



# Mothers as mentors in single-parent families: A practical theological study

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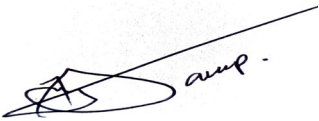
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**DECLARATION**

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'A' followed by the name 'amp.'.

Signature:

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2023

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## **ABSTRACT**

### ***Background***

The problem is that reduced parental involvement impacts the values and standards that children are brought up with. There may be no one else available or accountable to offer good role modelling, instil standards and values in single-parent households, or handle other matters when fathers are absent.

During this practical-theological study focusing on mothers as mentors through a literature review, South African society's moral compass is at risk. Gender-based violence is increasing in single-parent families where mothers are the main breadwinners.

To address this challenge and establish effective mentoring programmes for women in single-parent households, it is imperative to seek guidance from God and biblical principles. The absence of fathers, compounded by insufficient mentorship programmes, significantly impacts young children and single-parent households, underscoring the urgency for intervention.

### ***Objectives***

The objectives of the study were to:

- Describe the current situation in South Africa regarding single-parent families, including the huge problem of gender-based violence.
- Explore the role of mothers as mentors in single-parent families.
- Explore the biblical-theological views of mothers as mentors in single-parent families.
- Propose practical-theological guidelines regarding the mother as mentor in single-parent families.

### ***Method and approach***

Applying Osmer's four main tasks as a framework, a study of biblical material was conducted to develop a practical theology manual aimed at assisting congregations,

ministers, and practical theologians in understanding the realities of congregational life. The tasks, along with their corresponding questions in brackets, are as follows:

- *Descriptive-empirical task* (What is going on?). Engaging in the life of a congregation involves investigating the current situation. In the context of South Africa, what is currently happening regarding single-parent families and gender-based violence?
- *Interpretive task* (Why is this going on?). This task entails using scientific theories to understand the origin of situations and patterns. It is important to discuss and explore the role of mothers as mentors in single-parent families to comprehend the underlying reasons behind societal dynamics.
- *The normative task* (What should be going on?). To determine ethical norms, it is imperative to utilise theological-hermeneutical concepts, including written, verbal, and non-verbal communication. By delving into biblical-theological views of mothers as mentors in single-parent families, we can discern the ideals and principles that should guide their role and inform best practices.
- *The pragmatic task* (How could or might we respond?). The study's findings are integrated into actionable strategies suitable for possible interventions to address the identified issues. This involves proposing practical-theological guidelines for mothers as mentors in single-parent families, offering tangible solutions to support and empower them in their crucial role.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted, utilising secondary sources including academic publications, journal articles, websites, and national and international scientific resources. This approach was complemented by the utilisation of various search engines to gather relevant data. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach, the researcher was empowered to examine the subject matter from diverse perspectives.

In addition to drawing insights from biblical literature, this study incorporated findings from books, peer-reviewed journal papers, and other scholarly sources. This comprehensive approach facilitated a thorough exploration of the topic, enriching the depth and breadth of understanding.

## ***Outcomes and results***

The Bible served as a practical theology model for mothers and female mentors, offering a theological guide to help women become better equipped and prepared for the task of raising children. In situations where fathers or other male figures are absent, mothers must step into the role of readily available mentors within society, empowering children through mentoring programmes. While the presence of both parents would be ideal, practical-theoretical guidelines are essential to ensure that mothers can effectively fulfil the mentoring role in the absence of fathers.

Proverbs 31:10-28 and I Timothy 2:11-15 were analysed and presented as points of reference for developing a practical–theological paradigm for mother mentors. These biblical passages offer valuable insights into the behaviours and mentoring roles of biblical mothers, providing a wealth of information to guide modern mothers who face the challenge of raising children without fathers.

This study takes the position that mothers serving as mentors can effectively stand in for absent fathers in single-parent households, offering invaluable support and guidance to their children.

***Key words: practical theological study, role of mother, mentor, parent, families, absent father***

# OPSOMMING

## ***Agtergrond***

Ouer betrokkenheid is besig om die ideale en standarde waarmee kinders groot moet word, een kant toe te skuif. Ouers, veral die vaderfiguur is nie altyd teenwoordig tydens die grootmaak van kinders nie, en dit lei daarna toe dat kinders alleen grootgemaak word deur die enkelouer, gewoonlik die ma. Daar is dus niemand anders wat soms kan help met die taak om kinders groot te maak en gesonde rolmodelle ontbreek en ook verantwoordelike familieomnormes en waardes te kan oordra.

Die morele waarde sisteem in Suid-Afrika is besig om te wankel onder die druk van geslagsgebaseerde geweld. Geslagsgebaseerde geweld is besig om oor die algemeen te groei, veral in enkelouer huishoudings. Die ma is in baie opsigte die voorsienaar in die enkelouer huishouding. Die praktiese teologiese studie in die vorm van 'n literatuurstudie, kom in die tyd wat moeders as mentors vir kinders na vore moet kom wanneer vaders afwesig is.

Die studie is daar gestel om 'n mentorskapprogram te ontwikkel om enkelouers te ondersteun in wonings waar die vaderfiguur afwesig is, deur gebruik te maak van Bybelse perspektiewe en om God te raadpleeg. Weens die afwesigheid van 'n geskikte mentorskapprogram vir enkelouers, het vaderafwesigheid die kinders nadelig beïnvloed.

## ***Doelwitte***

Die doelwitte van die studie is as volg:

- Wat gebeur in Suid-Afrika, rakende enkelouer huisgesinne en geslagsgebaseerde geweld wat ondervind word.
- Om vas te stel watter rol enkelouer moeders as mentors vervul in hul huishouding.
- Die Bybelse-teologiese beginsels van moeders as mentors en as enkelouers vas te stel
- Die voorstelling van praktiese en teologiese riglyne vir moeders as enkelouers.

## **Metode**

Die navorser maak gebruik van Osmer se take en vrae om die bybelse materiaal te verwoord en dan sodoende 'n prakties-teologiese handleiding saam te stel wat gebruik kan word deur kerke, kerkleiers en gemeentelede om die uitdagings waardeur gemeente lede gaan, te kan verstaan. Die take en vrae van Osmer is as volg:

- *Beskrywende- empiriese taak* (Wat tans gebeur?) - om ondersoek in te stel wat aangaan in die lewe van gemeente. Wat is tans besig om in Suid-Afrika te gebeur rakende enkelouer huishoudings en geslagsgebaseerde geweld.
- *Interpretatiewe taak* (Waarom gebeur dit?) Die wetenskaplike teorie en vermoë om te verstaan waarom gebeur dit. Die rol wat moeders as mentors moet speel in enkelhuishoudings moet bespreek word.
- *Normatiewe taak* (Wat moet gebeur?) Die gebruik van teologiese hermeuniteik om deur teoretiese werk, verbale en nie-verbale kommunikasie etiese normas en waardes te kan voorstel. Voorgestelde bybelse-teologiese menings kan voorgelê word vir enkelouergesinne.
- *Pragmatiese taak* (Hoe kan ons reageer?) Die navorser moet sy bevindinge strategies kan voorstel om met die nodige oplossings na vore te kom. Die navorser moet dus prakties-teologiese riglyne saam stel om moeders te kan mentor in enkelouer huishoudings tydens die afwesigheid van die vaderfiguur.

Die beskrywende literatuur studie word gedoen deur die versameling van bronne soos akademiese publikasies, joernaal artikels, webtuistes, nasionale en internasionale wetenskaplike bronne. Soektogte sal ook gevolg word deur soek engins soos google te gebruik. Die rede vir die gebruik van al die bronne is sodat die navorser 'n breë veld van inligting kan versamel en deurwerk. Verder word verskillende bybelvertalings gebruik asook ander relevante boeke met betrekking tot die titel van die studie.

## **Uitkomst en uitslae**

In die literatuurstudie word die bybelse inligting gebruik om prakties-teologiese riglyne vir moeders as mentors voor te stel om vroue te mentor om kinders op te voed. Wanneer vaders afwesig is, sal moeders die mentorskap proses kan oorneem. Die ideaal is dat

albei ouers betrokke moet wees by die opvoeding van kinders maar `n geskikte prakties-teoretiese model sal moeders beter mentors maak.

Die bybelverse in Spreuke 31:10-28 en 1 Timoteus 2:11-15 sal gebruik word om die praktyk-teologiese paradigma te ondersteun vir moeders as mentors. Daar is baie inligting versamel wat gebruik kan word om moeders te mentor en toe te rus wat sukkel om kinders op te voed wanneer vaders afwesig is. Vroue bybel-figure word voorgehou as voorbeeld vir die hedendaagse Moeder-figure.

***Kernwoorde: prakties-teologiese studie, rol van die moeder, mentor, ouerskap, familie, afwesige vaders***

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AFMSA	Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa
ANC	African National Congress
CSDA	Centre for Social Development in Africa
FBO	Faith-based Organisation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MCSA	Methodist Church of South Africa
NWU	North-West University
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
TLASB	Tyndale Life Application Study Bible
UNISA	University of South Africa
URCSA	United Reformed Church in Southern Africa

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# CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

## 1.1 Concept clarification

## 1.2 Introduction

The following concepts will be discussed to give more clarity on the meaning of terms and how to use the explanation of concepts to give more understanding to the dissertation.

### 1.2.1 A practical theological study

The contemporary understanding of practical theology as a scientific discipline can be traced back to Schleiermacher's conception of theology (Gräb, 2012:79). Schleiermacher posited that the science of theology should be praxis-oriented, setting practical theology in collaboration with the other theological disciplines and related fields in the humanities and social sciences (Gräb, 2012:80). Miller-McLemore (2012:105) interprets practical theology as having significance for everyday life and faith.

