

# From Subordination to Equality in Christ

A Biblical & Sociological Perspective  
on Gender-based Discrimination



By Annick M. Brennen, M.A.  
Nassau, The Bahamas  
November 2011

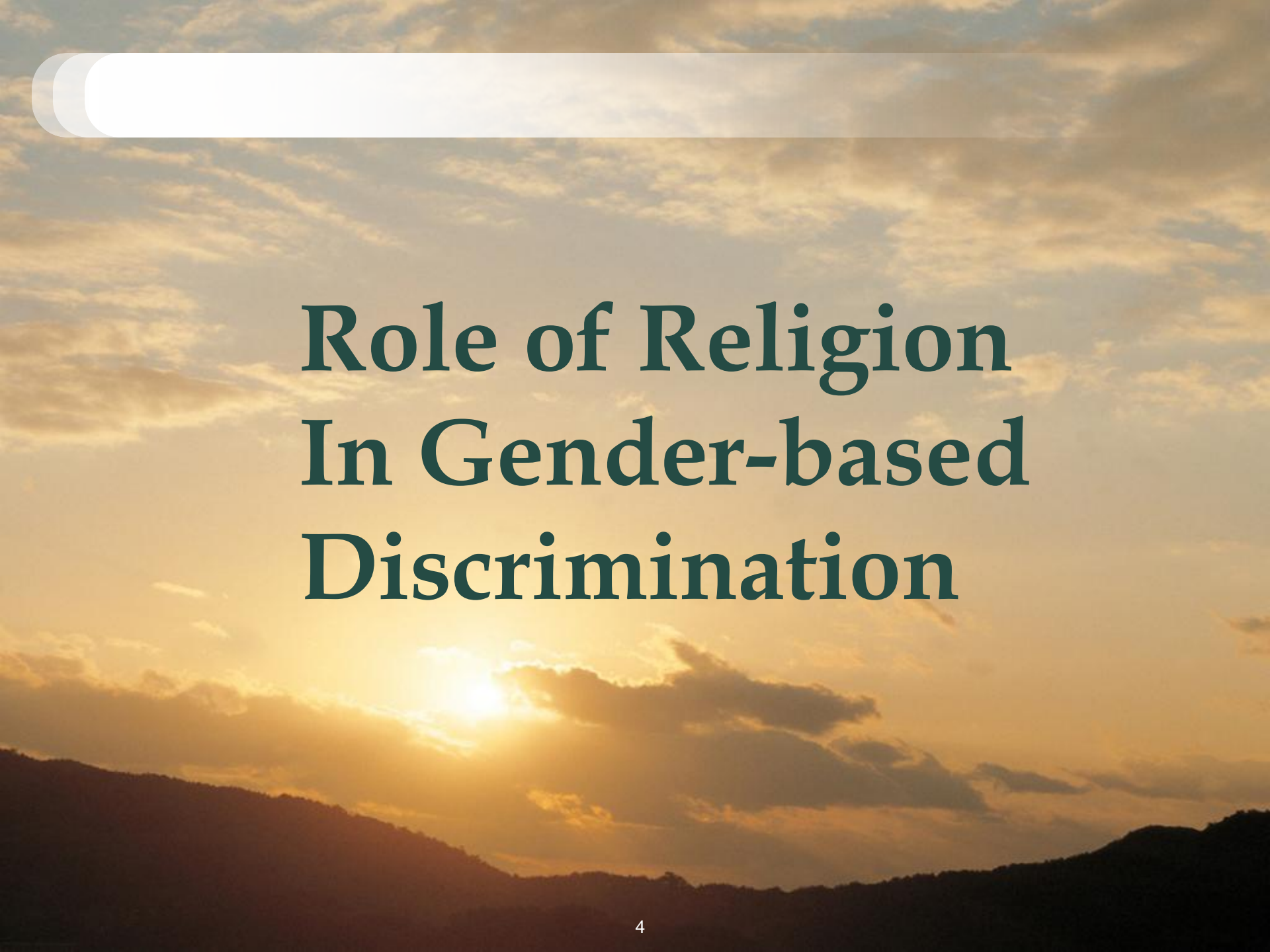


My Contribution

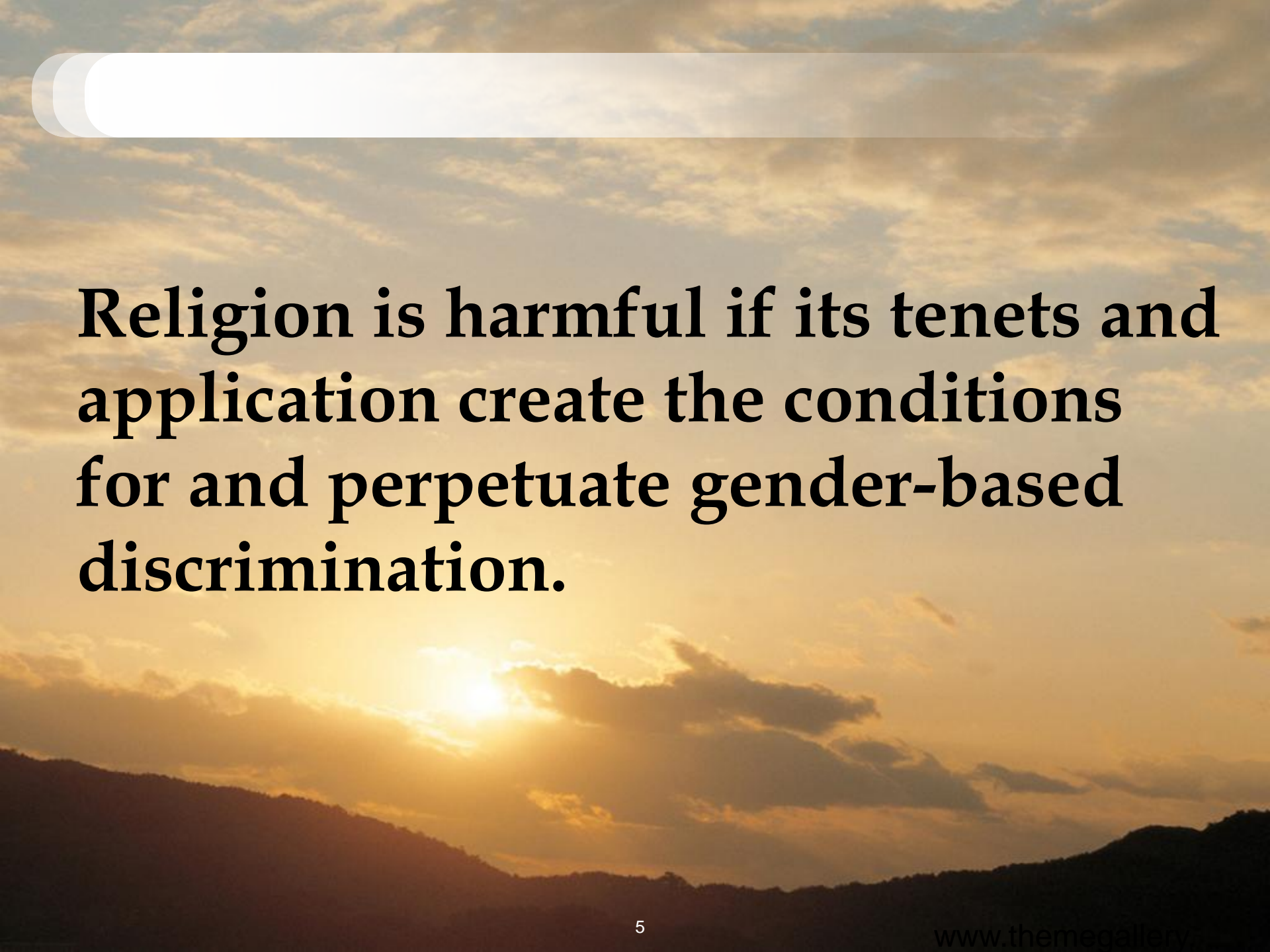
# **November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women**

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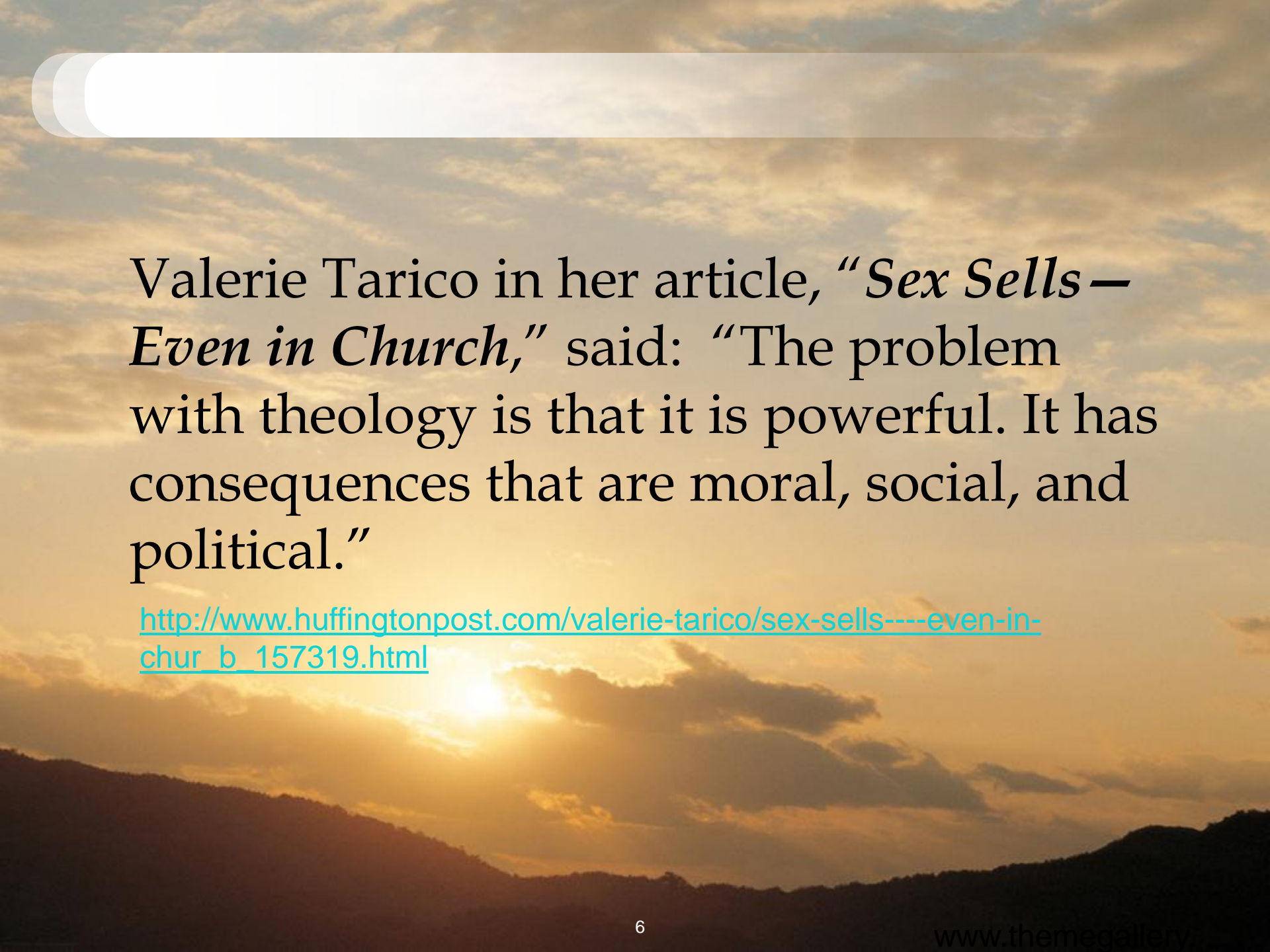
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# **Role of Religion In Gender-based Discrimination**

