asked his father David to send Tamar to cook for him, pretending that he was sick. And King David sent Tamar to the house of Amnon to cook for him so that he would feel better. Tamar went obediently.



3. Amnon told Tamar to bring the cakes she made to the bedroom and Tamar obeyed. When she took the cakes to him he said, "Sleep with me, my sister" (he wanted her to let him touch her private parts¹.) She said "NO, do not do this, my brother! Do not do such a wrong thing!"



4. Now Amnon, being stronger than her, did not listen when she said NO. Instead, he forced himself on her, touching and hurting her in her private parts.¹ After he did this terrible thing, he hated her and sent her away.



5. Tamar was so sad and hurt about what Amnon did to her body that she cried and cried. When Absalom, her other brother, saw her crying, he told her to be quiet about it and took her to stay in his house.²



6. When the king heard what Amnon had done to Tamar he was very angry. Absalom did not speak to Amnon again. He hated Amnon for what he had done to Tamar.



¹ This wording can be used for children under 7. To illustrate "private parts", adults can draw a picture of a boy and a girl in swimming clothes and point to the parts that are covered. The word 'rape' may be used for pre-teen and older children, and the term explained.

² This is important since many rape victims are hushed into silence. This should be discussed with the children after the story. They need to know they must scream and say NO if someone touches them, and tell someone that they trust.

How to discuss this story with children under 7 years of age:

After the story is told, the children are allowed to interact with the story through questions and discussions. These interactions are often lively and animated as the children's facial expressions and body language clearly indicate their feelings towards the characters. The children are asked the following questions, which are simply worded:

1. What do you think this story is about?
2. Who is the person that you like/is good in the story, and why?
3. Who is the person that you dislike/is bad in the story, and why?
4. What did you think about David, Absalom and Jonadab?
5. What did Tamar say to Amnon when he was attacking her?
6. How did Tamar feel in the story?
7. Do you know any children like Tamar?
8. What can we learn from the story of Tamar?
9. What can we do if someone wants to hurt us the way Amnon hurt Tamar?

Biblical reflections: The church as a refuge

Children are among the most vulnerable people in our society. Yet we all agree: all children have a right to feel safe and secure in their upbringing - not only physically safe, but emotionally safe too. Adults have the moral responsibility to nurture children and listen to them if they express fear, especially if they have been abused. This moral responsibility has to be shaped by the love of God in each of us.

We, as adults, must exercise wisdom when it comes to how we treat those who are more vulnerable than us. "Wisdom is with those who take advice" (Proverbs 13:10) and "The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life" (Proverbs 13:14).

Moreover, children learn from example. If we show children that we treat others with respect, they are more likely to grow up respecting others. If we teach them that it is okay to treat others disrespectfully, they are learning at an early age that this is "normal" behavior.

The church is responsible for upholding not only the teachings of Jesus Christ, but also for serving as an example of how Christians, and people in general, should act toward one another. The church needs to support children and all those who need support by listening, by teaching the wisdom of the Word of God, and by serving as a shelter to those who are most vulnerable.

- What should a church do to make sure it is a safe place for everyone?
- How does the church help children to feel safe and secure?
- What more can the church do?

Prayer: The church - A shelter and a refuge

Almighty God, whose name is love, we ask you to reach out in tender compassion to all the hurting people and places of your world. We recall the words of the Psalmist, who said:

"To you, Lord, have I come to shelter: let me never be put to shame. O, deliver me in your righteousness: incline your ear to me and be swift to save. Be for me a rock of refuge, a high fortress to defend me: for you are my high rock and my stronghold" (Psalm 31:1-3).

We pray that your church may be like you, a shelter and a refuge. May our buildings and communities be safe places for those who put their trust in us. Help us to be wise and careful, especially in our dealings with the vulnerable and in responding to those who have been scarred by the experiences of life.

