

Module 3 Workshop Guide

HOW IS SEXISM PERSONAL, AND HOW ARE WE THE BODY OF CHRIST TOGETHER?

Pages 49-61 in *Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversations Toward a Social Statement*

<http://www.elca.org/womenandjustice>

Please check the synod website for handouts for this workshop.

Opening Prayer – See *Suggested Prayers by Pastor Connie Winter-Eulberg on the ELCA Sierra Pacific Synod website or see prayers on pages 22-23 of the study guide.*

OPENING PRAYER

***This prayer has been written from a female point of view. It will need to be adapted for a male who prays this prayer.*

Mighty God, I hate it when someone views me only as a sexual object instead of an intelligent, strong, child of God. I don't like that I have to keep standing up for my rights to be heard and seen as someone who has great contributions to give at my job, as a parent, as a leader and as a person of faith. I pray that you will continue to give me strength to stand up for myself and demand respect. You created me as a whole person and I am proud to stand up for what you created me to be. AMEN (Connie Winter-Eulberg, 2017)

Conversation Covenant – See Pages 13-14 for more information and to copy the Covenant

TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

SCRIPTURE:

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:27-28)

I. WHAT IS SEXISM AND HOW DOES IT SHOW UP IN MY LIFE?

Sexism is that which promotes the silencing, controlling and devaluing of women, girls and gender non-conforming people, and perpetuates male privilege and power.

It can be challenging to see how gender affects our relationships. Naming or calling out sexism or gender inequality is discouraged and even taboo in our congregations, communities and culture. So we **don't!**

HOW, WHEN AND WHERE HAVE YOU SEEN SEXISM SHOW ITSELF IN RELATIONSHIPS, EXPERIENCES AND COMMUNITIES IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS?

1. When has someone doubted your ability to do something because of your gender?
2. When has someone assumed you could do something because of your gender?
3. When have you felt excluded from a conversation, situation, or decision because of gender?
4. When have you felt shame or inadequacy because you didn't live up to gender expectations?
5. When have you felt uncomfortable or physically intimidated by another person's body language, either because of their gender or yours?

III. HOW DOES SEXISM WORK? HOW DO STEREOTYPES AND SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS ABOUT GENDER ADD TO THE PROBLEM OF SEXISM?

Group Discussion:

Let's brainstorm lists of stereotypes and characteristics associated with males, then with females.

Sometimes gender-based inequality is easy to see, but often it is not. Too often when we have limited information about a person, we fill in the gaps with stereotypes according to that person's gender, a practice particularly harmful to women and girls.

Stereotypes and expectations for men and boys often set them up to step into roles that afford them decision-making power, leadership and greater visibility in our communities, societies and even churches. Often women are relegated to roles of nurturer, caretaker, or supportive partner. Even though all those roles are vital to our communities and society, we need to recognize that vocation is not limited by the roles traditionally prescribed. When we limit ourselves to roles because of gender, we participate in sexism that separates people from power and decision-making processes.

III. WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF SEXISM ON OUR BODIES?

Provide a printout of the shape of a hand, or ask participants to outline their hand on a piece of paper. Remember to have paper and pencils!

At age 13, 53% of American girls are unhappy with their bodies. At age 17 that figure is 78%.

In the United States, 1 in 6 women will be a victim of attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. Transgender people are 3.7 times more likely to be murdered by law enforcement.

As we go through several problems evident in our systems and culture, write down meaningful words on the fingers in your handprint. These problems are evidence of sin, not just because they deny the goodness of some bodies through control and domination, but also because they deny the diversity of human bodies. Human bodies are infinitely complex and diverse because of our characteristics, experiences, joys, sorrows, passions, and vocations. Attempting to "pigeon-hole" people separates them from who God created them to be this way, causing us to participate in the sexism that harms God's children.

IV. HOW CAN WE MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER?

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Through the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God affirmed the goodness of our bodies. We are held together in God's promise of wholeness and healing. In Jesus' incarnation and resurrection, God confirms for us what was stated in Genesis: The creation of our bodies is good. We are reminded of this in the sacrament of communion because of Christ's presence with us.

We are called to do the difficult work of embracing the gifts of our rich unity and diversity in the body of Christ by finding ways to include, affirm, and uplift people of every gender in our church and the world.

AS LUTHERANS, HOW CAN WE MOVE FORWARD?

Three theological emphases are critical resources for confronting sexism. Divide into small groups to read your theme and follow the discussion suggestions below the statement.

CLOSING:

In the face of the monumental challenge to overcome sexism, we are reminded by the sacraments and Jesus' body in the world that we can look forward to God's promise of wholeness and grace, empowered to be God's agents for alleviating the suffering of those controlled, ignored and dominated by sexism.

CLOSING PRAYER

COMPLETE THE RESPONSE FORM. TURN IT IN TO BE MAILED TO CHURCHWIDE IN CHICAGO. *A shortened response form is on the Sierra Pacific Website.*

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