

Worship and prayer resource for 16 Days of Activism on Gender-Based Violence

This resource includes a range of reflections and prayer templates that you can draw on for activities in your Diocese during 16 Days.

Bible Reflection

This Bible study could be done if meeting in groups of six, online via Zoom, or even done at home with your family or on your own.

At the heart of our campaigning against domestic abuse is our love for God, which motivates us to keep his command: to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbour as yourself.

Luke 10:27 (NIV)

Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and love your neighbour as well as you do yourself.

Luke 10:27 (The Message)

With such a well-known Bible verse the temptation is to use it without stopping to consider its implications, both for ourselves and those whom we accept as our “neighbour”; in this case those affected by violence and abuse.

So, it’s worth taking a moment to focus on the verse and the challenge it presents.

Reflect for some time on the verse, asking God to highlight words and phrases which will develop your thoughts and understanding.

After a while share together in pairs or small groups what has stood out to you personally. You may find that your individual strands of thought combine to bring new insight and motivation.

Then consider together the following in the light of the passage and your reflections on it.

- The Bible tells us to love, not just in word but indeed 1 John 3:18. In what ways do our actions to challenge domestic abuse show our love for God?
- The second command exhorts us to love our neighbours as ourselves. Reflect on how or whether we actually do love ourselves and how this is practically lived out. What are the stumbling blocks to loving ourselves?
- If we find it hard to love ourselves, what implications does this have for those we are seeking to support?
- Survivors of domestic abuse may find it hard to love both God and themselves. Reflect on how or whether they can be helped to do this and how this may benefit them in the long term?

We find this command in the context of Jesus being questioned on the way to gain eternal life. As we pray for God's help in all we do to love our neighbour, we give thanks that we are able to show our love for God and his people through our actions; and that these will have eternal as well as earthly significance.

Service outline template

This service outline may be used and adapted for a variety of contexts. You could ask your local church to use this as a basis of their service during 16 Days either in person or online or just use the intercession. You could use this to hold your own diocesan or branch service either in person or online via Zoom

Please add hymns and other prayers as wished.

As people arrive give them a link for a paper chain for them to write on before the service starts one short prayer, name of victim or survivor of domestic abuse or other appropriate word or phrase. If online ask beforehand for them to complete this before them. Assure them of confidentiality

Welcome and call to worship

Welcome to our service which is part of Mothers' Union's global action against domestic and sexual abuse. As we raise our voices on behalf of the voiceless, we also raise our voices in worship and intercession to our loving righteous God.

I love the Lord because he hears my voice
and my prayer for mercy.
Because he bends down to listen,
I will pray as long as I have breath!
Psalm 116:1-2 (NLT)

We draw near in faith to the Lord who draws near to us with love
and hears our prayers for mercy.

Opening hymn

Collect the paper links during the singing of this hymn. Then during the service have volunteers create a chain from them ready for the intercessions.

Opening prayers and confession

Loving Lord,
who came to proclaim justice,
make us bold to speak out truth
and break the power of silence.

Loving Lord,
who came to minister mercy
make us agents of compassion
to release the oppressed from fear.

Merciful and loving God,

**forgive us when we have closed our eyes
to the sufferings of others;
when we have stayed silent
in the face of abuse and oppression;
when we have declined to challenge
unacceptable actions and attitudes.**

**Take away our selfishness
and fill us with new resolve
to proclaim justice and mercy
in the name of Christ. Amen**

Readings

Jesus stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’
Luke 4:16-19

A Woman’s Psalm

O God, I am a woman in a violent world
let me know your peace.

Let blind rage born of despair
not find its target in me.

Let the value of my life
not be reduced to the jewellery I wear.

Let my family life not end
that life in a gang may begin.

Let rape not violate my body
nor anger ravage my soul.

Let fear not enter my heart
but caution sharpen my mind.

Let the light of Christ so shine in me
that I may reflect your love.