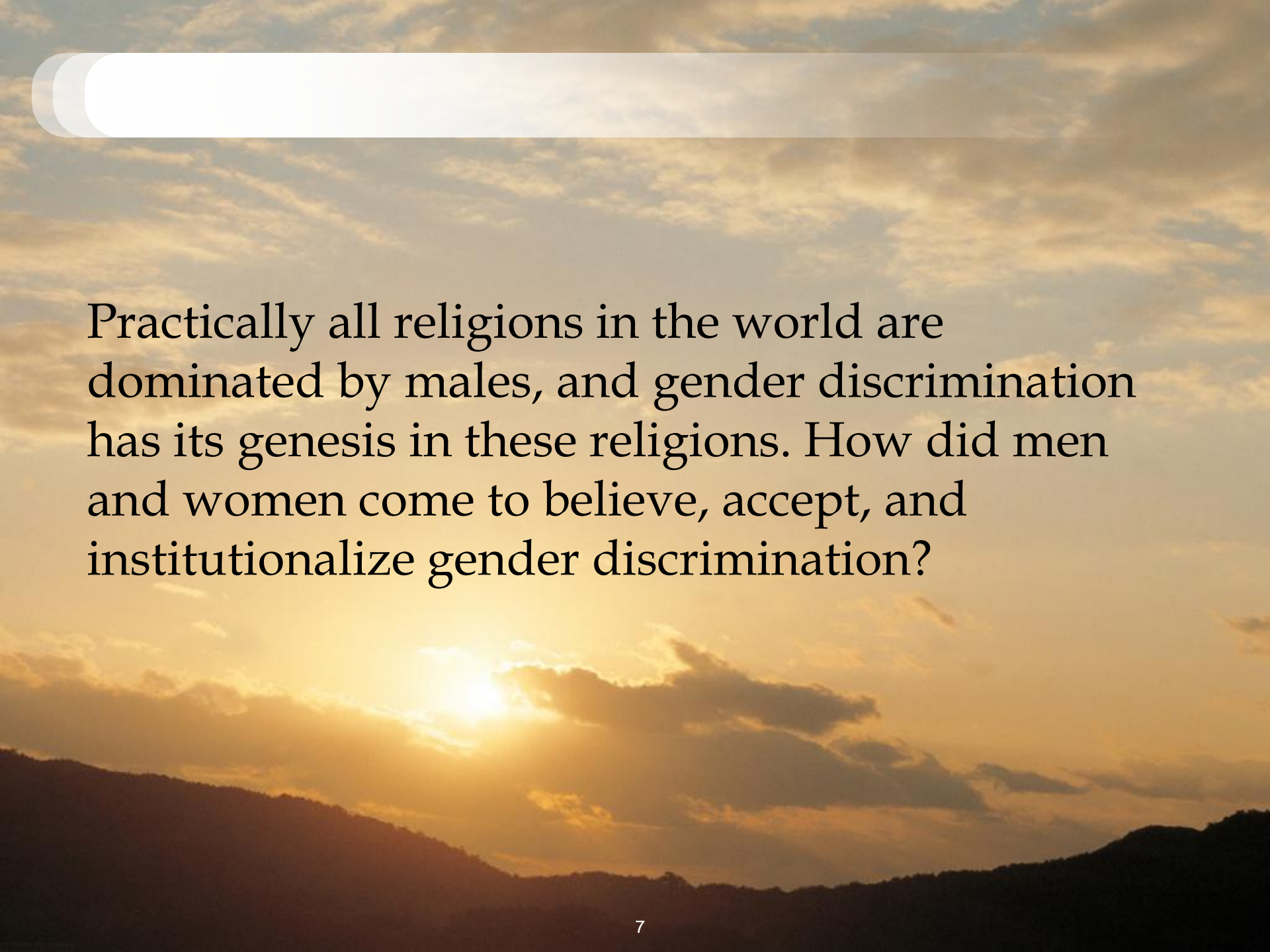
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**Religion is harmful if its tenets and application create the conditions for and perpetuate gender-based discrimination.**

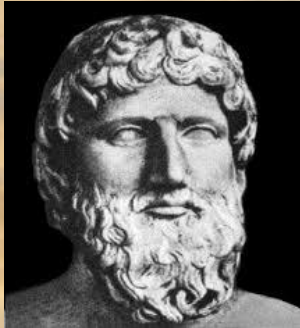
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Valerie Tarico in her article, *“Sex Sells – Even in Church,”* said: “The problem with theology is that it is powerful. It has consequences that are moral, social, and political.”

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/valerie-tarico/sex-sells----even-in-chur\\_b\\_157319.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/valerie-tarico/sex-sells----even-in-chur_b_157319.html)

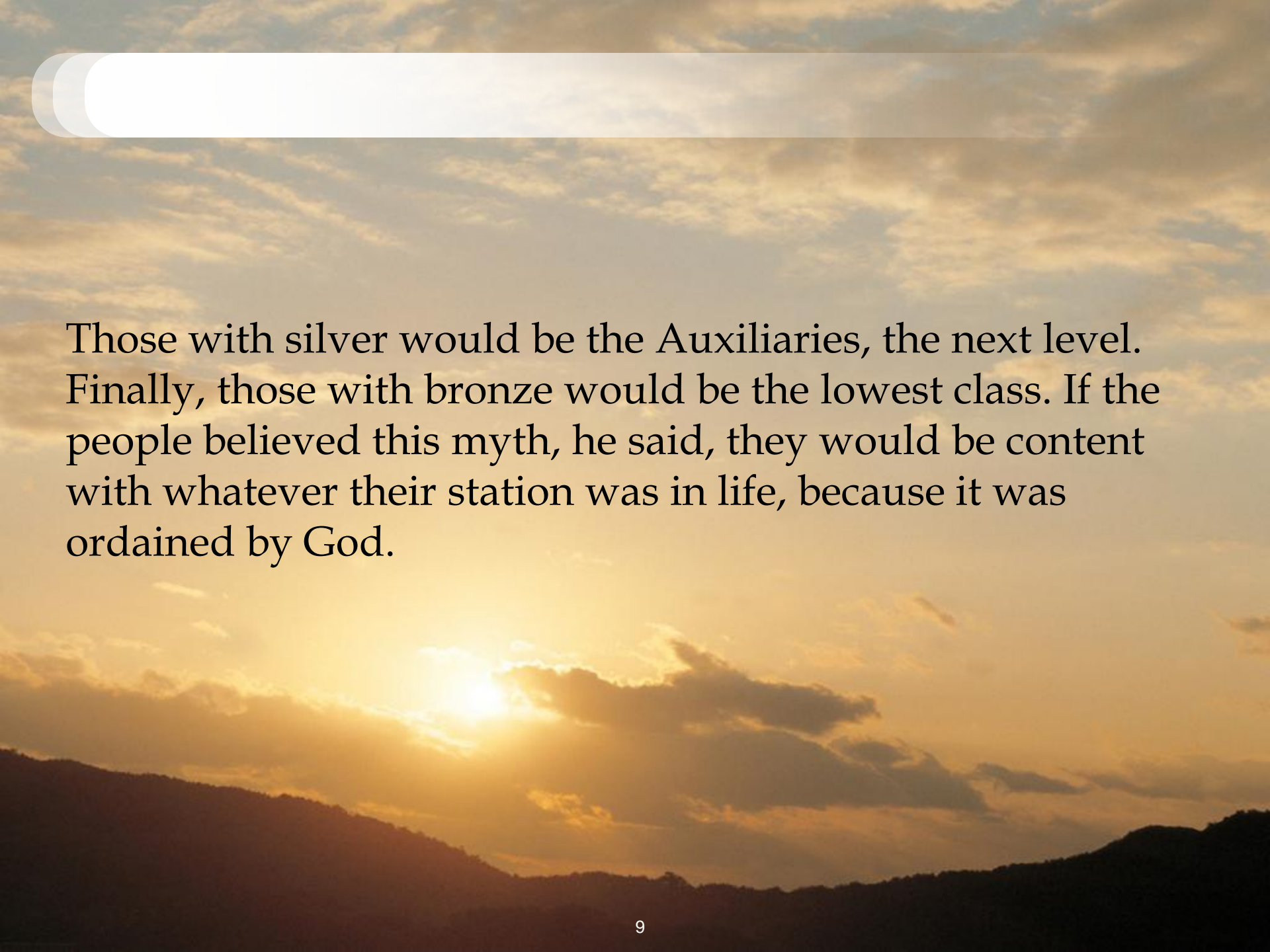
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Practically all religions in the world are dominated by males, and gender discrimination has its genesis in these religions. How did men and women come to believe, accept, and institutionalize gender discrimination?

