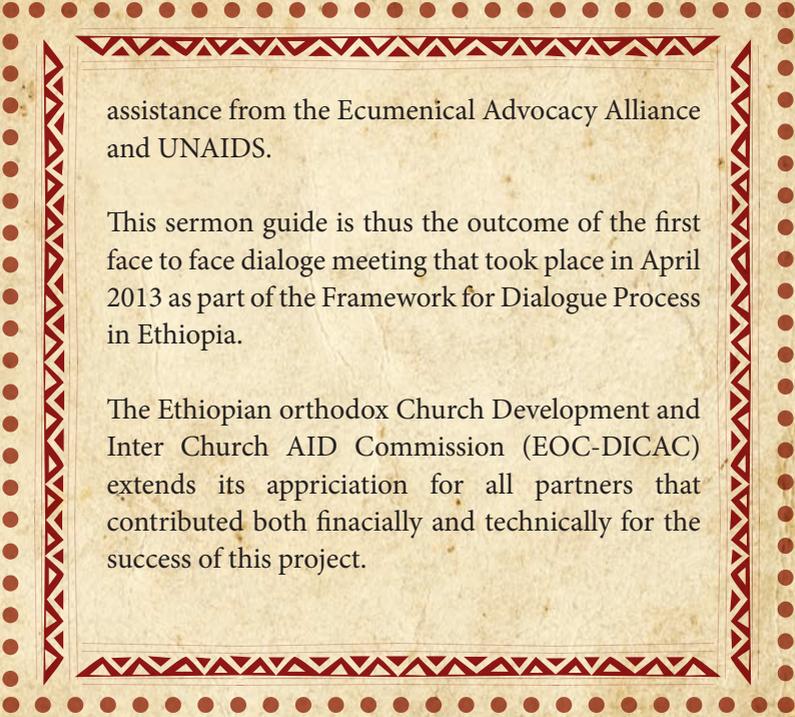


ORTHODOX  
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POCKET BOOK



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Dialogue between religious leaders and people living with HIV plays a significant role in addressing the barriers that still remain in stopping the spread of HIV. To this effect, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, the Global Network of People Living With HIV, the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with and affected by HIV, and UNAIDS launched a tool, called the Framework for Dialogue to support dialogue and joint action between religious leaders and people living with HIV. This tool, that resulted in the birth of this document was initiated in Ethiopia in early 2013 with the financial and technical



assistance from the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance and UNAIDS.

This sermon guide is thus the outcome of the first face to face dialoge meeting that took place in April 2013 as part of the Framework for Dialogue Process in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian orthodox Church Development and Inter Church AID Commission (EOC-DICAC) extends its appriciation for all partners that contributed both finacially and technically for the success of this project.



## MESSAGE FROM HIS HOLINESS

“Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.” 1 John 2:10

As the doctrine of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church insistently teaches God has given humanity the Ten Commandments to live abiding in law and order. According to Matthew 22: 37-40,



these commandments are classified into “Love of God” and “Love of Brethren”. These Laws of God are our paths of loving obedience to the commandments of God through living after His heart while not saddening our neighbors.

Our church has for long taught that no one should be stigmatized and stereotyped due to any sort of cause. And hence, it teaches against stigmatization and stereotype of people who live with HIV/AIDS and serves them with indifference from the rest of the congregation. The church provides appropriate support and care for the patients and children orphaned due to AIDS and also calls others attention for their care.

The very way we can show our love for God is through practice. Therefore, considering our love for God, as the greatest asset we should love everyone just because they are human beings while revealing the secret of love through action. Sin is a disastrous ailment for humanity. Even so, it is for the sinners the Son of God came to this world and not for the righteous (Matthew 9:12). One way of making





sure that we have the love of God and the love of brethren in us is by compassionately caring for our neighbors who live with HIV/AIDS. No matter how they contracted the virus, excluding the patients from the social circle and communication is not a Christian deed. It is also a sin to exaggerate the condition of the disease and leave the patients in despair. It cannot be considered as an act of love than wrongdoing them in enmity. It is our duty to comfort them with encouraging and edifying words even if we cannot cure them from the disease. This is how love can be put to action. Furthermore, appropriate treatment and care should be provided for pregnant women so that children would be born free from the virus. The clergy should advice pregnant women to receive the proper follow-up and treatment in health facilities, deliver at health facilities and to get the appropriate post-natal care. According to the history of our church, among the 120 people who witnessed the beginning of the early church and who were called out and received the special favor of God, 36 were women. This reveals the central role women have in the church. To remain silent when these invaluable mothers, sisters and daughters are violated is disobedience to the word of God. As the Book commands “So in everything, do to others





what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12), I encourage our clergy to teach their congregations and other believers using this guide which is developed by our Development and Christian Relief commission with the support of UNAIDS.