### 1.2.2 Role of a mother

Biologically speaking, a mother is a female individual who gives birth to children. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2019: n.p.) describes a "*mother*" as a "female parent but not necessarily the birth mother". Frahm-Arp (2016:151) expands this definition, stating that a mother is someone who ensures that children receive quality education, eat nutritious food, live in clean and hygienic environments, and have meaningful interactions with both parents. For this dissertation, a mother is viewed as a female individual who gives birth to children, nurtures them, and adopts a holistic approach to their upbringing. From a biblical perspective, Genesis 4:1 state that Eve was the first mother in God's creation (Bible, 2013:6). However, it must be noted that not all women are mothers.

Rich (cited by Miller-McLemore, 1994:299) outlines three prevailing viewpoints on motherhood: (a) all women are perceived as mothers; (b) all women are expected to experience motherhood; and (c) women who do not engage in mothering are regarded as different. However, Rich (cited by Miller-McLemore, 1994:299) diverges from these perspectives by asserting that some women opt not to become mothers, and he

emphasises that “lesbians can be mothers and mothers can be lesbians”. The researcher concurs with this assertion.

Psalm 139:13 states: “For you have created my inmost being you knit me together in my mother`s womb”. In the author’s opinion and understanding of the Bible, only a mother can truly attest to the feeling and experience of childbirth and bringing a child into the world. No woman, except a mother, can fully comprehend and agree with the message of Psalm 139:13 (Bible, 2013). However, there are also mothers who have not given birth to children but have adopted them, and they can experience the same feelings described in Psalm 139:13. Therefore, all women have the potential to be mothers.

### **1.2.3 Mentor and Mentoring**

“Mentoring” is defined by Santora, Mason and Sheahan (cited by Freeks, 2021a:4) “as a collaborative and personal relationship in which the mentor (experienced person) guides the mentee (less experienced person) to achieve maximum success”. For further explication, Freeks (2021a:4) formulates mentoring as follows:

*Mentoring is about relationships, and it is also about unleashing people’s potential and to allow these people to be the best they can be. Mentoring is a helpful learning relationship between an individual – the mentor – who shares his or her skill, familiarity, and insight with other less experienced person-learning associate (mentee) – who is willing and ready to benefit from this exchange.*

In the researcher’s role as both a teacher and a pastor, he has frequently encountered the validity of Freeks’ viewpoint that an inexperienced individual requires the guidance of an experienced person to learn and eventually become a mentor themselves. The Bible is replete with examples of individuals who have engaged in mentoring roles in their daily lives, e.g., Moses who served as a mentor to Joshua.

### **1.2.4 Absent fathers**

Yates *et al.* (2019:205) define “father absence” as the situation where the birth parents separate or divorce, leading to the biological father's absence from the household. In my understanding of the term, an absent father is a father who does not stay with the family due to various reasons, such as divorce, separation, and death. Nevertheless, it is

essential to recognise that many fathers who have experienced divorce or separation from their spouses remain actively involved in the lives of their children.

### **1.2.5 Parent**

In the researcher's understanding, the term "parent" is any individual who has children and/or contributes to their upbringing, regardless of whether the children are their own or adopted. According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2019), a parent is defined as a "person who begets or brings forth offspring" and the "natural parents of a child born of their marriage". Proverbs 17:6 further illustrates what a parent can be: "Children's children are a crown to the age, and parents are the pride of their children" (Bible, 2013).

### **1.2.6 Families**

According to Bardis (as cited by Meyer, 2018:1), the evolution of the *Christian family* was shaped by the influence of Roman civilisation and the integration of certain barbarian customs during the Middle Ages. Kane (2017:10) defines a "family" as a distinctive social group responsible for the mutual well-being of its members within a familial context. There are various types of family structures, including nuclear families, child-headed families, extended families, single-parent families, and multi-generational families (Coert *et al.*, 2021:2). "Families" can be described as: (a) "the basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their children"; and (b) "any of the various social units differing from but regarded as equivalent to the traditional family" (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019).

A "single-parent family" is defined a household consisting of one parent and their children (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019). The concept of "family" has evolved over time to encompass all individuals residing within a household (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019). In a legal context, family pertains to individuals connected by blood, marriage, or adoption (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019). Kane (cited by Freeks, 2021b:4) characterises a family as a distinct social unit aimed at nurturing its members' success. Additionally, Schirmmacher (2019:14) observes that families undergo continuous changes. Numerous scholars have examined the ongoing evolution and intricacies of family structures (Clark & Clark, 2010:37; Freeks, 2011:83-84).

### **1.3 Background and problem statement**

#### **1.3.1 Background**

Morwe *et al.* (2015:1) characterise fatherhood absence as a prevalent trend not only in South Africa but also as a global phenomenon. In the South African context, family structures are undergoing changes in composition and formation due to the absence of fathers (Kesebonye & P'Olak, 2020:383; Freeks & De Jager, 2023). The health and prospects of families without fathers have been extensively debated across various academic disciplines (Freek, 2017a:178). Meyer (2018:4) outlines several reasons for fathers' absence from their children's lives, including financial, emotional, and physical factors.

Forming and maintaining an effective family unit is inherently challenging, especially amidst the complexities posed by absent fathers (Freek, 2011; 2016:1; 2017b:1-2; 2017c:90-93; Freeks & Lotter, 2009:520-524; Welch, 2007:2). Stringer (cited by Freeks, 2017a:182) contends that families where fathers and children share equal importance may foster happier family dynamics and more meaningful relationships.

It is important to understand that the nuclear family typically comprises a father, mother, and children, whether they are biological or adopted. Frahm-Arp (2016:153) contends that mothers within nuclear families often prioritise ensuring that their children receive a good quality education and are successful in life. While the traditional emphasis of nuclear families is on the presence of both a father and mother, it is important to acknowledge that mothers can also fulfil the role of mentor in families where fathers are absent. For the purposes of this study, heterosexual families are specifically being referred to.

#### **1.3.2 Research problem and problem statement**

From the outset of this literature study, it is crucial to acknowledge the problem the researcher aimed to tackle, namely the abundance of capable women in both the Bible and the contemporary world who already mentor children without a father figure as a role model. The goal is to ensure that all women, with the necessary support and assistance, can enhance their effectiveness as mentors for children who lack both a father and a mentor.

A critical challenge that must be addressed is that not all women possess the strength and effectiveness needed to mentor and guide their children effectively in navigating the world beyond the home. We must take into consideration that men, especially fathers, play an important role in mentoring children and preparing them for life outside the home and community. However, in situations where fathers or male figures are absent, mothers should and must have the opportunity to step into the role of mentor, as advocated by the researcher. The question arises: from whom should children receive mentoring in the absence of fathers or male figures within the household?

Women are increasingly providing for their children and can continue to do so effectively. Socioeconomic conditions have led to a shift where fathers are able to contribute at home, even becoming stay-at-home dads, while mothers provide the income (Yogman & Eppel, 2022:16). Cultural changes, such as the exponential growth in women's education and economic power, and the repercussions of the 2008 recession, which saw many fathers losing their jobs and mothers stepping up as sole providers, are further shaping these dynamics (Yogman & Eppel, 2022:16).

This study was approached from the perspective of a biblical-theological and practical theological understanding of the role of the mother as mentor in the absence of fathers. The Bible was used in this study as a crucial source to empower women to become stronger mothers and more effective mentors to their children. Mothers require more scriptural and spiritual support, and it is incumbent on the local church to guide them in becoming influential mentors. We need mothers as mentors to support their children when fathers are absent. The aim of the study was to contribute to the field of practical theology by highlighting that Scripture, spirituality, and religious practices are essential and vital protective factors used by families and communities during challenging times and crises. It is imperative for families and communities to understand how to approach these challenges and crises from a biblical and Christian perspective.

The upcoming section will delve into the preliminary literature review focusing on biblical perspectives regarding the role of mothers as mentors in the absence of fathers. While mothers often assume the role of mentors when fathers are absent, it is imperative that they receive guidance to become more effective mentors for children. The significance of a supportive community in nurturing a child will be discussed as a precursor to exploring

literature on the role of mothers as mentors. It is important to note that the word “absent” means that the father is no longer part of the family, whether deceased or alive but not present in the household. Additionally, it is essential to acknowledge that fathers can be physically present in the home but emotionally or mentally absent.

Biological fathers are not the only male figures who can take responsibility and care for children. Even when biological fathers are not present, children can still have a "loving and caring relationship" with other males whom they can refer to as father (Morrel & Richter, 2004:38). Levant (cited by Ratele, 2017:17) refers to the “psychology of men” concerning gender roles as not being inherently biological or socially determined. Instead, it is viewed as psychologically and socially constructed entities with their own set of strengths and weaknesses, capable of change. In the researcher’s view, there are certain tasks at which men excel compared to women, and vice versa.

In the South African context, it is crucial for children to have someone who can assume a fatherhood role, especially in situations where children are deprived due to factors such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This crisis has resulted in the loss of many fathers. HIV/AIDS has a substantial impact on gender equality (Helman & Ratele, 2016), resulting in a higher incidence of HIV/AIDS-related illnesses and other causes of mortality among males compared to their female counterparts worldwide (Van Niekerk *et al.*, 2015). For this dissertation, this underscores the importance of women stepping up as mentors in the absence of men.