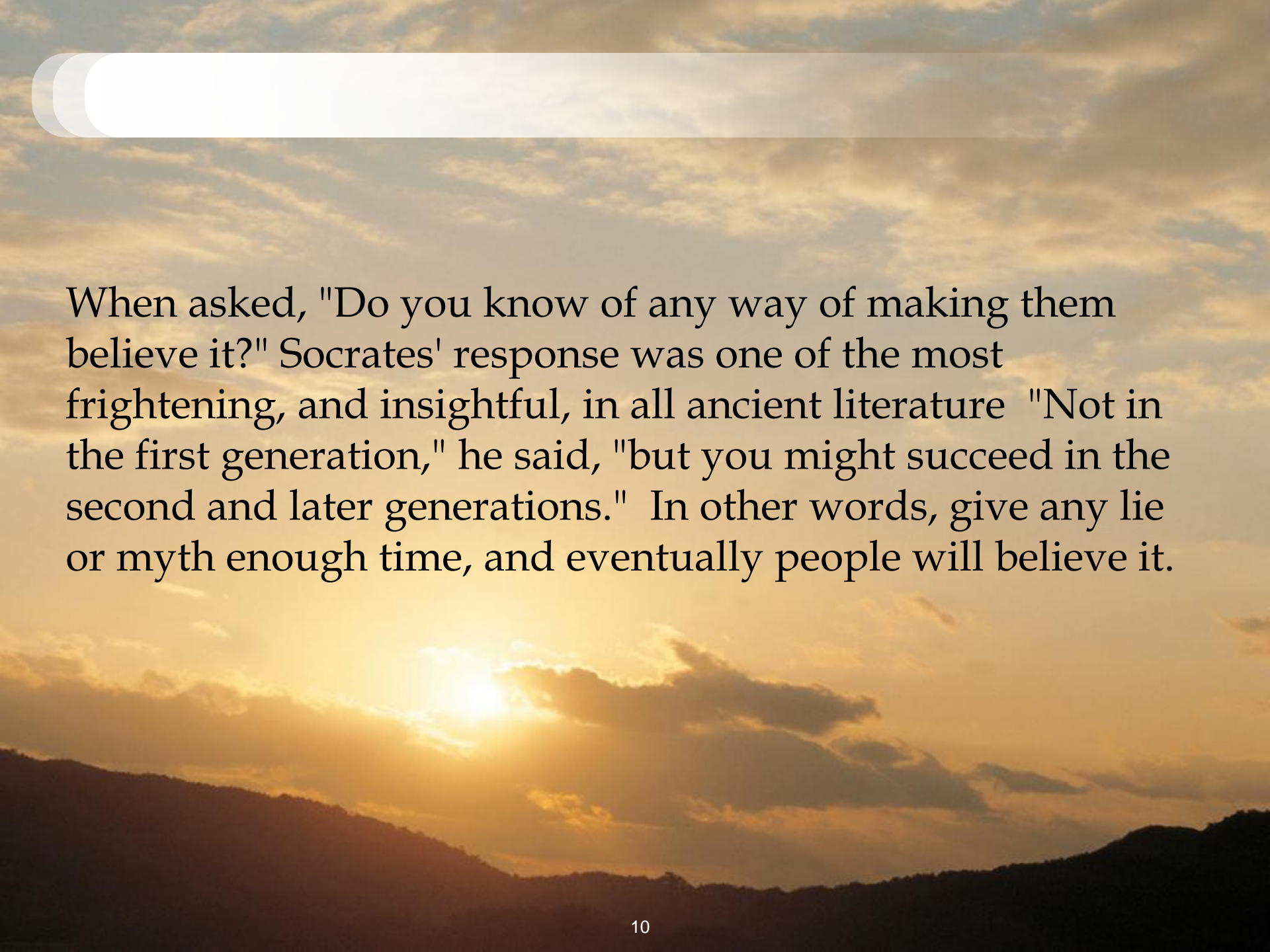


Plato, in his Republic, helps give an answer. In this book, Socrates recounts the "magnificent myth," a tale that would help the people accept whatever their social status happens to be. The myth went like this: When God created people, He created some with gold in them, some with silver, and some with bronze. Those with gold were to be the Guardians, the highest political and social level in the nation.



A sunset over a mountain range with a white decorative bar at the top. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the clouds and the dark silhouettes of the mountains. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds, and the overall atmosphere is serene and peaceful.


Those with silver would be the Auxiliaries, the next level. Finally, those with bronze would be the lowest class. If the people believed this myth, he said, they would be content with whatever their station was in life, because it was ordained by God.

A sunset over a mountain range with a white decorative bar at the top.

When asked, "Do you know of any way of making them believe it?" Socrates' response was one of the most frightening, and insightful, in all ancient literature "Not in the first generation," he said, "but you might succeed in the second and later generations." In other words, give any lie or myth enough time, and eventually people will believe it.



**The lie is exposed in Section 4 of this presentation.**



There is a preponderance of evidence that religion has and continues to be the main agency in normalizing customs that devalue women, place them in a subordinate relationship to men (in and out of marriage), and create an environment for the perpetration of discrimination and violence against them.

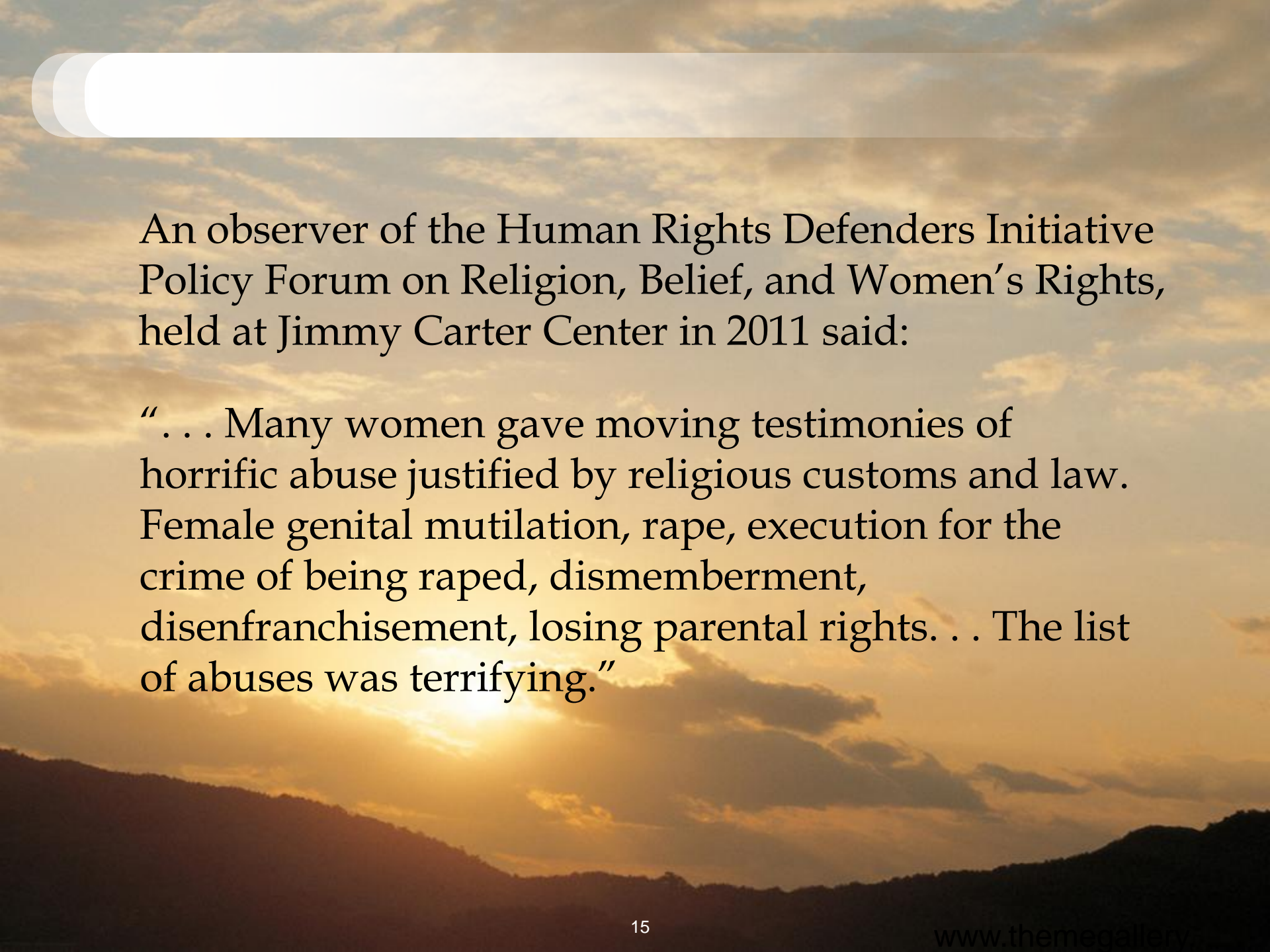
The World Alliance of Reformed Churches & St Paul's United Theological College Consultation on Gender addressed this issue at its Power and Leadership Jumua Conference Centre, Limuru, Kenya, June 29 to July 4, 2007.

“The challenge still remains for women to be included as equal partners in the church – at the local and national levels and also in the mainstream of ecclesiastical affairs. This situation exists in every region of the world – Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, North America, the Middle East and the Pacific. Many churches (including at the regional and international ecumenical levels) have failed to address gender, power and leadership in prophetic ways because this is deemed as a ‘dangerous issue’ which can have negative effects on church unity. Yet avoiding or hesitating to deal with this issue results in the continuous marginalization and dehumanization of women.”

*World Alliance of Reformed Churches & St Paul's United Theological  
College Consultation on Gender, Power and Leadership  
Jumuia Conference Centre, Limuru, Kenya, June 29 to July 4, 2007*

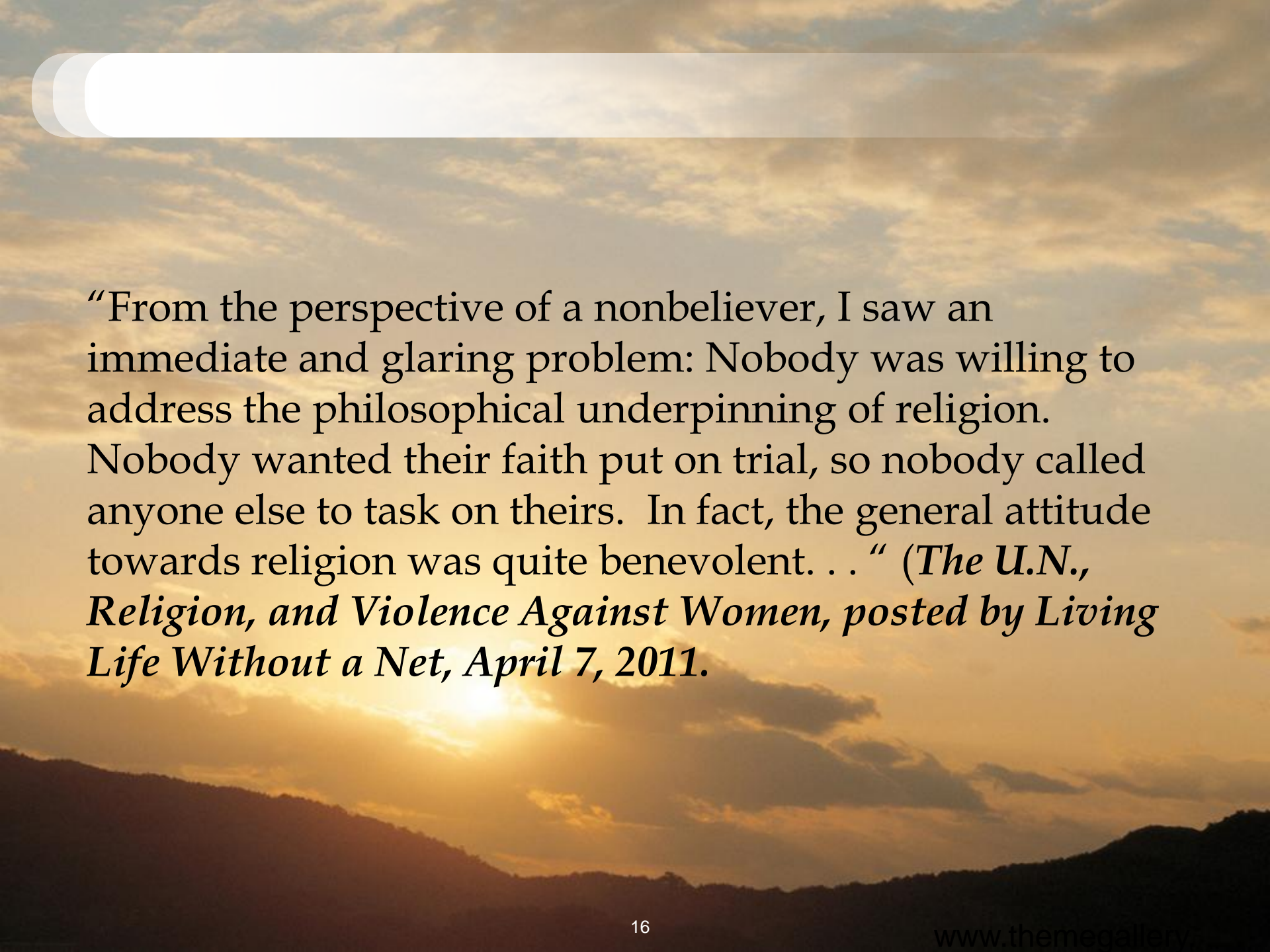


Barrington Brennen, counseling psychologist, and former director of psychoeducation at Safe Shelter Inc, Michigan, found that “all men who indicated they were Christians at the time of their assessment interview for treatment for abusive behavior revealed that the abuse started or severely escalated after they became Christian.”

