



Wounded healing as a caring approach to female survivors of rape in South Africa

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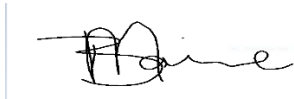
Dissertation accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Theology in Pastoral Studies* at the North-West University

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Declaration

By submitting this dissertation, I declare that this is my original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof and that I have not previously submitted it, in its entirety or part, for obtaining any qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Boitshepo Abigail Maine', written over a light blue horizontal line. A vertical blue line is positioned to the left of the signature.

Boitshepo Abigail Maine

Date: March 2025

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all the rape victims who never got justice.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the Almighty God for granting me wisdom, strength and faith until this dissertation got completed. I usually tell people that Theology chose me and it definitely has greater plans for me, as I am one step to becoming a PhD candidate.

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ACRONYMS

SAPS	SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICES
SA	SOUTH AFRICA
NGO	NON-GOVERMENTAL ORGANISATIONS
NWU	NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY
WHO	WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION
OT	OLD TESTAMENT
NT	NEW TESTAMENT
GBV	GENDER-BASED-VIOLENCE

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the application of the wounded healer metaphor from a Christian perspective to address the high prevalence of rape within the context of gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa. Despite constitutional protections and societal efforts, rape remains a critical issue, exacerbated by cultural and systemic factors, including the insufficient engagement of some Christian communities. Employing a literature review methodology, this research systematically analyzed existing studies, theological texts, and relevant social science perspectives. Key findings reveal a significant gap between scriptural mandates for justice and healing and the practical responses of churches, highlighting the need for a more proactive theological engagement. Scriptural analysis emphasizes justice, victim dignity, and transformative healing through faith. Furthermore, the study proposes strategic interventions, including trauma-informed pastoral care, community-based initiatives, and the re-education of faith communities, to foster effective wounded healing care. This research concludes that a robust application of the wounded healer concept, grounded in biblical principles, can empower survivors and facilitate societal change in addressing rape in South Africa.

Key words: Wounded healing, gender-based violence, rape, healing, practical theology, pastoral care.

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CHAPTER 1

1. STUDY BACKGROUND

Gender-based-violence (GBV) is a huge challenge in SA. WHO (2021) defines GBV as:

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life.

According to Zonp *et al.* (2022:1), GBV has different forms, which include but are not limited to domestic violence, child marriage, sexual harassment, aggression against others, sexual freedom, intimate partner violence. Gender-based-violence tends to leave long-term scars on victims and survivors (Taylor *et al.*, 2018:2).

Gender-based-violence is a huge challenge in South Africa. Statistically, one -in - three women in South Africa has experienced sexual or physical abuse (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2020:25). There has been many outcry on GBV in recent years. For instance, there have been cases such as gang rapes of eight women in West Rand, Namhla Mtwa's case, Sedika Lekhobo's case and many other cases (Nkanjeni, 2022). As a response to the outcry of GBV, the South African President established a GBV helpdesk in the presidential office, which indicates the high priority in responding and addressing GBV. Across the entire country, there are victim centers and specialized units in the SAPS to respond to the scourge of GBV. This also suggests the urgency and high priority in addressing GBV.

However, after reporting a case to the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the perpetrator gets arrested, the victim still has to live after the experience. Thus, to harness and utilize the people with firsthand GBV experience, GBV survivors sometimes participate in counselling processes to provide healing to others with similar experiences. There are several GBV victim and survivors' centers that have been established across the country by government and non-governmental organizations (NGO). The example of the organizations responding to GBV include Command Centre, People Opposed to Woman Abuse (POWA), Families South Africa (FAMSA) and others. These organizations encourage people to report GBV and also to cope post the ordeal. The

centers that have been largely established have been driven by the notion that people can recover and as they recover, they can also be instruments to help other people recover (Einat, 2017:205). Considered psychologically, the centers helping GBV victims being assisted by people who survived GBV particularly rape, could be characterized as providing care, counselling and guidance from a wounded healer perspective. A wounded healer perspective to care and counselling, as Jung maintained, holds that the “disease of the soul could be the best possible form of training for a healer” (Daneault, 2008:1219). Thus, one’s previous encounter and experience becomes a critical tool to provide insightful and meaningful counselling. However, in pastoral care and counselling, Jesus is theologically viewed as the wounded healer who provides healing to those in pain (Isaiah 53) (Nolte & Dreyer, 2010:2).

GBV indicates a world that is broken requiring healing. Indeed, people yearn for their wounds to be healed. Wounded healing is a metaphor denoting healing in a care and counselling situation where one’s experience becomes a central healing instrument (Louw, 2022, 60). Wounded healing refers to a person who is coping with a situation when one is metaphorically limping physically, emotionally, spiritually, and in other areas of life (Sedgwick, 1994:25). This healing occurs through support or counselling by someone who experienced a similar situation in the past with the channeling of healing by the Holy Spirit. Nouwen (1972:4) in his groundbreaking definition of the wounded healer archetype explains that a wounded healer is a person who avails his/her wounded side to other people and effectively manages to utilize that woundedness to heal others. Nouwen (1972:83) clarifies that being a wounded healer requires one to be willing to get into a situation that will show their vulnerability and share it with others. Nouwen (1972:83) states that as much as the process could be painful it helps lead the involved out of their “prisons of confusion and fear”. Louw (2022:63) citing Nilson (2007:238) explained that:

Woundedness, therefore, is not a matter of “complication” problematising life events with the allure of solving intriguing life issues rationally, but of “complexification” dealing with paradoxical determinants simultaneously without rational explanations (Nilson, 2007:238).

Espring (2014:377) understands the archetype of a wounded healer as an individual who carries features that enable them to educate, minister and mentor wounded people by utilizing the wisdom they got from their personal experience. Espring (2014:377) provided insight into wounded healing by stating that “empathy and sensitivity are most evident during the wounded healing process due to the lessons learned which now serve as constructive purposes”. The woundedness, as Nouwen (1979:82) advises, “draws attention to pastors’ weakness and brokenness, referring to his own life struggle to come to terms with his own imperfection and experience of personal loneliness”. This first-hand experience of the healer/pastor or counsellor assists him/her to be empathetic and to be insightful.

There is considerable literature on wounded healing as a way of providing care. For instance, Zerubavel and Wright (2012) reviewed literature from many scholars on past research regarding the metaphor wounded healer and confirmed its wide application in counselling practice. Notably, there seems to be more literature dealing with the subject of wounded healing from psychology counselling than in Christian counselling (Nolte & Dreyer, 2010:2). Apart from application of wounded healing applied among Christians, it seems the dynamics of how wounded healing works particularly on public issues such as GBV has not been thoroughly explored. Jesus, as the wounded healer, is concerned with people’s healing. Within Christian pastoral care healing, wounded healing is a metaphor and approach that draws from Jesus Christ, whose wounds brought healing to people (Isaiah 53:5-6). Jesus shared in flesh and blood and is an empathetic High Priest (Hebrews 2:17) who experienced suffering like any other person who experiences pain (woundedness). What Christ did for us in His substitutionary death and what He did in us because of our spiritual union with Him in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-10) provides motivation for Christians to care for all people. Healing was a key aspect of Jesus’ ministry. Bate (2012:69) states that Jesus’s ministry had a portion that was directed to healing of people. Jesus even delegated his disciples to go out and heal the sick (Matthew 10:8).

In pastoral care and counselling, wounded healer is a pastoral care metaphor denoting the care provided by Jesus (Nolte & Dreyer, 2010:1; Louw, 1998:40). This ministry should inform and be the pattern to be followed by pastoral care providers and counsellors when supporting people experiencing life’s challenges. Within Christian

In this context, when people face life challenges, they prefer to consult someone with a similar worldview or perspective, such as a pastor or fellow Christian who acts on behalf of God, serving as a fellow wounded person. Outside Christian circles or contexts, people sometimes prefer seeking help from someone who has prior experience. For this reason, survivor support groups are group counselling interventions where wounded people share their experiences to effect healing. In these group healing sessions, people who have experienced similar challenges would help others to heal or recover. Therefore, it is not surprising that wounded healing principles are a bedrock for survivor group counselling sessions and other similar interventions. In these sessions, education, ministering, and mentoring one another are empathetically and sensitively done (Espring, 2014:377). This is done from one's personal experience (Espring, 2014:377; Nouwen, 1972:83).

As earlier highlighted, there is extensive literature on wounded healing and its effects, as evident from different scholarly literature about support groups, victim empowerment, etc. (Zerai, 2020:9, Goodman *et al*, 2015:360, Sullivan, 2011:186, Alcantud *et al.*, 2021:4). The efficacy of these groups has been widely documented. Examples of studies demonstrating the efficacy of wounded healing interventions include Bryant *et al.* (2017:1)'s study report on the effectiveness of a brief behavioral intervention on psychological distress among women with a history of gender-based violence in urban Kenya - a randomized clinical trial, Morales-Campos *et al.* (2009:57) report on understanding a support group for Hispanic Women living with gender-based violence in Houston, Texas, Einat (2017:205) study The wounded healer- self-rehabilitation of prisoners through providing care and support to physically and mentally challenged inmates. However, while there seems to be considerable studies and literature on wounded healers from psychology, there is less research on wounded healer support provided from a Christian theological perspective, particularly within the context of GBV. This sad reality overshadows the reality that theologically, the wounded healer metaphor and approach is a central pastoral and Christian caring and counselling approach. Christian or pastoral care as a component of pastoral theology is understood as helping, which is aimed at healing, guiding, sustaining and reconciling congregants (Hiltner, 1958:89). This study is of theological interest because Jesus Christ is the wounded healer, he shares in the pain, struggles and concerns that all people on earth experience. Jesus became flesh so that he could

experience what humanity was experiencing so that he would be able to provide the care and healing that people require.

Thus, wounded healing is a key theological category in theology, especially in pastoral care. As already indicated above, pastoral or Christian care providers are human beings who are wounded healers, as they emulate Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who is the ultimate wounded healer. However, to go beyond theory at the application level, when people experience challenges and suffering, they require help to overcome the situation. In that process, people can then utilize their experiences to help others heal (Hunsinger, 2015:8). Applying this key theological notion to cases of raped women, it is imperative to reflect on how within a Christian perspective, it can be effectively done to provide effective care and counselling. The questions that arise are: how can this wounded healing archetype perform in a Christian perspective whereupon people who have experienced rape share their experiences in a caring space and environment to result in healing effectively? How can this process of sharing in pain be an instrument of effective healing to both the survivors and victims of rape, as both parties look up to Jesus Christ who is the ultimate healer? How can a Christian understanding of wounded healer informed by Jesus Christ be applied in public care issues such as rape?

Regarding GBV, Luvo and Saunders (2022:41) observed that GBV gives rise to challenges in people's health, and it has a huge role in the morbidity and mortality of women and children. Further to this, people experience anxiety, depression, brain injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, bone fractures, post-traumatic stress disorder, asthma, substance abuse disorders, diabetes, etc. (Taylor *et al.*, 2018:2; Zonp *et al.*, 2022:1). Importantly, from a wounded healer perspective, survivors who have gone through GBV ordeal after healing could provide important care and support to other victims. In so doing, they are providing the necessary support to victims to deal with the impacts of GBV, drawing from their own personal experiences. However, when a person has undergone GBV, like any other traumatic experience, there are long-term impacts that it leaves in the lives of survivors, even though they deem themselves as healed, issues keep resurfacing. To what extent is the process of supporting victims, and do those submerged impacts get fully healed.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Literature is replete with accounts of wounded healing from a psychological perspective (Hadjiosif, 2021:47). Support groups, counseling, and healing approaches, as well as some victim recovery and empowerment programs, draw from the notion of the wounded healer. In the healing process of the wounded, survivors share their experiences with victims to help them heal from the ordeal they experienced. Furthermore, as survivors relive and share their woundedness, they also heal others while learning to cope and further heal themselves. This has been largely utilized in psychology, but with much less literature reference to the involvement of survivors in pastoral counselling to victims in a practical theological context. This lack of literature on wounded healing diminishes the theological focus of wounded healing as a crucial category in Christian care and counselling. The extent to which the notion of wounded healer is drawn from scriptural sources, as rooted in Jesus Christ's woundedness on aspects such as GBV, has not been largely examined and analyzed. Wounded healing is an essential way of healing survivors and victims in situations such as rape. However, the approaches to healing for the victim and survivor's wounds have not been explored much. While survivors of rape share their experiences and in so doing help others cope with their situations, it is unclear how the Christian experience and theological position shape and inform the process. Theologically, the notion of the wounded healer is much more than sharing personal experiences. It is about people who have experienced healing primarily through the healing that Jesus Christ, as the wounded healer, offers, and then they lead others to Jesus to experience the same healing that Jesus Christ offers. The question that arises from this is: to what extent are Christians optimizing this wounded healing process in Christian care and counselling spaces to effect healing in rape victims and survivors? Is there any reference to different care and coping mechanisms where there is explicit and direct reference to the wounded healer, as indicated from theological sources, as lived and practiced by Christians? This, unfortunately, seems to be a gap that has not been reflected upon, particularly within rape contexts in South Africa, where interventions are more driven from a psychological perspective.

3. MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

3.1 Main research question

Given the above discussion, the study question is: How can the metaphor of the wounded healer from a Christian perspective in the context of GBV in South Africa be performed within the context of rape in a manner that the survivor and the victim both experienced healing?

3.2 Sub research questions

- What is the state of GBV-rape in South Africa, and what is the involvement of Christians in addressing the problem?
- What is the meaning of wounded healing within Christian perspective?
- What theological position can be developed theologically on the predicament of rape from scriptural sources?
- How could the notion of wounded healing be applied to rape situations within the context of South Africa to inform interventions?

4. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVE

4.1 Aim

To understand how the notion of the wounded healer from a Christian perspective in the context of GBV in South Africa can be applied in rape cases for effective healing among survivors and victims.

4.2 Objectives

- Explore state of GBV-rape in South Africa and the involvement of Christians and churches to address the problem.
- Describe the notion wounded healing within Christian perspective.
- Discern the theological position that can be developed on the notion of wounded healing within rape contexts from scriptural sources.
- Propose strategic interventions that could result in effective wounded healing care within the context of rape in South Africa.

5. METHODOLOGY

According to Sefotho (2015:31), research methodology focuses on the why, what, where, when, and how data is collected and analyzed. Smith (2008:157) states that for a research problem to be appropriately addressed, a specific methodology should be employed that meets the demands of the topic. Different methodologies employ various tools, enabling the researcher to achieve the research aim. Therefore, it is essential to select tools that align with the specific theme being studied (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 12). The study is not concerned with understanding how the notion of wounded healing is utilized in GBV contexts, as evidenced by the literature sources. Accordingly, this study adopts a literature review approach.

A literature-based research approach is a “systematic way of collecting and synthesizing previous research” (Snyder, 2019:333). Snyder (2019:333) maintains that “an effective and well-conducted review as a research method creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge and facilitating theory development”. Although literature review as a methodology has been criticized for lacking thoroughness, rigor, and for being ad hoc rather than following a systematic approach, Snyder emphasizes its importance, especially in light of the vast and complex interdisciplinary studies that make it challenging to stay current in some fields. For this reason, studies based solely on literature review remain essential. While the study would have benefited from empirical work, there is sufficient literature to answer the research question and to offer a robust theoretical engagement with the topic. According to Webster and Watson (2002:xii), the efficacy of a literature review lies in its ability to build a firm foundation and detect lacunas within the research that has been conducted within a specific field. This then enables academics to advance existing theories and knowledge.

5.1 Practical theology definition

Practical theology is a theological sub-discipline that reflects on religious practices, aligns theory and practice, and seeks to make changes and improvements to practices by discerning how God intended things to be. Locating the study within practical theology, it will be guided by Richard Osmer's (2008) model. This model was chosen as it contains steps which are aligned with what the researcher want to achieve on this study which is to understand how the notion of the wounded healer from a Christian perspective in the context of GBV in South Africa can be applied in rape cases for effective healing among survivors and victims. To understand the

phenomenon, we need to know what is happening, what caused it, and how it was intended to be. The researcher can then propose ways in which the notion can be utilized following the assessed need. Osmer's model has all those tasks. The first task is the descriptive task, which seeks to understand: what is going on? The second task is the interpretative task, which seeks to understand: why is it going on? The third task is the normative task that seeks to understand: what should be going on? The fourth task is the pragmatic task, which aims to recommend: how can we respond?

5.1.1 The descriptive task

In this task the study will look into describing and assessing the prevailing circumstances (Osmer, 2008:60). Concerning the study; it seeks to describe, understand and analyze the usage of the wounded healer archetype anchored in theology within GBV contexts zooming into raped women.

Smith (2016:45) points out the benefits of a well-done literature review as follows: It does not duplicate existing research, identifies lacunas in the current research and proposes further studies, utilizes existing perspectives and theories, it reduces the complexity of studies and narrows an idea so that it enhances knowledge in a specific field. The literature review will use a scoping approach. This approach seeks to understand the potential size and scope of available literature on a topic; in doing so research gaps will be identified (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005:6).

5.1.1.1 Data collection and analysis

The scoping approach follows, according to Arksey and O'Malley (2005:8-9), five stages which are:

1) Identification of research question, 2) Identification of relevant literature, 3) Selection of literature, 4) Charting the study data, and 5) collating, summarizing, and reporting study results. Integrating the five stages into the study, the process is elucidated below.

Stage 1 (Identification of research question): The study question is: How can the notion of the wounded healer from a Christian perspective in the context of GBV in South Africa be performed in a manner that the survivor and the victim both experience healing? In order to give the main study question clarity, it has been fragmented into four sub-questions: 1) What is the state of GBV in South Africa, and what is the

involvement of Christians in addressing the problem? 2) What is the meaning of wounded healing within the Christian perspective? 3) What theological position can be developed theologically on the predicament of GBV from scriptural sources? 4) How could the notion of wounded healing be applied to GBV situations within the context of South Africa to inform interventions?

Stage 2 (Identification of relevant literature): Search engines such as Google scholar, Ebscohost, NWU Library databases such as Boloka: NWU Institutional Repository, eBooks@NWU were utilized to acquire and identify relevant literature to the study. Arksey and O'Malley (2005:12) state that to identify all relevant literature available, reference lists of relevant literature could be checked for other literature. Specific search string terms were used in all search engines to get academic, non-academic, published and non-published literature.

Search string terms:

- Wounded healing as a caring approach in/and gender-based-violence
- Healing of raped women
- Gender-based-violence in South Africa
- Wounded healers/healing victims and survivors
- Caring Approaches
- Pastoral care
- Pastoral counselling
- Christian healing

Stage 3 (Selection of literature): Search engines at times provided some irrelevant literature when searching for relevant literature. Elimination was made of literature that does not address the main research question and sub-questions, which aided in terms of the inclusion of relevant literature in the study.

Stage 4 (Charting the study data): Relevant literature that was selected in accordance with the study questions was assessed because it has high scientific quality, as this will enhance the quality of the study. Data extraction took place, whereby applicable information from the literature was taken to answer research questions.

Stage 5 (Collate, summarize, and report study results): Analysis of data acquired from relevant sources selected for the study was combined, summarized, and a report of results was produced. In order to adhere to ethical and good conduct in writing, all literature utilized in this study is acknowledged in the text and reference list; Harvard

referencing style is followed.