## **1.4 Preliminary literature review and contextualisation**

### **1.4.1 Introduction**

The African proverb "it takes a whole village to raise a child" holds significant importance when exploring the concept of *Ubuntu* in community life. Mokhutso (cited in Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:84) posits that *Ubuntu* is an African philosophy that underscores the understanding of one's humanity through the interconnectedness with others. Various African tribes employ diverse expressions to articulate the essence of demonstrating humanity towards each other. Mligo (2021:6) mentions that the Nguni tribe of Southern Africa uses *Ubuntu* as a concept to reflect on humanity in relation to others. The Tswana and Sotho-speaking people of South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, and other African

countries use the word *botho* to convey the same idea (Mligo, 2021:6). Zimbabweans use the words *Unhu* and *ubunthosi* (Mligo, 2021:6). Mokhutso (2022:1-2) highlights the use of different terms to refer to one philosophy, *Ubuntu*. Mokhutso (2022:2) further asserts that despite linguistic variations, *Ubuntu* encapsulates qualities such as “sympathy, compassion, benevolence, solidarity, kindness, [and] caring” among people. This aligns with the researcher's interpretation of the concept of *Ubuntu*. The researcher contends that despite linguistic diversity, communities across South Africa embody the principles of *Ubuntu* in their daily lives.

Manis (2020:315) echoes the same conviction that the African philosophy of life entails that “the individual knows himself and the surrounding world through his community”. Thus, the person is inherently part of a larger whole (Manis, 2020:315). Nicolaidis (2014:19) describes *Ubuntu* as an African word that can universally represent the “golden rule of love thy neighbour”. Additionally, Mokhutso (2022:3) argues that the “state of *Ubuntu* is critical but stable”. Healy (1998) mentions that many African proverbs convey similar meanings. For instance, the Igbo and the Yoruba tribes in Nigeria express this philosophy with their own proverb: “raising a child is a community effort” (Healy, 1998), emphasising family values, parental care, sharing, and hospitality. Healy (1998) connects this African proverb with Ecclesiastes 4:9 and 12, which narrate union and support, and with a mother's self-surrendering love as depicted in Isaiah 49:15-16.

While Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) (2016) maintains that the nuclear family typically comprises a father, mother, and children, families can also consist of only a father or mother with their children. In some cases, other members of the community may step in to fulfil the role of the absent father. Furthermore, according to StatsSA (2018), only one-fifth of all children in South Africa live with their biological parents. The survey further reveals that 19.8% of all children live without either of their fathers or mothers, without specifying with whom they reside; it could be with any parent regardless of gender, while 33.8% live with both parents, and 43.1% live with their mothers. Additionally, approximately 6.1 million female-headed households exist in South Africa, accounting for 37.9% of households. Dube (2016:2) mentions that an estimated 2.13 million children are growing up without a father.

The Centre for Social Development in Africa (CSDA) and Sonke Gender Justice conducted a study in 2011 that revealed the profound implications of paternal absence on both families and society. The participants of this study expressed concerns regarding the heightened likelihood of their children engaging in criminal activities, alcohol consumption, and substance abuse. Moreover, they expressed apprehension about their children growing up without adequate guidance, lacking proper manners, and lacking respect for their elders. The participants feared that the absence of fathers might result in immoral behaviour among their children.

In the researcher's capacity as both the researcher of this study and a principal at a high school, he has witnessed the impact of drug abuse on children and the stark reality that only mothers attend disciplinary and intervention meetings. When the issue of fathers is raised, mothers often respond by stating that fathers are not involved in their children's upbringing, they are deceased, or they provide some other excuse. This leads us to consider the role of mothers in families where fathers are absent.

#### **1.4.2 Conceptualisation of the role of mothers**

Waltke (2007:237) references the creation narrative in Genesis 1, where it is stated that God created human beings as male and female (Gen 1:26-28; cf. Matt 19:4). In this account, God blessed them as a couple, empowering them to pro-create (be fruitful and multiply) and to govern. God solidified this relationship by emphasising that it was not good for Adam to be alone (Gen 2:18). Furthermore, God endowed the woman with the ability to give birth and fulfil the role of motherhood. Miller-McLemore (1994:215) describes mothering as the role of an adult woman who nurtures and cares for others, transforming it into "a caring labour" that becomes a "responsibility shared by all adult members of the community".

Wolfteich (2017:155) argues that mothering has been described as a kind of spiritual labour, ideally rooted in love, and frequently involves enduring suffering. Day (cited by Wolfteich, 2017:155) describes mothering as a blend of "love and suffering". Additionally, Wolfteich (2017:157) portrays a mother as a spiritual director and theological mentor to her children. Therefore, mothers bear the responsibility for the spiritual and theological guidance and upbringing of their children. From the researcher's understanding of the

Word of God, it is mandatory for mothers to impart the teachings of God's law to their children and to honour the mentoring role that the Bible plays in our lives as a guide.

Johnston and Swanson (2003:21) argue that motherhood is “not biologically determined or socially ascribed” but is a “social and historical construction”. They align with other scholars who contend that the traditional family structure, characterised by a wage-earning father and a stay-at-home mother, is a product of historical and cultural variations. They assert that individuals' cultural backgrounds influence the definition of motherhood, maternal behaviour, and the formation of relationships and self-identity within motherhood (Johnston & Swanson, 2003:21). Schlessinger (cited by Johnston & Swanson, 2003:23) characterises the traditional view of a mother as encompassing responsibilities such as exercising control, giving birth, providing childcare, and being responsible for household duties.

Leskošek (2011:1) describes motherhood as a role where women are confined to their homes, relegated to private life, and subject to a gendered division of labour. According to Chodorow (cited by Leskošek, 2011:1), motherhood is defined by a woman's capacity for reproduction and sexual inequality. Additionally, Leskošek (2011:2) defines motherhood as the basic mission, profession, and an intrinsic aspect of a woman's nature. She asserts that women are naturally drawn to motherhood due to their innate maternal instinct, ensuring their children's healthy growth and development.

The low-income mothers interviewed by McCormack (2005:38) defined a “good mother” as someone who prioritises her children's well-being and provides for them. In the researcher's opinion, good mothers also invest significant time caring for their children, ensuring they keep out of trouble, and meeting the needs of their families. Frahm-Arp (2016:146) mentions that Pentecostal Charismatic Churches in South Africa derive their understanding of the concepts of “mother”, “mothering”, and a “good mother” from four biblical texts: Proverbs 31:9-31, Ephesians 5:21-6:9, Timothy 2:13-15, and Titus 2:5.

Freeks (2021a:40) argues that it is advisable for mothers to rely on fathers because “it is her way of becoming one or equal with him”. However, Genesis indicates that both males and females should depend on one another. Freeks further supports this argument by referencing Genesis 1:26-27, which states that men and women are created in the image of God. The interpretation of this biblical passage suggests that the mother is equally

responsible for the family due to her union with the man. While this study concurs with Freeks' perspective, it argues that in situations such as single-parent families, where mothers take on the role of a mentor, it is crucial to establish strong norms and values based on biblical principles to equip single mothers to become more effective mentors in the absence of reliable fathers. Consequently, due to long working hours, mothers often find themselves unable to actively engage with their children and instil good values. Additionally, fathers who are present may not always serve as positive moral role models themselves.

The mother's role is inherently challenging due to the multifaceted responsibilities she must shoulder in managing both her family and work. This study posits that any willing mother or woman possesses the capacity to assume the role of a mentor in the absence of a father or husband. Moreover, it is worth emphasising that certain mothers are already effectively performing the duties typically associated with absent fathers. It is equally crucial to acknowledge that fathers can physically be present within the household yet fail to fulfil their expected responsibilities within the family unit.

### **1.4.3 Conceptualisation of mentor**

Wolfteich (2017:157) describes mothers as spiritual directors and theological mentors to their children. Through their mothering, mothers bear responsibility for the spiritual and theological upbringing of their children. Instilling biblical values in the lives of children is one of the greatest gifts a parent can offer. It is crucial to impart sound norms and values rooted in theological principles in the lives of children.

The role of a mentor encompasses various functions such as advising, being a friend, teaching, and providing counselling (Knippelmeyer & Torracco, 2007:2). Freeks (2021b:1) highlights its extensive application across diverse fields such as higher education, nursing, psychology, medicine, business, and research, underscoring its growing importance within family dynamics as well.

Mentoring stands as an essential and effective mindset and skill in aiding men to understand the essence of fatherhood (Freeks, 2021a:1). Santora *et al.* (2013:427-428) describe mentoring as a cooperative and personal relationship wherein the mentor guides and leads the mentee toward realising their utmost potential and achievements. Tucker

(2007: iii-vi) emphasises the mentee's readiness, highlighting mentoring as a dynamic learning alliance wherein the mentee must be open and prepared to glean from the shared learning experiences, knowledge, and perspectives.

Mentoring occurs in various domains, including education, business, healthcare, e-mentoring, practical theology, pastoral narratives, and within the family context (Masango, 2011:3-4). It is necessary to define the concept of a mentor (Freeks, 2018:3) to contextualise it within the paradigm of family life.

Numerous scholars and authors have provided explanations and definitions of the concepts of a “mentor” and “mentoring”. However, mentoring is an extremely broad and complex concept that encompasses numerous components, making it exceedingly challenging to define succinctly (Chiroma & Cloete, 2015:1). Several biblical examples showcase older individuals mentoring younger ones, leading to desired outcomes. A notable instance is the case of Aquila and Priscilla, who offered counsel and guidance to Apollos, facilitating his career and spiritual growth (Acts 18:24-28).

#### **1.4.4 Mothers as mentors from a biblical perspective**

The creation narrative in Genesis 1:27 states that “God created human beings” as male and female. Verse 28 emphasises God’s blessing upon them, instructing them to “Have many children”. In Genesis 2:23, which is part of the second creation narrative, the author recounts God’s creation of the man, Adam, and the woman, Eve. Genesis 3 portrays God’s judgement upon the sin of Adam and Eve. Genesis 2:20 records Adam naming his wife Eve because she became the mother of all humanity. In Genesis 4:1, Eve acknowledges that with the help of God she acquired a son, making her the first mother, in line with her name. This biblical narrative highlights how God's assistance enabled Eve to bear more children after the loss of Abel, indicating the role of mothers as mentors, guided by the Word of God.

