



# The red bench is a symbol of solidarity with victims and survivors of GBV.

**The red bench campaign was created in Italy in 2016** but then promoted in many countries, especially in Latin America. It is a symbol of resistance and sorority. By sitting on the red bench we show solidarity to survivors and victims of violence. An empty bench is a reminder of the people we have lost along the way. **This is our contribution to the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.**

**A movement is needed to end GBV and religious leaders must be on the forefront of action.** This campaign is also an opportunity to have a conversation about gender-based violence in an open and non judgemental way.

**You can join the conversation on social media using the hashtags #TheRoad2Equality, #16days, #Orangetheworld**

## Some facts

- Before the Covid-19 pandemic, 243 million women and girls experienced physical or sexual violence. The cases increased from the beginning of the pandemic.
- Worldwide, one out of four women have/are experiencing sexist violence.
- Women triple the amount of domestic work and unpaid care than men.
- According to the statistics, a former or a current victim's partner commits femicide in more than half of the cases.

# Reflections



## Tamar

### 2 Samuel 13:1-13

The text in 2 Samuel 13:1-13 describes the violence against Tamar—a raped young lady—and King David's injustice—her father—. The text shows the mainstream patriarchal system in that culture and the prevailing social organization at David's house and throughout the Old Testament.

The text tells us that Amnon was highly appreciated because he was King David's firstborn. Tamar and Absalom were his siblings from different mothers. Even though David was stern in fighting his enemies, he struggled with his conduct as a father and king. In previous chapters, we learned that he committed adultery with Bathsheba and found a strategy to send her husband to death.

David and Amnon broke the rules, grew apart from God, and evil prevailed.

Even though king David repented and tried to return to God by fasting and praying, his children witnessed his behavior. In that cultural context, it mattered little if a woman was a young or a married princess. Everyone lived under a patriarchal regime.

A translation of the Biblical text tells us that Amnon felt attracted to and passionate about his sister. Others say, «he fell in love with her.» Amnon himself said, «I fell in love with Absalom's sister,» to justify his behavior. He knows the law. Therefore, he knows it is forbidden to have sex between siblings. Yet, he yields to his desire, and his cousin and friend Jonadab conspires with him: «Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand'» (v. 5).

David granted his son's request and sent Tamar to his house. She trusted her father and brother, so she went to his place, where he was lying down, and she baked bread for him. But he refused to eat. When everyone left the house, Amnon said to Tamar, «Bring the food into the chamber, that I may eat from your hand.» She did not suspect anything, so she took the food to her brother. He took hold of her and said, «Come, lie with me, my sister.»

She refused and said, «No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing.» She insisted, but he did not listen to her—he was also stronger—. He raped her and put her out as if she were a thing.

Tamar's reaction was a complaint that his father needed to hear about what happened with her brother. She drew strength and courage to communicate her pain so people who saw her might understand she was deeply grieving. As customary, she put ashes on her head and tore her long robe. She walked across the streets but could not find any help. She expressed her grieving, and her brother Absalom was the only one who stood in solidarity. He was infuriated and waited for his father to do justice to Tamar. King David learned what happened, but he did not do anything. Even though he knew, he remained silent and allowed injustice.

Was Amnon worthier than his daughter Tamar? Why was he silent? The patriarchal law was evident in David and Amnon's behavior. Only Absalom was outraged seeing everything that



happened. He quietly plotted revenge. Two years later, he avenged killing Amnon.

So, we wonder, why does a father or a mother remain silent in such a situation? Why don't they report a child's rape in the family?

In our countries, statistics show that children and youth are mostly raped by a family member or a friend, leaving the victim devastated —having to face irreparable damages—. On the other hand, families can't find comfort and assistance in their quest for justice. The very fact of reporting will start a long healing journey.

This text invites us to pay attention, advocate, and work on preventing these reproachable actions. We have laws and decrees that indicate how to care for more fragile people. Likewise, they allow us to coexist with respect, responsibility, and freedom.

We keep providing spaces for reflection, speaking up, accompanying, and demanding comprehensive reparations for the victims. Thus, we promote hope to have a better life.

Written by: Ofelia Dávila

### **The Canaanite woman Matthew 15: 21-28**

A Gentile woman challenged Jesus. She asked for his powerful intervention because her daughter needed healing. Perhaps this woman should be known as the first gentile lady with a voice. She was the first to advocate for them. She was also a very daring woman who broke several cultural norms to get what she needed, driven by her heartfelt love for her child.

Let me give you some context. Jesus devoted himself to announcing God's Kingdom only to the Jews. He sought a genuine renewal of his people. Therefore, it was clear he should dedicate himself to Israel, or as the author says, «to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.» Yet, this woman made him reconsider his view and paved the way for non-Jewish people to get to know his love and benefit from his transformative power.

The text tells us that Jesus decided to go to Tyre, a Gentile region, a border area with Galilee facing several conflicts. Tyre was a wealthy and well-known city. Instead, Galilee had fewer economic advantages, and Tyre benefited from its agricultural products. These were two cities and cultures living side by side, and they did not like each other. Despite this, Jesus decided to go to Tyre. The text suggests that maybe he wanted to rest, but Jesus' fame preceded him, and people longed to see him. He failed to go unnoticed.

A woman had heard of him and was very concerned about her daughter, so she came crying, «Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!» At first, it seemed like Jesus did not want to heal her daughter —what a strange attitude coming from him because he was always merciful and compassionate—. Perhaps the story will teach us something else about her.



At first, Jesus did not respond to her, and the disciples got mad because the lady was putting on a shameful show. Jesus said again he was sent for the lost sheep in Israel, but she insisted and begged. As a mighty fighter, she challenged the norms of her time: she talked to a Jew male in the street, and she insisted, despite his reluctance. She surprised him with a sarcastic answer, «Yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.» The Canaanite woman knew there was food for everyone and fought for it. Her unmovable faith touched him, and he showed his compassion one more time. He got involved in a conversation with her and allowed himself to transform.

Women's words are also powerful, and Jesus knew it. Therefore, he said, «Oh woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.» Jesus, a Jewish male, didn't set her aside. He understood her instead, reconsidered, and changed his behavior. He listened to her and healed her daughter.

Source: Támez, E. (2020). Las mujeres en el movimiento de Jesús. Lecturas bíblicas en perspectiva feminista. Hialeah: JUANUNO1.