5.1.2 Interpretive task

In this task, the study seeks to understand the underlying cause of the prevailing circumstances. The study uses the literature gathered in the previous task. In order to understand why the issue is prevalent even though there has been literature and strategies to curb the stats of rape cases. The literature consulted disciplines such as social psychology, criminology and sociology to explore issues such as stigmatization of raped women, patriarchal forces, family and societal dynamics, access to health care and socio-economic challenges faced by women in the South African context.

5.1.3 Normative task

This seeks to understand the normal manner in which things were supposed to be in accordance with what God intended for humanity; this is discerned from scriptural passages. This task is about providing perspectives. This task has three approaches: theological interpretation, ethical reflection, and good practice. The following scriptures on rape were utilized to achieve this.

Old Testament verses

- 2 Samuel 13:1-38
- Deuteronomy 22:25-27
- Judges 19

New Testament verses

- Galatians 5:13-26
- Revelation 2:18-25

5.1.4 Pragmatic task

This task seeks to make recommendations and develop strategies to improve the prevalence of an unfavorable circumstance. This study integrated the wounded healer archetype with biblical scriptures to generate a strategy that can be utilized to curb the spread of rape cases across South African and to evoke healing among the survivors and victims.

6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION (NWU-00877-23-A6)

This dissertation consists solely of a literature study, and no empirical studies were conducted. The ethical risks are low given that the research ensured to reference all the resources cited in this dissertation; this was done according to the North West University referencing guide, and academic integrity is upheld. Furthermore, Grammarly, a writing assistant, was used to ensure the study is of high quality without clarity, grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.

7. PROPOSED STUDY OUTLINE

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Chapter 2: How is the state of GBV-rape in South Africa and what is the involvement of Christians and churches?

Chapter 3: What is the meaning of wounded healing within Christian perspective and its application to rape situations within the context of South Africa?

Chapter 4: What theological position can be developed theologically on the predicament of rape from scriptural sources?

Chapter 5: What strategic interventions could be implemented for effective wounded healing care application within the context of GBV-rape in South Africa?

Chapter 6: Recommendations and conclusions

CHAPTER 2

2. The state of GBV-rape in South Africa and the involvement of Christians and churches

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the state of gender-based-violence with specific interest to cases of raped women. In doing so, it seeks to understand the involvement of Christians and the Church in this predicament within the South African context. The exploration will be guided by the first task of Osmer's practical theology model, which is the descriptive task that asks the question "what is going on?" (Osmer, 2008:60). In asking this question, it describes and assesses the prevailing GBV circumstances in South Africa. This chapter will first; define and conceptualize GBV with a narrowed interest to cases of raped women. Second, it explores the causes of the prevalence of rape cases in South Africa and the impacts of such on victims. Third, it discusses the involvement of churches and Christians in addressing GBV or promoting it.

2.2 The definition and conceptualization of GBV with specific interest in rape cases

Javed and Chattu (2020:33) state that gender-based-violence and Violence Against Women are terms that can be used interchangeably. This is not done to disregard the men who also experience GBV, but to recognize and admit that it is mostly women who are affected. UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines gender-based violence as:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life ... Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following: physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family [and in the community], including battery, sexual abuse of female children ..., dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation ... sexual harassment and

intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution ... and violence ... perpetrated or condoned by the State.

Cotter and Savage (2019:9) add that GBV refers to any harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The definitions given by Javed and Chattu, and the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women are more focused on the perpetration of violence against women, as there has been more prevalence of women compared to men. However, Cotter and Savage's definition is accommodative of all genders. As asserted in the definition of GBV by the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, this violence can occur in different forms. This dissertation will lean more towards sexual violence as one of the forms. The focal point of this paper is cases of raped women, making it crucial to define sexual violence, focusing on rape. WHO (2000) defines sexual violence as

any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

According to Ndou (2019:14), prior to 2007 rape was considered a common law offence and was defined as a man engaging in unlawful and intentional sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent. The act should have constituted penetration of the female's sexual organ by that of a male. This definition had a lot of restrictions or flaws as it focused solely on women being victims, and it also excluded anal penetration as rape. The introduction of The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007 made a considerable difference to the definition of rape, it stated that it is "any person who unlawfully and intentionally commits an act of sexual penetration with another person without the latter's consent, is guilty of the offence of rape". Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (2007:20) defines rape as an act whereby

a person who unlawfully and intentionally commits an act of sexual penetration with a complainant, without that person's consent, is guilty of the offence of rape. Consent means voluntary and uncoerced agreement... This includes

where the complainant is incapable in law of appreciating the nature of sexual act, including the complainant is at the time of the commission of the sexual act a person with a mental disability.

This definition makes an important addition to the definition of rape that is overlooked in most cases. People living with mental disability are deemed incapable of making certain decisions, including giving consent to sexual activities, as their cognitive and reasoning capacity is low.

Scholars argue that GBV is not confined to people of certain economic status, educational level, or even geographical location (Easteal, 2011; Buqa, 2022; Zakrison et al., 2019; Banda, 2020). It is prevalent across diverse classes and areas of society. In the following section, the researcher discusses GBV globally, in Africa, and in South Africa.

GLOBAL

Gender-based violence can be considered a violation of human rights (WHO, 2021). This predicament is a global concern as it continues to penetrate societies.

WHO (2021) states that:

1 in 3, or 30%, of women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence or both. Over a quarter of women aged 15-49 years who have been in a relationship have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner at least once in their lifetime (since age 15).

The prevalence of GBV is also echoed by World Vision (2022), and it has always been a global concern; hence, in 1991, the Women's Global Leadership Institute initiated the 16 Days of Activism against GBV. This campaign is observed annually worldwide, yet the rates of GBV remain high. Bradbury-Jones *et al.* (2019) and Russo (2019) state that global GBV statistics do not show the exact extent of the prevalence of gender-based violence as it is under-reported. According to the World Bank (2021), globally 200 million women's genitals were mutilated, 38% of murders of women are experienced at the hands of their intimate partner, 35% of women have been sexually or

physically abused by their intimate partner, and 7% of women have experienced sexual assault by someone who is not their partner. The UN Women (2021) states that an estimated 81,000 girls and women were killed in 2020 globally; these females were killed by their partners and/or close family members. Asian Pacific Institute on gender-based-violence (2022) states that GBV makes it hard for girls and women to contribute meaningfully to the economy of their countries. In a study done in Asia, the prevalence of Intimate Partner (IP) violence is 35% higher than the global average.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) states that an estimated 8 million Australians have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15. Furthermore, 31% of women have experienced physical violence, and 22% of women have experienced sexual violence.

The World Bank (2022) states that 30% of women have experienced intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, which equates to 736 million women across the globe.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AROUND THE WORLD

- Sub-Saharan Africa
- South Asia
- Middle East & North Africa
- Latin America & Caribbean
- East Asia & Pacific
- Europe & Central Asia
- North America

% of women that have experienced IPV

the last 12 months
 ever

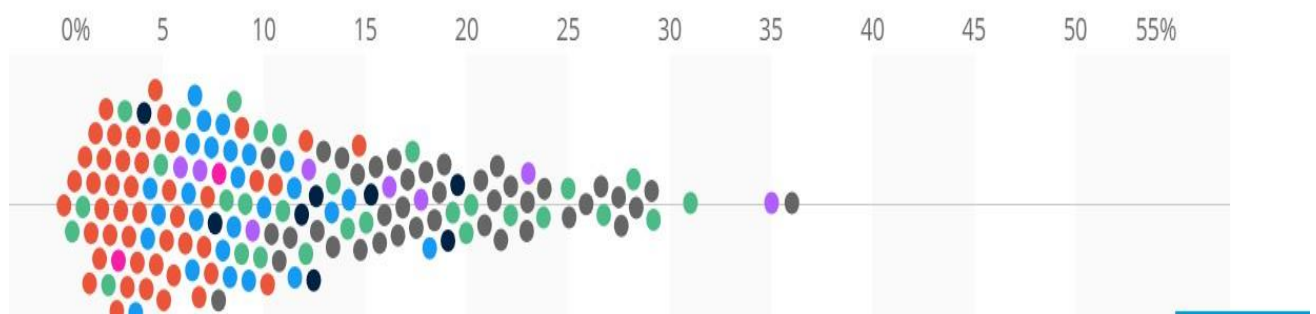


Figure 2.1: Intimate Partner Violence around the world (The World Bank:2022)

From the statistics and studies above, the researcher can observe that GBV, which is a violation of human rights, occurs in all continents across the globe. Violence against women is costly, yet there are still institutions that feed into it by downplaying it and denying its setbacks. Chronic pain, drugs and alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted infections and diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and depression are some of the health effects of gender-based-violence that women have to deal with; along with an eroded self-esteem and the victim blaming that society puts them through (Heise *et al* 2002:5). According to the UN Women (2021) the prevalence of Violence against women affects the empowerment of women and inhibits their ability to thrive in their academics, businesses and social lives. It is evident from the graph that women across the globe experience high rates of Intimate Partner Violence, with Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, and the Pacific in the lead. However, since the study is in Africa, our focus should turn there.

AFRICA

Women in developing countries are prone to GBV due to having less economic and social power (UN Women, 2021). World Vision (2022) adds that the driving factors of GBV range from:

perpetrator's sense of power, control and entitlement, gender-based stereotypes which contribute to inequality, drug abuse, cultural norms and traditions about masculinity and femininity and victim-blaming behaviors by the perpetrator.

Most African countries are rooted in cultural practices that subordinate women, hence making it easy for patriarchal practices that stem from those cultures to oppress women in all spheres (Hayhurst & del Socorro Cruz Centeno, 2019). In 2020, Gender-Based-Violence statistics increased drastically in African countries. Stevens *et al* (2021:2) say that in Kenya they experienced high rates of pregnant teenagers; this was a result of being raped by police officers or relatives. This was a result of the closing of schools and enforcing containment measures during the COVID-19 lockdown, as the daily lives of vulnerable teenagers were impacted.

Girls experiencing COVID-19 restrictions were twice as likely to report that their first sex was undesired, indicating a possible rise in sexual coercion. Studies have hypothesized that, during emergencies, increased economic strain may push girls to engage in sex in exchange for money or favours (Zulaika *et al*, 2022).

In Liberia a 50% increase of GBV was recorded in June; there were about 600 rape cases which had been reported. In South Africa, the SAPS stats revealed that a woman was murdered every three hours; this is one of the reasons President Cyril Ramaphosa said “the scourge of gender-based violence continues to stalk our country, as the men of our country declared war on the women”. Egbejule (2019) reports that in Nigeria a photographer broke her silence about her rape experience in the hands of a pastor, this resulted in #ChurchToo campaign which was aimed at churches to be accountable and not deny the GBV that is prevalent among congregations. However, the church sided with their pastor and claimed that the photographer was blackmailing the pastor. Furthermore, they threatened to sue her for defamation of character. Karl Barth advised pastors or church leaders to “preach with the Bible on one hand and the newspaper in the other”; this was to help them to align the scriptures read to the current context and to use scripture to address current matters, which is an aspect neglected in churches (Sinibaldo, 2015). Aligning our lives to the commands God has given is important as they help us live righteously, this ultimately means there will not be peaks of rape cases or broken people due to rape ordeals. South Africa is not exempt from church scandals involving church leaders; the Anglican Church of Southern Africa even resorted to asking potential pastors to produce a police clearance certificate before being ordained (Chambers, 2018).

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is one of the countries that has latent patriarchal domination, which makes it hard for females to freely practice and enjoy their human rights as there is still stigma on those who report GBV and worse for the raped women (Burris 2022:16). In a democratic country like South Africa, there are women are suppressed and do not enjoy their full rights. According to the constitution, Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights:

Everyone is equal before the law and has the rights to equal protection and benefit of the law. Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other

measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.

South Africa, as a democratic country, suggests that people should exercise their rights and responsibilities. Due to GBV, South Africa is considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world (Buqa 2022; Banda 2019; Enaifoghe *et al* 2021). This then makes it questionable as to what extent those rights, which are meant to protect people and promote life, are being practiced on a daily basis. Graaff and Heinecken (2017) state that South Africa has high rates of Gender-Based Violence for a country that is not at war. According to Mahabeer (2021:29), South Africa is known as a rape-capital globally. Crime Stats SA (2022) recorded a total of 241 337 rape, 43177 sexual assault, 12 109 attempted sexual offences, and 7 287 contact sexual offences cases for the past four years. These stats account for reported cases, yet it should be noted that there are cases that are not reported due to the stigma that clings to cases associated with female genitalia.

In a country that is deemed to have freedom, the stats recorded by Crime Stats SA are alarming and they have evoked a lot of fear, mainly in women within the country. Men are not disregarded in being afraid of these crimes, but it is primarily women who are affected, hence they are the focal point of this study.

Gender-based-violence, especially rape cases are rooted in the gender inequalities that are present in the country. Sibanda and Maposa (2013:143) state that women are subjected to unequal practices within their families, cultures, societies, and churches. These contribute to the prevalence of GBV cases in the country. Literature suggests an agreement between researchers that practices such as virginity testing, ho shobedisa (to carry off a girl for the purpose of marriage), go gapa (to capture), ukuthwala (abducting a female and forcing her into marriage) and lobola (dowry) continue to be the driving factors in making men feel entitled to women and perpetuate GBV (Ansell, 2001:10; Sibanda & Msibi, 2016:8-9; Magezi & Manzanga, 2019:3). Women in most African cultures and religions are conditioned that they are inferior to men, hence they would even opt for not reporting cases such as intimate partner rape, as they may seem deviant and disrespectful in the eyes of the society or church (Damron & Johnson, 2015:29).

Infringement of human rights is a crime, and we should not turn a blind eye as it shows condonement of such practice and it will not cease to occur. In a democratic South Africa same-sex relationships are legal. However, there is still prevalence of corrective

rape in the society. According to Koraan and Geduld (2015:1931)

“Corrective” rape refers to an instance when a woman is raped in order to “cure” her of her lesbianism. In the last 15 years there have been at least 31 murders linked with lesbianism and an average of 10 lesbians are raped per week to “correct” their sexual preferences.

The researcher is of the view that in a patriarchal-driven society, if it encounters any form of practice that threatens the norm, it will be eliminated. Hlongwane (2016:3) states that anti-lesbianism has been a real practice in this country. Furthermore, argues that there is a need for closer analysis of the existing legislative framework in order to assess if lesbian women require further protection than they are getting. Allinder and Fleischman (2019) state that South Africa is an epicenter of HIV/AIDS; this is no surprise due to the stats that show the prevalence of sexually related crimes in this country is always at high rates. As mentioned above, we live in communities whereby some mischievous trends are applauded; then this makes it difficult for females to report cases such as rape, probably not even seek medical attention after the encounter due to the stigmas which then makes it a leading factor in HIV rates. According to Hillstrom (2018:2), being a victim of GBV especially rape, one would require some level of comfort and surety of safety. However, women get to be asked humiliating questions such as “What were you wearing?”, “Did you scream?”, “Did you fight back?” or “Were you drunk?” Hlongwane (2016:25) argues that the continuous increase in rape cases suggests that there is a flaw in strategies utilized by the law enforcement services that fails to set an example of required standards. The researcher partially agrees with the statement by Hlongwane, yet it should be noted that when an officer is on duty, the way they choose to act might not portray the ethical standards that are set for their profession. Hence, we have police officers and judges who discriminate against GBV victims, or might go to the extent of accusing them of “victim-blaming” for fabricating the story, and this is mostly shaped by the worldview that the individual carries (Ahrens, 2007:263).

According to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (2021), all victims should be treated with the necessary respect, empathy, and professionalism. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, South Africa has several initiatives aimed at

curbing GBV and those that support people who have already experienced Gender-Based-Violence such as: Skhokho Supporting Success, GBV Command Centre,

People Opposed to Woman Abuse (POWA), Families South Africa (FAMSA), and other centers. As some initiatives are for pre-exposure to GBV, as no one is immune to it, this predicament is in a country that has been rated as one of the most dangerous in the world; others are for post-exposure. These are efforts to encourage people to report GBV ordeals and to also cope post the ordeal. It is crucial to establish what causes the prevalence in rape cases in the South African context, even though some strategies have been implemented with the aim of curbing the increasing stats which is the focal point of the subsequent section.

2.3 The causes of the prevalence in rape cases in South Africa

Ngubane *et al* (2022:4-9) present five themes that account to the prevalence of rape in South Africa. The researcher will utilize the themes as an outline of the discussion of the causes of rape.

First, it is childhood traumas and adverse events. The manner in which children are nurtured contributes to their conduct as adults. Being exposed to certain situations that are traumatic can result in unacceptable behaviour. Children who grew up in a society that has a prevalence in crime are likely to engage in crime as adults and the same goes for rape.

Second, it is understanding rape. There is a misconception of what constitutes to rape. Consent can be withdrawn during actions leading to an intercourse and any coercion that might follow is considered rape. Ngubane *et al* (2022:7) states some perpetrators engaged in rape as they slept with a minor as they were “unaware of the legal definition of statutory rape”. Furthermore, they believed that their victims had no problem with the act. However, the parents were the ones who had a problem.

Third, it is substance abuse. Some people tend to be reckless when intoxicated, which could result in undesired situations. The excessive use of intoxicating substances may result in people being harmful to each other, as it impairs one’s ability to see when they are acting in an antisocial manner.

Fourth, it is gender roles and avoiding responsibility. Patriarchal practices in different cultures have given men the power to oppress women in different spheres, including marriage. There is an entitlement aspect whereby they believe sex is their marital right, as they paid a dowry for their wife.

Lastly, it is recidivism. Condonement of crimes and minimal punishment given to perpetrators makes it possible for them to commit multiple crimes. In South Africa, there are several cases where a person has been convicted after committing more than two crimes, which suggests that the ineffectiveness of law enforcement contributes to high crime rates, as perpetrators are not convicted on time. According to Hassim (2009:463), South Africa is one of the countries with a liberal constitution and laws; however, these laws are not effectively implemented due to limiting factors, including politics and cultural practices.

2.3.1 Current trends on crime and sexual offences in South Africa

Having a country where males, females, black, colored, Indian, and white live together in unity with the spirit of Ubuntu, as envisioned when the Bill of Rights was put into effect, continues to be a fairy tale; the crime stats from SAPS and Stats SA can support this statement.