There are notable female figures in the Bible depicted as mentors, leaders and Judges. For instance, Deborah is highlighted in Judges 4-5, while Phoebe is mentioned in Romans 16:1, and Priscilla in Romans 16:3. Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, also stands out as a female leader (Exod 15:20-21). She protected Moses by hiding him between reeds to escape death by Pharaoh. She consulted with the princess of Egypt to provide

a Hebrew woman who could breastfeed Moses until he was strong. Further, Miriam was responsible for the teaching of the law of God to the Israelite women and she led people in song and dance to celebrate leaving Egypt and passing through the Red Sea (Exod 15:20–21). Miriam took a tambourine in her hand and all the women followed her, confirming that Miriam led the young women in song and dance to give honour to God. Bach (1999a:421) argues that the song that Miriam sang could be seen as a song that can bring about change in their daily lives, to be liberated as mothers.

Judges 4 introduces Deborah as the only female judge specially chosen by God to lead Israel in a time of need. The narrative in Judges 4:4 recounts the remarkable story of this exceptional leader whom God appointed as both judge and prophetess. According to Camp (1999:203), Deborah deserves recognition for her "good and effective counsel of faithfulness and unity in Israel". She laid under a tree known as the 'palm of Deborah', situated between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim. The Israelites sought her counsel to settle their disputes. Waltke (2007:599) provides his insights on Judges 4:4, stating that, "As a prophetess she functions as a spokesperson of God, and with a divine conviction of her calling she assumes the role of leading Israel". Drawing from Judges 4:8-10, she took Barak under her tutelage, becoming his mentor and role model. As a leader and mentor, she possessed the necessary abilities to ensure the fulfilment of God's greater plan for His people.

In Acts 16, it is mentioned that Lydia of Thyatira listened to Paul as he preached the gospel in Philippi. She worshipped God, who opened her mind to pay attention to the gospel. As a result, she established the church in Philippi and became its leader.

First Samuel 25 recounts the narrative of Abigail's intervention amidst her husband's failure to accord proper respect to the king of Israel, namely King David. According to Waltke (2007:649-650), it is posited that God graced David with a discerning spouse to safeguard his well-being.

## **1.5 State of the current research**

Miller-McLemore, an esteemed professor in theology, boasts a wealth of experience, evidenced by her extensive collection of books and articles. Amidst the intricate balance of motherhood's joys and dilemmas, she penned the book *Also, a mother: Work and*

*family as theological dilemma* (1994). In this work, she delves into the prevalent challenge faced by many households, where mothers juggle the demands of both employment and nurturing their families (Miller-McLemore, 1994:30-31).

In a later book, *Ideals and realities of motherhood: A theological perspective*, Miller-McLemore contends that religion plays a significant role in perpetuating misconceptions about motherhood. She suggests that religious influences contribute to reinforcing traditional notions about motherhood and even introduce new standards. Miller-McLemore argues that in order to critically examine and reconstruct societal ideals surrounding motherhood, one must engage with religious theories and perspectives (1999:282).

Miller-McLemore eloquently explores the theological aspects of motherhood, drawing from her own experiences as a mother. A scriptural foundation for understanding familial relationships can be found in Ephesians 5:22-33, where the Apostle Paul provides guidance on appropriate behaviour for different family members. Paul begins by instructing wives to submit to their husbands, but it is crucial to note that this does not condone any form of verbal, emotional, or physical abuse. On the contrary, the passage emphasises that husbands should love their wives in the same way that Jesus loved the church. This profound love entails genuine care, respect, and compassion towards their wives. Such a perspective is essential for cultivating and sustaining healthy and intimate relationships, particularly within the context of South Africa, which unfortunately grapples with gender-based violence (GBV).

Van Wyk and Chisale (2021:2) highlight a report published by the World Economic Forum which states that it will take 135.6 years to bridge the wage gap between males and females. Disparities in income between genders persist, despite individuals working in the same sectors with equivalent qualifications. However, this wage differential does not imply that males are inherently better equipped to care for children simply because they earn more. Across the contemporary Western world, there is a concerted effort to advocate for and champion equal rights for women within communities (Gane, 2017:296). They derive their argument from the text found in Genesis 1:26-28, where it is stated that God created man and woman in his image, designating them as equal partners with dominion over the earth (Bible, 2009). In the researcher's modest interpretation of the

Word of God, it means that while there may be differences between genders, spiritually we are equal – both male and female – representing God on earth.

Mwandayi (cited by Van Wyk & Chisale, 2021:2) underscores the exacerbated difficulties encountered by women, especially mothers, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The term "caring mothers" in this context refers to those who attend to their children's needs, regardless of their employment status or if they are stay-at-home mothers. Mwandayi (cited by Van Wyk & Chisale, 2021:2) proposes recommendations on how women's theology can offer distinctive insights beneficial to both governmental responses and Shona mothers navigating the pandemic's repercussions.

In the Zimbabwean context, Biri (2021:148) challenges the traditional notion of fatherhood, asserting that women in Zimbabwe frequently assume the roles of both "fathers and mothers" due to their dual parental responsibilities in the absence of fathers. However, the Pentecostal Church in Zimbabwe disagrees with this perspective according to (Biri, 2021:149). They argue that being a father is a sacred and God-ordained role. They reject the idea that single women can replace fathers and take on all the responsibilities associated with fatherhood. These pastors resist the women's thinking because it implies that women are surpassing men in terms of hard work and household management. Single mothers admit that it is challenging to mentor young boys without male role models, especially if there are available uncles who could fulfil this role.

Aschwanden and Bourdillon (cited by Biri, 2021:149) come to the defence of single Shona women, arguing that they play a crucial role in the upbringing of their children, particularly during the significant transitional stage of puberty for boys. In assuming the role of a father, these single mothers are highly valued by their children. Gombe (cited in Biri, 2021:149-150) highlights the deep respect that Shona indigenous culture holds for the father figure. In the unfortunate event of the biological father's passing, it is customary for an uncle, typically the deceased father's brother, to assume the paternal responsibilities. The eldest daughter of the father, known as the *babakadzi* or "female father", can also assume the role and even lead tribal gatherings to voice women's opinions or represent an absent male figure. She is acknowledged as a powerful figure, surpassing even men, as the Shona culture recognises the significant contributions, she makes in promoting peace, love, understanding, and the overall well-being of the family (Biri, 2021:150). This

account by Biri emphasises the viewpoint in this study that any mother can assume the role and responsibilities of the father figure in the absence of fathers.

Stevenson (2011:142) defines the concept of “motherhood” in the South African context as politically rooted when the politics of the day forced black women of South Africa to take to the streets to fight against apartheid and bring an end to the killing of their children. Women at ordinary level asserted their role as “activist mothers through their position in the working class, manifesting strength and courage taken from strategies of dealing with poverty” (Stevenson, 2011:142). They resorted to protests, which occasionally escalated into violent acts, to express their devotion in their pursuit of motherhood. It could be contended that female family members, as well as caring families and communities, served as mentors when Winnie Madikizela-Mandela recommenced her mission to advocate for the liberation of South Africa. Numerous female activists made sacrifices in their roles as mothers to further both the concept of motherhood and the emancipation of the nation.

Porter (2000:13) concludes that women have always held positions of leadership. She also asserts that evidence from the Bible supports the idea that women “fit the prevailing notion of leadership of their time” (2000:13). Furthermore, Porter demonstrates that while women held leadership roles, they were not given the official title associated with conventional leadership (Porter, 2000:3). Through her study of female leaders in the Bible, she argues that these women played clear leadership roles and displayed leadership qualities, even if they were not explicitly recognised with a title (Porter, 2000:13). The Word of God refers to Deborah's leadership role in Israel, identifying her as a prophetess and judge (Lindsey, 2018:78).

Schoelles (2009:21) states that four important factors influence the faith and spiritual development of children, namely: (a) “what the mother says”, (b) “what the father says”, (c) “what the mother does”, and (d) “what the father does”. This simple means, that mothers have a huge role to play in influencing the faith and spiritual growth of children in their care, even when fathers are absent or present in their lives.

## **1.6 Contribution of the study**

Scholars have extensively investigated and debated the phenomenon of absent fathers and its detrimental effects on families. There is a conspicuous dearth of responsible, present fathers who serve as crucial role models and contribute to the moral development of their children. This study seeks to enrich the existing research in this area by offering a distinct perspective – that mothers are fully capable of assuming the role of mentors and effective caregivers in the absence of fathers. By doing so, it aims to fill a notable gap in practical theological discourse on this matter. The literature review conducted so far has corroborated the historical role of mothers as leaders and mentors within their families.

## **1.7 Research questions**

### **1.7.1 Main research question**

The main research question of this study was:

"What guidelines can be given to mothers to mentor their children in the absence of the father?"

### ***Secondary research questions***

The secondary research questions were formulated as follows:

- What can be learned from a descriptive study about the current situation in South Africa regarding single-parent families?
- What is the role of mothers as mentors in single-parent families?
- What are the biblical-theological views of mothers as mentors in single-parent families?
- What practical-theological guidelines can be used to equip mothers to mentor children in single-parent families?

## **1.7.2 Research aim and objectives**

### **1.7.2.1 Aim**

The aim of the study was to explore whether mothers could be mentors in single-parent families.

### **1.7.2.2 Objectives**

The objectives that were formulated to address the research questions were:

- To describe the current situation in South Africa regarding single-parent families.
- To explore the role of mothers as mentors in single-parent families.
- To explore the biblical-theological views of mothers as mentors in single-parent families.
- To propose practical-theological guidelines regarding the mother as mentor in single-parent families.

