

**The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians’
Facilitators’ Resource Guide on Intersectional Sexual
Reproductive Health and Rights with Christian Texts**



Introduction

Genesis 41:43 “He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, “Make way!” Thus, he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.”

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (the Circle), under the Make Way program, created the Intersectional See-Judge-Act (ISJA) tool to promote Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights discussions within both religious and non-religious spaces. The ISJA tool continues to be effectively used in various settings. This current resource presents biblical and religious texts that can be paired with community stories to explore Intersectional Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (ISRHR) for adolescents and youth. It serves as an important transformative resource guide, offering a modern and contextual interpretation of the Bible and culture, demonstrating that sacred texts can facilitate meaningful discussions around ISRHR. This resource aims to equip religious and community leaders with texts to engage their communities in addressing the ISRHR needs and challenges related to Adolescent and Youth. The resource includes biblical passages that facilitators can utilize when guiding conversations on ISRHR to any audience. This resource is designed to foster community engagement in Intergenerational Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ISRHR) through faith-informed and inclusive dialogues. Like the ISJA tool, this guide encourages open, respectful conversations across generations in safe spaces, using carefully chosen texts that resonate with diverse and intergenerational audiences.

Designed with accessibility in mind, this resource is suitable for clergy, Christians, and non-Christians alike. It offers age-appropriate guidance for engaging adolescents, youth, caregivers, and parents in meaningful discussions about ISRHR, using relevant biblical texts as conversation starters.

At its core, this resource affirms that the Bible can be a powerful tool for addressing sensitive topics often seen as taboo within religious and cultural spaces. It demonstrates that faith groups and religious leaders can build safe, supportive spaces for open dialogue on ISRHR.

The resource includes six key biblical texts, each providing alternative, transformative questions that facilitators can use to guide conversations. This guide and the provided texts demonstrate that the Bible is not silent on issues of SRHR. These texts can be enriched with community-

based stories, enabling contextual relevance and cultural resonance during conversations with young people.

This tool is not limited to clergy. It is meant for anyone who can facilitate group discussion, making it accessible to lay leaders, youth workers, parents, and teachers. Using an interactive, participatory approach, the resource empowers communities to have informative, respectful and transformative conversations with youth. Below are 6 biblical texts and questions that facilitators can ask during an implementation on ISRHR. Some texts might have more questions than others. The facilitators can choose what texts are more relevant for a given implementation. The facilitator would divide the participants into groups for discussions on a given text.

Needed material: Markers, Flip chart and Pens/pencils

PROPOSED BIBLICAL TEXTS FOR THE ISJA RESOURCE GUIDE

1. Esther Chapter 2 – Power Dynamics

2 After these things, when the anger of King Ahasu-e'rus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. ² Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king. ³ And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in Susa the capital, under custody of Hegai the king's eunuch who is in charge of the women; let their ointments be given them. ⁴ And let the maiden who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This pleased the king, and he did so.

⁵ Now there was a Jew in Susa the capital whose name was Mor'decai, the son of Ja'ir, son of Shim'e-i, son of Kish, a Benjaminite, ⁶ who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away. ⁷ He had brought up Hadas'sah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother; the maiden was beautiful and lovely, and when her father and her mother died, Mor'decai adopted her as his own daughter. ⁸ So when the king's order and his edict were proclaimed, and when many maidens were gathered in Susa the capital in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken into the king's palace and put in custody of Hegai who had charge of the women. ⁹ And the maiden pleased him and won his favor; and he quickly provided her with her ointments and her portion of food, and with seven chosen maids from the king's palace, and

advanced her and her maids to the best place in the harem. ¹⁰ Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mor'decai had charged her not to make it known. ¹¹ And everyday Mor'decai walked in front of the court of the harem, to learn how Esther was and how she fared.

¹² Now when the turn came for each maiden to go in to King Ahasu-e'rus, after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments for women— ¹³ when the maiden went in to the king in this way she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. ¹⁴ In the evening she went, and in the morning, she came back to the second harem in custody of Sha-ash'gaz the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines; she did not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

¹⁵ When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Ab'ihail the uncle of Mor'decai, who had adopted her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her. ¹⁶ And when Esther was taken to King Ahasu-e'rus into his royal palace in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, ¹⁷ the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. ¹⁸ Then the king gave a great banquet to all his princes and servants; it was Esther's banquet. He also granted a remission of taxes^[a] to the provinces, and gave gifts with royal liberality.

