

Module 7 Exercise Handout

How do we challenge the misuse of Scripture against women and girls?

1. What's the Problem?

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.

The Bible has been interpreted in many ways, by different people, in different contexts. Unfortunately, the Bible has often been misinterpreted in ways that are limiting and even destructive for women and girls.

Christians treasure the Scriptures because from these writings we hear the message of God's wondrous, saving acts – especially the liberation of God's people from slavery in Egypt and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus — and God's promise of a new creation in Christ. So, it is troubling for many Christians when the Scriptures are used in other ways that devalue and harm women and girls, compromising the promise of a new creation in Christ.

For example: *(Have someone read these)*

- *Even though all the Gospels identify women as the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, some people use other scriptural passages to silence the voices and witness of women and girls in the church.*
- *Even though the Old Testament tells us that both women and men are created good and in God's image and even though the New Testament repeatedly affirms that God's mercy in Christ opens a place for all regardless of social identity or location, including race and gender, some people use other scriptural passages to devalue women and girls and to deny them equal standing in the church and society.*
- *Even though the entire Scriptures uphold the two-fold commandment to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself*

and direct all Christians to live respectfully with others, some people use other scriptural passages to excuse and legitimize violence against women and girls. Faithful Christians are right to be concerned and seek a remedy to these misuses of the Scriptures.

II. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY, AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN? (10 MINUTES)

(All of the following passages are from ancient religious texts. As each is read each out loud, invite participants to mark a Y or N next to the ones they think are from the Bible. Y (Yes: in the Bible) or N (No: not in the Bible).) **HANDOUT*

- If a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil.
- Women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.
- If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall give the marriage present for her, and make her his wife.
- It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead shall not be married outside the family to a stranger; her husband's brother shall go in to her, and take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.
- Woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

**(Note to leaders: Ask participants to share brief responses to this exercise. Then lead a discussion of the following questions.)*

QUESTIONS

How did these passages make you feel?

What helped you determine if each passage was in the Bible or not?

As a matter of fact, all of these statements are found in the Bible.¹

Does that surprise you? Why or why not?