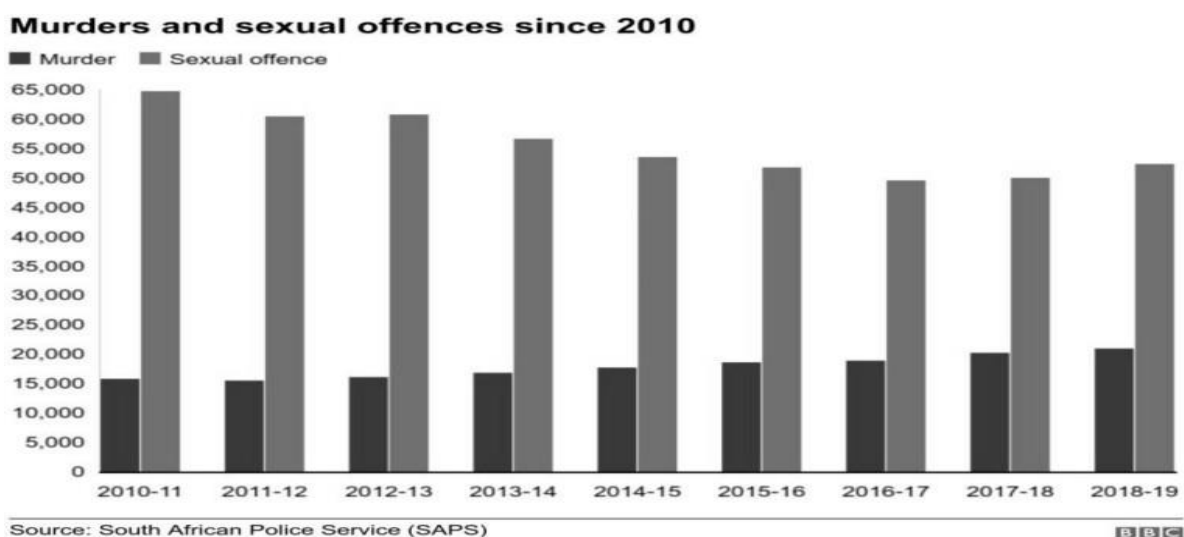


Figure 2.2: Murders and sexual offences since 2010 (SAPS, 2019)

The focal point of this study is on gender-based-violence with a specific focus on cases of raped women; as mentioned earlier in this study this does not disregard that the men also experience GBV. However, statistics show a prevalence of GBV towards women. The graph above shows that 50,000 women experienced sexually related offences in 2018-2019. Statistics SA recorded sexual offence cases as follows: 69% in 2018/19, 59.9% in 2019/20, 88.7% in 2020/21, and 90.0% in 2021/22. The statistics are alarming, as one would expect a decrease in cases, with all the national strategies that have been put into place to curb the spread of GBV-related crime.

WOMEN EXPERIENCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE BY PARTNER BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

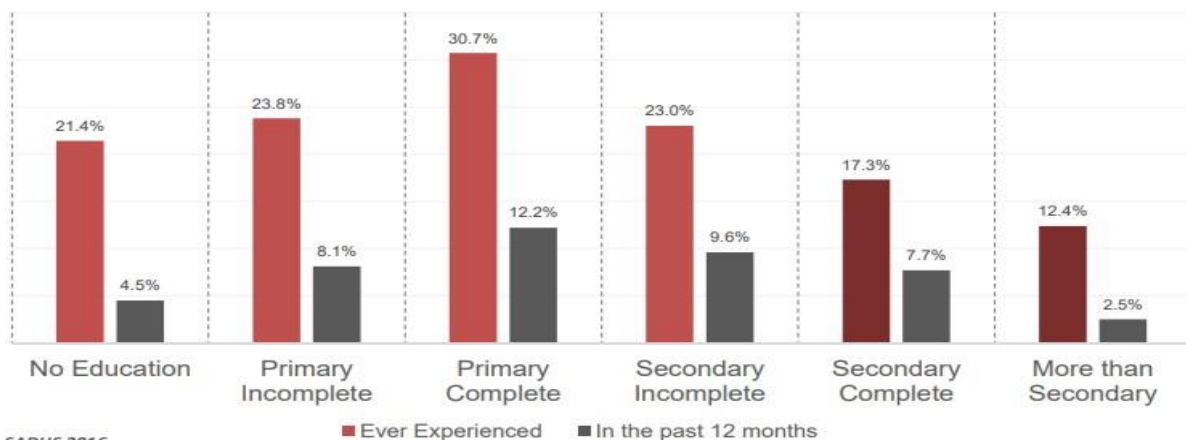


Figure 1.3: Experience of physical violence by any partner, women 18+ years by educational attainment

It is evident from the graph that less educated women are prone to physical violence by their partners. According to Branson *et al* (2014:8), teenage pregnancies in South Africa are one of the leading factors contributing to high rates of dropping out of school by girls. It is easier for literate women to detect violent behaviours within relationships and probably act on them, in comparison to those who do not have a good academic background, who are dependent on their partner; most violent behaviours are accepted, as they might not have any other forms of survival. The graph shows that the more educated the women are, the less physical violence they will experience. Recently, there has been a trend among South African women of “Indoda Must”, which translates to “A man must”. This kind of mentality has proven the statement by Damron and Johnson (2015:29) that society conditions women to be dependent on men;

females have set standards of what they expect from their male counterparts. This has resulted in men who can reach that expected standard having a sense of ownership over the woman they may be dating; as they are providing for them.

CRIMES STATISTICS IN SOUTH AFRICA FROM 2012-2022

CRIME CATEGORY	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	Count Diff	% Change
CONTACT CRIMES (CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON)												
Murder	16 213	17 023	17 805	18 673	19 016	20 336	21 022	21 325	19 972	25 181	5 209	26,1%
Sexual Offences	60 888	56 680	53 617	51 895	49 660	50 108	52 420	53 293	46 214	52 694	6 480	14,0%
Attempted murder	16 236	16 989	17 537	18 127	18 205	18 233	18 980	18 635	18 707	22 095	3 388	18,1%
Assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily ha	185 050	182 333	182 556	182 933	170 616	167 352	170 979	166 720	143 393	162 842	19 449	13,6%
Common assault	171 653	166 081	161 486	164 958	156 450	156 243	162 012	165 494	149 442	169 963	20 521	13,7%
Common robbery	53 196	53 505	54 927	54 110	53 418	50 730	51 765	51 825	37 648	41 600	3 952	10,5%
Robbery with aggravating circumstances	105 488	118 963	129 045	132 527	140 956	138 364	140 032	143 990	119 841	132 788	12 947	10,8%
Total Contact Crimes (Crimes Against The Person)	608 724	611 574	616 973	623 223	608 321	601 366	617 210	621 282	535 217	607 163	71 946	13,4%

Table 1.1: Crimes statistics in South Africa from 2012-2022 (SAPS, 2022)

In a country that has become violent with high rates of crime, one could argue that feeling safe is a thing of the past. As the citizen's adrenaline should always be fueled for a fight or flight mode. Feelings of safety have been declining and most people do not feel safe walking alone (Stats SA, 2023). Statistics SA recorded that the feeling of safety during the day in rural areas declined from 70,4% to 65,2% in 2021/22.

COMMON SEXUAL OFFENCES AND THEIR PREVALENCE FROM 2012-2022

CRIME CATEGORY	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	Count Diff	% Change
CONTACT CRIMES (CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON)												
Total Sexual Offences												
Rape	48 408	45 349	43 195	41 503	39 828	40 035	41 583	42 289	36 330	41 739	5 409	14,9%
Sexual Assault	6 967	6 597	6 087	6 212	6 271	6 786	7 437	7 749	7 025	7 798	773	11,0%
Attempted Sexual Offences	3 293	2 913	2 641	2 573	2 073	2 066	2 146	2 076	1 800	2 027	227	12,6%
Contact Sexual Offences	2 220	1 821	1 694	1 607	1 488	1 221	1 254	1 179	1 059	1 130	71	6,7%
Total Sexual Offences	60 888	56 680	53 617	51 895	49 660	50 108	52 420	53 293	46 214	52 694	6 480	14,0%

Table 2.2: Common Sexual Offences and their prevalence in South Africa from 2012-2022 (SAPS, 2022)

Reported cases increased by 5409 cases from 2020 to 2022 in South Africa. The SAPS Stats only show a fraction of the sexual offences that occur in the country as other people choose not to report due to the stigma and the lack of strength to endure the journey to the courts.

2.4 Involvement of churches and Christians in GBV cases

The subordination and marginalization of women has been practiced mainly within churches for the longest time, which some studies believe it comes from the patriarchal nature of some practices in churches (Buqa, 2022:4). Chisale (2020:2) states that women make up most of the population of the church, however there are less women in leadership positions in the church. The congregation is comprised of both males and females who face numerous challenges on a daily basis, and it is essential for the church's leadership (elders) to understand these challenges in order to provide support and offer effective solutions. According to Weed (s.a.:1)

Pastors tend to ignore domestic violence if they can. Having been a pastor before I became a chaplain, I understand why, remembering my own discomfort. I felt unsure of what to do and fearful of making a bad situation worse. It was so easy to do nothing.

This statement somehow goes against what God expects from elders of the church, which is to care, support and pray for troubled people as stated in James 5:14 "14. Is

Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.” Weed (s.a.: 4) states that churches still deny the existence of GBV within their congregations, which means the church does not adequately practice what God has intended for it. According to Magezi and Manzanga (2019:7), it is crucial to understand the church and its functions to society, as this will enhance the understanding of its mission on earth. Magezi and Manzanga (2019:7) citing Louw (1998:70)

the church forms a context in which the gospel can be mediated and realized. As an embodiment of koinonia and of the fellowship of believers, the congregation forms the context in which pastoral encounter can take place. Encounter means the communication process that takes place between God and humanity within a real situation where they discover meaning through faith and guided by scripture. Pastoral encounter is humane and contextual.

The church should not disregard the real-life situations of its congregations, as it should exist in the context of its congregants (believers). It is statistically evident that GBV is prevalent in South Africa; church leaders need to look into their congregations to realize this. However, not all churches deny the existence of this global predicament; some churches have even gone to the extent of calling for the re-interpretation of certain scriptures which seem to be promoting GBV (Banda, 2020:3).

Chitando and Chirongoma (2013:11) state that Christ should be imitated in church communities at all times, as that will show the true reflection of the image of God. Christian virtues urge believers to invite people into the house of the Lord, in that congregants should be willing to support one another in times of need, such as during GBV, in the context of this study.

In the context of South Africa, there have been cases of church leaders who were involved in GBV, which makes them active participants in the promotion of GBV in the society.

- Case 1: Bafomba William Emeka: He was found guilty of 19 counts of rape and three counts of sexual assault; he executed this by claiming to “bless” the women (Evans, 2021).

- Case 2: A preacher from one of the largest churches in the country appeared in the Grahamstown Magistrate's Court on Monday for allegedly raping a 12-year-old (Dayimani, 2023).
- Case 3: The case against a Katlehong pastor accused of sexually grooming boys had to be postponed after he was not brought before court from prison (Dlamini, 2022).
- Case 4: Three children were allegedly raped by a pastor who lured them with money and then threatened to kill them if they exposed him (Tshwete, 2023).

Oliver (2011:1) and Brade (2009) argue that religious affiliations should challenge people's behavior; the need to do introspection can never be overemphasized, as people will guard their actions so as not to participate in gender-based violence. Furthermore, the church should not be quiet towards GBV, as that may seem as if they are condoning it, and it must avoid saying "Amen" to questionable religious practices that do not portray God. Case 2 is an example of such

Majola said he was in disbelief that members of the girl's church did not show up in court – and that the church had not issued a statement to condemn the alleged incident. "I also expected them to come out in numbers in support of the victim. Their silence is shocking. They are not distancing themselves [from the accused] or openly showing support to the victim," said Majola (Dayimani, 2023).

One then wonders if the unethical behaviors by church leaders could somehow be perpetuated by the misinterpretation of scriptures that men are superior to women. Patriarchal practices are traceable in religious practices, which then influence the manner in which scripture is interpreted to support such. Ingwani (2013:83) states that how practices have been done in churches should change and this could be done by preaching with a new voice, liberational preaching that do not condone any form of GBV perpetuated by the patriarchal interpretation of scripture and liberating victims of gender-based-violence by allowing them to have a voice and not be silenced by the stigma that is clinging to GBV victims and survivors. Hendriks (2007:1004) recommends that Christians and churches could aim to understand the stance of Gods' mind regarding men and women, which could lead to better understanding of the Bible and this will result in women being treated with honor in churches. In South Africa, the theology in churches is influenced by cultural practices because we are born within cultures and get to choose our religions. Hence, they

overlap. Vast cultures in this country are in support of patriarchal practices. The overlap of culture and religion results in such practices being in the church and are normalized, yet most of them are questionable because they seem to condone ungodly behaviors such as GBV.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter mainly focused on exploring the state of gender-based-violence with specific interest to cases of raped women. From the literature that has been consulted, it is evident that GBV is a global challenge that violates the human rights of both men and women; however, women experience high rates of GBV compared to men. Gender-based-violence has been prevalent in South Africa. Researchers state that there are leading factors that feed into GBV, such as inequality between men and women, which is a result of factors from family and society dynamics, finances, education, culture, and religion. It was also observed that some churches and Christians are on board with the fight against GBV. However, literature suggests that there is still a considerable number of Churches and Christians who deny the existence of GBV, which makes it difficult for fellow believers who experience it to seek support at church. Considering that there is denial of GBV within churches, yet it is a phenomenon that leaves victims and survivors broken or wounded; emerging questions could be: what is the meaning of wounded healing within Christian perspective and how could the notion of wounded healing be applied to rape situations within the context of South Africa?

CHAPTER 3

3. The meaning of wounded healing within Christian perspective and its application to rape situations within the context of South Africa

3.1 Introduction

Human beings encounter numerous challenges in life, many of which result in significant suffering (Dykstra, 2005; Magezi, 2007; McClure, 2010). Some of these challenges or traumatic experiences leave lasting emotional, spiritual, or physical wounds that necessitate healing. However, accessing the necessary support for healing can be difficult. In response, some individuals who have experienced profound suffering make their woundedness available as a source of healing for others. This raises critical questions about the therapeutic potential of brokenness. While the concept of the wounded healer has been widely acknowledged as a significant approach to healing, a fundamental question remains: How can individuals who themselves require support extend care to others and achieve mutual healing, particularly in the context of rape in South Africa?

The previous chapter demonstrated the prevalence of rape in South Africa and examined the various strategies employed by different stakeholders to address this crisis. However, despite these efforts, a significant number of churches continue to deny the existence of gender-based violence (GBV), making it difficult for survivors to seek support within their faith communities (Manzanga, 2020). Given this reality, and recognizing that rape leaves victims and survivors deeply wounded, this chapter explores the notion of wounded healing from a Christian perspective and its applicability to rape survivors in South Africa. Theological perspectives and interdisciplinary insights from social psychology, criminology, and sociology inform this exploration.

3.2 Wounded healing

The concept of the wounded healer is rooted in ancient mythology and psychological theory. Historically, the figure of Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, symbolized the idea that those who have endured suffering possess a unique ability to facilitate the healing of others (Risse, 2015:5). In modern psychology, the term was popularized by

Carl Jung argued that personal suffering and wounds can become transformative tools in helping others heal (Sedgwick, 1994:25). According to Jung, a healer's own wounds, rather than being solely detrimental, can foster a profound sense of empathy, allowing them to deeply connect with those undergoing similar experiences.

This concept raises significant academic and practical questions. How does personal suffering shape one's ability to provide care for others? To what extent can the wounded healer archetype be considered a practical psychological and pastoral healing framework? Additionally, how does this concept align with broader theories of trauma and recovery? These questions are particularly relevant in contexts where individuals have experienced severe trauma, such as rape and gender-based violence (GBV), as they highlight the potential for healing within communities of survivors.

Understanding Jung's background provides insight into his development of the wounded healer archetype. Born in Switzerland into a deeply religious family, Jung was significantly influenced by his father, a clergyman, and by the psychological struggles he witnessed within his own household (DeLong, 2020:2). His mother's battles with mental illness, coupled with his own experiences of bullying and social isolation, contributed to his deep interest in human suffering and the psychological mechanisms of healing. These early experiences played a crucial role in shaping his later work on the unconscious mind and therapeutic processes.

Jung's intellectual trajectory was shaped by his formal education and personal encounters with suffering. He studied medicine at the University of Basel, where he developed a strong interest in psychiatry and the treatment of mental disorders. His engagement with parapsychology, religious studies, and analytical psychology further distinguished him from his contemporaries, as he sought to bridge the gap between science and spirituality (Maraldi & Fernandes, 2018:4). His belief in the interconnectedness of the mind, body, and spirit influenced his theoretical development of the wounded healer, emphasizing that healers themselves must acknowledge and integrate their wounds in order to facilitate the healing of others.

Jung's contributions to psychology were extensive, spanning psychotherapy, dream analysis, and analytical psychology (Maraldi & Fernandes, 2018:12). His theory of archetypes proposed that human experiences are shaped by universal symbols and patterns embedded in the collective unconscious. Within this framework, the wounded

healer emerged as a key figure, representing an individual whose own suffering enables them to assist others in their healing process.

The application of this concept extends beyond clinical psychology to fields such as pastoral care, trauma counselling, and spiritual formation. In pastoral settings, the wounded healer archetype is particularly relevant, as many clergy members and pastoral caregivers draw upon their personal experiences of suffering to provide compassionate care for others. However, this raises critical questions regarding the ethical implications of wounded healers working with vulnerable populations. To what extent can a healer's unresolved trauma affect their ability to support others? How can institutions ensure that wounded healers receive the necessary support to prevent further harm to themselves and those they seek to help?

3.2.1 What is a wounded healer?

The concept of the wounded healer has been widely discussed in theological, psychological, and pastoral care literature. Scholars such as Dykstra (2005), Nouwen (1972), Sedgwick (1994), and Espring (2014) have provided extensive insights into how wounded healing serves as a model for care, particularly in counselling, pastoral ministry, and therapeutic settings. While these scholars approach the concept from different angles, a common thread in their work is the idea that personal suffering and woundedness, when acknowledged and processed, can become a source of healing and transformation for others.

Espring (2014:377) offers a particularly detailed understanding of the wounded healer, describing such an individual as someone who possesses the capacity to educate, minister, and mentor others by drawing on the wisdom gained from personal experiences of suffering. This perspective aligns with the broader psychological understanding of wounded healing, where past pain is not only a liability but also a potential tool for deep empathy, insight, and healing (Espring, 2014:377). According to Espring, this process is effective because it fosters sensitivity and empathy, which are essential qualities in care-related professions. The personal suffering of the wounded healer equips them with a profound understanding of pain and loss, which enables them to relate to the struggles of others in meaningful and transformative ways.

Nouwen (1972) provides a seminal contribution to the wounded healer discourse. He emphasizes that a wounded healer is one who does not hide their wounds but rather exposes their vulnerability as a means of ministering to others (Nouwen, 1972:4). This idea challenges the conventional notion that caregivers must always be emotionally invulnerable or distant. Instead, Nouwen argues that true healing comes from shared vulnerability, where both the healer and the wounded engage in a mutual process of healing. His well-known assertion that “the great illusion of leadership is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there” (Nouwen, 1972:83) underscores the belief that authentic leadership and healing require first-hand experience of suffering.

This perspective has significant implications for pastoral care, where ministers, counsellors, and caregivers often encounter individuals experiencing deep emotional and spiritual wounds. Nouwen's model suggests that rather than presenting themselves as flawless guides, caregivers should acknowledge their own struggles as a way of fostering connection and healing. This aligns with contemporary psychological approaches that emphasize peer support, shared experiences, and relational healing as key aspects of recovery from trauma (Espring, 2014:379).

The concept of the wounded healer was also deeply explored by Carl Jung, who introduced the idea of the "wounded physician" in psychotherapy. Jung's personal experiences of suffering, particularly his struggles with mental health and his attempts to understand his mother's mental illness, played a significant role in shaping his theories. According to Espring (2014:379), Jung's early exposure to religious teachings led him to initially seek theological explanations for suffering. However, when he found these explanations insufficient, he turned to medicine and psychology to explore the roots of mental illness and healing.