## **1.8 Central theoretical argument**

The primary theoretical contention of this study posited that mothers possess the capability to act as mentors, even in the absence of fathers. It is crucial to recognise the presence of resilient and adept mothers who can actively participate in mentoring programmes, empowering other women to undertake this role in circumstances where fathers are absent. This study aimed to glean insights from exemplary models to formulate an efficient mentoring programme aimed at aiding those facing challenges. To bolster its argument, the study employed guidelines rooted in both a biblical-theological framework and a practical theological perspective.

### **1.8.1 Epistemology of the study**

This was a literature study. Practical theology is an academic field dedicated to scrutinising and contemplating religious practices. Its objective is to grasp the theological principles that underpin these practices and to explore how theological theory and practical applications can be aligned to facilitate necessary changes and improvements.

Miller-McLemore (2010:814) describes the main subject matter of both pastoral and practical theology as seeking to communicate a dynamic theology that enhances the study of religious practices and texts by emphasising their relevance to practical application, activities, events, and situations. According to Miller-McLemore (2010:814), practical theology should be embraced for its continual push to consider the broader educational objectives of religious and theological studies. She finds practical theology highly appealing due to the way scholars utilise it to integrate religious knowledge with praxis (Miller-McLemore, 2010:820). Miller-McLemore perceives practical theology as embodying the principle of practicing what one preaches and providing support to mothers in need of the church's assistance in raising children in the absence of paternal mentors.

Osmer (2008:4) argues that practical theology must focus on the actual life experiences of congregations, intricately connected with their everyday lives and the impact it has on their faith. Swinton and Mowat (2016:6) propose a preliminary definition of practical theology as a discerning, theological examination of the church's practices as they engage with the practices of the world, aiming to facilitate and empower faithful engagement in God's redemptive work within, toward, and for the world.

Practical theology is a field within theology that centres on individuals' religious actions and the manner in which these actions are expressed. Thirty-four years ago, Heyns and Pieterse (1990:10) asserted the existence of various models of practical theology, a claim that remains valid to this day. The present study adopts the theoretical and methodological framework proposed by Osmer (2008). A concise overview of Osmer's framework will be provided below, and subsequently elaborated upon in each chapter, exploring its relevance to the different aspects of this study.

Osmer (2008:4) identifies four fundamental questions that he has further developed into four key tasks. These tasks provide guidance to congregations, ministers, and practical theologians in their efforts to comprehend and address the real-life situations of congregations. The tasks, along with the corresponding questions (enclosed in brackets), are outlined below:

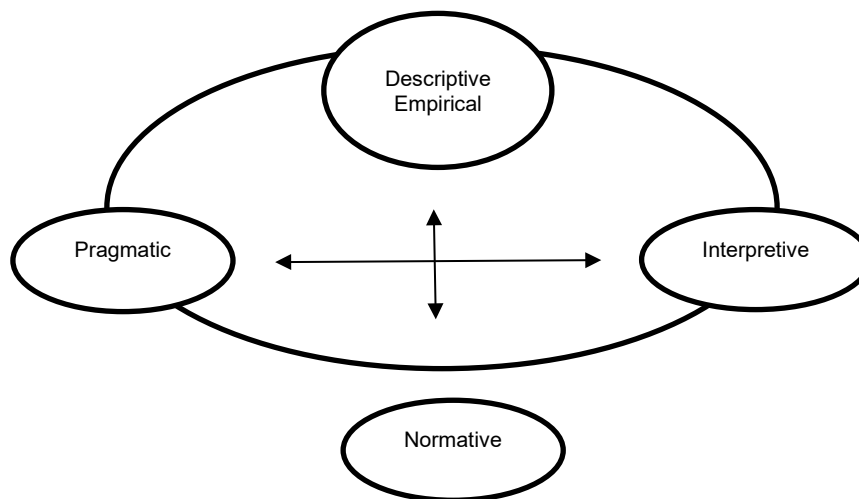
- *Descriptive-empirical task* (What is going on?). Engaging in the life of a congregation involves investigating the current situation.

- *Interpretive task* (Why is this going on?). This task involves using scientific theories to understand the origins of situations and patterns.
- *The normative task* (What should be going on?). Using theological-hermeneutical concepts, such as written, verbal, and non-verbal communication, to find ethical norms that will assist the researcher to formulate and suggest good practices.
- *The pragmatic task* (How could or might we respond?). The researcher would be able to integrate his/her findings into strategies of action that are suitable for possible interventions to provide potential solutions.

Firstly, this framework helped to guide the researcher to focus on the four interconnected intellectual tasks of practical theological research. Secondly, it facilitated the development of scientific research in the “transversal model of cross-disciplinary dialogue” (Osmer, 2008:170) to gain interdisciplinary perspectives from the different study fields of practical theology.

Wolffteich (2017:143) refers to the practical theological question of how and whether to disrupt tales of “maternal self-expense” to create imprints for rest or regeneration without “dishonouring mothers”. In the researcher’s view, the image of the working mother can serve as a source of inspiration for other women, fostering empowerment and drawing positive lessons.

The next section presents a brief overview of Osmer’s four core tasks of practical theological research, guided by the four related questions. Figure 1-1 below represents a schematic overview of Osmer’s framework.



**Figure 1-1 : Schematic representation of Osmer's framework**

(Osmer, 2008:11)

## **1.9 Research Method**

### **1.9.1 The descriptive-empirical task ("What is going on?")**

The *descriptive-empirical task* seeks to answer the question, "What is going on?" (Osmer, 2008:4). According to Osmer (2008:4), this task involves gathering information to identify patterns and dynamics in specific episodes, situations, or contexts. The first task is focused on collecting information about the topic being studied.

To achieve the first objective of this study, it was necessary to understand the current situation in South Africa regarding the position and real-life circumstances of mothers in single-parent families, as well as the role that the church can play in supporting these mothers in handling various situations. The objective of this study was to investigate whether mothers who lack support from other role models, including the church, are effectively managing children who exhibit behavioural problems. Therefore, gathering information from literature about the lived experiences of single mothers facing GBV in their homes helped provide a broader framework and perspective of what is happening.

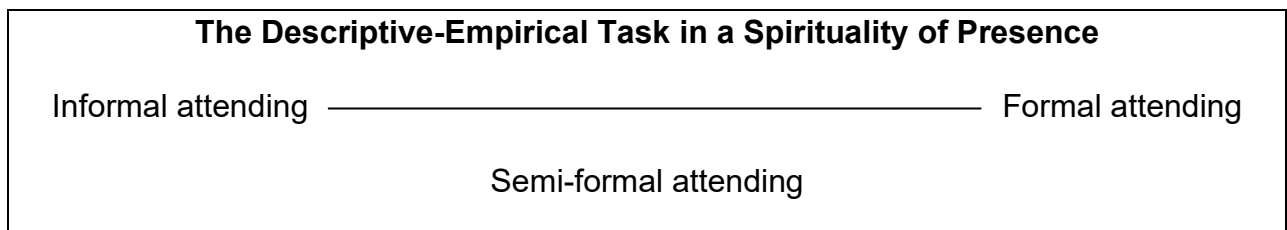
Osmer (2008:31-78) refers to the concept of "priestly listening" to explain his understanding of the potential implications of the descriptive-empirical task. When seeking insight into others' contexts, it is crucial to listen attentively. Tisdale (cited in Osmer, 2008:36) argues in favour of congregational leaders not only immersing

themselves in the contexts and lives of people using intuition and imagination, but also employing "methods for 'exegeting' the congregation in all its sociocultural particularity". Attentive listening to individuals as significant others requires concentration and spending time with them. Although this study does not rely on quantitative methods such as structured surveys and questionnaires, the researcher's listening will occur through observant and mindful investigation of relevant literature on the topic being discussed.

It is crucial for the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of women in single-parent families from their own perspectives. The researcher does not approach the topic as a male individual who considers himself an authority on the challenges faced by women serving as single-parent mentors to their children. Instead of adopting a top-down patriarchal viewpoint, it is imperative for the researcher to position himself as a co-explorer on equal footing with women. Therefore, attentive listening in this study means the following:

- Engaging thoughtfully and wisely with contemporary literature relevant to the research question to develop insight and understanding.
- Taking the life stories and experiences of single mothers seriously, striving to develop as accurate and deep an understanding as possible of their challenges and struggles.
- Interpreting relevant biblical passages and narratives through careful and wise deliberation.

Achieving this level of empathic listening and understanding requires *formal attending*, which constitutes one of the two poles on a continuum of attending, as represented in the figure below.



**Figure 1-2: The descriptive-empirical task**

(Osmer, 2008:37)

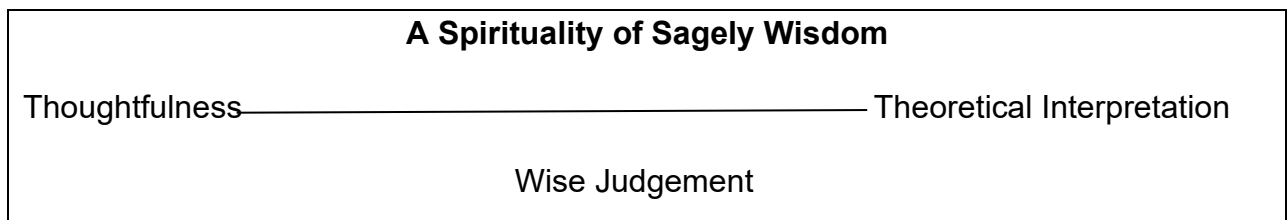
For the purposes of this study, the significance and role of formal attending in connection with the theme of the study will be discussed in each chapter. At this juncture, it is pertinent to note that the empirical research within a congregation's unique context does not reduce individuals to mere objects; instead, it fosters a profound connection by emphasising and attending to individuals as *significant others*. It involves expanding and deepening one's understanding of individuals as they navigate various life experiences.