Abba Mathias the first

Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Archbishop of Axum, and Ichege of the See of St. Tekle Haymanot



**MESSAGE FROM THE  
ARCHBISHOP OF THE  
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**



“Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God” 1 Peter 2:17

The Apostle Saint Peter said this in order that we feed the hungry, provide drink for the thirsty, cloth the naked and show them kindness in every possible way. It is now more than four decades,

since the Development Commission in collaboration with partners provides the basic needs to the needy regardless of their age, sex, race and religious orientation. HIV/AIDS was one of the leading diseases that caused a huge loss for families. The church was at the forefront in the national HIV prevention and mitigation efforts by providing care



and support services for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS mainly for destitute women, orphans and vulnerable children.



Even through we have seen progress in the AIDS response and that new infections has currently declined, we still long way to go to ending the epidemic in our country Ethiopia. There are still people in need of anti-retroviral medication, children are still born with HIV, and barriers of stigma, denial and complacency are still among us in danger of failing the next generation. Gender based violence is also a pervasive reality in our nation. There are parts of the society who are victims of gender based violence. Responding to gender based violence and HIV is our responsibility .Therefore, we have prepared this guide called “Firque Bits” to widely reach people on these issues.



According to the teaching of our church, love is helping the needy, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, loving the enemies, visiting the sick, supporting the weary, comforting the sad and encouraging the culture of love and care. Teaching the society against harmful traditional practices and promoting peaceful environment. This is genuine love and most honorable of all services. It has been written in Matthew 25:40 “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me.” At this very time



people who are living with HIV/AIDS are among those who need help. To help, provide care and show them kindness is to fulfill the law of “loving your brethren”. So, on behalf of our church, I urge the clergy to use this guide while teaching the congregations.



May the peace of God be with all of us!



Abba Samuel



Archbishop of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church-Development and Inter Church Aid Commission; and member of the Holy Synodos





# 1. BACKGROUND

## A. CONTEXT: SITUATION ANALYSIS

Throughout history diseases have been associated with negative ideas and discrimination. Jesus Christ challenged these ideas in his time and we too need to challenge them in ours. Stigma, discrimination and denial of HIV and AIDS can result in harm to individuals and communities. This needs to be stopped by ensuring our communities have correct information, avoid judgement and act based on the love God calls humanity to.

St. Mary, mother of Jesus, provides guidance for parenthood – the challenges she faced and the effort she took for her child – Christ. Circumstances have changed, and in our times some children are born with HIV, however this can be prevented. Following the noble example of St. Mary we can seek support to ensure that our children receive the care they need to be healthy.





Marriage is a sacred bond and God gives guidance about how this relationship should be – based upon compassion and love. Jesus is an example for humanity in enacting love for all. Violence against women is not an acceptable form of relationship and harms women physically, emotionally and mentally. Jesus Christ shows us how to avoid violence against women when He was teaching this world for three years and three months. Understanding marriage based on scripture and following the calling of Jesus, will ensure that our relationships are founded in love and compassion.

Love and compassion extends to all of humanity – including care and support for those who are discriminated against and facing challenges. Jesus Christ provided care and support for those who were in need around him and this is the example to be followed today. Ensuring that people have the care and support they need extends beyond physical support, and includes changing the ideas of the community that negative impact others as well as providing social and emotional support.





## B JUSTIFICATION FOR DESIGNING THE GUIDE BOOK ON HIV/AIDS SDD



The active and informed involvement of religious leaders is a critical part of an effective and comprehensive response to HIV. At the same time, the active and meaningful participation of people living with HIV (PLHIV) is an undeniably critical component of responses to HIV at national, regional and global levels. Yet, dialogue and collaboration between these two stakeholders requires support and guidance to overcome challenges, learn from successes, and share with others the lessons learned. To this effect, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+), the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with and affected by HIV (INERELA+), and UNAIDS have recently launched a tool to support dialogue and joint action at the national level between religious leaders and people living with HIV (PLHIV). The tool – called the Framework for Dialogue – starts with evidence that quantifies and illustrates the experiences of people living with HIV in a specific country, and then guides religious leaders and people living with HIV through a process of analyzing this





evidence in order to identify areas for joint action as well as key issues for further dialogue.

The Framework for Dialogue process was initiated in Ethiopia in early 2013, with a first face-to-face dialogue meeting taking place in April 2013. The meeting was attended by some 50 participants, including the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. During the meeting, 11 follow-up activity priorities were identified, along with 3 areas for further dialogue (issues concerning gender, youth and most-at-risk populations).

The Framework for Dialogue process in Ethiopia is overseen by a small working group of partners at the national level that implements six key steps to ensure proper planning, follow-up and sustained, ongoing dialogue. The technical working group thus agreed to develop a sermon guide for religious groups specifically addressing stigma, gender equality and promotion of PMTCT services.







## C. ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN THE HIV RESPONSE

Religious leaders are guides. They act as sign posts in the community for people to know which direction to go. Religious leaders also play a role in recognizing challenges within the community and work to address them – to show the love of Jesus in their action and concern. This guide outlines issues that religious leaders can support their communities in taking a greater leadership role on: stigma and discrimination, preventing the transmission of HIV from mother to child, violence against women, and care and support.