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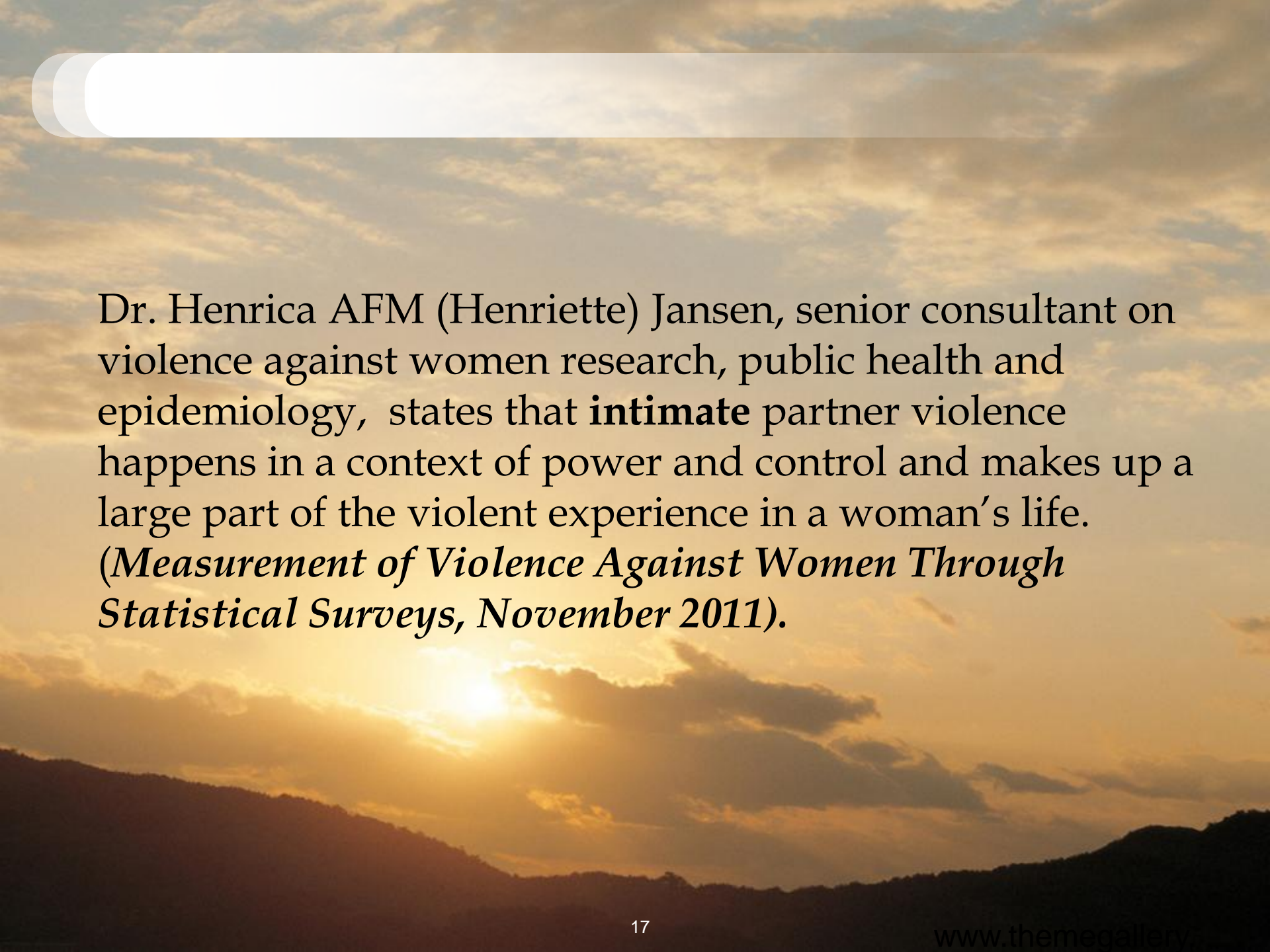
An observer of the Human Rights Defenders Initiative Policy Forum on Religion, Belief, and Women's Rights, held at Jimmy Carter Center in 2011 said:

“... Many women gave moving testimonies of horrific abuse justified by religious customs and law. Female genital mutilation, rape, execution for the crime of being raped, dismemberment, disenfranchisement, losing parental rights... The list of abuses was terrifying.”

A sunset over a mountain range with a white decorative bar at the top.

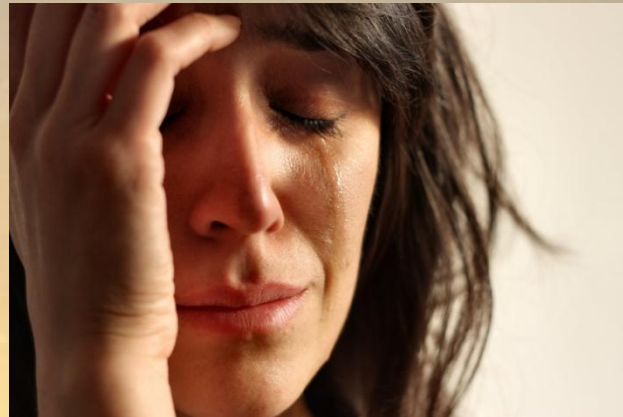
“From the perspective of a nonbeliever, I saw an immediate and glaring problem: Nobody was willing to address the philosophical underpinning of religion. Nobody wanted their faith put on trial, so nobody called anyone else to task on theirs. In fact, the general attitude towards religion was quite benevolent. . . .” (*The U.N., Religion, and Violence Against Women, posted by Living Life Without a Net, April 7, 2011.*)





Dr. Henrica AFM (Henriette) Jansen, senior consultant on violence against women research, public health and epidemiology, states that **intimate** partner violence happens in a context of power and control and makes up a large part of the violent experience in a woman's life. (*Measurement of Violence Against Women Through Statistical Surveys, November 2011*).

Where it hurts women the most



# **Intimate Partner Abuse: Where Power and Control is at Work.**

# Intimate Partner Abuse

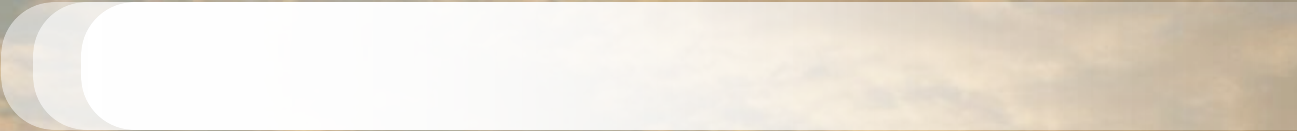
- ❖ In an article titled, *“Prevalence of intimate partner abuse: findings from the Who multi-country study on women’s health and domestic violence,”* Claudia Garcia Morena, Henrica AFM Jansen, Mary Ellsberg, Lori Heise, Charlotte H. Watts stated:
  - A review of over 50 population-based studies in 35 countries before 1999 indicated that between 10% and 52% of women from around the world report that they had been physically abused by an intimate partner at some point in their lives
  - Between 10% and 30% indicated that they had experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner

# Intimate Partner Abuse

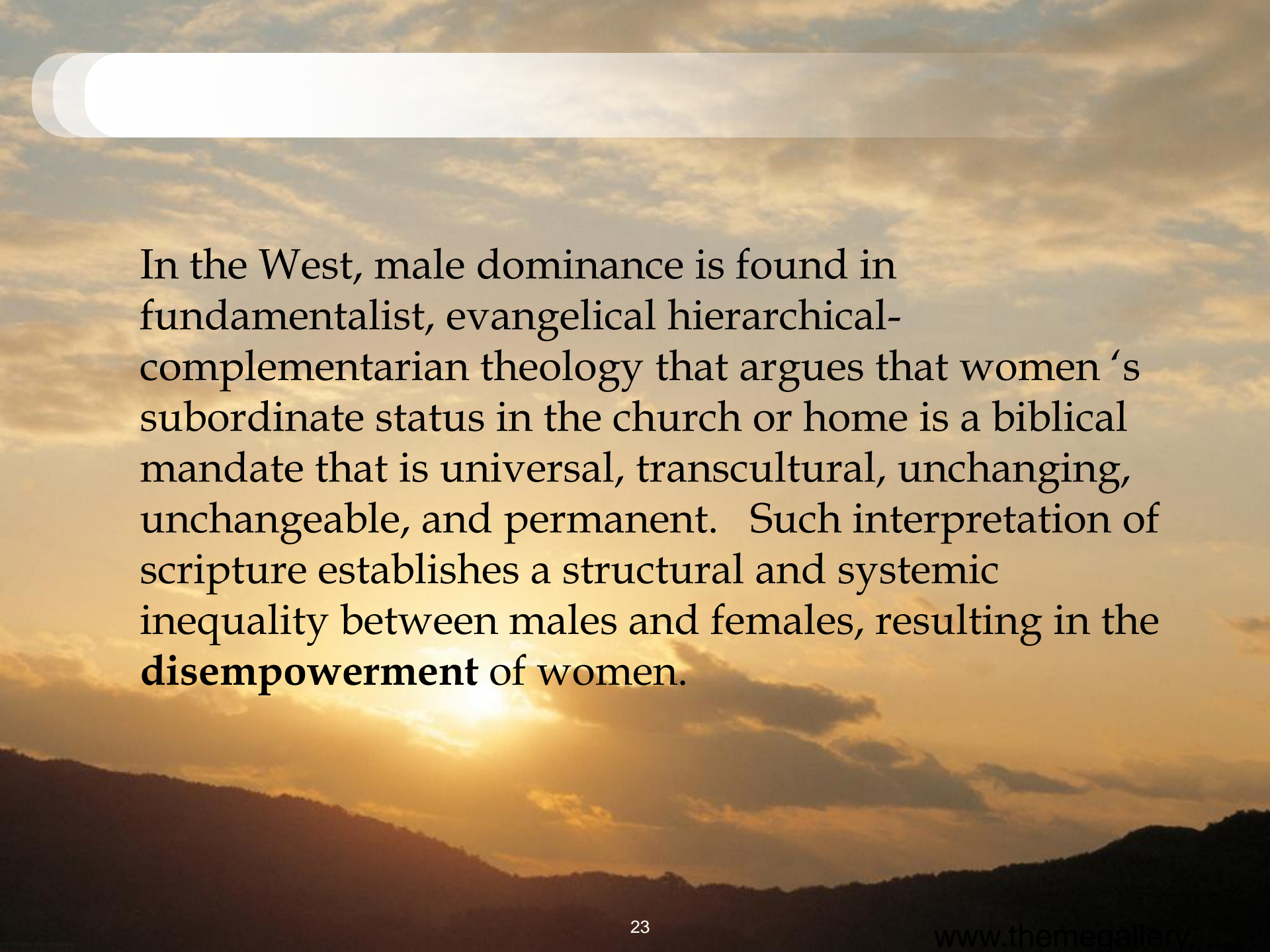
- ❖ In the same afore-mentioned article, the researchers report findings of the WHO multi-country population-based survey which was conducted between 2000 and 2003 in 15 sites in 10 study countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Peru, Thailand, the United Republic of Tanzania, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia and Serbia, Montenegro, and Samoa. The study revealed that:
  - Much abuse in the developing world is conceptualized as **discipline** or **chastisement** [power/control issue]
  - Across the study sites in the WHO study, between 15% and 71% of ever-partnered women reported physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner at some point in their lives