To achieve this aim, the research design employed a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach, conducting a literature study through data collection from academic books, journal articles, and online resources. Search engines such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, EBSCOHost, Project MUSE, SA- ePublication, and SACat were used to gather information. Through the utilisation of secondary sources, the conceptual study aimed to contribute new insights to the existing body of knowledge (Maree, 2007:71).

### 1.9.2 The interpretive task (“Why is this going on?”)

The interpretive task asks the question, “Why is this going on?” (Osmer, 2008:4). Answering this question entails understanding the role of metatheoretical perspectives and cross-disciplinary dialogue in the field of practical theology. In essence, it involves exploring the commonalities between phenomena in the research area of practical theology and other scientific disciplines (Osmer, 2008:58, 100).

After gathering relevant data, researchers must interpret and reflect upon this information. This process involves thoughtful, reflective, analytical, and discerning scrutiny, which takes time and necessitates a specific mindset and skills, as elucidated by Osmer (2008:79-128). Once more, Osmer outlines his perspective through a schematic illustration, as depicted in the figure below.



**Figure 1-3: A spirituality of sagely wisdom**

(Osmer, 2008:82)

Applying Osmer's framework to this study required the researcher to have a deep understanding of how thoughtful theoretical interpretation, real-life stories, scientific exploration of existing literature, and biblical narratives can be meaningfully integrated. This integration process was consistently applied throughout the study using relevant and applicable terms.

A comprehensive literature investigation was conducted on the topic of religion and biblical hermeneutics in the field of practical theology. The purpose of this investigation was to gain insight into the presence and significance of this phenomenon or episodes. The literature search encompassed related disciplines that explore the intersection between practical theology and morality. This search was guided by Osmer's (2008:114) criteria:

- Identifying and evaluating the model or theory, as well as the conceptual framework upon which it is built.
- Identifying the disciplinary perspective, theoretical framework, and the level of reality that the discipline addresses.
- Identifying and assessing the coherence and strength of a theory's arguments (the central argument of the theory).

Osmer (2008:87) mentions that we need to look at this task while keeping in mind the wisdom that we need to apply for every issue there is.

This study investigated the reasons behind the existence of this phenomenon and the inability of mothers and other stakeholders to substitute for absent fathers in single-parent families. In order to accomplish the second objective, an interpretive approach was employed, involving a comprehensive literature review of various related fields such as social work, gender theory and gender studies, research on GBV, cultural and anthropological studies, and socio-religious studies (Osmer, 2008:170).

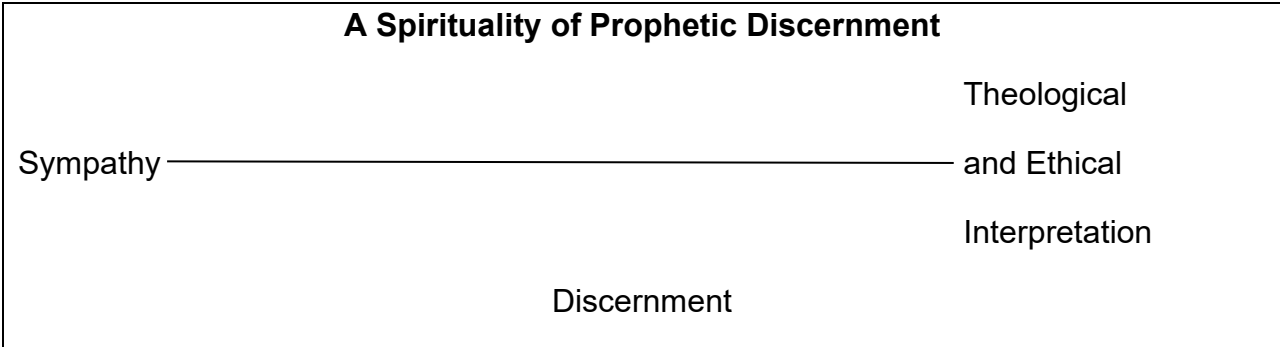
### **1.9.3 The normative task (“What ought to be going on?”)**

The normative task responds to the question, “What ought to be going on?” (Osmer, 2008:4). Osmer (2008:129-173) examines this aspect by identifying potential connections

between a theological interpretation of specific situations, the use of ethical norms to guide behaviour, and the consideration of existing examples of good practice, referred to as *prophetic discernment*. An example in which this study applied Osmer's guidelines is the endeavour to equip single mothers in single-parent families who face the challenge of being mentors for their children while also defending themselves against GBV due to absent fathers (cf. Chapter 2).

The normative task seeks to provide a theological perspective, acknowledging the reliance on the Holy Spirit's guidance throughout this process. In doing so, prophetic discernment as defined by Osmer (2008:133) was employed. The normative task was carried out by conducting exegetical studies of Scripture and examining its perspectives on the role of mothers as mentors in the absence of fathers.

Osmer (2008:138) characterises the normative task's spiritual and practical discernment as actively seeking God's guidance to determine what should be done in specific episodes, situations, and contexts. The objective here was to investigate the potential for women to serve as strong mentors in lieu of absent fathers from a biblical-theological perspective. In this regard, the use of Bible commentaries played a crucial role in supporting this research. The normative perspectives derived from the exegesis were then juxtaposed with the interpretive perspectives to assess how worldly wisdom appropriately intersects with and complements the wisdom of God (Osmer, 2008:162). Osmer (2008:135) delineates this aspect of his framework as "qualities of life in the Spirit", conceptualising it on a continuum, as illustrated below.

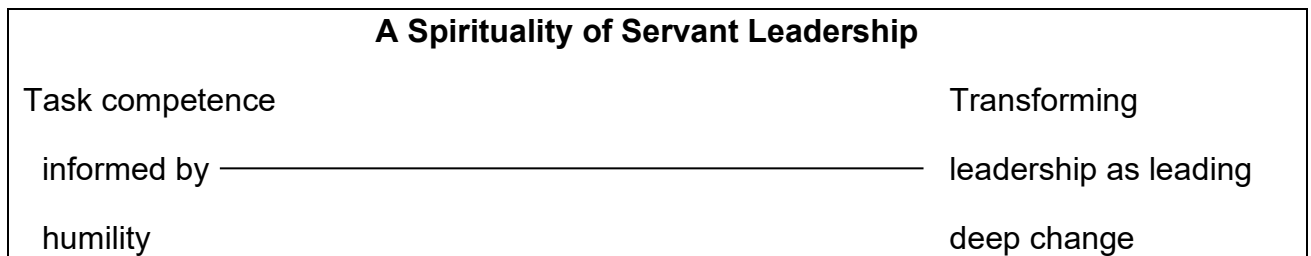


**Figure 1-4: “Qualities of life in the Spirit”**

(Osmer, 2008:136)

#### 1.9.4 The pragmatic task (“How might we respond?”)

The pragmatic task raises the question, “How might we respond in ways that are faithful and effective?” (Osmer, 2008:10). Moreover, its focus lies on developing strategies and taking actions to steer events towards desired goals (Osmer, 2008:176). Hence, synthesis achieved through a hermeneutical interaction between the research results of the descriptive, interpretive, and normative tasks were utilised to propose perspectives and guidelines. This aspect of Osmer’s framework is illustrated in the figure below.



**Figure 1-5: Perspectives and Guidelines**

(Osmer, 2008:193)

#### 1.9.5 Meta-theoretical perspectives

This study utilised the meta-theological perspectives outlined by Osmer (2008:58), which encompass conventions concerning realism, knowledge, and science extending beyond individual research theories and projects. These perspectives will thus be elaborated upon in the following discussion.

##### ***The theory-praxis relationship***

The choice made regarding the theory-praxis relationship influences how the specifics are analytically explored. However, for the purposes of this study, a literature review approach was employed.

According to Osmer, the theory-praxis relationship also influences the interpretive framework that a researcher uses to understand the findings (Osmer, 2005:307). The results then influence the norms that are presented to the church and society, as well as the models that are used to guide and restructure current praxis (Osmer, 2005:307).

### ***The sources of justification***

The *sources of justification* pertain to how the researcher draws upon traditional sources of theological truths to inform theological and ethical proposals. These encompass Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason (Osmer, 2005:307).

### ***Models of cross-disciplinary work***

Osmer (2011:3) defines *cross-disciplinary work* as the effort to facilitate dialogue between two or more fields of study.

This study also entailed *intra-disciplinary communication* (Osmer, 2008:163) due to the interwoven and segmented nature of the sub-discipline of practical theology, as suggested by Osmer (2008:13). These detailed engagements occurred within the narrative as the study progressed.

The fundamental framework of practical theological interpretations can also be observed in other sub-disciplines of practical theology (Osmer, 2008:13).

The researcher conducted interdisciplinary research in the fields of education, social work, and sociology, focusing on various subjects such as parenting, single parents, father absence, families, and children.

## **1.10 Ethical implications of the research**

### **1.10.1 Rationale for the specific methodology of the study**

This study adhered strictly to the ethical guidelines outlined by the North-West University (NWU) (2022:00856-22-S6) where the research was conducted (See Annexure 2). As it constituted a descriptive literature study, employing a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive design through literature analysis, it involved minimal risk, given that it did not involve the participation of human subjects, such as personal interviews.

The researcher conducted a thorough and systematic literature review on Reformed theology, paying careful attention to recent studies and scholarly works pertinent to the subject. This non-empirical study focused primarily on analytical evaluation, drawing insights from practical theology literature. Additionally, the study was enriched by

incorporating recent research from various disciplines such as social work, social science, and psychology, showcasing an interdisciplinary approach.

### **1.11 Research strategy**

As previously mentioned, this study relied on a comprehensive review of literature, encompassing articles, periodicals, and established reference texts to compile pertinent data regarding the topic. The descriptive literature research was conducted through the collection of data from secondary sources, comprising both national and international scientific resources, academic publications, journal articles, and reputable websites. Additionally, various search engines were utilised to facilitate this process.