Jung believed that many individuals enter the field of psychology due to their own personal suffering (Espring, 2014:379). This claim is supported by research showing that many therapists and counsellors are drawn to their profession due to personal experiences with trauma or mental health struggles, which shape their desire to help others (Espring, 2014:379). This perspective suggests that wounded healing is not just a theoretical concept but a lived reality for many professionals in caregiving roles. Jung's notion of the wounded physician proposes that those who have endured and

processed their own suffering can be more effective in treating others, as they possess both intellectual knowledge and deep, personal empathy.

According to Espring (2014:379), psychologists of the twenty-first century are driven into the field by their own personal suffering. Jung might have tried to understand his mother's pathological illness from a religious point of view as he grew up in a religious family, but when he did not get adequate answers, he then ventured into medicine to broaden this understanding. Espring (2014:379) states that Jung suffered from some mental illness as well; this could have served as a reason that led him to develop the notion of "wounded physician".

Dykstra (2005:77) notes that a wounded healer "binds his own wounds carefully in anticipation of the moment when he will be needed. Furthermore, he/she must look after his/her own wounds and be prepared to heal the wounds of others." Dykstra (2005:77) looks at aspects of the wounded minister and the healing minister. According to Dykstra (2005:77), a wounded minister is always ready to help other wounded people as he is continually binding his wounds, so when the time comes to help others, he will be ready.

Jesus has given this story a new fullness by making his own broken body the way to health, to liberation and new life. Thus, like Jesus, he who proclaims liberation is called not only to care for his own wounds and the wounds of others, but also to make his wounds into a major source of his healing power (Dykstra, 2005:77).

From various definitions of wounded healing given above, it is evident that there is no uniform definition for this notion. However, there is a common thread that runs through all definitions given by scholars. Firstly, Espring, Nouwen, and Dykstra all agree that suffering or experiencing certain bad situations qualifies an individual to be seen as wounded if those situations have affected the person negatively. Secondly, one has to learn some life lessons during the dark times or times of turmoil. Lastly, the wounded person should be willing to utilize the lessons or wisdom gained to help others who are going through similar challenges, and they should be prepared to show vulnerability during the process, which will eventually result in mutual healing. For this

dissertation, the researcher will link all the aspects stated and use it as a single definition.

Scholars like Marchinkowski (2023), Ford (2002), and McCullough (2022) contend that Nouwen was compelled by the wounded healer notion when he realized it in the lives of two mentors who were of interest to him, namely, Anton Boisen and Vincent van Gogh.

Nouwen chose Anton Boisen as the subject of his doctoral research in Psychology. That is when he learned that Boisen was struggling with mental health problems. However, this aspect helped him understand pastoral care differently from those who had not been in a vulnerable state. Marchinkowski (2023:2) mentions that Boisen approached his patients as living documents. People tend to have long-term effects from traumas because they try to find meaning, understanding, and validation of their experiences. According to Marchinkowski (2023:3), Anton Boisen was Nouwen's first wounded healer, as he had a broken and troubled life that did not hinder him from utilizing those wounds to heal other people. Boisen's methodologies changed Nouwen's perspective when looking at wounded people. Nouwen saw their belovedness and beauty as children of God and not just as brokenness.

Penkett (2019:39) mentions that Van Gogh had his wounds, which were psychotic episodes, anguish, and loneliness. He expressed his woundedness through art, which Nouwen related to, and Van Gogh became his wounded healer. According to Marchinkowski (2023:4), the theme that unifies Nouwen and Van Gogh is compassion. Marchinkowski (2023:5) states that it is not known what exactly caused Nouwen's wounds as there are several aspects that could be considered, such as "strained relationship with his father in early life, or his repressed homosexuality, or the effects of the Jansenist flavor of the Catholicism in which he grew up". According to Marchinkowski (2023:5) Nouwen utilized his own wounds to foster transformation in other people's lives.

3.2.2 Elements of the wounded healing

Reading literature on the wounded healer reveals five elements that make it unique. The following is a brief discussion of those elements.

First, it is experience. People tend to become wounded healers due to their personal experiences. These experiences are often marked by suffering, hardship, or deep personal struggles that later shape their approach to healing others. The notion that suffering can be transformed into a source of wisdom and healing is central to the concept of the wounded healer. This idea is exemplified in the life and work of Anton Boisen, a pioneering figure in clinical pastoral education. Boisen struggled with severe mental health problems, which led to several hospitalizations. However, instead of viewing his struggles as purely negative or debilitating, he interpreted them as a search for meaning, understanding, and validation. Boisen believed that each time he experienced a breakdown, he was not merely suffering from an illness but was engaging in an existential and spiritual struggle that had the potential to reveal more profound truths about human suffering and healing.

Boisen's experiences were not only formative for him but also became the foundation for his work in pastoral theology. He developed an approach to theological education that emphasized the importance of real-life experiences in understanding and ministering to those in distress. His model encouraged clergy and caregivers to study human experiences, particularly those of people undergoing crises, as essential sources of theological and pastoral insight. According to Higgins and Burns (2012:387), Boisen utilized his personal experiences to develop a “therapeutic alliance among clergy, health professionals, and patients; and his realization that the struggle for wholeness through one’s vulnerabilities and wounds and not despite them is a mode of spiritual wisdom.” This perspective challenges the traditional notion that healers or caregivers must be completely whole without struggles. Instead, it suggests that true healing can emerge from a place of brokenness, where the healer's wounds become a bridge for understanding and connecting with others’ suffering.

Boisen's work underscores the profound connection between personal suffering and the ability to empathize with and support others. His legacy continues to influence contemporary pastoral care, particularly in clinical settings where chaplains and pastoral caregivers are encouraged to integrate their personal experiences into their caregiving roles. This approach fosters deeper empathy and enhances the effectiveness of care, as wounded healers can offer insights that arise from firsthand encounters with suffering. The idea that experience transforms individuals into

wounded healers is thus a crucial element in understanding the unique role they play in pastoral care, counseling, and other forms of caregiving.

Second, it is the frame of reference. Taking a step in the direction of healing can be daunting and lonely, as individuals often struggle to navigate their pain and find meaning in their suffering. A frame of reference provides a guiding perspective, reassuring that healing is possible and that one's experiences, no matter how painful, can contribute to growth and transformation. Having such a reference point can serve as a source of strength and motivation, reminding individuals that while suffering is accurate, it is not insurmountable.

Henri Nouwen, a well-known advocate of the wounded healer concept, found inspiration in the lives of Anton Boisen and Vincent van Gogh, both of whom experienced deep personal struggles but transformed their suffering into something meaningful. Nouwen identified with their pain and resilience, recognizing them as his wounded healers (Penkett 2019:29; Higgins & Burns 2012:387). By reflecting on their journeys, he was able to understand his woundedness in a way that fostered healing, both for himself and others. This illustrates the importance of having role models or sources of inspiration demonstrating how suffering can be channeled into acts of healing and service.

Third, it is sharing. This element is crucial because when individuals share their pain and struggles, they create opportunities for more profound empathy and connection. Sharing fosters a sense of mutual understanding and solidarity, breaking down barriers of isolation that often accompany suffering. When people openly express their wounds, they unburden themselves and allow others to relate to their experiences, making healing a shared and communal process rather than an individual struggle.

Lutz (2009:4) emphasizes the inherent connectedness of humanity, describing people as beings of "blood and bone, idealism and suffering." He further argues that despite our differences—faith, culture, social status, or race—we remain part of one shared human experience. Whether wealthy or underprivileged, oppressed or free, superior or inferior, all people are ultimately branches of the same tree of humanity. This interconnectedness makes it possible, and even natural, for individuals to share in the suffering of their fellow brothers and sisters.

In the context of wounded healing, sharing becomes a transformative process, as it not only validates the pain of those who suffer but also allows them to see that they are not alone. This shared experience fosters a sense of belonging and creates a support system where healing becomes a collective journey rather than an isolated struggle. Through sharing, wounded healers not only acknowledge their pain but also become instruments of comfort and restoration for others, reinforcing the idea that healing is most effective when it occurs in the community.

Fourth, it is an ultimate example. Jesus Christ serves as the ultimate model of a wounded healer, demonstrating how suffering can be transformed into a source of healing for others. His life and ministry exemplify the way in which personal pain, when embraced with faith and purpose, can become a means of restoration for those who are broken. For individuals seeking healing, Jesus provides both a theological and practical framework for navigating suffering and extending compassion to others.

One of the most profound moments illustrating Jesus' wounded healing is found in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36–46). In this passage, Jesus prays to the Father, expressing deep anguish and a desire to be spared from suffering, yet ultimately submits to God's will. His experience highlights the reality that pain and distress are part of the human condition, but they can also be brought before God in prayer and surrender. Just as Jesus sought divine strength in the face of suffering, people today—especially those who have endured profound wounds such as rape and gender-based violence—are encouraged to turn to God for healing and guidance.

Rowdon (2002:227) affirms that Jesus led by example in His ministry, setting a precedent for His followers to emulate. Since Christians are called to imitate Christ, they are likewise urged to lead by example in fostering healing, offering comfort, and guiding others towards wholeness. This imitation of Christ's wounded healing is not only a spiritual practice but also a call to action, encouraging believers to transform their own suffering into a source of support and restoration for those around them. In doing so, they embody the redemptive power of wounded healing, just as Christ did, by walking alongside those in pain and facilitating the process of healing and renewal.

Lastly, it is ongoing healing. The concept of the wounded healer acknowledges that healing is not always immediate or complete; for some, it may take a lifetime to process and recover from deep wounds. Rather than seeing healing as a final destination,

wounded healing is an evolving process, where individuals continue to navigate their pain while simultaneously supporting others in their own healing journeys. This mutual healing occurs when one wounded individual avail their own wounds to help another, creating a space where both can grow, heal, and find renewed strength together.

Nouwen (1979:94) highlights this dynamic, stating, “A Christian community is therefore a healing community not because wounds are healed and pains alleviated, but because wounds and pains become openings or occasions for new vision. Mutual confession then becomes mutual deepening of hope, and sharing of weakness becomes one and all of the coming strength.” This perspective shifts the focus from merely eradicating suffering to transforming it into a source of deeper connection, wisdom, and resilience. Within this framework, healing does not mean returning to a pre-trauma state but rather developing new ways of understanding, coping, and finding meaning in suffering.

This ongoing nature of wounded healing is particularly significant in the context of trauma, such as rape and gender-based violence. Survivors often carry their wounds for years, if not a lifetime, and full restoration may never be entirely possible. However, by engaging in mutual healing—whether through sharing experiences, supporting others, or drawing from their pain to advocate for justice and healing—they participate in a process of continuous transformation. This approach fosters a sense of belonging and community, ensuring that no one suffers in isolation. Instead, their wounds become a source of connection, strengthening both the individual and the wider community in their collective pursuit of healing and wholeness.

3.3 Wounded healing in Pastoral Care

It is essential to understand what pastoral care is before attempting to understand how the notion of wounded healing functions within our churches and communities. Magezi (2007:657) defines pastoral care as the following.

The term pastoral refers to the support system of the *communio sanctorum* (mutual care), which has as its main goals: the development of faith, the enhancement of Christian spirituality and empowerment of parishioners’ faith by conveying organically the fulfilled promises of the gospel. An organic approach interprets the gospel within the actual relationships, contexts, and life

issues. The story of salvation is linked to the story of parishioners' struggle, agony and suffering.

Magezi (2007) asserts that the pastoral aspect of ministry unifies us in Christ, creating a support structure for fellow brethren. He further contends that this support structure seeks to develop faith and enhance the spirituality of Christians by communicating the fulfilled promises of the gospel. The scripture that carries promises from God is interpreted in accordance with different contexts of people, which encompasses their daily challenges and suffering. The concern that fellow Christians have for each other, which drives them to care for one another as God cares for humanity, can result in befriending.

Varah (1978:22) expresses that warmth and care are synonymous, so it can be called befriending. Listening, acceptance, understanding, and empathy are elements found within befriending a person. Fakoya *et al* (2021:2) adds that befriending is a way that can be employed to combat loneliness and isolation, which are some of the challenges that women who have gone through rape ordeal struggle with. The above understanding of care does not restrict it to the borders of Christianity only. However, it is a generic responsibility of people to one another. Care is a human attitude towards people in distress; hence, it is expected of us as members of society. There are different types of care, yet for this dissertation, we will only focus on one branch of Christian care, which is pastoral care.

Pastoral care is a branch of practical theology, which integrates theory, theology and practice for spiritual healing within faith communities (McClure, 2011:269-270). Pastoral care is derived from the Latin word *Pastorem*, which means a shepherd whose goal is to help people navigate life challenges and grow in faith (McClure, 2011:269). According to Clinebell (1984:26), pastoral care is broad, encompassing the ministry of mutual healing and growth within a congregation and its community throughout its life cycle. People need pastoral care throughout their lives, as there is no certain stage of life where challenges cease to come their way; it helps people cope in the midst of adversity.

McClure (2011:269) states that pastoral care is one of the primary works of religious leaders. This care towards fellow brethren is motivated by God's love and the command given to people to love thy neighbor. Ministry takes the form of pastoral care

to meet various needs of people in different contexts (Campbell, 1987:188). Living morally motivates this care. "Purging the desires of the flesh not just out of fear of God but through love of God embodied in the church" (McClure, 2011:271). A church is not a building but the body of Christ, which has gathered to His glory. Congregants face vast challenges on a daily basis, that could result in being wounded. According to Dykstra (2005:77), woundedness can result in loneliness. When looking at the stigmatization of raped women in our society the aspect of loneliness is evident as people at times even avoid having any relations with them as it is believed they carry a bad omen. Dykstra (2005:77) observed the following:

This mentality carried by our societies has left many with a heightened anxiety and an intense search for the experience of unity and community. It has also led people to ask anew how love, friendship, brotherhood and sisterhood can free them from isolation and offer them a sense of intimacy and belonging..... Group experiences with verbal and non-verbal communication techniques where people share common problems, and the many experiments which seek to create intimate liturgies where peace is not only announced but also felt, these are signs of a painful attempt to break through the immobilizing wall of loneliness.

Nouwen (2005:78) maintains that people need to recognize that they are suffering and the root cause of that suffering; then this will allow them to recognize the suffering of their fellow brethren. This ignites compassion and empathy, which are important elements of pastoral care and can be utilized as a source of beauty and self-understanding. Nouwen (2005:81) states that ministry can become a healing service for ministers, congregations, and the community when ministers understand the source of their pain. Furthermore, Nouwen warns against putting our wounds on display. However, he states that they should not be hidden either. Our wounds should be utilized as a source for inspiration and healing. Pastoral care and the notion of wounded healing are essential aspects that can be utilized to heal the woundedness of Christians within churches and the community at large.

3.3.1 Wounded healing within the church

In the Christian religion, Jesus is viewed as a good shepherd and scripture commands us to follow in his footsteps:

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” ²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” ²⁵ For “you were like sheep going astray,”^[f] but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (BIBLE: 1 Peter 2:21-25).

Jesus is the ultimate example of the wounded healer. Jesus became flesh so that he can share in our human conditions, enabling him to identify with our experiences and suffer on our behalf to destroy the power of death. In the Christian religion, people are viewed as spiritually connected as they belong to one family, the family of Christ. “So, in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” Romans 12:5. We tend to be concerned about our fellow brethren when they are going through life challenges, and the love brings this about, we have for them that gives rise to compassion. Scripture commands believers to take care of one another. According to Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:2, we should carry each other’s burdens, and by doing so, believers will be fulfilling the law of Christ. During Old and New Testament times, people valued communality, one could say they believed that no man is an island.

Within a religious community, people go through vast challenges, and it is important to offer support and care to those who are distressed and sick. In James 5:14 Scripture instructs people who are ill to call church elders to pray for them; for the context of this dissertation the same instruction can be taken by those afflicted due to having gone through rape ordeal. One should not be in isolation but seek help from fellow brethren as they share in pain as Christ does to all our pains. Fellow Christians who might have gone through rape can help in encouraging the ones who is in a dark place, or had

just experienced it. Yet, those who have not physically gone through it can help as well, as we are interconnected spiritually, and we share in one another's sufferings.

Dykstra (2005:77) warns against putting our wounds on display for everyone to see, which might invite infections. Wounds should be well bandaged for them to heal. However, we are also advised to avail our woundedness to other people to help them heal and that could ignite mutual healing. "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never lack zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people in need. Practice hospitality" (Romans 12:10-13).

3.3.2 Wounded healing in the community

Kasambala (2004:95) states that "the African community is a service provider for a process of healing. For this reason, the community must facilitate healing". The involvement of Christians in the healing of wounds of their community members is vital to the overall wellbeing of society because it functions as a unit and is not separated into segments. According to Mligo (2021:8), Ubuntu is a word that is used in our South African communities, which is short for "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" which encourages unity and interdependence as it states that "I am because, you are". Lutz (2009:1) states that "one of the most striking features of the cultures of sub-Saharan Africa is their non-individualistic character. Although African cultures display extraordinary diversity, they also show remarkable similarities. Community is the cornerstone in African thought and life. An African is not a rugged individual, but a person within a community. Humanity is created in the image of God.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26-27).

Mankind is given stewardship by God over His creation, and being made in His image means our actions should always reflect Him. Luke 6:35-36 encourages believers to do good and help non-believers, even though they are ungrateful and selfish. By doing this gesture, you are glorifying God, as he knows no colour or gender. Jesus is the

ultimate example of the wounded healer. He was afflicted by people whom he was sent to deliver from sin; even though he was persecuted, he treated everyone with kindness and love; he even prayed for non-believers to be healed. The church should be vocal about immoral behavior and injustices; they should be willing to take a stand in support of those abused. Christians should keep their doors open to the community as people are going through challenges, they should be willing to help others without expecting anything in return. One would expect this significant aspect to motivate people to live righteously, however that is not the case as we have people who are still engaging in immoral acts such as rape. Having experienced a phenomenon as traumatic as rape, one might say perpetrators has disregarded the image of God which gives us dignity as our birthright.

As Christians, we must imitate Christ, who is a shepherd of God's flock, which is us. That then gives believers a task to function as wounded healers in their communities. They are to care for the needs of those afflicted and suffering and shepherd them to Jesus, who is the light, and this is done to the glory of God. This indirectly helps spread the gospel and let people know more about God, who saves, heals, and forgives.

3.4 Wounded healing practices in South Africa

Wounded healing, as a concept rooted in both psychological and theological traditions, has significant implications for addressing trauma in South Africa, particularly in the context of rape and gender-based violence (GBV). Given the country's history of colonialism, apartheid, and persistent socio-economic inequalities, many survivors of trauma, including sexual violence, struggle to access formal therapeutic support. In response, various faith-based, community-driven, and psychological interventions have emerged, incorporating wounded healing principles to foster collective healing and resilience (Nanthambwe & Magezi, 2024; Msibi, 2023).