## 2. STIGMA, DISCRIMINATION & DENIAL AND HIV/AIDS

### A. CONTEXT

Today, more than thirty million people are living with HIV around the world. HIV and AIDS has already taken the lives of tens of millions of people, which has resulted in the orphaning of an estimated twenty million children. Many tens of millions more have been affected by HIV and AIDS as friends, parents, children or neighbours.

Ethiopia is home to one of the largest populations of people living with HIV in the world. That, however, should be understood in its context. There are more than eighty million Ethiopians, so a prevalence rate of two percent results in a large number. Approximately one million people. Other countries might have a very high prevalence rate of HIV, but a low population, so the number of people living with HIV is lower.



In other countries, the prevalence rate might be lower than Ethiopia's, but the population very large, which makes the number of people living with HIV also large.

A two percent prevalence rate of HIV in Ethiopia should also be understood in terms of the country itself. Urban areas tends to have higher prevalence rates than rural ones. Certain vulnerable groups of people tend to face higher levels of HIV. Transmission of the virus in Ethiopia is largely through heterosexual activity. The virus can be transmitted through the passing of sexual fluids, blood and breast milk from one person to another. Different forms of activity can result in these fluids being transferred from person to person. Understanding these transmission routes is important for stopping stigma and discrimination and denial. HIV is not transmitted by feces, saliva, sweat, tears or urine.

Stigma is something that classifies people in a different way, which tends to be social disapproval. As a result, there may be discrimination against people because of that social disapproval. Sometimes stigma comes from fear, which can sometimes be incorrect. For example, someone might refuse to use utensils or sit in a room with a person living with HIV because they fear transmission of HIV. This fear causes







people to stay away, or shun, those living with HIV. However, that fear is not based on facts. HIV is not transmitted in these ways. Knowing what HIV and AIDS are and how the virus works are the first steps to stopping stigma and discrimination and denial.



In addition to stigma, some may deny the existence, role or potential for HIV. This can manifest itself in different ways, however each have the potential for causing misunderstanding and blocking means to prevention and treatment. For example, one person may not believe that HIV and AIDS exists at all, another might deny the impact of the virus and not seek care while a third might deny the potential for the virus to be in the self or the community. Each of these ideas can result in people not seeking to know their HIV status, not utilizing prevention approaches and not accessing healthcare.





## B. MESSAGE

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Denial, stigma and discrimination come from ideas and perceptions. Often these are judgmental, and many times they are not based on all the information needed to fully understand the situation. As believers in Christ we must refrain from judgement, avoid hatred and enjoin love. This starts with our own ideas and is embodied in our action.



Denial, stigma and discrimination around issues of HIV and AIDS cause great harm and a great sin for those who believe in Christ. They harm those who are unfairly treated. They harm the community as people fear for speaking about the topic. They discourage people from understanding HIV and AIDS. They act as a barrier for utilizing prevention approaches, such as knowing ones HIV status before marriage. They also act as a barrier for seeking treatment when it is required, including treatment which could prevent transmission of the virus from mother to child. However, religious leaders can play an important role in changing this: putting a stop to stigma and discrimination and self denial, helping other to avoid judging and showing the community the love of Jesus in all that they do.

## C. SCRIPTURE

1. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. (John 15:12)*

2. *Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. (Mathew 22:39)*

3. *Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hope all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. (1 Cor 13:4-10)*

4. *He that said he is in the light, and hate his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loves his brother abided. He that loves his brother abided in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. (1 John 2:9-10)*



5. Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (Mathew 7:1-2)

6. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death. Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. (1 John 3:14-15)

7. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. (1 John 4:7)

8. If a man says, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment has we from Him, that he who loves God loves his brother also. (1 John 4:20-21)

9. And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought



him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. (Luke 5:12-13)

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10. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Mathew 25:34-36, 40)

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11. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Luke 10: 33-34

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12. Jesus answered, neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. (John 9:3)



*13. Blessed is he that considerate the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. (Psalm 41:1)*

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*14. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; (Mark 1:34)*