#### **1.11.1 Criteria for selection of sources**

The researcher availed himself of research from a variety of disciplines. A multidisciplinary approach had the advantage of examining the same theme from different perspectives. Sources used in this study included books, articles published in peer-reviewed journals, and biblical literature.

A distinction is made between primary sources and secondary sources. In the strictest sense, a *primary source* is contemporary, original, and directly connected to the event it pertains to. An exemplary primary source would be Sigmund Freud's book on his psychoanalytical theories and methods. On the other hand, *secondary sources* are materials created by researchers who build upon, refine, and expand Freud's ideas. For this study, secondary sources include books, commentaries on biblical texts, and articles from peer-reviewed journals. By utilising secondary sources, the conceptual study aimed to generate knowledge that can contribute to the existing body of knowledge (Maree, 2007:71).

An important criterion for literature selection is the issue of the currency of research. To ensure efficiency, both older and recent research materials were utilised. This approach eliminates the risk of bias and ensures trustworthiness.

The estimated risk of bias and the trustworthiness of this literature research are low due to the researcher's efforts to include sources that present opposing viewpoints on the

same subject. Enhancing trustworthiness will increase the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:105).

### **1.11.2 Benefits for participants/researcher/organisations and society at large**

This study endeavours to contribute to the existing body of literature that deals with the specific research question within the field of practical theology. The research endeavours to benefit not only the church and its leaders but also mothers who play a crucial role in the holistic upbringing of children in single-parent families. The findings of this research will be disseminated to church support groups, schools, community groups, and healthcare facilities. Workshops will be conducted by mentors in these facilities, and formal training will be provided to interested mothers or women to encourage them to take on the role of mentoring when fathers are absent. The desired outcome is that the children of these women will benefit greatly from the mentoring programme provided by other reputable and strong women. Mother mentors will help fill the void left by male counterparts when they are absent in the upbringing of children.

### **1.11.3 Expertise, skills, and legal competencies**

The study demands expertise in conducting research and a profound understanding of practical theology. The researcher possesses the requisite skills for executing the research, having earned an Honours degree in theology and education.

### **1.11.4 Monitoring of research**

The researcher is responsible for ensuring that the research is completed in compliance with the approved protocols. The literature research study involves a close examination and description of the various themes and patterns that emerge from the research question/s of the study. In this regard, the literature research was constantly monitored by the study leader.

## **1.12 Practical-theoretical perspectives**

### **1.12.1 The capable woman**

Proverbs 31:10 portrays the character of a “virtuous woman”. The Tyndale House Publishers (2005:1042) refer to her as the “capable woman”, depicting her as a wise

figure who imparted invaluable teachings to her son, guiding him to become a just and godly king. The woman mentioned in Proverbs 31:1-9 is identified as the mother of King Lemuel, offering him sage advice to steer him through life and prepare him to rule wisely after his father, David (cf. Chapter 2).

Bathsheba, the mother of King Solomon, is portrayed by her son as the *capable woman*, who served not only as his mother but also as a mentor in shaping his life as a king and guiding his constituents. Bathsheba's roles as both a mother and a leader are explored further in Chapters 2 and 4.

Attention is now focused on specific verses taken from Proverbs 31:10-31 to develop a model showcasing how women can conduct themselves to become impactful mentors to their children. Eleven (11) Scriptures are extracted from Proverbs 31:10-31 and presented in table form, providing insights that every woman can resonate with. Additionally, other Scriptures are referenced from both the Old and New Testaments that offer similar exegesis and explanations, as discussed in Chapter 2, paragraph 2.1.

**Table 1-1: A model of good conduct derived from Proverbs 31:10-31**

<p><b>Proverbs 31:10-31</b></p> <p><b>Epilogue: A wife of noble character</b></p>	<p><b>Meaning to mothers and women who want to be mentors</b></p>	<p><b>Other Scriptures from the Old and New Testaments referring to other mothers and women</b></p>
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**1.12.2 A Biblical hermeneutic and exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:9**

***Introduction***

The distinction between "hermeneutics" and "exegesis" lies in their respective roles within the interpretation of text or Scripture. *Exegesis* focuses on the interpretation of text or scripture to discern its meaning, while *hermeneutics* encompasses the study and establishment of principles guiding the interpretation or understanding of Scripture.

According to Kaiser and Silva (2007:17-21), exegesis involves the process of delving into the text to extract its intended meaning. On the other hand, hermeneutics, as defined by The Young's Bible Dictionary (Young, 2002:269), refers to the method of explaining the Bible and establishing fundamental principles for interpreting the Word of God. The basic principles employed for interpreting Scripture according to hermeneutics are as follows:

1. The linguistic level employed in the text: Understanding the original language in which the text was written, whether Greek or Hebrew, is essential for grasping context and translation of words (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:22).
2. The historical, cultural, and geographical setting in which the narrative transpired (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:22).
3. The teachings conveyed by the passage: Exploring the lessons offered by the narrative regarding real-life situations and how to address challenges (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:22).
4. The historical context of the text is equally vital for comprehension. This entails examining other passages to see how they align with the narrative, comparing parallel passages in different books of the Bible, and noting any discrepancies (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:22-23).
5. The literary setting involves the context in which we encounter the narrative of the event (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:23).
6. The canonical context of the passage and its relation to the whole canon of Scripture (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:23).
7. The history of interpretation of the narrative. Understanding how different individuals have interpreted the text and how its meaning has been preserved in the history of sermons within the church (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:23).
8. The significance and meaning of the text to the reader (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:23).

### ***What is biblical hermeneutics?***

Biblical hermeneutics is the discipline concerned with interpreting and understanding the Bible. According to Kaiser and Silva (2007:25), while some scholars question the necessity of this discipline, those who recognise the unique nature of Scripture see its importance and relevance. Biblical hermeneutics possesses several key characteristics:

1. **Relying on the Holy Spirit:** This involves recognising the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in interpreting Scripture, as only the Holy Spirit comprehends the depths of God's wisdom (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:25).
2. **Seeking Divine Revelation:** Hermeneutics involves opening oneself to God's revelation and truth within the Scriptures, coupled with the exercise of discernment (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:25-26).
3. **Consistency of God's Message:** It acknowledges that God's message within the Bible is consistent and unchanging, ensuring that it guides believers without leading them astray (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:26).
4. **Submissive Predisposition:** Success in interpreting biblical passages requires a humble and submissive disposition. Genuine understanding of the Bible is contingent upon obedience to God's commandments and a commitment to fulfilling His will (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:26).

Drawing upon these fundamental principles and characteristics, we can enhance our understanding of passages in the Bible (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:24). From the context of hermeneutics, the interpretation of biblical texts for meaning is greatly influenced by one's chosen approach, which subsequently shapes how Scripture is read, understood, and applied in contemporary contexts. While I may acknowledge your interpretation of hermeneutics as valid, I reserve the right to disagree with your specific applications of hermeneutical practices, thereby raising questions about the accuracy of the interpretation (Freeks, 2021: xi).

Exegesis and hermeneutics are essential tools for grasping the intended message behind Paul's writings, as inspired by God. Exegesis, as defined by Kaiser and Silva (2007:21), entails comprehending the meaning of Scripture. In the researcher's perspective, it

involves delving into the text to extract its significance while allowing the Holy Spirit to guide one's interpretation towards understanding the true essence of Scripture.

### **1.12.3 The model**

The proposed guidelines emphasise placing God at the forefront, acknowledging Him as the centre of all things. Mothers are encouraged to rely on God and adhere to biblical principles in their role as mentors, guiding children toward becoming better individuals and advocating for the dignity and safety of all females in the face of GBV.

Further elaboration on the praxis-theoretical perspective will be provided in Chapter 5.

### **1.13 Chapter outline**

The chapters of this study are structured around the four tasks of practical theological interpretation outlined by Osmer (2008:4)

**Chapter 1:** Introduction, problem statement, and research methodology

Chapter 1 serves as an introductory chapter, presenting the topic of the study and the main elements of the research process.

**Chapter 2:** A descriptive analysis of the current situation in South Africa regarding single-parent families – *What is going on?*

Chapter 2 discusses the role of mothers as mentors in single-parent families. The author engages with literature about the plight of mothers in single-parent families and the prevalence of GBV in South Africa.

**Chapter 3:** Exploration of biblical-theological perspectives on mothers as mentors in single-parent families – *Why is it going on?*

Chapter 3 focuses on the views of mothers as mentors to fulfil their role and function in single-parent families. Relevant information is drawn from other fields, including *Education, Social Work, Sociology, and psychology*.

**Chapter 4:** Practical theological guidelines to equip mothers to mentor children in single-parent families – *What ought to be going on?*

Chapter 4 concentrates on practical theological guidelines of mothers in single-parent families.

**Chapter 5:** Proposed biblical guidelines for mothers as mentors in single-parent families – *How might we respond?*

Chapter 5 presents proposed practical theological guidelines intended to support mothers in single-parent families, whether through the church, church leaders, or other organisations addressing societal issues. These guidelines aim to equip the church and ministers to empower women and mothers in single-parent families to mentor children in combatting GBV.

An exegesis and hermeneutical understanding of 1 Timothy 2:9 provides insights into the appropriate behaviour for mothers, especially in public settings. Additionally, Proverbs 31 offers guidance on how mothers can exemplify the principles of a capable mother.

The practical theological guidelines underscore the centrality of God as the provider and the foundation of all things. God's provision and blessing upon the matriarchs underscore the significance of securing the bloodline of Jesus. Mothers are encouraged to rely on God and adhere to biblical principles, guiding children toward becoming better individuals and defending the honour of all females against GBV.

**Chapter 6:** Recommendations, suggestions, and conclusion

Chapter 6 presents recommendations, suggestions for future research, and a conclusion.