3.4.1 Faith-based healing and pastoral care

The role of the church in responding to sexual violence in South Africa remains complex. While some religious institutions continue to deny or silence issues related to rape and gender-based violence (GBV) (Manzanga, 2020), others have developed faith-based healing initiatives that integrate pastoral care, counselling, and survivor-

led support groups. These initiatives are grounded in theological understandings of suffering and restoration, where survivors who have experienced deep wounds become agents of healing for others (Magezi, 2019). The concept of redemptive suffering, drawn from Christian theology, affirms that God can bring healing through wounded individuals (Nouwen, 1979), though it must be applied cautiously to avoid justifying suffering without addressing justice and accountability (Arel, 2016).

Several churches in South Africa have integrated trauma-informed pastoral care programs to support survivors. The *We Will Speak Out South Africa* coalition, for example, works with churches to break the silence around GBV and train faith leaders in survivor-centred care. Similarly, *Thursdays in Black* raises awareness and promotes healing through prayer, pastoral counselling, and survivor support networks.

Faith-based organizations also collaborate with psychologists and social workers to provide holistic care. The *Jesuit Institute South Africa*, for instance, integrates spiritual direction with psychological support for trauma survivors. In townships and rural areas, some churches have established informal survivor-led support groups, where individuals share experiences, offer encouragement, and engage in healing practices.

While these initiatives are crucial, challenges remain, particularly in African initiated churches that still deny the prevalence of GBV. More structured theological engagement is needed to ensure faith communities not only offer spiritual care but also actively support justice and social change.

3.4.2 Survivor-led support networks and testimonies

Survivor-led initiatives play a crucial role in wounded healing practices in South Africa (Kaminer & Eagle, 2010). Many survivors of rape and GBV have established support groups, storytelling circles, and advocacy movements, using their experiences to empower others. The *Tears Foundation*, for example, provides crisis intervention, counselling, and legal assistance while also creating spaces for survivors to share their stories as a means of healing (Kaminer & Eagle, 2010). Similarly, the *Kwanele Survivor Movement* supports women who have experienced sexual violence by facilitating survivor-led discussions and campaigns aimed at breaking the silence surrounding GBV.

Narrative therapy and testimony-based healing are particularly significant in the South African context, as they allow survivors to reclaim their agency and reshape their personal and communal identities (Arel, 2016). For instance, the *Jes Foord Foundation*, founded by a rape survivor, provides platforms where survivors can share their testimonies in schools, churches, and community gatherings to educate others and foster resilience. By publicly sharing their experiences, wounded healers create a collective space where trauma is acknowledged, and healing is pursued in solidarity.

However, while survivor-led healing is powerful, it also presents challenges such as re-traumatization and societal stigma. Some survivors face backlash when speaking out, which underscores the need for professional psychological and pastoral support structures (Magezi, 2019; Msibi, 2023). Faith-based organizations, such as *We Will Speak Out South Africa*, have worked to integrate survivor testimonies into pastoral care while ensuring emotional safety and support. These efforts highlight the importance of balancing empowerment with appropriate trauma-sensitive approaches to avoid further harm.

3.4.3 Traditional African healing and community-based approaches

In addition to Christian pastoral care, African traditional healing practices play a significant role in wounded healing. Many South African communities embrace *ubuntu*-based healing, which emphasizes interconnectedness, reconciliation, and communal restoration (Downing & Hastings-Tolsma, 2016). Within African spirituality, healing is often understood as a collective endeavour, where the community supports individuals who have experienced trauma through rituals, storytelling, and intergenerational dialogue (Magezi, 2019). Traditional healers (*sangomas*), elders, and community leaders facilitate these healing processes, reinforcing the belief that individual well-being is deeply tied to communal harmony.

Some faith communities integrate Christian and indigenous healing practices, recognizing that trauma healing requires spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions. For example, in rural KwaZulu-Natal, certain churches incorporate traditional cleansing ceremonies alongside Christian prayers for survivors of sexual violence. Similarly, in Limpopo, community-led healing circles combine biblical reflection with African storytelling traditions to create safe spaces for survivors to process their pain.

This holistic perspective aligns with African pastoral theology, which advocates for contextual approaches that resonate with the lived realities of survivors (Downing & Hastings-Tolsma, 2016).

However, tensions sometimes arise between Western psychological models and African communal healing traditions. While Western approaches often emphasize individual therapy, African frameworks prioritize collective healing, which may not always align with clinical methods of trauma recovery. This dynamic necessitates an approach that respects both cultural and theological frameworks in trauma care (Arel, 2016). Organizations such as the *Institute for Healing of Memories* have sought to bridge this gap by integrating narrative therapy with African communal healing practices, fostering a culturally responsive approach to trauma recovery.

3.4.4 Challenges and ethical considerations in wounded healing practices

While wounded healing has transformative potential, several challenges and ethical concerns must be addressed in its application. One key issue is the emotional burden placed on wounded healers—those who have experienced trauma may struggle with their own healing while helping others, which can lead to secondary trauma or burnout (Buqa, 2022). Faith communities and support networks must ensure that wounded healers receive adequate psychological, pastoral, and peer support to sustain their well-being.

Another concern is the risk of reinforcing passive suffering narratives, where survivors are expected to find meaning in their pain without addressing systemic injustices and perpetrators' accountability (Buqa 2022; Msibi 2023). Ethical wounded healing practices must therefore balance compassionate care with justice-oriented action, advocating for policy changes, legal protections, and community education to prevent future harm (Magezi, 2019).

Wounded healing practices in South Africa manifest through a combination of faith-based initiatives, survivor-led networks, and community healing approaches. The integration of Christian theology, African communal healing, and trauma-informed pastoral care provides a robust framework for addressing the deep wounds caused by rape and GBV. However, these practices must be applied with caution, ensuring that wounded healers receive support, survivors' voices are honoured, and justice-oriented

interventions accompany healing processes. Moving forward, a more comprehensive approach that combines spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions of healing is necessary to create lasting change in South African communities.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter is aligned with Osmer's methodology. It focuses on answering the second question, which is "why is it going on?". Stemming from the prevalence of GBV and rape cases presented in the previous chapter, this chapter seeks to understand why is this happening. It is evident in the literature presented in this chapter that people turn a blind eye to GBV that is occurring in their communities, which means perpetrators do not get punished, hence they proceed to victimize other people.

Women who have encountered rape are left with long term effects. The wounded healer archetype is incorporated in this study to see how the notion of wounded healing is utilized in churches and communities to help GBV victims. It is evident that the utilization of the idea in pastoral care is minimal, this then encourages us to look at the fourth task of Osmer's methodology to understand "what ought to be going on?". Aligned with the fourth task the following chapters seek to discern the theological position that can be developed on the notion of wounded healing within rape contexts from scriptural sources.

CHAPTER 4

4. Discern the theological position that can be developed on the notion of wounded healing within rape contexts from scriptural sources

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on scriptural reflection to discern a theological position that can be developed on the notion of wounded healing within rape contexts. It seeks to establish a biblical and theological stance on rape by examining selected scriptural passages that directly or indirectly address the issue. These passages provide insight into the biblical understanding of sexual violence, justice, healing, and moral responsibility.

In the Old Testament, three key passages—Judges 19, 2 Samuel 13, and Deuteronomy 22—are analysed because they deal explicitly with rape-related issues and guide how such cases were perceived and handled in ancient Israelite society. Judges 19 presents the harrowing account of the Levite's concubine, highlighting the brutal reality of sexual violence and communal complicity. 2 Samuel 13 narrates the story of Tamar and Amnon, exposing the abuse of power, the silencing of survivors, and the consequences of unchecked injustice. Deuteronomy 22, on the other hand, provides legal instructions on sexual violence, illustrating the complexities of biblical law concerning consent, accountability, and protection of the vulnerable.

In the New Testament, passages from the books of Galatians and Revelation will be explored to address the moral and ethical implications of rape and develop a biblical response to sexual violence. Galatians 5:13-26 emphasises the contrast between living by the flesh and walking in the Spirit, urging believers to uphold values that prevent harm and promote love, peace, and self-control. Revelation 2:18-25 speaks against sexual immorality within the church, emphasising the need for accountability and moral integrity in Christian communities.

By engaging with these scriptural texts, this chapter aims to extract theological principles that can guide the church's response to rape, ensuring that survivors receive justice, healing, and pastoral care rooted in biblical truth. These principles will contribute to the broader discussion on wounded healing, emphasising the church's

role in addressing sexual violence while fostering spaces of restoration and empowerment for survivors.

4.2 Exegetical approach applied to the selected texts

This study employs an exegetical approach that integrates historical-critical, literary, and theological methods to interpret the selected biblical texts—Judges 19, 2 Samuel 13, Deuteronomy 22, Galatians 5:13-26, and Revelation 2:18-25—with rape and wounded healing. However, as an interpreter, the researcher acknowledges that no reading of Scripture is purely neutral. My interpretation is informed by the researcher's own experiences and impressions as a Black woman, particularly in engaging with contemporary realities of sexual violence in South Africa. This perspective allows for a contextual and justice-oriented reading of the texts, ensuring they speak meaningfully to survivors and faith communities today.

The historical-critical approach helps uncover the social and cultural contexts in which these texts were written (Barton, 2006), shedding light on how ancient Israelite and early Christian societies responded to sexual violence. Deuteronomy 22, for example, reflects legal norms of the time that sought to address rape, though often within patriarchal constraints. The narratives of Judges 19 and 2 Samuel 13 expose the failures of justice systems in protecting women, which resonates with ongoing struggles against gender-based violence in South Africa.

The literary approach considers how the texts construct meaning through narrative techniques and rhetorical strategies (Smith 2007). Judges 19 and 2 Samuel 13, with their shocking portrayals of sexual violence, force the reader to confront the gravity of such acts and the silence that often follows them. Galatians 5:13-26 contrasts destructive behaviors with the "fruit of the Spirit," offering an ethical framework for responding to rape, while Revelation 2:18-25 calls out complicity in sexual immorality within faith communities.

The theological approach derives biblical principles (Smith, 2007) that inform a response to rape within a wounded healing framework. These texts affirm the need for justice, accountability, and healing rather than victim-blaming or theological justifications for suffering. By incorporating my impressions, the researcher emphasises the lived experiences of Black women in South Africa, whose voices and

pain must be centred in theological discourse. This ensures the biblical message remains relevant and transformative, guiding faith communities toward justice and healing.

4.3 Bible and Rape

Rape was seen as a horrible act in ancient times, as it is today. It was prohibited for a man to force himself on a woman, and the act was punishable by death. In Genesis 34:1-31, we find the story of Dinah, Jacob's daughter, who was raped by Shechem. This act infuriated Dinah's brothers as they felt that Shechem humiliated, defiled, and treated their sister like a "prostitute" by raping her. According to the said passage in verse 7, rape is an outrageous thing that should not be done. The brothers deemed it necessary to exact justice for their sister by slaughtering all the men of Shechem and plundering their possessions.

The cultural context of honour and shame in ancient Israel played a significant role in the severe consequences of acts like rape. Matthews (1998) explores this in his article "Honor and Shame in Gender-Related Legal Situations in the Hebrew Bible," highlighting how such acts were seen as violations of family and community honour. Frymer-Kensky (1998) also discusses the societal implications of rape in her book "Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories," providing an in-depth analysis of women's stories in the Bible, including the narrative of Dinah.

Niditch (2012) presents a feminist perspective on the story of Dinah in "Genesis," part of the *Women's Bible Commentary*. She examines the themes of violence and justice, emphasizing the brothers' response to Shechem's act as a form of retributive justice. Fokkelman (1991) analyses the literary structure of Genesis in "Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis," highlighting the narrative techniques used to convey the gravity of the crime.

The Bible further warns against sexual immorality in the New Testament among people. Loader (2012) in "The New Testament on Sexuality" examines the New Testament's teachings on sexual ethics, including warnings against sexual immorality. Hays (1996) discusses the ethical teachings of the New Testament in "The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation," emphasizing the importance of justice and moral conduct.

With this brief perspective of the Bible on rape, we now go into the exegesis of the specific passages starting with the Old Testament.

4.4 Exegesis of Judges 19

4.4.1 Introduction

Judges 19 presents one of the most troubling accounts in the Old Testament, revealing the moral and spiritual decay of Israel during a time when “everyone did as they saw fit” (Judges 17:6). This passage highlights the covenant community’s failure to uphold God’s laws, particularly regarding justice and the protection of the vulnerable. Despite Israel’s formal commitment to the covenant at Shechem (Joshua 24), their repeated disobedience led to societal breakdown, including the normalization of violence and gender-based oppression (Hill & Walton, 2016:239; Longman III & Dillard, 2006:128).

The book of Judges serves three key purposes: defending God’s justice in response to Israel’s rebellion, warning against assimilation into Canaanite practices, and demonstrating Israel’s need for righteous leadership (Chisholm, 2009:247-255). The events of Judges 19 exemplify all these themes, particularly in the way they expose the deep moral corruption of Israel’s covenant people. This exegesis explores how the text reflects the covenant community’s view on rape and the broader implications of their unfaithfulness to God’s commands.

4.4.2 Text analysis

A man fetches his concubine from his in-laws (19:1-9)

The title of the pericope is A Levite and His Concubine. This book was written as a narration of events that unfolded leading to the death of a Levite’s concubine. The first verse of this pericope reads as thus: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.” People did as they pleased, and that meant not following moral norms at times. Constable (2023:203) states that the Israelites had portrayed a “practical denial of Yahweh’s sovereignty over them, as well as the absence of an Israelite monarch”. God’s ideal form of marriage is monogamous. In Genesis 2:24 states that a man shall be united to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. The Levite did as he pleased by getting a concubine. According to Duell (2023;122), a concubine is a

“second wife, one who has “inferior status.... Legally and socially, she...is virtually a slave, secured by a man for his own purposes”. The definition provided by Duell is somehow acceptable when we look at other passages that had women who were used by their masters and their wives to reproduce so that they could have many descendants. In Genesis 16 and 30, we find narrations of slaves who had to bear children for their masters. However, Schneider (2000:248) believes that there is insufficient information in the literature to really understand what a concubine was in ancient times.

In verse 2, it states that the concubine was unfaithful, then she decided to go back home, where she stayed for four months. Deuteronomy 22:22 states that if a man is found sleeping with someone’s wife, both the woman and man must die. This is done to purge evil from Israel. However, as it was stated at the beginning of this passage that Israel had no king, that meant people did as they pleased, and some acts would go unpunished. The researcher is of the view that the concubine might have fled to her home, as the husband would not have been pleased by the act. The husband took some time to reconsider, and he then decided to go and persuade her to return; this might have taken four months due to his still being unhappy with the unfaithfulness of the concubine. Schneider (2000:253) is of the opinion that the husband took four months before going to persuade his concubine to return, as that duration would have proven her unfaithfulness if she had conceived.

The Levite journeyed to Judah, and scripture states that his father-in-law gladly welcomed him. From verses 4 to 9, the passage presents the hospitality that the Levite got at Bethlehem from his father-in-law, who was reluctant for them to leave, as he would make excuses each day for them to stay longer. However, on the fifth day, the Levite was unwilling to spend another night in Bethlehem. He left with his concubine, servant, and two donkeys.

[The journey \(19:10-15\)](#)

The Levite, the concubine, and the servant were travelling towards Jebus when it got late, the servant suggested to his master that they spend the night in Jebus. However, the master turned down the suggestion, stating that he would not spend the night in a town of people who are not Israelites. He preferred for them to spend the night in Gibeah or Ramah. They stopped in Gibeah as the night set as they were about to

reach it, but they got stranded as no one took them in.

Hospitality in Gibeah (19:16-27)

In the evening an old man coming back from work saw them sitting at the city square, he asked them where they came from and where were they heading. The Levite answered that they were from Bethlehem and heading to a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim, coincidentally the old man was also from the hill country of Ephraim but living in Gibeah. The Levite told the old man that they had everything that they needed for themselves and their donkeys, they only needed a place to sleep for the night. The old man invited them to his home, and he was hospitable as he offered them everything they would need for the night even though they had brought their own supplies.

The Gibeahite's immorality

While they were dining and enjoying themselves, the wicked men of the city came and surrounded the house. They demanded that the old man bring out the men who visited him so that they could have sex with them. The intertextuality in Judges 19 has been argued by scholars, as they believe that it has similarities to Genesis 19:5 (Masenya, 2012:210; Longman & Dillard, 2006:136). The emergence of the statement: "Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them" in Judges 19:22 appears in Genesis 19:5. The intertextuality between the two pericopes continues to the responses offered by the hosts. In Genesis 19:7-8 Lot responds to the men by saying:

No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.

In alignment with the passage above is the response by the old man in Judges 19:23-24 to the wicked men of the city:

No, my friends, don't be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don't do this outrageous thing. 24 Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will

bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But as for this man, don't do such an outrageous thing.

Inasmuch as the two pericopes have similarities, it is crucial to take note of the different contexts of the narratives and the continuation from those similar statements. In Genesis 19, Lot offered his two daughters to the men, but they refused. They attempted to force entry into his house to get the two guests without any success, as the angels struck them with blindness so that they would not be able to find the door. However, in Judges, the narration is different as the wicked men were not willing to listen to the offer made by the old man, but they took the concubine as soon as she was sent out by her master.

Verse 25 states that the men raped and abused the concubine throughout the night, they only let her go at dawn. The researcher believes the men were willing to sacrifice the women to save themselves during the ordeal. The passage states that the old man was offering his virgin daughter and the concubine; the Levite saw it fit to send the concubine outside to prevent the men from entering and raping them. In verse 26:

The writer now called the Levite the "master" of the concubine, rather than her husband. Perhaps he did so because the Levite treated her as his property, not as a person (Constable, 2023:244).

After the concubine was taken, the passage does not record the Levite being concerned about her, which portrays selfishness. This response supports the definition of concubine given by Duell (2023), that she is socially and legally inferior, and she was secured by a man to fulfill his desires. After being released by the "wicked men" the concubine went back to the place where her master was staying. She fell on the doorway and remained there until daylight.

Verse 27 states that the Levite got up, he opened the door to "continue" on his way. The continuation of the journey by the Levite, even though such a horrific thing had occurred during the night, shows that he had no regard for his concubine. Tribble (1984:80) states that the narrations of this passage mainly surround the concubine, but she remains nameless, which could serve to objectify her. The Levite does not seem concerned with the well-being of the concubine after what occurred to her because he only instructed her to "get up" as they should now leave, even though he

found her lying on the ground. He showed no empathy. Ephesians 4:32 encourages people to be “kind and compassionate to one another, forgive each other, just as Christ forgave us”. The Levite showed no kindness or compassion. When the concubine did not respond to the Levite’s instructions, he put her on his donkey and continued his journey back home.

Returning to Ephraim (19:28-30)

When the Levite got to the remote area in the hill country of Ephraim where he resided, he took a knife and began to cut the concubine. He cut her into twelve parts, which were sent to all the parts of Israel. The researcher is of the view that this act by the Levite is inhumane; there could have been other ways to acquire justice, and the concubine deserved a proper burial. When Solomon, in 1 Kings 3:16-28, was faced with making a difficult choice as two mothers were fighting for a living baby, as one had died during the night, he threatened to cut the living baby in half to serve justice. However, he eventually gave the baby to the woman who was willing to give him up to save his life. This ruling left the Israelites in awe because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice. The same would have been the case with the Levite, as he would have looked for justice in an acceptable manner, but Israel had no king, and people did as they pleased and showed practical denial of Yahweh's sovereignty over them. Upon receiving the parts of the concubine, the Israelites were moved; they felt that they must do something about such a horrible crime that the concubine had encountered in Gibeah, and people should not keep quiet about such an ordeal.