Let the joy that the apostles knew
infuse my spirit and alleviate my pain.

Let Love who suffered and died on the cross

find resurrection and new life in the world you love.

O God, I am a woman in a violent world
let me know your peace.

Elizabeth Kaeton, (from Lifting Women's Voices: Canterbury Press; 2009)

Hymn

Homily

Intercessions

Bring the paper chains of prayers to the front and break them apart throughout the intercessions, or during the moment for quiet prayer.

Loving Lord,
hear our cries for justice
and break the chains of abuse
that all may live in safety.

Loving Lord,
hear our cries for righteousness
and break the chains of oppression
that all may live in freedom

We take a moment in the quiet to bring our own prayers to God.

Loving Lord,
hear our cries for mercy
and break the chains of fear
that all may live in peace. **Amen**

Final Hymn

Closing Prayers and Blessing

May God give us eyes
to recognise abuse where it exists.
May God give us a heart
to reach out in compassion.
May God give us courage and resolve
to make a difference wherever we are.

And the Blessing of God Almighty,
the Holy Trinity,
guide our steps today,
this week and always.
Go in peace and in resolve. **Amen**
Source unknown

Sample Prayers

Great God we give you thanks that you call us out of silence to name hidden and domestic abuse.

We pray for all those women who despite suffering from abuse and violence, continue to care for family and children, to grow and prepare food, carry water, earn a living and offer support to others.

We pray for women who are trafficked as domestic or sex workers; for women who are raped and do not know how to find words to name their pain or a way into the future.

We pray for transformation of our societies which often find it easier to judge the victims of violence than to solve the problems of injustice

We pray that women's voices may be heard and taken into account in all peace and reconciliation work.

We pray for a transformation in the violent way many men act towards and think about women.

We pray for right and just relations between women and men that together we may transform and overcome violence in all its forms and learn to celebrate our diversity and interdependence

We look forward to the age of peace, when violence is banished, both women and men are able to love and to be loved, and the work and wealth of our world is justly shared. *World Council of Churches*

Stir us with a resolve not to be silent.
To speak out against the abuse of power;
especially in our homes.
To speak up
for those who have been pushed down
in any way.
To speak to
the needs of those who are suffering
at the hands of another.
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ,
who extended his forgiving hands to all. Amen *Restored Church Pack*

Compassionate God,
may those experiencing all forms of violence
be given courage, hope and the means
to break free from their abuse.

We pray for all who live in fear of violence
and despair that life will ever change:

Bring to an end their suffering;
restore their sense of worth.
Bring to light deeds of abuse hidden in darkness,

that they may find safety and refuge, free from fear.

We pray for all to follow your example
of treating women with equality and respect.
We pray for the dawn of a better world
where justice and peace may flourish. Amen

Creative Prayer Ideas

Inspired by God's Word

This idea could work well when holding a vigil. When each prayer is shared a candle could be lit as a symbol of God's light overcoming the darkness.

Provide Bible verses connected with aspects of domestic abuse on pieces of card or paper – there are some examples below but feel free to use your own ideas.
Give people opportunity to choose a card and then have a time of quiet for each to reflect on their verse.

Then take turns to use your verse for prayer. Each read out their verse and then either finish with *Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer* or if people are confident, speak out their own prayer arising from their reflection.

This idea could be combined with the use of a prayer tree with the verses hung on a tree after being shared.

Prayer Tree

Provide a prayer tree along with labels for people to write their prayers on and hang on the tree. If you can participate in a service, you could bring the tree forward in the service and offer up the prayers as part of the intercessions. You may like to open this to the wider community.

*Instead of the thorn-bush will grow the juniper,
and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.
This will be for the Lord's renown,
for an everlasting sign,
that will endure for ever. Isaiah 55:13*

*Loving Lord,
we offer up these prayers
for all who are affected
by domestic or sexual abuse.
May blighted lives be transformed
through the healing power of the Spirit. Amen*