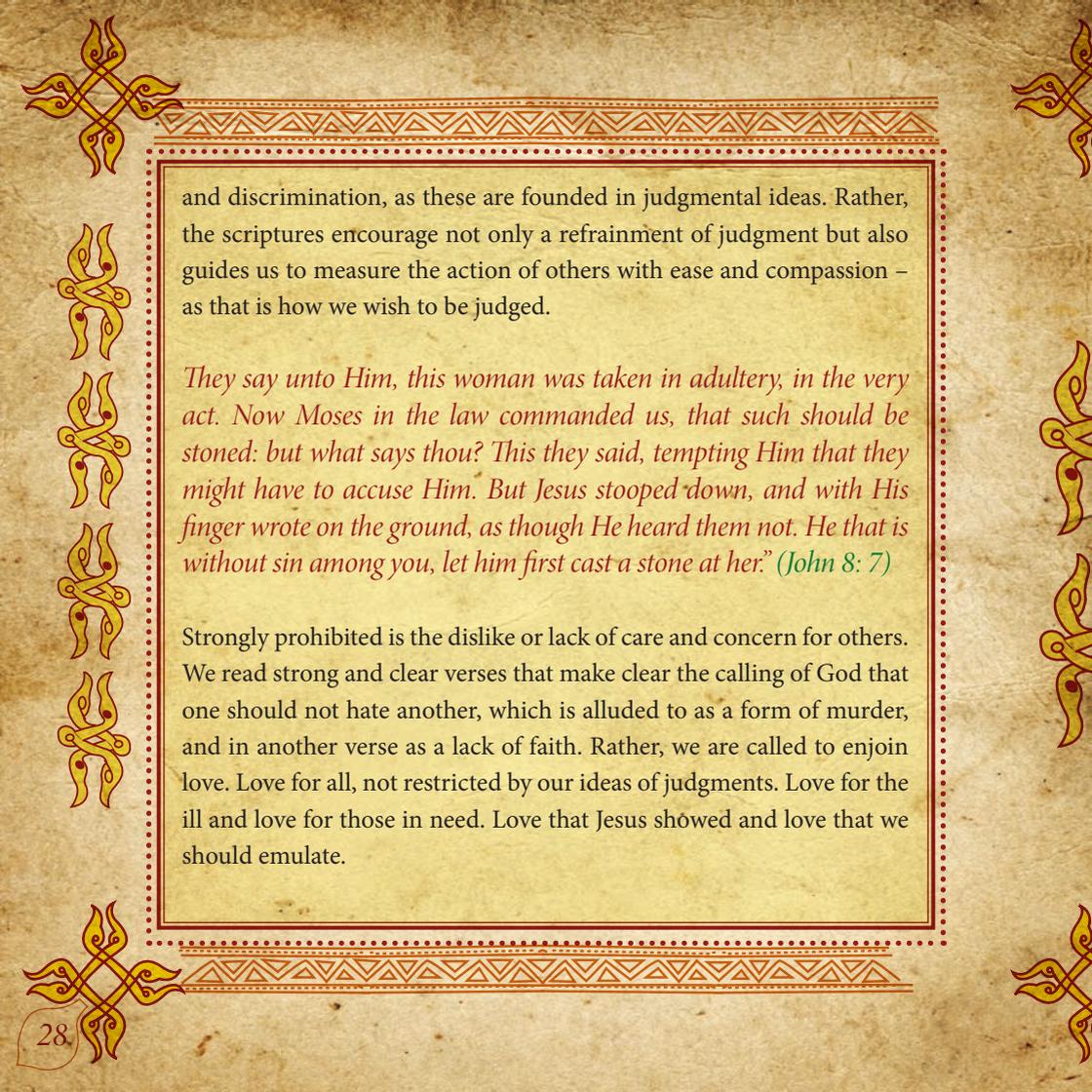


## D. SUGGESTED SERMON

Jesus Christ gave the message to humanity that we should love one another just as Jesus has loved us. This message was a cornerstone of His calling, and it is found in different forms throughout the scriptures. Love they neighbor as thyself. Wish for others what you wish for yourself. For this message to be fully understood, let us look to the scripture for the meaning of love:

*“Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hope all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.” (1 Cor 13:4-10)*

In addition to manifesting love for one another in our action, we should refrain from judgment of others. Judge not lest you be judged, and the measure with which you judge others you will be judged by. Refraining from judgment is of great importance when seeking to address stigma



and discrimination, as these are founded in judgmental ideas. Rather, the scriptures encourage not only a refrainment of judgment but also guides us to measure the action of others with ease and compassion – as that is how we wish to be judged.

*They say unto Him, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what says thou? This they said, tempting Him that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not. He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” (John 8: 7)*

Strongly prohibited is the dislike or lack of care and concern for others. We read strong and clear verses that make clear the calling of God that one should not hate another, which is alluded to as a form of murder, and in another verse as a lack of faith. Rather, we are called to enjoy love. Love for all, not restricted by our ideas of judgments. Love for the ill and love for those in need. Love that Jesus showed and love that we should emulate.





### 3. PMTCT

#### A. CONTEXT

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One of the ways that HIV can be transmitted is from mother-to-child. With available and free options throughout Ethiopia, this can largely be prevented.



If an expecting mother is living with HIV there is a possibility that HIV could be passed from her to the infant. In order for this transmission to be prevented, the expecting mother needs to know her HIV status. Although treatment options are available, these options might not be accessed if people do not know they are needed. This is particularly important as many women give birth without support of trained medical professionals, so they are likely not being tested for HIV, and as a result not be treated







if that is required. Throughout Ethiopia HIV testing is available, and this can be done at a routine visit that women make while pregnant. In addition to this test, medical professionals will be able to provide nutritional advice and information about having a healthy pregnancy.