4.4.3 Principles from Judges 19

Principle 1: Rape as a vile and outrageous act (v. 23)

Judges 19:23 presents a contradictory moral stance. The old man hosting the Levite and his concubine pleads with the wicked men of Gibeah not to commit such an “outrageous thing” (NIV), recognizing the gravity of the intended sexual violence against his male guest. This suggests that within the cultural context of ancient Israel, hospitality was highly valued, and violating a guest was seen as an egregious offense (Block, 1999:530). However, in the same breath, the old man offers his own daughter and the Levite’s concubine to appease the attackers, exposing a deeply entrenched patriarchal system where women's bodies were seen as expendable (Trible, 1984:65).

This passage highlights the disturbing reality that while rape was condemned in theory, certain victims—particularly women—were dehumanized and sacrificed for social or self-preserving reasons. The old man’s plea against the rape of his guest reveals an awareness that sexual violence was a grievous act, yet his actions expose a moral inconsistency in how sexual violence was perceived and addressed (Pressler, 2002:43). This contradiction reflects a broader issue of selective justice, where the dignity of some individuals was prioritized over others.

From a wounded healing perspective, this passage raises concerns about how faith communities today respond to rape. Like the old man, some religious institutions acknowledge the sinfulness of sexual violence yet fail to protect survivors or offer them healing justice. The principle derived from this text is that true justice and healing require consistent ethical standards—rape must be condemned universally, and no survivor should be treated as disposable. Faith communities must actively challenge cultural and systemic structures that perpetuate such injustices and instead become spaces of refuge and restoration for victims.

[Principle 2: The need to speak up and advocate for justice \(v. 30\)](#)

Judges 19:30 reveals a critical response to the horrific events of Gibeah. After the Levite dismembers his concubine and sends her body parts across Israel, the nation reacts with shock, declaring, “Such a thing has never been seen or done... Just imagine! We must speak up! We must do something!” (NIV). This verse underscores the moral outrage that follows acts of extreme violence and the necessity of collective action in response to injustice (Chisholm, 2009:267). The Israelites recognized that silence was not an option; they were compelled to address the crime and seek justice.

This principle remains relevant in contemporary discussions on rape and gender-based violence (GBV). Survivors often face immense social pressure to stay silent due to stigma, fear, or lack of support from their communities (Phiri, 2001). However, the biblical text suggests that when such atrocities occur, survivors and society have a responsibility to speak out and demand justice.

From a wounded healing perspective, this passage highlights the role of advocacy in the healing process. Healing is about personal restoration and ensuring that justice is pursued to prevent further victimization. Faith communities and pastoral caregivers must challenge harmful narratives that silence survivors and instead create platforms where their voices are heard and justice is pursued (Magezi & Manzanga, 2019). The principle from this passage calls for an active response—survivors must be supported in speaking up, and society must take meaningful action against sexual violence.

Principle 3: The Failure of leadership and collective responsibility (vv. 1, 25-28)

Judges 19 presents a disturbing portrayal of leadership failure and societal complacency. The Levite, who should have been a spiritual leader, fails to protect his concubine, instead handing her over to the violent men of Gibeah (v. 25). After her brutal assault, he displays shocking indifference, telling her to "get up" (v. 28) rather than showing concern for her well-being. This reflects a deeper societal issue in Israel at the time—leaders and ordinary people alike had abandoned their moral responsibilities, leading to a culture of impunity and violence (Block, 1999:533).

This principle highlights that when leaders—whether religious, social, or political—fail to protect the vulnerable, society as a whole bears responsibility. The Levite's actions mirror broader patterns where authority figures ignore or perpetuate injustice instead of intervening to prevent harm (Webb, 2012:429). In South Africa, a similar crisis occurs when religious leaders and institutions fail to respond adequately to rape and gender-based violence (GBV), either through silence, victim-blaming, or lack of tangible action (Phiri, 2001).

From a wounded healing perspective, this principle emphasizes the need for ethical and responsible leadership in responding to sexual violence. True healing requires leaders to actively confront injustice, support survivors, and foster safe spaces within their communities. The passage challenges faith leaders to adopt a stance of accountability, ensuring that their responses to GBV align with justice, compassion, and healing (Magezi & Manzanga, 2019).

4.4.4 Summary and Conclusion

Judges 19 presents a harrowing account of sexual violence, societal corruption, and the breakdown of justice among God's covenant people. The Levite's concubine, a nameless and voiceless victim, symbolizes the failure of Israel's moral and communal responsibility. Her suffering highlights the deep wounds caused by unchecked violence, patriarchal oppression, and the absence of justice.

From a wounded healing perspective, this passage underscores the need for communities of faith to confront violence and advocate for those who have been silenced. Ultimately, Judges 19 serves as a warning against indifference to suffering. The story calls faith communities to become places of refuge, advocacy, and restoration for survivors of sexual violence. Healing is not just a personal journey but a communal responsibility—one that demands justice, compassion, and a commitment to breaking cycles of harm. The act of shared pain among the tribes of Israel when they got the news of what had occurred resembles wounded healing. They were instantly willing to join in the fight as they were against what had happened to the concubine, which set the tone that women were valued and being ill-treated to the point of death is unacceptable. I assume this act healed a lot of broken women in society, as they themselves might have gone through abuse in one way or another, as they lived in a patriarchal society.

4.5 Exegesis of 2 Samuel 13:1-38

4.5.1 Introduction

2 Samuel 13:1-38 is a significant narrative that explores the rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon, the eldest son of King David. This passage is not only a tragic tale of sexual violence but also a pivotal turning point in the larger Davidic narrative. It sets into motion a chain of events that disrupt David's household and ultimately influences the political stability of his reign.

This text raises critical issues related to the misuse of power, family dynamics, and the failure of justice. Amnon's actions reflect unchecked privilege and entitlement, while Tamar's plight highlights the vulnerability of women in a patriarchal society (Trible 1984). Moreover, David's failure to administer justice reveals moral and leadership flaws that resonate throughout the rest of the narrative.

In theological terms, the passage underscores themes of sin, consequences, and

divine justice. It invites reflection on the enduring impact of trauma and the need for accountability and restoration. An exegetical analysis of this passage will explore its historical, cultural, and literary contexts, as well as its theological implications for understanding justice, gender, and power in the Old Testament.

4.5.2 Text analysis

[A wicked plan \(vv. 1-5\)](#)

Amnon's fixation on Tamar is characterized by an intense desire that clouds his judgment. His reference to Tamar as "Absalom's sister" rather than acknowledging her as his own sister, reflects a psychological distancing, possibly to mitigate the moral conflict of his intentions (Trible, 1984). This objectification reduces Tamar to a mere entity of desire, disregarding her autonomy and familial bonds.

Jonadab, identified as "a very shrewd man," plays a pivotal role in orchestrating the deceitful plan. His counsel to feign illness to lure Tamar reveals a misuse of wisdom and influence, prioritizing Amnon's illicit desires over ethical considerations (Levenson, 1997). This manipulation highlights the potential dangers of counsel devoid of moral integrity.

The plan's success hinges on deceiving King David, who unknowingly facilitates the encounter by sending Tamar to care for Amnon. This betrayal within the royal family underscores the erosion of trust and the vulnerability of individuals within power dynamics (Exum, 1995). Tamar's compliance, driven by obedience and concern, is exploited, leading to her victimization.

[Tamar takes care of Amnon \(vv. 6-10\)](#)

Amnon skillfully deceives both King David and Tamar, exploiting their goodwill. By pretending to be ill, he gains sympathy, positioning himself as vulnerable to elicit compliance from his father. Unaware of Amnon's true intentions, David unknowingly enables the tragic events that follow by granting his son's request. This reflects a broader concern about the misuse of authority and how power can be wielded for destructive ends (Exum, 1995).

Tamar's willingness to care for Amnon reflects her virtuous character and adherence to societal expectations of women as caretakers. However, her trust is betrayed, illustrating how patriarchal structures often place women in vulnerable positions (Trible, 1984). The repetition of Amnon being Tamar's brother in verse 10 is an intentional contrast—while Tamar views him as family, Amnon sees her as an object to be possessed (Yamada, 2008).

Amnon rapes Tamar (vv. 11-14)

Tamar's response reflects the established laws in Leviticus 18:6-9, which explicitly prohibit sexual relations between close relatives. Scholars note that her statement, "such a thing should not be done in Israel," signals that rape, particularly within the family, was seen as a gross violation of divine law and social order (Frolov, 2013). This phrase aligns with biblical condemnations of other grievous sins, such as in Judges 19:23, where a similar phrase is used to describe a heinous crime (Yamada, 2008).

Tamar appeals not only to personal dignity but also to national identity. The phrase "should not be done in Israel" suggests that Amnon's act would bring disgrace upon the covenant community (Exum, 1995). In ancient Israel, the community played a role in upholding moral laws, and Tamar's words indicate that violating these laws was seen as dishonoring the entire nation. Trible (1984) argues that Tamar's protest highlights the biblical stance against rape, reinforcing the notion that sexual violence is a violation of both human dignity and divine command.

Some scholars note that Tamar's plea might also indicate an attempt to negotiate in the face of impending violence. In verse 13, she suggests that Amnon should ask their father for permission to marry her. While this suggestion appears troubling, it may have been a desperate effort to prevent outright rape, as marriage (even under coercive circumstances) would have provided her with some degree of social protection (Bach, 1993). However, this does not mean Tamar accepted such an arrangement—rather, it reflects her strategic resistance within a society where women had limited agency (Trible, 1984).

In verse 13, "You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel." This is a statement by Tamar; she compares the actions of her half-brother to the wicked fools of Israel as

he was trying to force himself on her. Tamar's question posed to her brother regarding the disgrace that would be brought to her following the actions of her brother; serves as proof that women are left to deal with vast challenges after being raped. She asked her brother, "What about me?" the researcher is of the opinion that Tamar was trying to make her brother empathize with her and hopefully stop what he wanted to do. However, Amnon had already made up his mind as he did not listen to Tamar's plea and raped her.

[Amnon hates Tamar \(vv. 15-18\)](#)

Amnon's immediate hatred after the rape suggests that his feelings were never rooted in genuine love but rather in selfish lust and the assertion of power. Exum (1995) argues that biblical love narratives often depict commitment and protection, whereas Amnon's treatment of Tamar reveals that his so-called "love" was a violent impulse that, once satisfied, turned to disgust. Tribble (1984) sees this as an example of how patriarchal dominance manifests in male aggression, where women are dehumanized after being used for male gratification.

Amnon's abrupt shift from desire to hatred reflects deep psychological and cultural factors. Frolov (2013) notes that this kind of emotional reversal is common in cases of sexual violence, where perpetrators transfer guilt and shame onto the victim rather than accepting responsibility for their own actions. This also aligns with the honor-shame culture of the ancient Near East, where Amnon may have viewed Tamar not as a person but as an object whose "value" was now diminished.

Response and vengeance (vv. 18-38)

Tamar's actions—tearing her ornate robe, putting ashes on her head, and weeping aloud—symbolize her deep grief and public mourning. Tribble (1984) argues that Tamar refuses to suffer in silence, instead making her pain visible, in contrast to how many rape victims in patriarchal societies are silenced. The robe she tears was a sign of her virgin status, highlighting the societal consequences of her assault—she is now seen as "damaged" and unlikely to marry, further compounding her suffering (Bodner, 2019).

Absalom's reaction is problematic; instead of advocating for justice, he tells Tamar to be silent, reinforcing the culture of shame that often surrounds rape survivors (Frolov,

2013). His words reflect the patriarchal norm that discouraged women from speaking out, leaving Tamar in a state of isolation.

David is furious when he hears of Amnon's crime, but does nothing to punish him. Bergen (1996) points out that David's inaction may stem from his own guilt over his past sins, particularly his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah (2 Samuel 11). Yamada (2008) argues that David's failure to act represents the broader failure of leadership in dealing with sexual violence. His inaction leads to a lack of justice for Tamar and ultimately fuels Absalom's resentment.

Absalom's silence masks his growing hatred for Amnon, leading to his carefully planned revenge two years later. His decision to kill Amnon aligns with Deuteronomy 22:25, which prescribes the death penalty for rapists. However, instead of seeking legal justice, Absalom takes the law into his own hands. Leithart (2006) notes that Absalom's act mirrors David's own moral failings—just as David orchestrated Uriah's death to cover up his sin, Absalom orchestrates Amnon's murder as a form of justice.

This passage also reflects God's judgment on David's household (2 Samuel 12:10-11). Alter (2019) highlights how Nathan's prophecy about the sword never departing from David's house is fulfilled in the violence between his sons. This cycle of vengeance demonstrates how unchecked sin can lead to escalating family and societal conflict.

4.5.3 Principles from 2 Samuel 13:1-38

Principle 1: The importance of speaking out against injustice (vv. 12-13)

Tamar courageously speaks out against Amnon's intentions, pleading with him not to commit such a wicked act. She appeals to moral, legal, and social standards, emphasizing that such behavior is not acceptable in Israel. However, her voice is ignored, and she is ultimately silenced by both her rapist and her own family.

Tamar's story highlights the pain of survivors who are often unheard or dismissed. However, wounded healing emerges when survivors are empowered to tell their stories and when communities provide safe spaces for victims to be heard. As Tribble (1984) argues, giving voice to Tamar's suffering is an act of reclaiming her dignity.

Faith communities must ensure that survivors of sexual violence are not silenced but supported in their journey toward healing.

Principle 2: The Consequences of inaction and the need for justice (vv. 21-22)

King David is furious when he hears of Tamar's rape, yet he does nothing to punish Amnon. His failure to act allows injustice to prevail and sets the stage for Absalom's revenge. This principle highlights the destructive effects of inaction—when those in positions of power fail to address wrongdoing, it perpetuates cycles of trauma and violence.

Justice is a crucial part of the healing process. Lapsley (2005) argues that healing cannot occur when injustice is ignored. Wounded healing involves acknowledging pain, seeking justice, and holding perpetrators accountable. Churches and communities play a vital role in advocating justice for survivors, ensuring that they are not left in a state of desolation like Tamar.

Principle 3: The Risk of Unresolved Trauma Leading to Cycles of Violence (vv. 28-29)

Absalom takes matters into his own hands, ordering the murder of Amnon as revenge for Tamar's suffering. While his actions stem from his desire for justice, they ultimately contribute to the ongoing cycle of violence and division within David's household. This principle warns against the dangers of leaving trauma unaddressed, as it can manifest in destructive ways and over generations.

True healing does not come from revenge but from restorative justice and reconciliation. Leithart (2006) notes that the absence of justice in Tamar's case led to more bloodshed. Wounded healing requires a holistic approach—supporting survivors, advocating for justice, and fostering environments where healing, rather than retaliation, can take place. Pastoral care should focus on breaking cycles of violence by promoting emotional and spiritual restoration.

4.5.4 Summary and conclusion

The narrative in 2 Samuel 13 depicts a society with two distinct types of men. The ones like Jonadab and Amnon who do not care for women and can be labelled as “wicked fools” and those who show a certain level of concern, such as Absalom and David, as they were infuriated when they learned of Amnon’s actions on Tamar. Amnon was not considerate of Tamar’s dignity when he raped her, as he was just concerned with feeding his lust. The response by Absalom towards Tamar after she confirmed that indeed Amnon had raped her: “Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart” shows some of the responses that females are getting in our current context after being raped by their partners, relatives, and/or colleagues. Apparently, knowing the person should console the victim as they were not raped by a stranger. This gives the researcher the idea that victims are being told that it could have been worse if it was a total stranger.

Not being expected to dwell much into rape by society towards victims is ludicrous, as rape has long-term effects on the victims, and not giving them full attention might give rise to other challenges in the victim’s lives, as mentioned in Chapter 2. This pericope’s lesson is that selfishness and giving in to the desires of the flesh not only affects the parties involved but also has the ability to break up families and result in civil wars between siblings. The father was furious after learning what his son had done, Tamar was left joyless after the ordeal, and Absalom killed his brother due to the disgrace he had brought to Tamar. Getting justice for the abuse has endured can be considered one way of moving in the direction of healing, Amnon was killed as scripture commands for perpetrators to be killed. Healing takes time, the joylessness that Tamar was feeling was because she was having fresh wounds from the ordeal. Absalom shared in his sister’s brokenness and saw it fit to get justice for her, he showed her how much he cared for her.

4.6 Exegesis of Deuteronomy 22:25-27

4.6.1 Introduction

Deuteronomy 22:25-27 addresses the issue of rape within the broader context of Israelite laws concerning sexual violations. This passage provides specific legal provisions for cases where a woman is assaulted in a field, emphasizing justice and the protection of the victim. The book of Deuteronomy, as a whole, serves as a reiteration of God’s law to a new generation of Israelites born in the wilderness (Hill & Walton, 2000:131). The name “Deuteronomy” means “second law” in Greek,

originating from a mistranslation of a phrase referring to kings making a copy of the law for future generations. Moses, the recognized author, wrote this book shortly before his death on the plains of Moab (Constable, 2023:2). The underlying message of Deuteronomy is that God's love for His people should inspire obedience to His commandments (Constable, 2023:12).

This passage is particularly significant in discussions on sexual violence, as it provides legal guidelines that distinguish between consensual and non-consensual encounters. The law highlights the importance of justice for rape victims and condemns sexual violence as a grievous crime. While written in an ancient Israelite context, the principles in Deuteronomy 22:25-27 remain relevant today, particularly in addressing the ongoing crisis of rape in South Africa. The passage highlights the importance of societal responsibility in protecting the vulnerable and ensuring that survivors receive justice rather than blame. The exegesis of this text will explore its historical context, legal implications, and contemporary applications in the fight against gender-based violence.

4.6.2 Text analysis

Deuteronomy 22:25-27 presents a legal framework for handling cases of sexual violence in ancient Israel, emphasizing justice and the protection of victims. The passage states that if a man encounters a betrothed woman in the countryside and rapes her, only the man shall be put to death. The woman is not to be punished because she has not sinned. This law reinforces the principle that sexual violence is a grave offense comparable to murder and must be dealt with severely.

According to Wright (2009:251), Deuteronomic laws aimed to protect the vulnerable in society, including women, by ensuring that rape was not mistaken for consensual adultery. This law distinguishes between cases that occur in isolated locations, where a woman's cries for help might go unheard, and those in populated areas, where mutual consent could be questioned. McConville (2002:344) explains that the legal assumption in Deuteronomy 22:27 gives the victim the benefit of the doubt, recognizing the power imbalance between a male aggressor and a female victim, who might be unable to resist effectively.

The comparison between rape and murder in verse 26 is significant. Tigay (1996:204) argues that this parallel underscores the severity of rape as an act of violence rather

than mere sexual misconduct. In the legal framework of ancient Israel, the act of rape was seen as an assault on the dignity and life of the victim, reinforcing the need for capital punishment against the perpetrator. Similarly, Christensen (2001:493) notes that this law functions within the broader Deuteronomic theme of justice and covenantal ethics, in which Israel is called to uphold righteousness and protect the oppressed.