# Intimate Partner Abuse

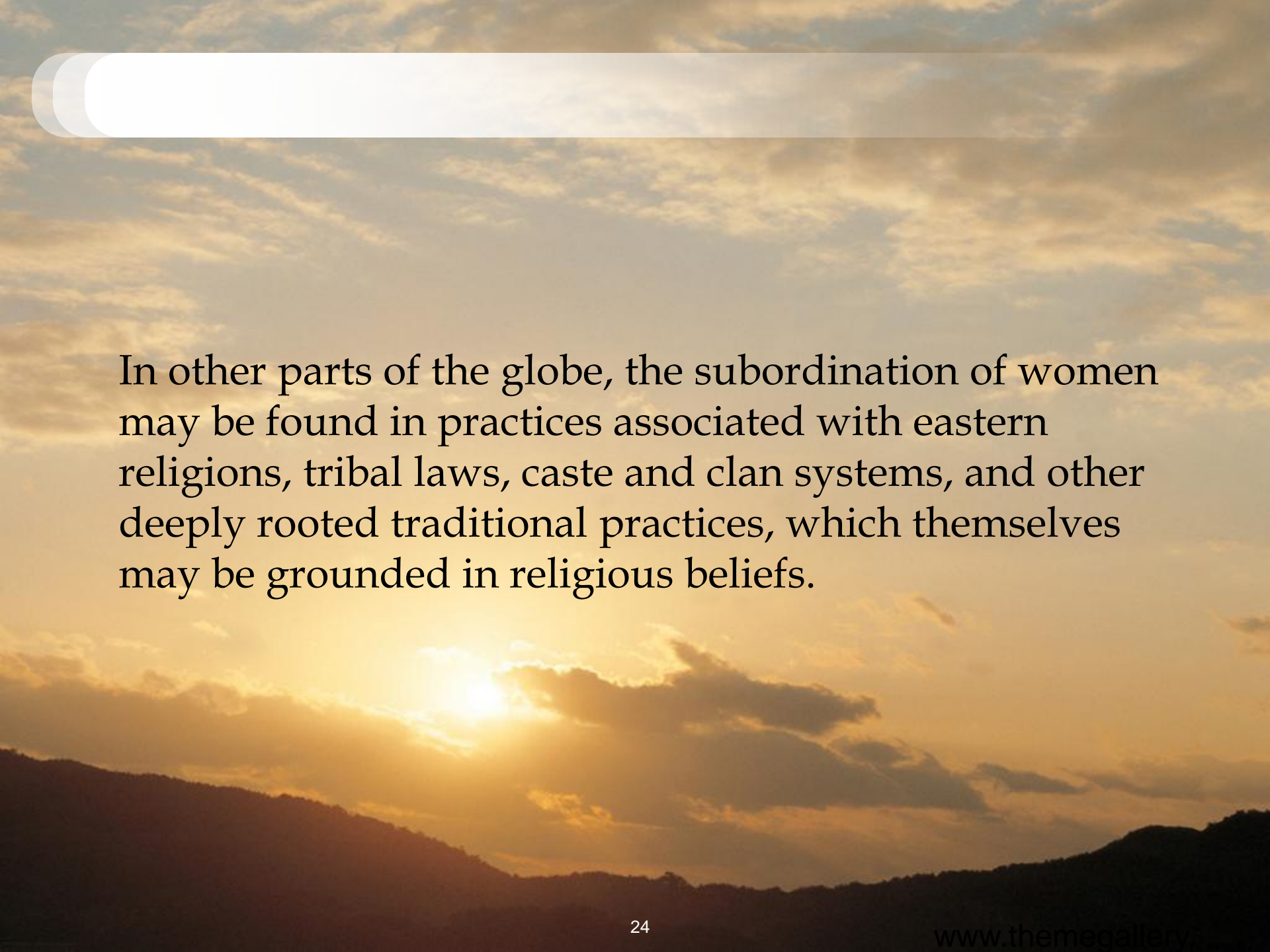
- ❖ In the afore-mentioned WHO multi-country population-based survey, the study also revealed that:
  - Between 4% and 54% of women reported physical or sexual violence, or both, by partner within the 12 months before the study
  - A large proportion of the violence is severe, and happens frequently
  - The pattern of violence might be different in settings of **high violence** and **low empowerment of women**
  - The prevalence of partner violence was much **lower** in **more industrialized sites** [where women empowerment is greater]



Scriptural interpretation that promotes (intentionally or unknowingly) male dominance, skews the balance of power in men's favor, limits women's decision making power, restricts their development, places obstacles in their mobility, undermines their emotional well-being and health, reduces their economic potential through discriminatory practices (in and out of marriage), constitutes a violation of human rights. Such scriptural interpretation is immoral, unethical, and unjust. It should be denounced and rejected.

A sunset over a mountain range with a white decorative bar at the top.

In the West, male dominance is found in fundamentalist, evangelical hierarchical-complementarian theology that argues that women's subordinate status in the church or home is a biblical mandate that is universal, transcultural, unchanging, unchangeable, and permanent. Such interpretation of scripture establishes a structural and systemic inequality between males and females, resulting in the **disempowerment** of women.

A sunset scene with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over a range of dark mountains. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds. At the top of the image, there is a white decorative bar with rounded ends and a slight shadow effect.

In other parts of the globe, the subordination of women may be found in practices associated with eastern religions, tribal laws, caste and clan systems, and other deeply rooted traditional practices, which themselves may be grounded in religious beliefs.



# Religious-based Discrimination Scenario

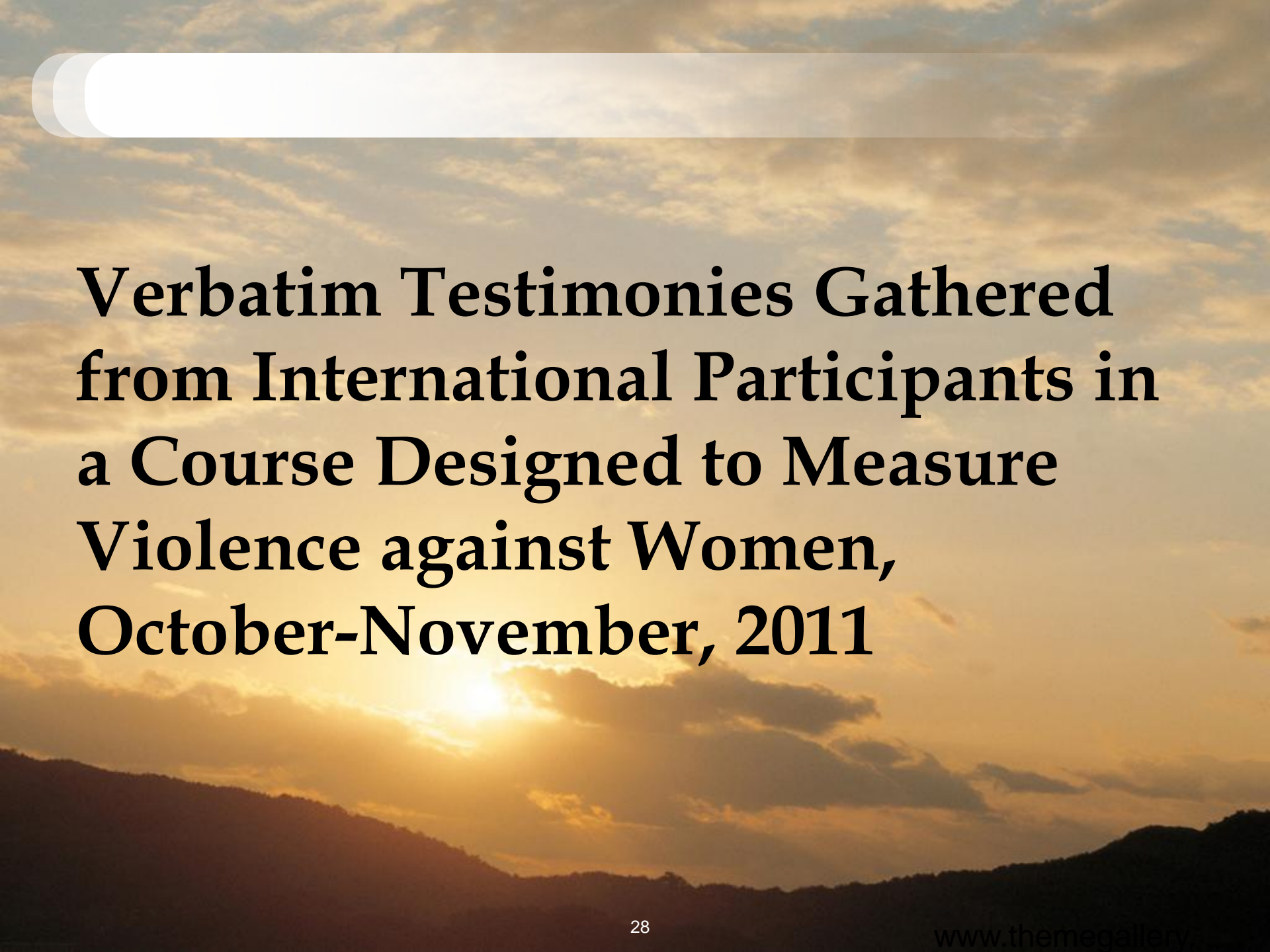
Justina works at Tots Day Care Center. Tots is run by a **religious organization** that believes that, while women may work outside of the home if they are single or have their husband's permission, men should be the heads of their households and the primary providers for their families. Believing that men shoulder a greater financial responsibility than women, the organization **pays female teachers less than male teachers**. The organization's practice of unequal pay based on sex constitutes unlawful discrimination. (*EEOC Manual, Chapter 12, p. 10*)

# Seventh-day Adventist Case

- ❖ For decades, the Seventh-day Adventist Church systematically practiced gender discrimination.
  - Church leadership positions were restricted to males.
  - In all its institutions, married and single women were denied the same compensation benefits as men because they (men) were considered “heads of household.”
  - The landmark case of Silver and Tobler vs. the Pacific Press Publishing Association forced the Church to redress its violation of Title VII.
  - Up to now, the Church denies ordination to qualified women who believe that God called them to the Gospel Ministry.
  - A 2000 survey reveals a high prevalence of intimate abuse among its married members in North America (61% psychological violence). The divorce rate is also high.
  - In spite of civil rights victory, the Church still practices segregation through its Black and White conferences in North America.