In Ethiopia this is an important issue. In recent years almost 15,000 children were born with HIV. Many mothers living with HIV did access the government services that provide treatment and support to prevent HIV transmission from mother-to-child, however many did not. In order to ensure that as many children are involved in these programs, we must encourage expecting mothers to access medical support and speak with trained medical professionals. Doing so will help the mother and the child in many ways, and if it is required it will also allow for the treatment to be given if the mother is living with HIV – she can then live a long and healthy life herself and it is more likely that her child will live a life free from HIV.

One of the key components that religious communities and religious leaders need to integrate into their work is encouraging





women to visit medical services. This includes for prevention and treatment of HIV, but will also support the health and wellness of women and children.



If it is the case that an expecting mother is living with HIV, there are treatments available. This treatment will help prevent transmission of the virus from the mother to her child and it will help the mother live a long and healthy life. In addition to the treatment, there are a number of supports that medical professionals will provide for the birthing process, which will further lessen the chance of passing the virus to the infant. The best advice we can give to pregnant women is to ensure that they are supported by medical professionals and have a regular visit during pregnancy and after delivery.







## B. MESSAGE

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The miracle of Jesus' birth posed challenges for His mother, St. Mary. Some people made accusations and had negative assumptions about her.

We can reflect upon the story of St. Mary for important lessons about the calling of God for us. We should avoid judgement of others – St. Mary was honored by God with the miraculous pregnancy, yet some people wrongly judged her. HIV results in some negative assumptions, and we should avoid this. Husbands should act as supporters in times of difficulty. Last, if there is a means to protect and honor our children, we should take those means – such as knowing our HIV status and seeking medical support to prevent the transmission of the virus from mother to child.





## C. SCRIPTURE

1. Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5)

2. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. (Mathew 19:14)

3. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace. (Galatians 1:15)

4. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother. (Mathew 2:11)

5. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. (Psalms 27:10)





## D. SUGGESTED SERMON



During the childhood of Jesus, his mother St. Mary cared for Him deeply. She faced a great number of tests and trials because of the circumstances surrounding the miraculous birth of Christ. People made accusations and assumed that she had done something wrong. Despite these difficulties she faced, she gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem, following the guidance of the rulers of the time that required everyone to return to their city of origin.

This gives us an insight into how St. Mary cared for Christ. She faced great difficulties and challenges, but faced them as best she could. We can understand from this how much St. Mary and Joseph cared for the yet unborn Jesus.

Today in Ethiopia those who are living with HIV and AIDS face great challenges, and people make assumptions about them. Even though God calls us to love one another and not

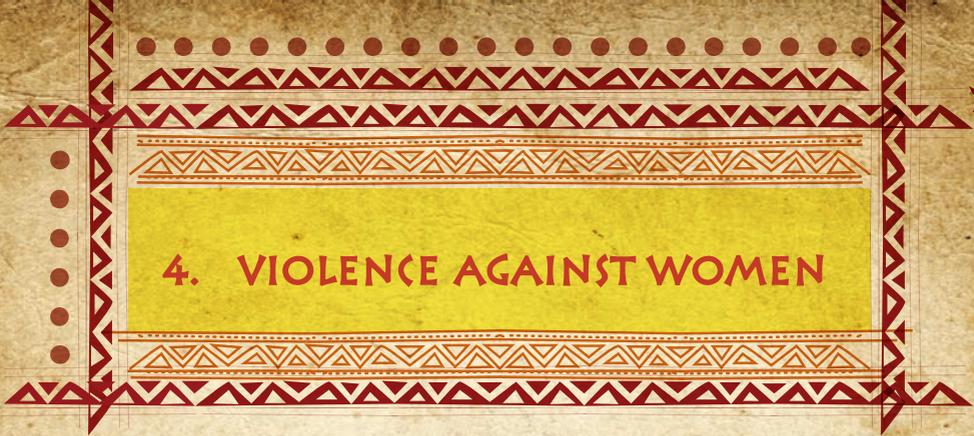




to judge one another, we witness this. However, let us not forget the great example of St. Mary – about whom negative assumptions were made, and they were wrong.

In the example of HIV, it is possible for the virus to be passed from mother to child; however this can largely be prevented. To do so, we must know our status and seek medical support when required. Certainly the circumstances have changed, but the value and approach has not – love and compassion for our children, doing our best to care for them and exemplifying the love of Jesus for all in each of our actions. Because that's what Jesus Christ would want you to do.





## 4. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

### A. CONTEXT



Violence against women can take many forms. In Ethiopia that includes the facts that: seventy-five percent of women have undergone female genital cutting, which is largely practiced on non-consenting minors, eight percent of women have been abducted into marriage, over eighty percent of women feel their partners have a right to beat them, over fifty percent of women will experience sexual violence at least once in their lives from their partner, and a significant number of girls are forced into marriage.