Moreover, Block (2012:525) highlights that Deuteronomy's legal codes reflect God's concern for justice and social order. By ensuring that the victim is not punished, the passage challenges the patriarchal tendency to blame women for sexual violence, a perspective that persists in many societies today. This principle remains relevant in contemporary discussions on rape, particularly in addressing victim-blaming attitudes and advocating for stronger legal protections.

The phrase in verse 27, "there was no one to rescue her," further illustrates the vulnerability of the victim. As Craigie (1976:296) points out, the text acknowledges that a woman in an isolated setting has little chance of being saved, making her a defenseless victim. This recognition aligns with modern understandings of trauma and the need to believe survivors when they report sexual violence.

4.6.3 Principles from Deuteronomy 22:25-

27 Principle 1: Justice for victims of rape

The passage establishes that the victim of rape is not guilty of any wrongdoing and must not be punished. Instead, full responsibility falls on the perpetrator, who faces the death penalty. This principle highlights God's commitment to justice and the protection of vulnerable individuals in society. It challenges victim-blaming attitudes that often persist today and underscores the importance of ensuring that survivors are heard, believed, and supported in legal and social structures.

Principle 2: Rape as a crime against human dignity

By equating rape with murder (v. 26), the passage emphasizes that sexual violence is not merely a moral failing but a violent crime against human dignity. This principle

reinforces the need for societies to treat rape with the utmost seriousness, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and that victims receive justice and healing. The phrase “there was no one to rescue her” (v. 27) also acknowledges the reality that victims may be powerless in the face of violence, further affirming the need for communities to stand in solidarity with survivors and provide support.

These principles remain relevant today in discussions on justice, pastoral care, and societal responses to gender-based violence, particularly in addressing wounded healing for survivors. From a wounded healing standpoint, the passage challenges interpreters to resist harmful literal applications and instead use it as a theological provocation. It underscores the need for hermeneutical healing, where the church acknowledges historical misreading and reclaims the text in ways that prioritise the dignity and rights of the wounded. While healing here may not emerge from the text itself, nevertheless, the corrective theological work necessitates it.

4.6.4 Summary and Conclusion

The passage in Deuteronomy 22:25-27 provides a strong theological and ethical foundation for addressing rape and supporting survivors in their journey toward wounded healing. It establishes that rape is a grave crime, comparable to murder, and that the victim bears no guilt for the assault. By placing full responsibility on the perpetrator and demanding strict punishment, the passage reinforces the principle of justice for survivors and the need for society to protect the vulnerable.

From a wounded healing perspective, this passage acknowledges the deep harm inflicted on victims and the necessity for societal and religious communities to stand in solidarity with survivors, ensuring they are heard, validated, and supported. The statement that the woman cried out for help but no one was there to rescue her (v. 27) highlights the pain of isolation and helplessness that many survivors experience, calling for the church and society to actively engage in advocacy, support systems, and trauma-informed pastoral care.

Building upon the examination of rape narratives in the Old Testament, the focus now shifts to relevant New Testament passages that address similar issues. This transition enables a comparative theological and ethical analysis, highlighting both continuity and transformation in biblical perspectives on sexual violence and justice across the two testaments.

4.7 Exegesis of Galatians 5:13-26

4.7.1 Introduction

The passage under consideration, titled *Life by the Spirit*, is part of Paul's letter to the Galatians, in which he warns believers against the influence of Judaizers. As Gundry (2012:388) notes, many of the first Christians were of Jewish origin and continued practicing Mosaic rituals, dietary laws, and sacrificial offerings even after conversion. Paul, upon learning that some Jewish converts still adhered to the law for righteousness, sought to clarify that Christian liberty is not a license for sinful indulgence but a call to live by the Spirit.

In this passage, Paul emphasizes that true Christian freedom liberates believers from legalistic constraints while also requiring them to reject the desires of the flesh. He warns against acts of the flesh—including sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery—stating that those who engage in such behaviours will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Instead, believers are urged to walk by the Spirit, cultivating virtues such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

This passage is particularly relevant to the discussion of rape, as it presents a theological framework for moral living, condemning sexual immorality and emphasizing a Spirit-led life. In the South African context, where rape remains a pressing social crisis, the principles in Galatians 5:13-26 offer ethical guidance on fostering a culture of respect, self-control, and justice.

4.7.2 Text analysis

Christian Freedom and the Call to Love (vv. 13-15)

In verse 13, Paul reminds the Galatians that they were "called to be free," emphasizing that Christian freedom does not equate to moral license. Burton (2000:292) asserts that the term *flesh* in this passage refers to "that element of man's nature which is opposed to goodness and makes for evil." This understanding underscores Paul's concern that believers might misuse their liberty as an opportunity to gratify sinful desires. Instead of indulging the flesh, Paul exhorts them to serve one another humbly in love.

This call to love aligns with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 22:37-39, where He identifies

love as the greatest commandment: love for God and love for neighbour. When love is the guiding principle, believers naturally fulfil the moral intent of the law. As Longenecker (1990:245) highlights, Paul's argument here resonates with Jewish ethical thought, in which love is seen as the essence of the law. By serving others in love, the Galatians would avoid destructive behaviours such as "biting and devouring one another" (v. 15), which could lead to their downfall.

The Conflict Between the Spirit and the Flesh (vv. 16-21)

Paul contrasts walking by the Spirit with gratifying the desires of the flesh, stating that these two forces are in opposition. He insists that being led by the Spirit liberates believers from the law's condemnation while enabling them to live righteously. Bruce (1982:245) observes that Paul's dichotomy between the Spirit and flesh reflects a deeper theological concern—whether one's life is governed by divine influence or human nature marred by sin.

The acts of the flesh listed in verses 19-21—sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, discord, jealousy, and others—serve as indicators of a life not submitted to the Spirit. Schreiner (2010:350) notes that these vices were common in Greco-Roman society, and Paul warns that those who engage in such behaviours will not inherit the Kingdom of God. This is a sobering reminder that true freedom is not lawlessness but alignment with God's will.

Living by the Spirit and Bearing Its Fruit (vv. 22-26)

In contrast to the works of the flesh, Paul presents the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These qualities reflect a transformed life and demonstrate evidence of genuine faith. Dunn (1993:308) points out that while the works of the flesh are plural, the fruit of the Spirit is singular, emphasizing the unity of a Spirit-led life.

In verse 24, Paul states that those who belong to Christ have *crucified the flesh* with its passions and desires, signifying a decisive break from sinful tendencies. This

crucifixion metaphor echoes Galatians 2:20, where Paul declares that he has been crucified with Christ. Moo (2013:364) interprets this as both a past event and an ongoing process—believers have positionally died to sin but must actively resist its influence.

Finally, Paul warns against conceit, provocation, and envy (v. 26), recognizing that spiritual pride can undermine community harmony. As believers walk by the Spirit, their lives should be marked by humility and mutual encouragement rather than rivalry.

4.7.3 Principles from Galatians 5:13-26

Principle 1: The call to love and serve one another (vv. 13-14)

Paul emphasizes that Christian freedom is not an opportunity for indulging in sinful desires, but a call to serve one another humbly in love (v. 13). He highlights that the entire law is fulfilled in loving one's neighbour as oneself (v. 14).

Rape is a direct violation of love and human dignity (Lapsley, 2005), contradicting the biblical principle of selfless service. Victims of rape experience deep wounds—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Healing must begin with a community that embodies love, support, and restoration. The church and society are called to advocate for justice and provide spaces of healing and restoration, demonstrating Christ's love in practical ways.

Principle 2: Walking by the Spirit and overcoming the desires of the flesh (vv. 16-26)

Paul contrasts the works of the flesh, which include sexual immorality and impurity, with the fruit of the Spirit—love, peace, kindness, and self-control (vv. 19-23). He urges believers to crucify the sinful nature and live by the Spirit.

- Rape is an act driven by the desires of the flesh (lust, selfish ambition, lack of self-control). Paul calls for a transformation where individuals submit to the Spirit, which cultivates self-control and respect for others.
- For survivors of rape, healing involves embracing the fruit of the Spirit, especially peace, love, and restoration.

- Wounded healing occurs when individuals and communities walk by the Spirit, fostering a culture of protection, accountability, and support for survivors.

4.7.4 Summary and Conclusion

This passage speaks directly to the moral and ethical implications of sexual violence. Rape is an act rooted in the desires of the flesh, violating the command to love and serve others. It reflects a world where selfishness, lack of self-control, and power imbalances lead to the exploitation of others. Paul's message challenges individuals and communities to reject such destructive behaviours and instead cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, which promotes dignity, healing, and justice.

For survivors of rape, wounded healing takes place when they encounter a community that embodies love, kindness, and restoration—values central to life in the Spirit. The church, as the body of Christ, must actively promote healing, justice, and advocacy for victims, ensuring that they experience not just human compassion but also the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, Paul's exhortation to live by the Spirit calls for a renewed commitment to justice, respect, and healing, creating a society where the dignity of every person is upheld and the wounds of trauma are met with God's love and restoration.

A final biblical passage will now be examined to develop this discussion further.

4.8 Exegesis of Revelation 2:18-25

4.8.1 Introduction

Revelation 2:18-25 is part of the letter to the church in Thyatira, where Christ rebukes the community for tolerating the corrupting influence of Jezebel, a false prophetess who led believers into sexual immorality and idolatry. This passage highlights the destructive impact of moral corruption and the consequences of unrepentant sin. In the context of rape and wounded healing, the passage serves as a critique of societies that permit or overlook sexual exploitation, emphasizing the need for accountability, justice, and healing. Christ's call to repentance and perseverance provides a

framework for addressing the wounds caused by sexual violence, offering hope for restoration and renewal through faith. This exegesis will explore the theological and ethical implications of the passage, linking it to contemporary concerns about rape and the process of healing for survivors.

4.8.2 Text analysis

The Authority of Christ and His Judgment (vv. 18-19)

Verse 18 begins by establishing Jesus as the *Son of God*, emphasizing His divine authority over the church in Thyatira. Constable (2023:64) notes that the inclusion of this title underscores Christ's right to judge His people. The imagery of His eyes being like *blazing fire* and His feet like *burnished bronze* conveys both His penetrating vision and unwavering strength. Barclay (1957:128) interprets the *flaming eyes* as symbolizing Christ's righteous anger against sin and His ability to see into the depths of human hearts. Similarly, the *brazen feet* signify His steadfast and immovable power, reinforcing the seriousness of His judgment.

Verse 19 highlights the commendable attributes of the Thyatiran believers—love, faith, service, and perseverance. These virtues reflect their commitment to Christ. However, as the passage progresses, it becomes clear that their moral integrity is compromised by their tolerance of false teachings and immorality.

The Danger of Conforming to Sexual Immorality (vv. 20-23)

Despite their faithfulness in some areas, verse 20 reveals Christ's reproach: the church in Thyatira tolerated the influence of Jezebel, a false prophetess leading believers into sexual immorality and idolatry. Beale (1999:261) suggests that this reference to Jezebel may not refer to an actual woman but rather to a symbolic figure representing corrupt influences within the church. The historical Jezebel in the Old Testament (1 Kings 16:31; 21:25) was notorious for promoting Baal worship and leading Israel into idolatry and immorality, making her a fitting metaphor for this situation.

Verse 21 states that Jezebel was given an opportunity to repent, but she refused. Consequently, verse 22 declares that she will be *cast onto a bed of suffering*, a poetic justice that contrasts the illicit *bed of sin* she promoted. Those who engaged in adultery with her will suffer intensely unless they repent. This warning aligns with Numbers 14:18, which affirms that while God is *slow to anger and abounding in love*, He ultimately *does not leave the guilty unpunished*.

Verse 23 extends the judgment to Jezebel's *children*, likely referring to her followers rather than literal offspring. Christ's declaration that He *searches hearts and minds* emphasizes His omniscience and His commitment to justice, ensuring that *everyone will be repaid according to their deeds*. Osborne (2002:164) points out that this passage reinforces divine retribution as a key theme in apocalyptic literature, where moral corruption inevitably leads to divine judgment.

A Call to Perseverance and Righteousness (vv. 24-25)

In contrast to the judgment on Jezebel and her followers, verses 24-25 assure those in Thyatira who *have not conformed* to her teachings or engaged in what is referred to as *Satan's so-called deep secrets*. Beale (1999:263) interprets this phrase as a sarcastic reference to Gnostic-like claims that deeper spiritual knowledge justified immoral behaviour. However, Christ reassures these faithful believers that *no further burden* will be placed upon them.

The final exhortation in verse 25 urges believers to *hold on* to righteousness until Christ returns. This aligns with the broader theme of perseverance in the book of Revelation, where remaining faithful amidst corruption and persecution is essential for spiritual victory (Mounce, 1998:93).

4.8.3 Principles from Revelation 2:18-25

Principle 1: God's justice confronts sexual immorality and abuse

One of the key principles from Revelation 2:18-25 is that God holds individuals and communities accountable for enabling or tolerating sexual immorality and abuse. The passage condemns the influence of *Jezebel*, who misleads believers into *sexual*

immorality (Rev. 2:20). Beale (1999:261) interprets *Jezebel* as a symbolic representation of corrupt influences in the church, reinforcing the idea that systemic tolerance of sexual sin is condemned by God.

For survivors of rape and sexual violence, this passage offers a powerful affirmation that God sees injustice and will act against perpetrators. The imagery of *blazing fire* (Rev. 2:18) represents Christ's penetrating vision, which exposes hidden sins and ensures that no act of abuse goes unnoticed (Barclay, 0000:128). The divine judgment on *Jezebel and her followers* (Rev. 2:22-23) serves as a reminder that God is committed to justice, ensuring that those who exploit others will face consequences (Osborne, 2002:164). This offers hope to survivors, affirming that God is neither indifferent nor silent in the face of sexual violence.

Principle 2: The call to healing and perseverance in the midst of pain

The passage also highlights a principle of perseverance and healing for those who resist corruption and seek righteousness. In verse 24, Christ acknowledges those in Thyatira who have *not conformed* to Jezebel's teachings, assuring them that *no further burden* will be placed upon them. This can be linked to the wounded healing process, where survivors of rape and sexual violence are called to stand firm in their healing journey despite societal pressures or past trauma.

Mounce (1998:93) emphasizes that this verse encourages believers to hold *on* until Christ returns, reinforcing the need for endurance in faith and personal restoration. For those who have experienced rape, healing is often a long and painful process. Yet, just as the faithful in Thyatira were assured of God's support, survivors are reminded that they are not alone in their journey. The passage assures them that God sees their pain, provides comfort, and ultimately restores justice.

Thus, Revelation 2:18-25 provides both a theological condemnation of sexual violence and a message of hope for survivors. God's justice confronts perpetrators, while His grace sustains those on the path to healing.

4.8.4 Summary and Conclusion

Revelation 2:18-25 presents a dual message: divine justice against sexual violence and encouragement for those who have suffered. The passage affirms that God sees and condemns sexual abuse, bringing judgment upon those who exploit and harm others. At the same time, it assures survivors that they are not forgotten—God calls them to hold on, promising healing and restoration.

In the context of wounded healing, this passage encourages faith communities to resist cultures of sexual violence actively, ensuring justice and providing spaces for survivors to heal. As Christ's blazing eyes symbolize His all-seeing justice, this serves as a reminder that no injustice is hidden, and ultimate restoration comes from God.

4.8.5 Chapter summary and conclusion

The Bible consistently condemns rape and presents three key lessons regarding sexual violence and wounded healing. First, justice and accountability. The passages emphasise that rape is a grave sin requiring decisive action against perpetrators (Deuteronomy 22:25-27, Revelation 2:18-25). The failures in Judges 19 and 2 Samuel 13 illustrate the tragic consequences of ignoring justice. These texts emphasize the importance of societies and faith communities in protecting victims and holding offenders accountable. Second, the dignity and innocence of victims. The biblical narratives recognize the suffering of victims, emphasizing that they bear no guilt for what was done to them (Deuteronomy 22:25-27, 2 Samuel 13). Tamar's story underscores the importance of support and restoration over silence and shame. Scripture affirms that victims deserve care, justice, and the opportunity to heal. Third, healing through faith and transformation. While the Bible acknowledges the deep wounds caused by sexual violence, it also offers a path to healing through spiritual renewal (Galatians 5:13-26) and perseverance in faith (Revelation 2:18-25). God's justice and love are central to the healing process, calling believers to create a culture of care, repentance, and restoration.

The Bible not only condemns sexual violence but also charts a path toward healing. By seeking justice, embracing spiritual renewal, and fostering a compassionate community, survivors of rape can find restoration. The wounded healer model—where

suffering transforms into a source of strength and advocacy—can be drawn from these passages, encouraging the church to be an agent of healing, justice, and renewal.

In conclusion, the biblical response to rape is both a call for justice and a promise of healing. Scripture denounces sexual violence, affirms the dignity of survivors, and provides a vision for a community that stands against oppression while fostering healing and renewal. The church and society must embody these biblical principles by advocating for justice, supporting survivors, and working toward a future free from the scourge of sexual violence.

CHAPTER 5

5. Strategic interventions could be implemented for effective wounded healing care application within the context of GBV-rape in South Africa

5.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to answer Osmer's pragmatic question, "how might we respond?" This study has looked at the state of GBV-rape in South Africa and the involvement of churches in chapter 2, the meaning of wounded healing within Christian perspective and its application to rape situations within the context of South Africa in chapter 3, discerned the theological position that can be developed on the notion of wounded healing within rape situations from scripture in chapter 4. This chapter seeks to come up with recommendations based on principles that have been learnt from the word of God that can be utilized to address rape situations in South Africa.

5.2 Recommendations to curb the spread of rape in South Africa

The following are recommendations drawn from literature study and exegesis of scriptural passages from the Old Testament and New Testament on chapter 4, as principles to address rape in South Africa.

- Address GBV happening in churches
- Speak up and do something about rape situations
- The law should punish perpetrators in rape cases
- Victims of rape should be supported and not persecuted
- Pastoral care collaborated with wounded healer notion to comfort victims

5.2.1 Address GBV happening in churches

Landman and Mudimeli (2022:2) state that South Africa has been put as one of the most religious countries globally by the stats presented by the census, 85% of people indicated that they were affiliated with a certain religion, and among those, 80% were Christians. This means whatever is preached in the churches reaches great masses, and the message has the potential to build or break the nation. The misinterpretation

of scripture has led to the Bible being used to support immoral and patriarchal practices within churches. The belief that women are inferior to men and after marriage the wife belongs entirely to the husband has been the leading cause of rape cases within the context of South Africa.

Since the dawn of humanity, men have used the biblical account of Adam and Eve's creation to portray and perpetuate the idea of women as weak and inferior. She was only created to assist men (Freeks, 2023:5).

According to Nelson (2014:6), patriarchal practices objectify women and take away the equality that God has instilled in men and women, who are both made in His image. The misuse of religious texts to justify male dominance and the subjugation of women is a persistent issue in many faith communities (Phiri, 2001). Certain biblical passages, such as Ephesians 5:22-24, which instructs wives to submit to their husbands, have been taken out of context to promote oppressive gender roles (Oduyoye, 2001). However, a critical theological reflection reveals that biblical teachings advocate for mutual respect and love, as seen in Ephesians 5:25, which commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

Moreover, churches have often been silent or complicit in cases of GBV due to cultural norms that prioritize male leadership and dismiss the voices of women (Rakoczy, 2004). This silence reinforces harmful practices, leaving victims without support and perpetrators unaccountable. Phiri (2001) argues that theological education must incorporate gender justice to challenge oppressive interpretations of scripture and empower faith leaders to advocate for the rights of victims. According to Banda (2020:2), the church has not been active in combating GBV. However, it has been only engaging in burying victims of GBV. It is crucial for faith communities to actively challenge cultural and systemic structures that perpetuate injustices and instead become spaces of refuge and restoration for victims. Women should be empowered by the church to speak up.