# Pacific Press vs Silver & Tobler

- ❖ December 28, 1979, U.S. District Judge in San Francisco ruled that the Pacific Press Publishing Association owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church was guilty of discrimination against its female employees and that First Amendment guarantees of religious freedom did not mean the Press could violate federal equal rights laws.
- ❖ **Summary of the Cases**
  - The Seventh-day Adventist Church was denying its female employees the same compensation given to married men on the basis that men were “heads of household.”
  - Merikay Silver and Lorna Tobler were the first two employees who charged the Press with such discrimination.
  - The Department of Labor and the EEOC filed suits on their behalf.

A sunset over a mountain range with a white decorative bar at the top.

**Verbatim Testimonies Gathered  
from International Participants in  
a Course Designed to Measure  
Violence against Women,  
October-November, 2011**

# Arab Countries

“ . . . in some countries where women work, when it comes to buying a property it is not acceptable to be registered in her name or even as a co-share, usually homes land and cars are registered in the name of husbands or fathers, although she contributed or may be even paid it all, the statistics in some Arab countries shows that percentage of women who owns land, houses is very low.”

# South Africa

In South Africa, rape is so prevalent that “. . . some institutions give women a security briefing which literally encourage them not to resist if they are being assaulted, in an attempt to save their lives. Furthermore, women are expected to hand a condom to their perpetrators to avoid being infected by any STI especially HIV.”

**79 % Christian, 1.5% Muslim, 18.8 % other/unspecified**

# Italy

“Italian survey conducted in 2006 by the National Institute of Statistics, shows that 96 percent of women who have undergone some [form] of violence has not reported the incident or has not spoken to any one, even with a friend.”

**90 % Roman Catholic, 10% Protestant and Jewish**

# Egypt

‘In Egypt . . . due to old traditions and norms that lead to complete silence in the sexual life and talking about it to be considered a crime. Victim’s complete denial and fear of social stigma to protect her child.’

**90 % Muslim, 9 % Coptic, 1% other Christian**



# Senegal

“In Senegal, . . . women are all the time afraid to talk about her sexual life. And more when you get married, to join your husband, your mum will give you some advise. And one of them is that whenever he ask you sex you should give him. This mean you should never say (no sex today). So you can just guess that one day he can force you and you will never talk about it. Sometimes, if he’s Muslim you know that he can take four wives and in this case the man stays in each of them two days. When receiving him, you may be forced. You will just keep silent.”

**94 % Muslim, 5 % Christian, 1 % Indigenous beliefs**

# Morocco

In Morocco, “It is socially accepted that the husband decides what his wife and daughters wear.”

**98.7 % Muslim, 1.1 % Christian, 0.2 % Jewish**

# Lebanon

In Lebanon, “. . . women are all the time afraid from disclosing information about their intimate life, and this is due to the fear from the shame and dishonor from divulging information [about] her sexual life, because she won't be tolerated neither by her family nor by the society and the environment where she lives in. . for the Lebanese society she will always be a “blamed victim,” especially when a woman was abused by a member of her family, the father or the brother or any relative. . or from an intimate partner. . although that in a multicultural society as Lebanon, the “incest” is prohibited by all religions, and it's a crime, but from the other side, if a woman was raped, the perpetrator according to Lebanese Law is allowed to marry her if she's single in order to save her honor.”

**59.7 % Muslim, 39 % Christian, 1.3 % Other**

# Sudan

“The mass rape and abuse of women is a widespread and systematic tool used in ethnic conflict areas of Sudan.”

**70 % Muslim, 5 % Christian, 25 % Indigenous beliefs**

# Trinidad & Tobago

“In Trinidad and Tobago sexual violence usually takes the form of incest.”

**57.6 % Christian, 22.5 % Hindu, 10.8 % Other, 3.3 %  
Unspecified/None**

# Belize

“In Belize, the term sweetheart is synonymous with ‘mistress.’ I make the point because some women in Belize have grown to tolerate their husband having a mistress. I know of women who have spent most of their married life sharing their husbands with another woman. . .”

**76.6 % Christian, 14 % Other, 9.4 % None**

# India and Somalia

“ . . . in contexts of clan (e.g. Somalia) and class (e.g. India), psychological violence is readily leveraged by the perpetrator who knows the full weight of the clan or class system will discourage the ‘survivor’ from seeking help.”

**India: 80.5 % Hindu, 13.4 %, Muslim, 2.3 % Christian, 1.9 % Sikh, 1.9 % Unspecified/Other**  
**Somalia: Sunni Muslim**

# Women and Poverty

“According to some estimates, women represent 70 percent of the world’s poor. They are often paid less than men for their work, with the average wage gap in 2008 being 17 percent. Women face persistent discrimination when they apply for credit for business or self-employment and are often concentrated in insecure, unsafe and low-wage work. Eight out of ten women workers are considered to be in vulnerable employment in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, with global economic changes taking a huge toll on their livelihoods.”

[http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_poverty\\_economics/](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/)



# Women and Poverty

“Women bear a disproportionate burden of the world’s poverty. Statistics indicate that women are more likely than men to be **poor** and **at risk of hunger** because of the **systematic discrimination** they face in **education, health care, employment and control of assets**. Poverty implications are widespread for women, leaving many without even basic rights such as access to clean drinking water, sanitation, medical care and decent employment. Being poor can also mean they have little protection from violence and have no role in decision making.”

[http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_poverty\\_economics/](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/)

# Women and Poverty

According to the 2011 Labour Force Survey report disseminated by the Department of Statistics of the Government of The Bahamas (a so-called “Christian nation”):

“The average household income for households headed by women, \$31,109, continued to be lower than that of households headed by men, \$43,147. In other words, for every \$1 earned by households headed by men, households headed by women earned only 72 cents. Households headed by women accounted for one-third of the total aggregate household income in 2011.”

# Women, Land, and Property Rights

“In many countries around the world, women’s property rights are limited by social norms, customs and at times legislation, hampering their economic status and opportunities to overcome poverty. Even in countries where women constitute the majority of small farmers and do more than 75 percent of the agricultural work, they are routinely denied the right to own the land they cultivate and on which they are dependent to raise their families.”

[http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_poverty\\_economics/land\\_property\\_rights.php](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/land_property_rights.php)



# Equality in Scripture

**Taking down the pillars supporting female subordination**



Source:

*Women in Ministry, Biblical & Historical Perspectives, Special Committee, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Editor, Nancy Vyhmeister, 1998, Andrews University Press.*

# Equality before the fall

# Creation

- ❖ “So God created man [humankind] in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”
  - Adam and Eve are paired equally
  - There is no hint of ontological or functional superiority/inferiority or headship/submission between male and female (Read this article: [Ontological Equality Hierarchy and Functional Subordination.pdf](#))
  - Adam and Eve are “equally immediate to the Creator and His act.”
  - Both are given the same dominion over the earth and other living creatures (vv. 26 and 28)
  - Both share alike in the blessing and responsibility of procreation (vv. 29-30)
  - Both participate equally in the image of God (*Special Committee*, p. 260)

# Chronology of Male & Female Creation

- ❖ That Adam was created first does not mean that he is superior to Eve. This is a false premise. The literary structure of the original Hebrew text does not support this view.
  - In Genesis 2, the author uses a Hebrew literature an *inclusio* or “ring construction” device in which the points of central concern to a unit are placed at the beginning and end of the unit.
  - The creation of man at the beginning of the narrative and that of woman at the end correspond to each other in importance
  - The author used precisely the same number of words in Hebrew to describe the creation of man and woman, thus underscoring their equal importance
  - The movement in Genesis 2, is not from superior to inferior, but from **incompleteness to completeness**
  - Woman is created as the climax of the culmination of the story. She is the crowning work of creation. (**Special Committee**, p. 261)

## Adam's priority in speaking and being spoken to in Genesis

- ❖ “. . . these points fail to take into account the movement of the narrative from incompleteness to completeness and climax, as noted above. As part of the process of bringing Adam to realize his “hunger for wholeness,” his need for a partner, God speaks to Adam, warning him not to eat of the forbidden tree. Such information was crucial for the human being to avoid transgression and to be a free moral agent with the power of choice.”  
(*Special Committee*, p. 261)



# Use of “helper” in Genesis 2:18

- ❖ The original Hebrew word does not imply a subordinate position.
  - In English, the word “helper” tends to suggest an assistant, a subordinate, an inferior. A better translation would be “partner.”
  - In Hebrew, it describes a superior helper – God himself as the “helper” of Israel. It is used 17 times in reference to God.
  - Helper is a **relational** term, describing a beneficial relationship
  - In itself does not specify position or rank, either superiority or inferiority
  - The specific position intended is gleaned from the words “*neged*” used in combination with the word “*ezer*” used in the immediate context. These terms used in combination indicate no less than equality: Eve is Adam’s “benefactor/helper,” one who in position is “corresponding to him,” “his counterpart, his complement.”
  - Eve is “a power equal to man”; she is Adam’s partner. (Special Committee, p. 262)

# “Woman came out of man”

- ❖ No subordination can be interpreted from God’s act of woman’s creation.
  - Derivation does not imply subordination. Adam also was “derived” from the ground, yet we are not to conclude that the ground was his superior
  - Woman is **not** Adam’s rib. The raw material, not woman was taken out of man, just as the raw material of man was “taken” out of the ground (Gen 3:19)
  - The verb, *bnh*, “to build,” used in the Creation account for the formation of Eve, “suggests an aesthetic intent and connotes the idea of **reliability** and **permanence**”
  - That the man was asleep while God created woman, allows him **no claim** to be her superior or head (*Special Committee*, p. 263)

# “Woman created from man’s rib”

- ❖ No patriarchal hierarchy can be interpreted from this symbolism.
  - The very symbolism of the rib points to equality.
  - By “building” Eve from one of Adam’s ribs, God appears to be indicating the “mutual relationship,” the “singleness of life,” the “inseparable unity in which man and woman are joined.
  - The rib means **solidarity** and **equality**.
  - This interpretation is further confirmed by the man’s poetic exclamation when he sees the woman for the first time (v.23): “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!” This phrase indicates a person “as close as one’s own body.” It denotes **physical oneness** and a “commonality of concern, loyalty, and responsibility,” but does not lead to the notion of woman’s subordination or submission to man (*Special Committee*, p. 263)

# “Man named woman”

- ❖ In the Creation account, the man naming the woman does not imply power, authority, and superiority over her, although it does sometimes in Scripture.
  - The word “woman” in Genesis 2:23 is not a personal name, but only a generic identification. This is verified in v. 24, which indicates that a man is to cleave to his “wife,” and further substantiated in Gen 3:20, which explicitly records the man’s naming of Eve only after the Fall.
  - According to Jacques Doukhan, Gen 2:23 contains a pairing of “divine passives,” indicating that the designation of “woman” comes **from** God, not man. Just as woman “was taken out of man” by God, with which the man had nothing to do, so she “shall be called “woman” a designation originating in God and not man

# “Man named woman”

- ❖ In the Creation account, the man naming the woman does not imply power, authority, and superiority over her, although it does sometimes in Scripture.
  - The wordplay in v. 23 between man and woman and the explanation of the woman being taken out of man are not given to buttress a hierarchical view of the sexes, but rather to underscore man’s joyous recognition of “his second self.”