Violence against women causes many forms of harm. Violence can negatively affect physical, psychological and emotional health. It can damage relationships and feelings of self-worth. Violence may result in: depression, anger, risky behavior, abuse of intoxicants, increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, social stigma, costs of medical support and lost work. Violence against women also negatively impacts children. Children who witness or experience violence at home might develop problems in their physical, emotional and social health.

The Government of Ethiopia has laws against these forms of violence against women. However, because much of the violence occurs within the homes of people, it is hard to detect when violence is happening. There are barriers that prevent women from reporting violence, such as social stigma around the issue, a lack of appropriate reporting facilities and insufficient support networks for women, if they need protection.





## B. MESSAGE

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Throughout Ethiopia religious communities and religious leaders can play an important role in helping to prevent and stop violence against women. First and foremost, this means that we need to understand what violence against women is, and find appropriate times and places where this topic can be discussed. For example, people don't feel comfortable discussing intimate matters in public, and they may also feel uncomfortable doing so with a person of the opposite gender – even if that person is a religious authority. As such, we need to ensure that appropriate services are available so that women can feel safe in speaking about topics of a very personal nature. We also need to make sure that religious leaders gain the skills they need to provide the required support that families need when dealing, and coping, with violence.

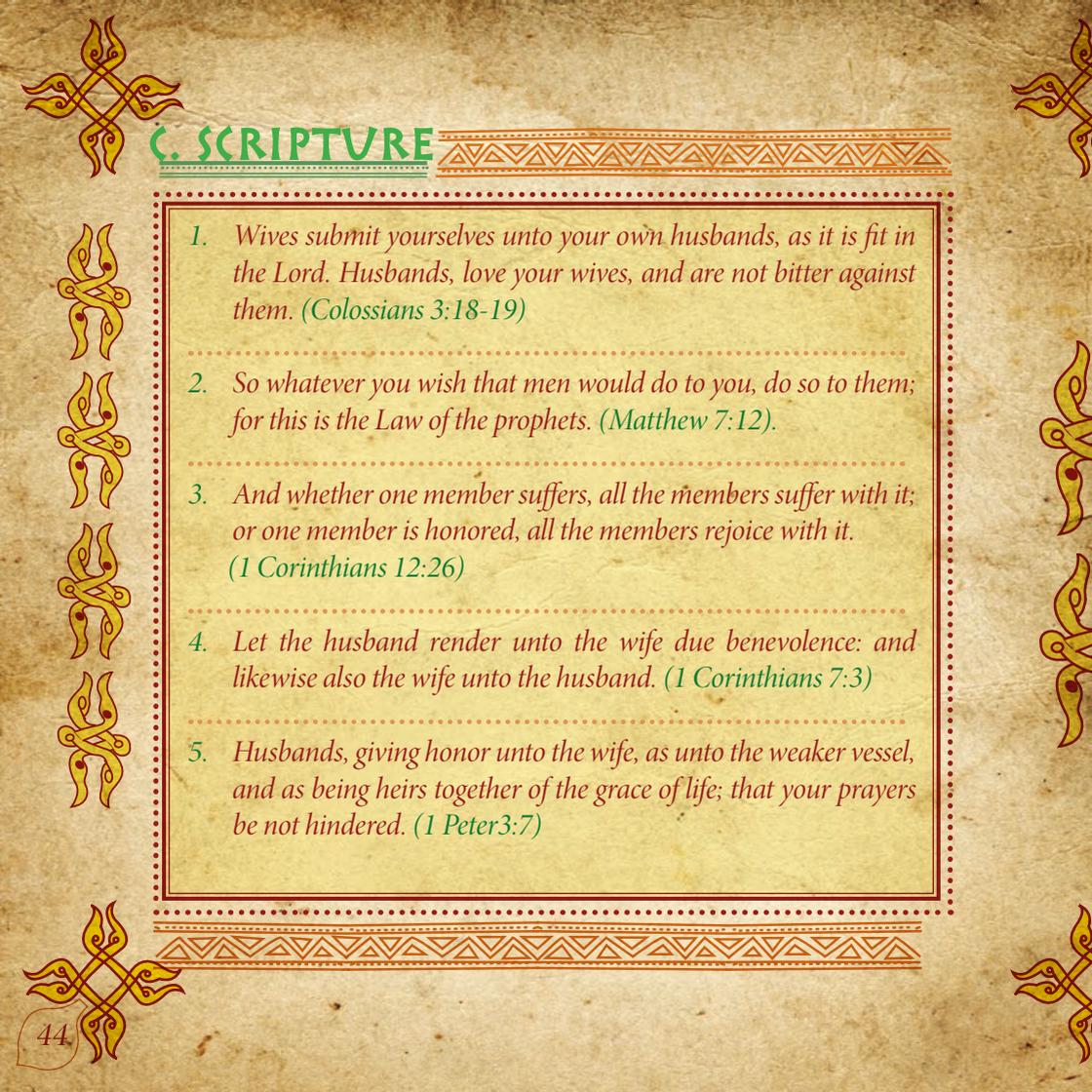
Using scripture as the guide and Jesus Christ as the example, religious leaders can share the message about healthy relationships. They can ensure the love of Jesus is manifested in our communities and that members of that community





understand the nature and responsibilities in marriage – which include love, compassion, understanding and kindness.