Churches need to be vocal about GBV and rape. Faith communities play a vital role in addressing GBV by actively challenging cultural and systemic structures that perpetuate injustice and instead becoming spaces of refuge and restoration for victims (Nanthambwe & Magezi, 2024). Churches should promote theological frameworks that emphasize gender equality and human dignity (Lapsley, 2005). Theologies such

as African women's theology and feminist theology provide critical insights into the lived experiences of women and challenge patriarchal readings of scripture (Oduyoye, 2001). Communities are full of violence, and children who grow up witnessing such have the tendency to conform to such, so the church could make it their aim to go to schools and educate pupils about the unacceptability of these immoral acts and the consequences of such according to the Bible and law. This could curb the number of people who become perpetrators in our communities. Furthermore, churches could offer support programmes to their congregants and community members who are victims of GBV, as this will fuel their progress in healing post their ordeals and bring them closer to God, who is the ultimate healer.

Addressing GBV in churches requires a multifaceted approach that includes theological reflection, education, policy development, and active advocacy. Faith communities must assume their prophetic role in speaking out against injustice and fostering an environment that upholds gender equality. By doing so, they can transform into places of healing and empowerment for all individuals, particularly women who have suffered from gender-based violence.

5.2.2 The law should punish perpetrators in rape cases

In 2 Samuel 13, two men devised a plan to get Amnon alone with Tamar so that he could execute his sinful act on her. Amnon was inconsiderate of what raping Tamar would do to her hence she even asked him "What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace"; this gives the researcher the idea that rape was viewed as a disgrace on women and men who do such an act were seen as wicked fools. The woman went to the extent of not fully rejecting her brother's proposal. However, she asked him to speak with the King to arrange their marriage, so that he could have her. In South Africa women must go to the extent of lying during rape, as to protect themselves from contracting diseases.

She then lied to him and told him that she was HIV positive. He stood up, got a condom and put it on and penetrated her again for the third time. On these three occasions he did not ejaculate, instead, he urinated inside the condom (South African Legal Information Institute, 2021).

Rape is a punishable offence even in our current context, even though currently it is not punishable by death. However, victims expect the law to take its course and hold perpetrators accountable. In South Africa, there have been some convictions. However, there have also been some cases where there is no prospect of successful prosecution due to insufficient evidence. This does not mean that victims who got such results do not face the effects of the ordeal, so the researcher believes more should be done so that justice prevails.

It is important for the community at large to support rape victims, this can be done by following their cases. When the community follows a case and notices any injustice, they can bring it to attention of the relevant structure such as Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), Legal practice council, South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), Judiciary Service Commission (JSC), or the Magistrates Commission that the personnel who committed such an injustice belongs to. The researcher has observed that most cases that gain media attention tend to be taken seriously or reviewed if they are believed to involve an injustice. The laws that govern the country are meant to protect its people. There are laws against rape, these laws need to be taken into consideration at all times when an individual has been raped to ensure that they are protected, get justice and have access to resources that aid in their healing process.

The manner in which the justice systems run its rape trials poses a risk to people who are witnesses in rape cases, as their identities are not protected as long as they are not minors. This makes people who witness such crimes avoid coming forward as witnesses for their own safety. The justice system should have witness protection systems in place, as this could encourage people to be whistle blowers and witnesses in rape cases. The maximum sentence should be imposed on perpetrators on rape cases to set an example to those who might have a desire to commit such a crime.

Furthermore, perpetrators should only be released from correctional services when they have been rehabilitated, not simply because their sentence has been completed. In South Africa, there have been instances of people being released, only for them to cause more harm in the community. For example, Thabo Bester was released on parole and then he raped two women (Engelbrecht, 2023). Another example is the case of Botha.

Botha survived an attack in 1994 by Frans du Toit and Theuns Kruger, after they raped her and subsequently stabbed her 37 times. On the night of the attack, they

were also on parole for a different rape prior to attacking Alison. This is a clear indication that these attackers are a danger to society. Their release from prison this week has placed the safety of both Alison and every other woman in South Africa at risk (Engelbrecht, 2023).

The parole system in South Africa needs to be reviewed in order to protect its citizens because we cannot have history repeat itself on other women or survivors of rape. This will encourage victims to report rape and gain trust again in the justice system, as they will know that the law is on their side and will be supported.

5.2.3 Victims of rape should be supported and not persecuted

The exegeted pericope (Deuteronomy 22:25-27) gives a command or law that whenever a woman has become a victim of rape, only the perpetrator is to be punished. However, in our current context we find women blamed for getting raped and facing stigma in the community which can be equated to punishment to rape victims. Goffman (1963:3) defines stigma as differentness that is undesired, which ultimately discredits the person and decreases how they are viewed by others. This is not what God had intended hence it should be addressed.

People who are tasked with providing services to rape survivors such as health workers, police and actors in the legal system may enact external stigma against survivors, for example, by implying they were to blame for the rape. We need to eradicate this from our services. Although changing gender attitudes can be a long-term process, the evidence of a protective effect of holding more progressive gender attitudes warrants attention. This supports a view that part of the psychological assistance women require after rape involves specifically addressing ideas around gender equality and a shift from self-blame to appropriate blame of the perpetrator (Jewkes *et al.*, 2022:8).

Jewkes *et al.* (2022:8) believe that the main driver of the stigmatization of rape survivors is gender inequality, further adding that if more attention was given to addressing it, then consequently, there would be a decrease in stigmatization. A community filled with wounded people is not a functional one and stigmatization of raped women hinders their healing.

Different organizations could have stigmatization awareness campaigns whereby people are taught about the effect of stigma on raped women. Raising awareness

helps equip people on how to treat and comfort survivors of rape and assure them that they will support them through their journey of healing. WHO (2021) believe there is a need for law enforcement officers, healthcare professionals, and other stakeholders to be re-educated on how to respond with respect and sensitivity to rape survivors.

5.2.4 Speak up and do something about rape situations

Apostle Paul got well acquainted with the Galatians after his first missionary journey. During his visit, he founded churches in Galatia, and many people converted when they heard the good news about God. After Paul left Galatia, believers started to listen to false teachers who were trying to impose their Judaizing practices on them. When Paul got this news, he became angry and wrote them this letter. Paul must have been extremely frustrated when writing this letter as he did not even see the need to include Thanksgiving. Apostle Paul began this passage by calling the Galatians foolish, as they lacked sound judgement in the face of false teachers. He could not understand why the Galatians were deviating from the work of God, when he had preached the unadulterated truth to them. They had accepted his preaching as the truth, and some had even converted. He wondered why they would quit now after being through so much pain caused by the same law they want to follow. He further states that those who truly follow God and have faith will be blessed, while those who are reluctant to follow God are under a curse. Those who believe in the works of the law to save them are not justified before God, as they contrast with the principle of living by faith. Jesus Christ saved believers from the curse, so whoever does not believe in Him is cursed.

The rape statistics of South Africa are alarmingly high, indicating that people are misusing the freedom given to them by Jesus Christ by indulging the flesh. Mile (2020:4) states that even the statistics available to the public reflect half the truth about the extent of GBV, as some cases are not reported to the authorities or at times charges were not even laid against the perpetrators.

Rape is a desire by the flesh; this act is considered to be sexual immorality, driven by selfish ambitions and hatred towards the victim. The Bible teaches that believers should crucify the flesh along with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24).

Furthermore, Paul warns that people should “watch out” or they will destroy each other

(Galatians 5:15). This destruction is evident in how rape leaves victims with long-term wounds, affecting their psychological, mental, and physical well-being. Scholars such as Phiri (2001) and Rakoczy (2004) argue that gender-based violence, including rape, is often sustained by patriarchal systems that fail to hold perpetrators accountable while silencing survivors. Rape survivors often struggle with social stigma, isolation, and a lack of justice, making their recovery difficult. As discussed in previous chapters, the trauma experienced by victims can lead to hopelessness, depression, and even suicidal thoughts. The church, therefore, has a moral and theological responsibility to be at the forefront of addressing sexual violence. According to Chitando and Chirongoma (2013), faith communities must challenge cultural narratives that normalize rape and instead promote a theology of healing, justice, and dignity for survivors.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), and those who live righteously, taking Him as the ultimate example, will inherit the kingdom of God. When people's actions are anchored in Jesus Christ and driven by the Spirit, they will not despise one another and end up committing acts of violence, such as rape. Instead, they will embody the greatest commandment—to love God and love their neighbour (Matthew 22:37-39). When one truly loves their neighbour, they will not seek to harm them but will instead practice gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

However, theological responses must go beyond personal transformation; they should also include social action. As Baloyi (2015) asserts, churches must move from passive acknowledgment of GBV to active intervention. This includes educating congregants about consent, challenging harmful gender norms, and providing safe spaces for survivors to seek support.

Re-educating people about what constitutes rape is crucial in our communities, as perpetrators sometimes claim they did not fully understand that their actions constituted rape. The misconception that “silence means consent” is a dangerous and flawed perception that must be corrected. According to Nadar (2009), theological education should actively challenge rape myths and promote gender-sensitive biblical interpretations that uphold the dignity of all individuals.

When proper education on consent and accountability is provided, individuals can be held responsible for their actions. Additionally, faith communities must create platforms for survivors to share their experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Henri

Nouwen (1979) believes that storytelling and sharing experiences play a crucial role in healing, as they allow survivors to reclaim their voices and begin the journey toward restoration. Churches should facilitate these spaces, ensuring that survivors receive not only spiritual support but also psychological and legal assistance.

Speaking up against rape and taking tangible action is a moral and theological imperative for the church. Faith leaders must break the silence, challenge harmful cultural and religious norms, and create spaces of healing and justice. By re-educating communities, supporting survivors, and promoting a theology of justice and restoration, the church can play a pivotal role in eradicating sexual violence. A holistic approach that includes theological reflection, community education, and survivor-centered support is necessary for meaningful change.

5.2.5 Pastoral care collaborated with the wounded healer notion to comfort victims

Rape is a form of sexual violence that fundamentally violates the dignity, autonomy, and personhood of its victims. As demonstrated in earlier exegetical discussions, such acts contradict the biblical commandment to love one's neighbour (Mark 12:31) and are explicitly condemned in Scripture (1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Galatians 5:19–21). Perpetrators, when unrepentant, will face divine and, where applicable, legal judgment. Yet, alongside the need for justice, there is an equally urgent need to extend pastoral care to survivors—particularly women who suffer rape—to facilitate healing, restoration, and spiritual renewal.

The scope of pastoral care includes spiritual guidance, emotional support, and social advocacy. These are crucial aspects of care for rape victims who experience multi-dimensional trauma. Within this framework, the wounded healer concept, as articulated by Henri Nouwen (1979), offers a profound theological and pastoral model. The wounded healer is someone who has undergone suffering or deep emotional pain and, through the transformative power of Christ, becomes an instrument of healing for others. This concept is highly relevant for pastoral care to rape survivors, particularly when care is offered by those who have endured trauma themselves or are empathetically attuned to the wounds of others.

As Nouwen puts it, the healer does not come from a place of invulnerability, but from a deep awareness of human brokenness and God's grace. This aligns well with

Baloyi's (2015) argument that theological responses to GBV must move beyond sin condemnation to focus on healing and restoration. Survivors should not be stigmatized but embraced as individuals in need of loving, redemptive care.

The integration of the wounded healer concept into pastoral care can be operationalized by mapping the specific effects of rape onto pastoral responses inspired by wounded healing. The table below provides a structured approach for doing so:

Table 3: Integrating wounded healer approaches into pastoral care for raped women

Effect of Rape on Victim	Wounded Healer Response in Pastoral Care
Deep emotional trauma and shame	Acknowledge pain without judgment; offer a presence that listens with empathy. The healer's own experience of shame or brokenness allows them to create a safe, non-condemning space.
Loss of trust in others (including religious leaders or communities)	Model vulnerability and humility in pastoral relationships. The healer admits their own doubts and brokenness to rebuild trust in a compassionate community.
Spiritual disillusionment or questioning of God's presence	Share personal or biblical narratives of suffering and divine silence, affirming that questioning is part of faith. The healer walks alongside, not ahead.
Social isolation and stigmatization	Form support groups where survivors can meet other "wounded healers"—people who have experienced healing and now comfort others (2 Cor. 1:3–4).
Guilt or self-blame	Offer theological reorientation: victims are not to blame. The wounded healer can help deconstruct internalized shame through empathetic theological insight.
Fear and anxiety	Practice calming spiritual disciplines together (e.g., prayer, lament, silence). Wounded healers guide not with abstract doctrine but lived experience.
Desire for justice and closure	Encourage righteous anger and advocacy as part of healing. Pastoral care should affirm that seeking justice is biblical (Isaiah 1:17), while healing remains a long-term journey.
Identity confusion and loss of self-worth	Through the wounded healer's affirmation and theological reflection, survivors are reminded they are made in God's image and beloved despite what happened.

In this way, the pastoral caregiver does not act as a distant authority, but rather as a witness to God's redemptive presence amid suffering. Pastoral care that integrates the wounded healer notion becomes relational, authentic, and grounded in both theological and psychological wisdom. Survivors are invited to see that healing is possible—not through the erasure of pain but through its integration into a new narrative of hope and purpose.

Faith communities must, therefore, be transformed into spaces of refuge rather than judgment. As Nadar (2009) rightly warns, patriarchal religious interpretations that silence women or shield perpetrators must be dismantled. Similarly, Baloyi (2010) calls on churches to become active agents of justice and healing. Rakoczy (2004) further reinforces that gender justice is a theological imperative, requiring a conscious dismantling of systems that enable sexual violence.

Pastoral care combined with the wounded healer concept offers a biblically and theologically robust approach to comforting victims of rape. It affirms that healing can come from brokenness, that woundedness can be redeemed, and that survivors, too, may eventually become healers within their communities.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has explored strategic interventions for the effective application of wounded healing care within the context of GBV-related rape in South Africa. Given the country's alarmingly high rates of sexual violence and the deeply entrenched patriarchal structures that contribute to it, the need for faith communities to take an active role in addressing this crisis cannot be overstated. Drawing on theological and academic perspectives, the chapter emphasized that churches must move beyond passive condemnation to proactive engagement in dismantling systems that enable gender-based violence (GBV).

The strategies discussed highlight the importance of integrating theological insights, trauma-informed pastoral care, and community-based initiatives tailored to the South African context. These interventions include fostering safe spaces for survivors to share their experiences, providing holistic healing through psychological and spiritual support, and re-educating faith communities on consent and gender justice. Furthermore, religious leaders must use their influence to challenge harmful cultural norms and advocate for justice by collaborating with legal and social institutions.

Ultimately, by adopting a wounded healing care approach—one that prioritizes empathy, justice, and restoration—faith communities in South Africa can contribute to breaking the cycle of sexual violence. Such an approach aligns with the biblical call to love and justice, ensuring that survivors are not only supported but also empowered to reclaim their dignity and healing. Through these interventions, the church can serve as a transformative agent in addressing GBV and fostering a society where all individuals, particularly survivors, experience justice, healing, and wholeness.

CHAPTER 6

6.1 Recommendations and Conclusions

This study embarked on a critical exploration into the potential of the wounded healer metaphor, as understood within a Christian framework, to address the deeply entrenched and pervasive issue of rape within the broader context of gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa. The central objective was to understand how this theological concept could be practically applied to facilitate meaningful healing for both survivors and, where possible, perpetrators, within a society grappling with alarmingly high rates of sexual violence.

The research successfully navigated and addressed each of its sub-objectives, revealing crucial insights and proposing actionable strategies. Firstly, by exploring the state of GBV-rape in South Africa and the involvement of Christians and churches, the study illuminated a stark disconnect between the gravity of the rape crisis and the often inadequate or inconsistent responses from Christian communities. This highlighted not only a profound lack of awareness and engagement but also the urgent necessity for a paradigm shift within religious institutions. It underscored the need for churches to move beyond mere condemnation to active, informed, and compassionate participation in addressing the crisis, recognizing the spiritual and psychological wounds inflicted by sexual violence.

Secondly, by describing the notion of wounded healing within a Christian perspective, the study established the theological foundation for its central argument. It demonstrated that the concept, deeply rooted in scriptural principles, emphasizes the transformative power of shared suffering, empathy, and the potential for healing through personal experience. This understanding positions those who have endured trauma not merely as victims but as potential agents of healing, capable of offering unique support and understanding to others.

Thirdly, by discerning the theological position that can be developed on the notion of wounded healing within rape contexts from scriptural sources, the study provided a robust biblical and theological framework. Through careful scriptural analysis, it identified key principles such as justice, the inherent dignity of victims, and the possibility of transformative healing through faith. These principles validate the

application of the wounded healer metaphor within the context of rape, providing a theological mandate for churches to actively engage in healing and restorative justice.

Finally, by proposing strategic interventions that could result in effective wounded healing care within the context of rape in South Africa, the study transitioned from theoretical exploration to practical application. It offered concrete recommendations, including the implementation of trauma-informed pastoral care, the development of community-based support initiatives, and the delivery of educational programs aimed at fostering awareness and challenging harmful cultural norms. These interventions are designed to create safe spaces for survivors, facilitate holistic healing, and empower them to reclaim their dignity and agency.

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated that the wounded healer metaphor, when grounded in sound biblical principles and implemented through strategic, contextually relevant interventions, offers a powerful and viable framework for addressing the complex and deeply damaging issue of rape in South Africa. By bridging the gap between theological ideals and practical action, faith communities can play a transformative role in fostering healing, promoting justice, and driving societal change. This study calls for a renewed commitment from churches to actively engage in the fight against GBV, embracing their unique capacity to provide spiritual and emotional support, advocate for justice, and contribute to the creation of a society where all individuals, particularly survivors, can experience wholeness and restoration. It is a call to action, urging faith communities to become beacons of hope and agents of healing in a nation desperately in need of both.

6.2 Limitations of the study

The focus of this study was to what extent are Christians utilizing the notion of wounded healing in Christian care and counselling spaces to effect healing in rape victims and survivors and if there is any reference to different care and coping mechanisms where there is explicit and direct reference to the wounded healer as indicated from theological sources as lived and practiced by Christians. In exploring the problem, reference was made to different parts of the world. South Africa as the focal point of this dissertation was discussed whereby its history on rape and strategies

that were implemented by different stakeholders to address it were presented and analyzed. The researcher believes due to the limited sources relevant to the topic in theological literature, this topic was not explored fully as this study did not include any empirical data but a literature review.

6.3 Recommendations for further studies

The following are recommended areas for further research.

- Practical steps the church can take to address rape situations in their churches and community.
- The missional role of the church to shed light in the world and be of service to victims of GBV (rape)
- Proactive programmes that churches can implement to curb the surge of GBV within congregations and community.
- Programmes or laws that the government and churches in South Africa could initiate to enforce moral conduct among the citizens.

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