¹⁹ When the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mor'decai was sitting at the king's gate. ²⁰ Now Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mor'decai had charged her; for Esther obeyed Mor'decai just as when she was brought up by him. ²¹ And in those days, as Mor'decai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasu-e'rus. ²² And this came to the knowledge of Mor'decai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mor'decai. ²³ When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the Book of the Chronicles in the presence of the king.

Issues for Analysis

Power dynamics, body autonomy, exploitation and Gender-Based Violence GBV

Questions

- a. Who are the people/characters in the text?
- b. Who has power in this text? How are they using it?
- c. Are there voices that are not heard in this text? Whose voices are not heard in the text?
- d. Who has power within your/our community and how are they using it?
- e. How can young girls say no to sexual advances from people with power?
- f. Are there cultural or religious beliefs that prevent young people from accessing SRH information and services?

2. Genesis 38 Onan - Enhancing access to Youth friendly SRH services

Judah and Tamar

38 It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers, and turned into a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. ² There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; he married her and went in to her, ³ and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. ⁴ Again she conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. ⁵ Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. She^[a] was in Chezib when she bore him. ⁶ And Judah took a wife for Er his first-born, and her name was Tamar. ⁷ But Er, Judah's first-born, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. ⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife, and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." ⁹ But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother's wife he spilled the semen on the ground, lest he should give offspring to his brother. ¹⁰ And what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD, and he slew him also. ¹¹ Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah my son grows up"—for he feared that he would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

¹² In course of time the wife of Judah, Shua's daughter, died; and when Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. ¹³ And when Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," ¹⁴ she put off her widow's garments, and put on a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. ¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶ He went over to her at the roadside, and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" ¹⁷ He answered, "I will send you a kid from the flock." And she said, "Will you give me a pledge, till you send it?" ¹⁸ He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹ Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood.

²⁰ When Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand, he could not find her. ²¹ And he asked the men of the place, "Where is the harlot^[b] who was at Enaim by the wayside?" And they said, "No harlot^[c] has been here." ²² So he returned to Judah, and said, "I have not found her; and also the men of the place said, 'No harlot^[d] has been here.'" ²³ And Judah replied, "Let her keep the things as her own, lest we be laughed at; you see, I sent this kid, and you could not find her."

²⁴ About three months later Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; and moreover, she is with child by harlotry." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." ²⁵ As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong, I am with child." And she said, "Mark, I pray you, whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." ²⁶ Then Judah acknowledged them and said, "She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not lie with her again.

²⁷ When the time of her delivery came, there were twins in her womb. ²⁸ And when she was in labor, one put out a hand; and the midwife took and bound on his hand a scarlet thread, saying, "This came out first." ²⁹ But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out; and she

said, “What a breach you have made for yourself!” Therefore his name was called Perez.^[e] 30
Afterward his brother came out with the scarlet thread upon his hand; and his name was called Zerah.

Issues for analysis

Contraceptives, vulnerability, power imbalance, women’s agency (father in-law to daughter in-law relationships)

Questions

1. Who are the characters in the text and do they have power?
2. Why was Onan punished by God?
3. What methods of contraception do you know?
4. Are women and girls able to get contraceptives in your community? If yes, from where? If no, why not?
5. What are some reasons people might find it difficult to access contraceptives?
6. Do you think everyone has the same opportunities to access contraceptives?
7. Who should use contraceptives and why? How does the use of contraceptives give girls/women agency?
8. What cultural or religious factors could prevent access to contraceptives for young people?

3. Mark Chapter 5: 25 – 29 The woman with the issue of blood

25 And there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, **26** and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. **27** She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. **28** For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well.” **29** And immediately the hemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

Issues for Analysis

Menstrual health, uterine issues, access to SRH services, quality of SRH services

Questions

1. What is this text about?
2. What do we notice about the woman in the story?

3. What is your view on the quality of health services she received from the physicians?
4. What barriers did the woman in the text face in accessing healthcare services?
5. How would you describe the SRH services offered at the health centers in your communities?
6. What cultural or religious factors could prevent access to SRH services?