## C. SCRIPTURE

1. *Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and are not bitter against them. (Colossians 3:18-19)*
2. *So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the Law of the prophets. (Matthew 7:12).*
3. *And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (1 Corinthians 12:26)*
4. *Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. (1 Corinthians 7:3)*
5. *Husbands, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)*

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6. *Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it. (Ephesians 5:25)*
7. *This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. (Genesis 17: 10)*
8. *So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. (Ephesians 5:28)*
9. *There is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)*
10. *Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled. (Hebrew 13:4).*
11. *Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (Mathew 19:6)*



## D. SUGGESTED SERMON



The role that scripture plays in understanding appropriate relationships requires reflection beyond a cursory reading of one or two verses, lest one misunderstand. An incorrect reading of the scriptures may, such as understanding roles in marriage following *Colossians 3:18-19*: “*wives submit yourselves unto your husbands*”, result in action that is against the core values presented by God, and as embodied by Jesus. In our communities we need to ensure that families understand the nature of a healthy relationship, based upon the scriptures, and help to prevent and overcome the kinds of interactions that are harmful to one another.

This is important because some relationships are not healthy. Some people experience violence from their loved ones. These are occurrences that happen in Ethiopia and these are things which we must seek to change. As a community following Jesus Christ we can move forward with collective





understanding in using the scripture as the guide and Jesus as the example.

One of the core messages that helps shape scripture-based values is that of the golden rule: that one wishes for others what they wish for themselves. Thus we need to encourage general concern for one another. In doing so, it will become clear that acting violently towards one another is something God has called humanity to avoid. The scriptures speak of understanding, or embodying, the suffering – as well as the honoring – of all people. Gender in this sense, of loving one another and wishing the best for others, is not a factor as we are all one in Christ.

*“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled” (Hebrew 13:4).* Marriage is sacred. How that bond is to manifest itself based on God’s calling is one which is based on honor, kindness and compassion. Furthermore, it is a relationship build upon love and understanding, a foundation for



dealing with one another we find best exemplified in Jesus. Just as we are to consider the suffering of humanity, God calls us to consider the love of our spouse as the love we wish to see, we read that men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. In addition, marriage is a religious agreement and so the nature of the relationship should be one based in love. *“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* (Mathew 19:6)





## 5. CARE AND SUPPORT

### A. CONTEXT

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People who are living with HIV and AIDS can live long and healthy lives. To do so, care and support is required. This includes medical support, nutrition, rest and exercise as well as social and emotional support. People are better able to cope when they have the support of others, and this helps people have a positive attitude.

Many times people living with HIV and AIDS do not have all the support they need. This might be for a number of reasons. For example, a person may not know they need medical support. Thus it is important for everyone to know their status. For others, they may fear the stigma of others and neglect to seek the help they require. In yet other cases, people are discriminated against





because of their status, and support is withheld, people refuse to offer support.



It is important for vulnerable children and people living with HIV and AIDS to have support that goes beyond medical support. Individuals and families need social and emotional support as well. In addition, the other members of families might face challenges of their own and also require support. Some religious communities have organized meetings where people can discuss the challenges they face as vulnerable children and people living with HIV, others have held community gatherings to inform the community about the virus, others join hands with the medical professionals and work to change the ideas and attitudes in the community.

Religious leaders and religious communities can play an important role in supporting vulnerable children and people living with HIV and AIDS in a number of ways. One way is to help change the ideas of the community: to avoid judgment and to better understand the virus. Another way is to ensure the needs of vulnerable children and people living with HIV and AIDS are met, such as educational support, nutrition and emotional support. Groups might organize to ensure that everyone is cared for.





## B. MESSAGE

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Each of us have unique abilities and talents and we should utilize them to support others. Jesus Christ offered His care and support by healing those who were sick. We can offer our care and support through physical, social and emotional support. Jesus cared for those who were discriminated against in His time, and we should follow this example – we should extend our love and compassion for all, as Christ did.



HIV and AIDS poses challenges in our communities, and some of these are the result of negative ideas and judgements. We should challenge these, just as Jesus did, and ensure that all people have the care and support that they need. This also means working to change the ideas that people have – to provide correct information, to stop stigma and discrimination and to ensure we avoid judgment. HIV and AIDS should be understood within the context of the scripture, even if it is not something Jesus Himself encountered. God calls us to love one another, and this is a boundless love that has no barriers.