A sunset scene with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over a range of dark mountains. The sky is filled with scattered, light-colored clouds. At the top of the image, there is a white decorative bar with rounded ends and a slight shadow effect.

# Equality after the fall

# Equality after the Fall within the Marriage Relationship

- ❖ The Special Committee has studied and identified **five major views** in the history of scriptural interpretation. Two of these views maintain that the subordination of woman is a Creation ordinance. These two views are fallacious; therefore, they are excluded in this presentation. The other three views are summarized in Table 1:

# Table 1 – Summary of Interpretations

Creation Genesis 1-2	Fall Genesis 3	Divine Judgments Genesis 3:16
<b>View 1:</b> Equality With no subordination of woman	Ruptured Relationship	<b>Description</b> of sinful consequences (to be removed by gospel), husband usurps authority
<b>View 2:</b> Equality With no subordination of woman	Ruptured relationship	<b>Permanent prescription</b> of divine will for harmony after sin, husband “first-among-equals”
<b>View 3:</b> Equality With no subordination of woman	Relationship Continues	<b>Blessing of equality</b> (no headship or hierarchy)



A sunset over a mountain range with a white decorative bar at the top.

# Analysis and Critique of All Views

By Annick Brennen

# Critique of View 1 and 3

- ❖ **View 1** argues that husbands usurped authority.
  - Authority was not usurped. Men centralized the authority originally shared by both genders, into one gender. By doing so, men created an unbalance of power in the male-female marriage relationship.
- ❖ **View 3** ignores or denies the ruptured relationship between male and female that occurred after the Fall.

# View 2: Philosophical Underpinning

**Proponents of View 2** place God's judgment pronounced upon the woman, the ground, and the serpent in the context of legal proceedings; hence, the sentences are permanent and binding. Of Eve's judgment they say: "Just as none of the other judgments were removed or reversed at the Cross, but stay in force until the consummation of salvation history, so this judgment remains in force until the removal of sinful world conditions at the end of time."

Yet, they admit that the curse can be rolled back through advances in science and technology.

## View 2: Softening the Curse

**Proponents of View 2** try to temper their position by stating: “This is not to say that is inappropriate for humankind to seek to roll back the judgments/curses and get back as much as possible to God’s original plan – by advances in obstetrics to relieve unnecessary hard labor during deliver; by agricultural and technological advances to relieve hard labor in farming, by scientific and medical advances to delay the process of death. In the same way **it is not inappropriate to return as much as possible to God’s original plan for total equality in marriage,** while at the same time retaining the validity of the headship principles as necessary in a sinful world to preserve harmony in the home.” (*Special Committee*, p. 267)

# View 2: Softening the Curse

- ❖ The headship principle establishes the subordination of women.
  - Equality and subordination are mutually exclusive.
  - Subordinate: Belonging to a lower or inferior class or rank; secondary; subject to the authority or control of another.
  - Equal: Having the same privileges, status, rights. Being the same for all members of a group; same rank, ability, merit.
- ❖ Merely having a man in charge does not bring about harmony in the home. The reality of spousal and child abuse, divorce, incest, strife, and contention with a man in charge has discredited the theory.

# Critique of View 2

- ❖ God never delegated to any human or human agency the responsibility to enforce the curse.
- ❖ Although we are all destined to die as a penalty for our rebellion against God, He commands us not to kill. (Exodus 20:13).
- ❖ On the contrary, God committed to us the ministry of reconciliation: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19; Hosea 3:1).
- ❖ This ministry consists also in reconciling males and females and re-establishing the original equality that existed before the Fall. “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there **male and female**, for you are all **one** in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

# Critique of View 2

- ❖ No happiness can be found on a marriage based upon a curse. Bristow comments: Three characteristics of the traditional model, as defined in Genesis 3:16, seriously challenge the idea that patterning one's own marriage upon this model will insure happiness:
  - The model is centered upon pain and toil – labor in birthing that is cursed with additional agony, and labor in tilling soil that is cursed with many thorns and thistles
  - The husband and wife want to control each other
  - Adam and Eve experience a sense of guilt and fear and blame each other (Bristow, p. 67)

# Critique of View 2

- ❖ View 2 does not differentiate the recipients of the curse: Eve and Adam are persons, the serpent is an animal, and the ground an inanimate object.
- ❖ Unlike the serpent and the ground, men and women are teachable. They are endowed with reason, self-will, self-determination, power of choice. They can learn to collaborate and escape the relational consequences of the curse.
- ❖ From View 2, one can infer that children are permanent home fixtures; thus, a titular head is needed “to achieve harmony.” The reality of modern existence is that when children become independent, only spouses remain in the home as companions. There is no objective or practical need for a “first-among-equals” in a companionship of only **two**. “Do two walk together unless **they** have agreed to do so?” Amos 3:3.



# Critique of View 2

- ❖ Proponents of View 2 have a limited view of the “one-flesh” relationship. They limit it to coitus interaction. “God’s ideal for the nature of sexual relationship after the Fall is still the same as it was for Adam and Eve in the beginning – to “become one flesh.”
- ❖ “One flesh” is a symbol of the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and financial union that should exist between spouses.

# Critique of View 2

- ❖ View 2 overlooks the innate insatiable desire of sinful men to dominate (which is the curse placed on Adam).
- ❖ Haki Madhubiti, the African-American author, educator, and poet said we need "a liberation of the male psyche from preoccupation with domination, power hunger, control of patriarchal culture."
- ❖ Most men have successfully evaded the curse of tilling the soil, since the agrarian age no longer exists; but some theologians, clergy, and religious insist on maintaining and enforcing the curse upon all women.

# Male Leadership: Wrong Emphasis

- ❖ **The Emphasis on Male Leadership/Headship is Unscriptural and Unbalanced**
  - Exodus 20:12 assigns equal authority to mothers and fathers: “Honor your mother and father. .”
  - In Ephesians 5, Paul asks husbands to love their wives no less than 10 times.
  - Love, intimacy, oneness, and union are emphasized throughout Paul’s discussion of headship in marriage in Ephesians 5.
  - The only mention of authority in marriage is found 1 Corinthians 7:3-7: Paul gives husbands and wives mutual authority over one another’s bodies.

# Male Leadership: Wrong Emphasis

- ❖ **The Emphasis on Male Leadership/Headship is Unscriptural and Unbalanced**
  - Jesus himself defines “headship” in Matthew 20: 25-28:  
25 Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
  - If temporal leaders are forbidden to have authority over subjects, then husbands cannot and must not have authority over their wives. Christ forbids it.

## First-Among-Equals – Men and Women are Equal, but Men are more Equal than Women

- ❖ First-among-equals means best or most important in a similar group
- ❖ This is what a business leader said: “Greenleaf used this phrase in his writing about the principles of the servant leader. The concept is simple: **Focus less on traditional hierarchy or formal titles and more on who is best suited to lead, given the immediate need.** Certainly, formal structure, especially in large organizations, is necessary. You could not run a Fortune 500 company with frequently rotating leadership. However, in a given situation, the leader by title, may not be the person best suited to lead. Instead, as servants to their stakeholders, leaders should identify and support the individual best suited to drive results in each situation.”

# Operationalizing “First-Among-Equal”

- ❖ **Decision making:** Do husbands make 100% of the decisions? Do husbands and wives share decision making equally? Or do they mutually agree who is the best person to make decisions given the immediate situation?
- ❖ **Conflict resolution:** Are husbands 100% responsible for conflict resolution? Or do husbands and wives share the responsibility equally? Or do they agree to delegate the responsibility to the best-suited person in a given situation?
- ❖ **Spiritual leadership:** Do husbands have a monopoly on spiritual leadership? Or do husbands and wives share the responsibility equally? Or do they agree to delegate it to the person best suited?

# Operationalizing “First-Among-Equal”

- ❖ **Financial support:** Do husbands provide 100% of the family income? Do both husbands and wives agree to contribute as each is able?
- ❖ **Financial management:** Are husbands automatically responsible for managing the finances? Or do they agree to delegate the responsibility to the best qualified person?
- ❖ **Physical health:** Are husbands 100% responsible for the physical health of the family? Or do husbands and wives share the responsibility equally? Or do they agree to designate the responsibility to the best-suited person?
- ❖ **Nurture of children:** Are husbands 100% responsible for the nurture of children? Or do they agree to share the responsibility equally?
- ❖ **Domestic chores:** Are husbands 100% responsible for doing domestic chores? Or do they agree to share the responsibility based on skill?

# Subordination in Marriage Leads to Subordination out of Marriage

- ❖ According to the proponents of Views 1 to 3, the equality of males and females outside the marriage relationship remains unchallenged: Men and women are and remain equal after sin. They point to the Biblical texts that speak of submission within the marriage relationship only.
- ❖ In reality, a woman's status in marriage impacts her status out of marriage. The fundamental questions are:
  - If women are not qualified to “head” their homes, what qualifies them to “head” entities at the national and sub-national levels?
  - If men habitually hold the reins of power in the home, why should they relinquish and turn it over to women at the macro level? (Isn't power seductive and addictive?)
  - Why is it that men always “**allow**” women (single and married) to act (i.e., to vote, to get an education, to own property, to be ordained, etc.) if they are equal?





# The Companionship Model

# The Companionship Model



- ❖ This view accepts pre-fall equality and post-fall ruptured relationship. It posits that through education, the curse provides a lifetime opportunity for men and women to re-learn the companionship ideal intended at the beginning.
- ❖ Achieving oneness/unity and companionship in the marriage relationship becomes the focus and work of a lifetime. Therefore, hierarchy, headship, first-among-equals theories are no longer perceived as desirable. Husbands and wives are lifetime companions, serve each other, have equal power and equal vote.

# Table 2 – The Companionship Model

Creation Genesis 1-2	Fall Genesis 3	Divine Judgments Genesis 3:16
View 4: Equality With no subordination of woman	Ruptured relationship	<b>Curse provides a lifetime opportunity</b> to grow and learn through education and to restore the divine ideal of companionship and equality in the marriage relationship (no hierarchy, no headship, no first-among-equals)

A sunset over a mountain range with a white decorative bar at the top.

# The Origin of Female Inferiority

What the Church Will Never Tell You!