We pray that, wherever there has been harm, we may be instruments of your healing, wholeness and hope, so that all might know the redemptive newness of life won for us upon the cross by your Son, our Saviour and Lord. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, who embraced suffering and death to free us from their power. Amen

Thabo Makgoba

3 Song: There is no child so small

Shirley Erena Murray

Jim Strathdee

$\text{♩} = 66$

1. There is no child so small no scrap of life so pre - cious who
2. There is no child un - fed left hun - gry now at Christ - mas but
3. There is no child so lost, no ref - u - gee so name - less that
4. There is no child so cheap, in war - fare or de - struc - tion that
5. There is not one of us who could not be more giv - ing and

4 *after last verse*

is not born like Je - sus, whose cry is like us all.
God will ask for jus - tice, for shel - ter and for bread.
God will leave us blame - less, who share no care or cost.
love can - not take ac - tion when God is made to weep.
in the gift more lov - ing, to light a star for peace, for peace.

Note: Bible reflections and prayers taken from the *Ending Corporal Punishment of Children: A Handbook for Worship and Gatherings*, published by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children in collaboration with the Churches' Network for Non-violence.

Music © Jim Strathdee, USA. Words: Shirley Erena Murray (1931-2020), New Zealand © 2008 Hope Publishing Co., USA.

More songs for Coming Out of the Shadows

These songs were written and composed in Spanish for the Out of the Shadows campaign, by Gerardo Oberman and Horacio Vivares.

Danos tu Gracia

Gerardo Oberman

Tranquilo

The musical score for 'Danos tu Gracia' is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of three staves of music. The first staff is the vocal line, starting with a C chord and a tempo marking of 'Tranquilo'. The second and third staves are the guitar accompaniment, with chords Dm, E7, Am, F, and G indicated above the notes. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

Da - nos tus o - jos pa - ra ver, da - nos tu Gra -
 - cia pa - ra/en - ten - der có - mo/a - bra - zar a la ni - ñez,
 ga - ran - ti - zar que vi - van bien.

Translation from Spanish:

Give us your eyes to see,
 Give us your Grace to hear
 Embracing childhood,
 We ensure they live well.

Danos tus ojos para ver,
 Danos tu Gracia para entender
 Cómo abrazar a la niñez,
 garantizar que vivan bien.

Yo Quiero Ser

Horacio Vivares

♩ = 120

The musical score for 'Yo Quiero Ser' is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (D major). It consists of ten staves of music. The first staff is the vocal line, starting with a tempo marking of '♩ = 120'. The second through tenth staves are the guitar accompaniment, with chords D, F, G, and C indicated above the notes. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

Yo quie-ro ser sol y lo voy a ser yo quie-ro ser luz y lo
 I want to be sun and I will be I want to be light and
 voy a ser. Yo quie-ro ser ma - nos que se/a-bran siem - pre que
 I will be. I want to be hands al - ways ex - ten - ded that
 pue-dan sol - tar en lu - gar de/a - pre - tar. Yo quie-ro ser flor y lo
 can let go ins - tead of grab. I want to be flo - wer and
 voy a ser yo quie-ro ser mar y lo voy a ser. Yo quie-ro ser mú - si - ca
 I will be I want to be sea and I will be. I want to be free mu - sic
 li - bre/al vien - to que pue - da vo - lar y la vi - da/a - le - grar. Yo
 in the wind that can fly and blow bright-en up my life. I
 quie - ro ser lo que sien - to ser por - que cre - o/en un Dios de/a - mor. Yo
 want to be what I feel I am I be - lieve in a God of love. I
 quie - ro ser lo que sien - to ser. Dios me/a - yu - da - rá. Yo
 want to be what I feel I am. God will help me. I
 quie - ro ser lo que sien - to ser por - que cre - o/en un Dios de/a - mor. Yo
 want to be what I feel I am I be - lieve in a God of love. I
 quie - ro ser lo que sien - to ser. Dios me sos - ten - drá.
 want to be what I feel I am. God will sus - tain me.