## C. SCRIPTURE

1. *They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. (Mathew 9:12)*
2. *For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. (Mathew 25: 35-36)*
3. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. (Mathew 7:12)*
4. *And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. (Luke 7:13)*
5. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. (1 Peter 3:8)*

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6. *I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. (Psalms 40:1)*
7. *Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. (Psalms 82:3-4)*
8. *He that hath pity upon the poor lends unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again. (Proverbs 19:17)*



## D. SUGGESTED SERMON

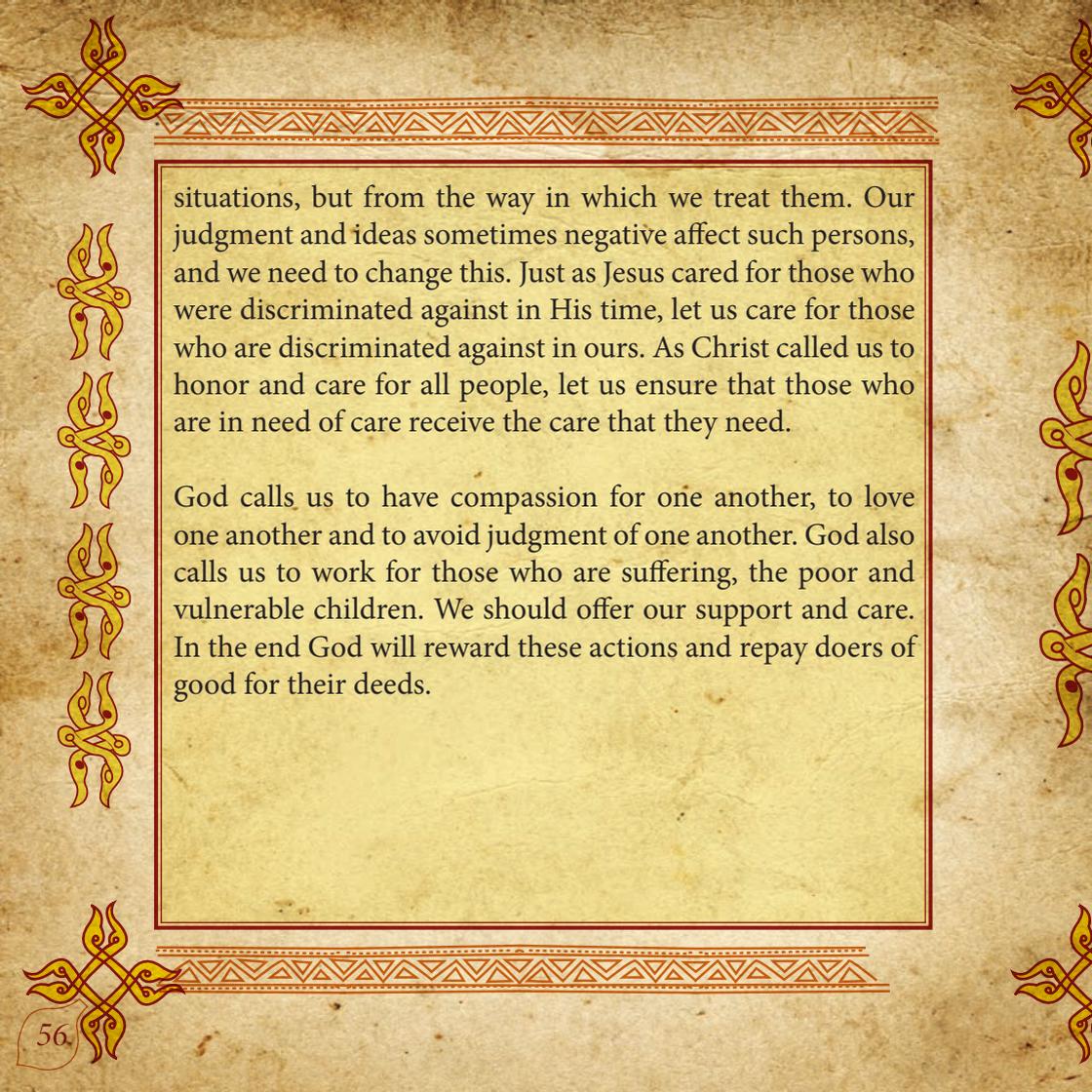


Jesus Christ cared for the sick by healing them. His actions are a great lesson for us today. On one occasion Jesus met a man with leprosy, a disease which was associated with stigma and discrimination during that time. What was His response? Jesus stretched out His hand, touched the man and cured him. The love of Jesus was demonstrated by His action, His care and compassionate for others was lived.

God calls us to care and support one another, and gives us clear examples to follow: I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. These are all works of love that are demonstrated through action, acts of care and support for others.

In our communities there are people who are facing challenges. These tests are not just from their own





situations, but from the way in which we treat them. Our judgment and ideas sometimes negatively affect such persons, and we need to change this. Just as Jesus cared for those who were discriminated against in His time, let us care for those who are discriminated against in ours. As Christ called us to honor and care for all people, let us ensure that those who are in need of care receive the care that they need.

God calls us to have compassion for one another, to love one another and to avoid judgment of one another. God also calls us to work for those who are suffering, the poor and vulnerable children. We should offer our support and care. In the end God will reward these actions and repay doers of good for their deeds.





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