4. **John Chapter 8: 1 – 11 Woman caught in adultery.**

8 ¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² Early in the morning he came again to the temple; all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?” ⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus looked up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.”^[a]

Issues for analysis

Gender-based discrimination in sexual matters, threat of violence, rights violations against women

Questions

1. Who are the characters/people in this text and what does the text say about them?
2. What is our understanding of adultery?
3. How did the community treat the woman in the text?
4. How are women and girls treated in our/your communities?
5. What needs to be done to prevent such treatment of girls and women in our communities?
6. Why was the man who was found with the woman in the act not brought to Jesus?

7. Why was it necessary for the religious leaders (men) to task themselves with the duty of bringing the woman to face Jesus.
8. In what ways are religious and social cultural beliefs and practices used to marginalize women and girls in accessing SRHR services and speaking up against violence?
9. How can this story inform our understanding in addressing systemic marginalization within religious communities in SRHR discussions?
10. How does this story challenge societal attitudes towards judgement and punishment in cases related to SRHR issues?

5. **Genesis Chapter 34 - Dina (Josephine)**

The Rape of Dinah

34 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land; ² and when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humbled her. ³ And his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob; he loved the maiden and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this maiden for my wife.” ⁵ Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with his cattle in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came. ⁶ And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷ The sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard of it; and the men were indignant and very angry, because he had wrought folly in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.

⁸ But Hamor spoke with them, saying, “The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; I pray you, give her to him in marriage. ⁹ Make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ You shall dwell with us; and the land shall be open to you; dwell and trade in it and get property in it.” ¹¹ Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, “Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. ¹² Ask of me ever so much as marriage present and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; only give me the maiden to be my wife.”

¹³ The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. ¹⁴ They said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is

uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. ¹⁵ Only on this condition will we consent to you: that you will become as we are and every male of you be circumcised. ¹⁶ Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people. ¹⁷ But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone.”

¹⁸ Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor’s son Shechem. ¹⁹ And the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob’s daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his family. ²⁰ So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, ²¹ “These men are friendly with us; let them dwell in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them; let us take their daughters in marriage, and let us give them our daughters. ²² Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. ²³ Will not their cattle, their property and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will dwell with us.” ²⁴ And all who went out of the gate of his city hearkened to Hamor and his son Shechem; and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city. ²⁵ On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and came upon the city unawares, and killed all the males. ²⁶ They slew Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem’s house, and went away. ²⁷ And the sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled; ²⁸ they took their flocks and their herds, their asses, and whatever was in the city and in the field; ²⁹ all their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and made their prey. ³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Per’izzites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.” ³¹ But they said, “Should he treat our sister as a harlot?”

Issues for Analysis

Boy/girl Relationships, sexual violence, consent, female agency

Questions

1. Who are the characters in this story?
2. How did they respond to Shechem raping Dinah?
3. Do we know any 'Dinahs' in our communities?
4. How do people respond to rape cases in our communities?
5. How do churches respond to rape cases within the church or in the communities?
6. What should the community do to prevent such cases?

6. 2 Samuel 9: 1 – 11 Mephibosheth- Disability Rights and Inclusion

David's Kindness to Mephibosheth

9 And David said, "Is there still any one left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" ² Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David; and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "Your servant is he." ³ And the king said, "Is there not still someone in the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet." ⁴ The king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Am'miel, at Lo-debar." ⁵ Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Am'miel, at Lo-debar. ⁶ And Mephib'osheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David, and fell on his face and did obeisance. And David said, "Mephib'osheth!" And he answered, "Behold, your servant." ⁷ And David said to him, "Do not fear; for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father; and you shall eat at my table always." ⁸ And he did obeisance, and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon a dead dog such as I?"

⁹ Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's son. ¹⁰ And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him, and shall bring in the produce, that your master's son may have bread to eat; but Mephib'osheth your master's son shall always eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. ¹¹ Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do." So Mephib'osheth ate at David's^[a] table, like one of the king's sons.

Issues for analysis

Disability and SRHR, lack of disability representation in SRHR

Questions

1. Who do you think is the main character in this text and why?
2. Are there any people like 'Mephibosheth' in our communities?
3. How are people like Mephibosheth treated in our communities?
4. What needs to be done to support people like Mephibosheth?
5. What cultural views are prevalent in our communities regarding persons with disabilities and SRHR?
6. Does this text give a positive or negative view of persons with disabilities?