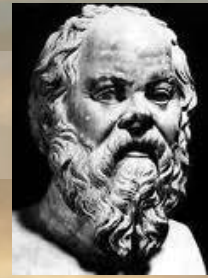


**Source:**

*What Paul Really Said About Women: An Apostle's Views on Equality in Marriage, Leadership, and Love.* John Temple Bristow, Harper San Francisco, 1991

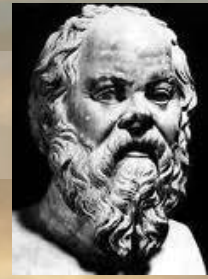
# Athens: The Greek Legacy of Disdain for Women

# Homer and Socrates



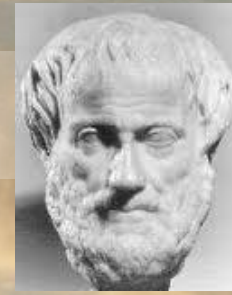
- ❖ **Homer**, author of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, sang of the struggles of distant heroes and how “each one gives law to his children and to his wives.”
- ❖ **Socrates** (c.470-399 B.C.) immortalized the Athenian disdain toward women.
  - He often referred to woman as “**the weaker sex.**” He argued that being born a woman is a divine punishment, since a woman is halfway between a man and an animal.
  - He humorously advised a young man, “By all means, get married. If you get a good wife, you will be happy. If you get a bad one, you will become a philosopher.”
  - He also argued that in the ideal society, marriage would be abandoned. “No one will deny that it would be the greatest good to have women in common and children in common.”

# Socrates



- ❖ **Socrates** (c.470-399 B.C.) immortalized the Athenian disdain toward women.
  - Conversation between husband and wife was neither valued nor expected. Socrates asked Athenian men: “Is there anyone to whom you entrust more serious matters than to your wife, . . . And is there anyone to whom you talk less?”
- ❖ Socrates’ teachings came down to us through his star pupil, Plato (c. 427-347 B.C.). And Plato’s most distinguished disciple was Aristotle (384-322 B.C.)

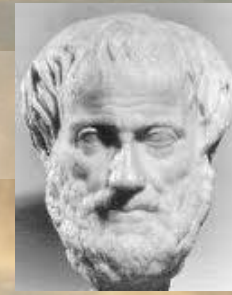
# Aristotle



- ❖ **Aristotle:** In his discourse on insects, he noted that a single bee will lead a vast swarm of bees to a new location, where they will industriously build a new nest and establish their complex society. And because the swarm follows one individual, Aristotle unquestioningly assumed that this single leader must be male, the “king bee.” Centuries passed before naturalists corrected this with objective observation: the leader was a “queen bee.”
- ❖ **Aristotle’s premise:** “the male is by nature fitter to command than the female.” He added that this “inequality is permanent.” This was true of all creatures, especially humans.
- ❖ “The courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying.”

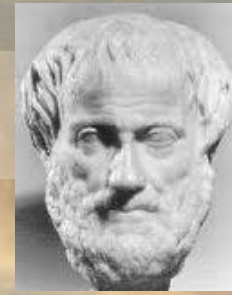


# Aristotle's Legacy



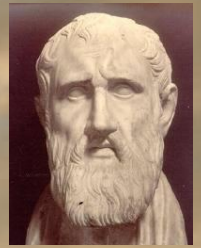
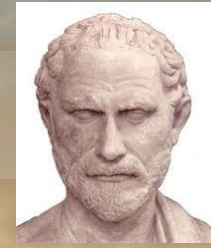
- ❖ Aristotle explained that this difference between husband and wife is like that of man's soul and his body. The man is to his wife as a soul is to the physical body, meant to command and guide arms and legs with wisdom and intelligence. (Aristotle used this same analogy to defend the practice of slavery and define the relationship of master and slave.) Just as one's body, with its impulses and desires, should not rule his soul, so a wife should not rule her husband. And, he added, as a stern warning, the **"equality of the two or rule of the inferior is always hurtful."** (Bristow, p. 6)

# Aristotle's Legacy



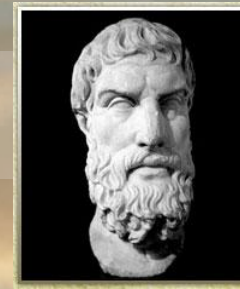
- ❖ Aristotle thus laid a lasting philosophical foundation for the notion that females are inferior to males. He formalized the practice of sexual discrimination and offered learned authority to the belief in sexual inequality. Centuries later, church leaders who themselves were a product of Greek culture and education, interpreted Paul's writings from the perspective of Aristotelian philosophy, even to the point of assuming that when Paul wrote of the husband being the head of the wife, he was simply restating Aristotle's analogy of the husband being to his wife like one's soul to one's body. As will be seen, a careful reading of what Paul wrote demonstrates that this apostle was **actually challenging Aristotle's idea instead of supporting it.** (Bristow, pp. 6-7)

# Xenophon, Demosthenes, Zeno



- ❖ **Xenophon**, a disciple of Socrates, argued that the ideal Athenian woman was one who “might see as little as possible, hear as little as possible, and ask as little as possible.”
- ❖ **Demosthenes**, Greek orator, analyzing the roles of Athenian women: “We have courtesans for our pleasures, prostitutes for daily physical use, wives to bring up legitimate children and to be faithful stewards in household matters.”
- ❖ **Pericles** stated that it was the duty of an Athenian mother to live so retired a life that her name would never be mentioned among men, either for praise or for shame.
- ❖ **Zeno** (the originator of asceticism) taught that sexual intercourse is justified only if its purpose is procreation. All passions and pleasures are to be disdained by those who would truly pursue wisdom.

# Epictetus



- ❖ **Epictetus**, Stoic teacher in Rome until A.D. 90 constantly wrote of women as a temptation to men, how they lure “with softer voices” a young philosopher who is no match for “pretty girl.” He taught that women, from the age of fourteen, think of nothing and aim at nothing but lying with men.

# The Legacy of Athenian Philosophy



- ❖ The philosophers of Athens, then bequeathed to the world, a double indictment against womanhood. From the classic period, especially in the teachings of Aristotle, came the conviction that women are inferior to men. Therefore, women are to be commanded by men and used for the pleasure of men. Then, from the stoic philosophers came the conviction that women are a distraction and temptation to men. Therefore, women are to be avoided by men who would thereby be free to pursue those qualities that make men superior. **Both points of view underlie the traditional interpretation of the writings of Saint Paul regarding women and marriage. (Bristow, p.9).**

# Jewish Devaluation of Women

- ❖ Paul's Gentile converts to the faith were heirs to Greek philosophy, with Aristotelian and Stoic disdain for women.
- ❖ For the most part, the rabbis of Judaism devalued women:
  - "Girls are but an illusory treasure."
  - "Besides, they have to be watched continually."
  - "A woman has more pleasure in one *kab* (measure) with lechery than in nine *kabs* with modesty."
- ❖ Every Jewish male thanked God every morning that "He did not make me a Gentile, . . . a woman, . . . a boor."
- ❖ On the education of women, "It would be better to see the Torah burnt than to hear its words upon the lips of women."
  - ❖ "Teaching a girl is the same as starting her on the road of depravity." (Bristow, p. 19)



# Jewish Devaluation of Women

- ❖ The tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shalt not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.” (Deuteronomy 5:21, RSV) became the basis for the legal principle within Judaism that married women are the property of their husbands.
- ❖ Why? Because “Rabbinical interpretation reasoned that all the potential objects of a person’s coveting, as listed in this commandment, are the possessions of that persons’ neighbor: his ass, his ox, his servants, his field, his house – and his wife.”

# Jewish Devaluation of Women

- ❖ Consequently, women were granted few legal rights of their own in ancient Israel.
  - Husband's refusal to acknowledge any business agreement entered into by his wife. No recourse for the injured party.
  - An unmarried woman was regarded as the possession of her father, and a widow as the possession of her husband's male next-of-kin. She could inherit, but her inheritance would be put in trust for her, managed by the man who was in charge of her care.



# The Hellenization of Jewish Thought and Scripture

- ❖ The belief that women are inferior to men has its source in the Hellenization of Jewish thought after the conquest of Judea by Alexander the Great. Many of the Jews welcomed the customs and philosophy of the Greeks.
- ❖ “At that time, lawless men arose in Israel and seduced many with their plea, “Come, let us make a covenant with the gentiles around us, because ever since we have kept ourselves separated from them we have suffered many evils.” The plea got so favorable a reception that some of the people took it upon themselves to apply to the king, who granted them liberty to follow the practices of the gentiles. Thereupon they built a **gymnasium** in Jerusalem according to the customs of the gentiles and underwent operations to disguise their circumcision, rebelling against the sacred covenant. They joined themselves to the gentiles and became willing slaves of evil doing.” ( 1 Maccabees 1:11-5 RSV). (Bristow, p. 24)

# The Hellenization of Jewish Thought

- ❖ It was in the gymnasium that men engaged in exercise in the nude, which would have brought attention to the matter of circumcision (and which would have shocked the conservative Jews). And in the gymnasium young Jewish men learned the philosophical insights of Plato and Aristotle and the Stoics, which contained the doctrine of the inferiority of women. (Bristow, p. 24)
- ❖ **Philo**, a Jewish scholar at the time of Christ, sought to harmonize the teachings of Plato and Aristotle and other Greek philosophers with the teachings of the Old Testament. In the process, he imposed the Greek disdain for women onto his interpretation of Scripture (just as later Christian scholars were to do in their interpretations of the writings of Paul). (Bristow, p. 25.)

# The Hellenization of Jewish Thought

- ❖ **Josephus**, a Jewish historian (in the next generation after Philo) who also studied both Greek and Hebrew literature, viewed the Old Testament with the same disdain toward women. He wrote how the Jewish law declared that the wife “is inferior to her husband in all things.”
- ❖ He even went beyond the Jewish law in the matter of witnesses in a court of law, insisting that the testimony of women should not be admitted “on account of their levity and the boldness of their sex.”



# A Call for Action

# A Call for Action

- ❖ Women, unite, and stand-up to end gender inequality and discrimination, the bedrock of violence against women
- ❖ Men who have a monopoly on ecclesiastical, economic, and political power will not share power with you willingly unless you want and demand it. It's not in their self-interest to do so.
- ❖ Stop believing the lie that men are de-facto “heads of the home and the church” because they are better suited for leadership.

# A Call for Action

- ❖ When two become **ONE**, there is no need for a head. This is the lie that created gender inequality.
- ❖ Demand parity, equity, and equality in the home, church, and society.
- ❖ Stop supporting financially and otherwise political parties, businesses, churches, and other organizations that are not gender inclusive.

# A Call for Action

## ❖ Church leaders:

- Acknowledge the wrong you have perpetrated against humanity and society in promoting a theology of male dominance.
- Own and redress the church's passive violence of silence against women that allows men to abuse women with impunity.
- Develop a balanced theology of marriage, family life, and reconciliation.

# This is the Year of the Lord's Favor

- ❖ Isaiah 61: 1-3: The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has **anointed** me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.



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