## **1.14 Conclusion**

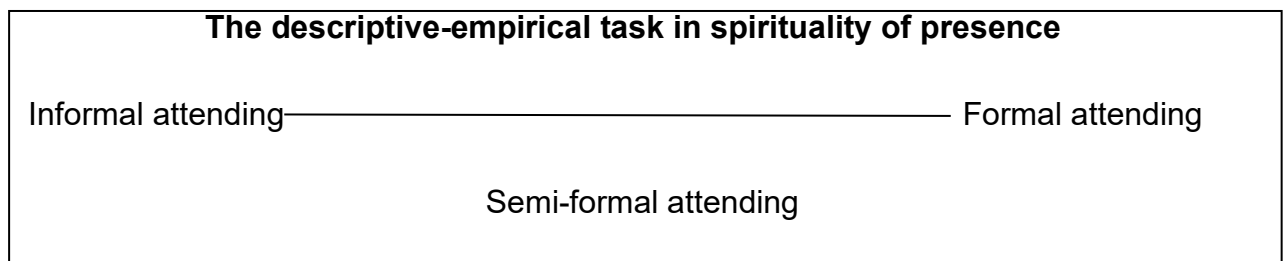
Chapter 1 introduced the topic of the study and outlined the key elements of the research process. Through a comprehensive literature study, the researcher aims to demonstrate that mothers are more than capable of becoming mentors when men are absent in single-parent families. This chapter highlighted the challenges that single mothers face as they endeavour to serve as mentors for their children in homes where fathers are chronically absent. The remaining chapters will delve deeper into these challenges and explore practical solutions rooted in biblical principles to empower mothers in their important role as mentors. Attention now shifts to “what is going on?” in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 2 WHAT IS GOING ON?

### *A descriptive analysis of the current situation in South Africa regarding single-parent families*

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the descriptive-empirical task of Osmer's practical theological framework (Osmer, 2008:31-78), involving a meticulous review of existing literature concerning the role of single mothers as mentors to their children in single-parent families. To ensure a thorough and comprehensive report, an interdisciplinary approach is adopted, drawing from theology, psychology, social sciences, and gender studies. Osmer's first task can be illustrated graphically as follows:



**Figure 2-1: Descriptive-empirical task in spirituality of presence**

(Osmer, 2008:37)

The act of asking the question, "What is going on?" (Osmer, 2008:33), instead of simply providing solutions without understanding the challenges people face, places the researcher in a descriptive-empirical frame of mind. This mindset focuses on gathering data from real-life contexts in which people live. Collecting data of this nature demands more than mere accumulation; it is about "the *quality of attentiveness*" (Osmer, 2008:33, emphasis added) paid by the researcher rather than sheer quantity.

The researcher gains profound insight into the worlds and circumstances of single-parent mothers by adopting a "priestly" mindset and a "spirituality of presence" (Osmer, 2008:33-37). Rather than recounting personal stories from interviewees, this study draws upon narratives from diverse academic disciplines. It demands the researcher's undivided attention, guiding him towards a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by single-parent mothers. This involves meticulous examination of pertinent literature to elucidate

the complexities of their situations and contexts. The researcher in this study transcends the role of a mere data compiler, aspiring instead to become a guide to the people whose stories he will engage with in the future.

Osmer's first question can be reframed to refine the focus of the chapter as follows: The research question is: *What insights can a descriptive study offer about the contemporary landscape of single-parent families in South Africa?* The objective is: *To provide a descriptive account of the present state of single-parent families in South Africa?* The alternative formulation emphasises the human element within the dissertation, acknowledging its focus on people – mothers, fathers, and children. Drawing from Gerkin's (cited in Osmer, 2008:33) utilisation of the concept of a “living human document”, coined by the renowned practical theologian Anton Boisen (1876–1965), the study reflects on the narratives and lives of people. This recognition that the study centres around real human beings serves as a guiding principle throughout the research process.

## **2.2 Mothers as single-parent families**

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a “single mother” as a woman with children but without a partner or husband. This can include women who were married, never married but have children, or divorced. In the researcher's view, a single mother is a woman who has children and lacks a husband or any form of support system from family. Single mothers face multifaceted challenges on various levels, as will be elucidated in the subsequent sections.

Matlakala *et al.* (2019:1-12) argue that the phenomenon of absent fathers regularly leads to various social problems, such as family dysfunction, socio-economic challenges, confusion regarding the identity of the biological father, emotional trauma, promiscuous behaviour, frequent teenage pregnancies, and criminal and destructive behaviour among boys. Matlakala *et al.*'s (2019) study was carried out within a rural community in South Africa, involving interviews with seven single mothers, regardless of age and race. Their findings revealed the following: (a) feelings of loss, confusion, loneliness, and isolation; (b) a lack of a sense of belonging and identity; (c) adolescents engaging with society differently than children with both parents at home; (d) single mothers experiencing significant emotional stress due to unemployment, financial hardships, their boys disregarding their roles as mentors, poverty, and the financial inability to provide for their

children. In summary, it is clear from this study that single mothers face numerous challenges on emotional and practical (e.g., financial) levels, which reflected in their children's attitudes and behaviour.

Furthermore, Matlakala *et al.* (2019:1) state that broken families are often attributed to the absence of fathers, which subsequently leads to social problems. According to Matlakala *et al.* (2019:1), there are numerous reasons why fathers are absent from their homes and therefore unable to fulfil their role in the upbringing of children. In the researcher's modest opinion, it is primarily the mother who is left to care for the children at home, sometimes without the support of extended family members.

The researcher agrees with Eddy *et al.* (2013, as cited by Matlakala *et al.*, 2019:2) that support programmes should be developed to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomenon of father absence in South Africa. However, it is important not to exclude single mothers and their children from this process. Single mothers, who are without fathers and/or family support, must prepare their children for a future without fathers. Furthermore, mothers themselves suffer directly from a lack of financial resources, emotional support, and perhaps the appropriate guidance to equip and guide them. One significant advantage of having two parents is shared responsibility. Therefore, when mothers are healthy, happy, and empowered, they may be better able to fulfil their natural role as mentors and guides. According to Meyer (2018:2), it was discovered that orphaned black boys had a greater respect and admiration for their mothers, which also included spiritual guidance.

Social problems can arise when children are raised by single mothers or any other caregiver, even when fathers are present. The researcher agrees with scholars such as Matlakala *et al.* (2019:1-12) that the absence of a father can have an impact on the social problems experienced by children. However, with the implementation of development programmes, we can assist single mothers in filling the void left by absent fathers in the lives of their children. The issue does not solely lie with the absence of a male figure, but rather with the support that is provided. Many individuals can serve as father figures, including pastors, teachers, community leaders, as well as singers and actors, to name just a few.

### 2.3 Concept of “motherhood” and its importance in society

Miller-McLemore (1994:20) characterises motherhood as encompassing various forms of essential caregiving, highlighting the importance of mutual support among mothers. She contends that the act of mothering is a unique and largely “untapped resource of theological reflection”. In her book *Also a mother: Work and family as Theological Dilemma*, she mentions that she was confronted with the challenges of life when she was pregnant and heard her baby calling her mother (Miller-McLemore, 1994:21). Mothers have many challenges working full-time and being co-providers for their families (Miller-McLemore, 1994:21). The researcher concurs with Miller-McLemore’s argument that the daily responsibilities and challenges of motherhood add to the pressures of fulfilling their roles as women. Balancing a nine-to-five job with domestic duties such as cooking and caring for the family exacerbates the process of finding balance and meaning in life. This struggle is evident across various workplaces. For instance, female teachers in our school often work a full day and then assume the additional responsibility of caring for their own children and husbands afterward.

The definitions of motherhood and family are subject to debate because these issues transcend mere functionality and description; they are integral to discussions about gender. The discourse surrounding motherhood and fatherhood frequently takes centre stage in conflicts, primarily because mothers typically shoulder a greater share of household responsibilities compared to fathers (Miller-McLemore, 1999:286). Furthermore, Miller-McLemore (1999:287) contends that while many theologians are mothers, only a few have investigated the intersection of mothering and theology.

It is important to remember that the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2 clearly state that God created the first mother, Eve. The biblical narratives highlight God's love and support for women: women are honoured, valued, and entrusted with the responsibility of motherhood by God. Wolstenholm (2021) describes motherhood as a "blessing" and "ordained" by God, as stated in Psalms 127:3 and 139:13. Motherhood is consistently portrayed in the Bible as a remarkable and meaningful role. Wolstenholm (2021) affirms that God established the family, as indicated in Genesis 3. The Bible (2009:765) further emphasis in Isaiah 66:12-13 that God's care for us is likened to a mother's care for her child.

Many women mentioned as ancestors of Jesus were barren at first, but God opened their wombs, e.g., Sarah, the mother of Isaac (Gen 11:30; 21:2-3); Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau (Gen 25:21a and 25:21b); Rachel, the mother of Joseph (Gen 29:31b; 30:22-24), and Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1 Sam 1:2-7; 1 Sam 18-20). The reason for mentioning these stories of women, who God opened their wombs to conceive was for the contemporary women to take faith that God can do for all other women, as well, who cannot conceive.

The points below list some biblical themes related to motherhood.

- Motherhood is dedicated by God. Psalm 127:3, “Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from Him”.
- Motherhood is intended and ordained by God. Psalm 139:13, “For you created my inmost being: you knit me together in my mother’s womb”.
- Motherhood is full of hope and confidence. Proverbs 22:6, “Start children off in the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it”.
- Motherhood is full of joy. Proverbs 23:25, “May your father and mother rejoice may she who give you birth be joyful”.
- Motherhood is a calling from God. Proverbs 31:28, “Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her”.
- Motherhood is worthy of honour. Ephesians 6:1-3, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your father and mother-which is the first commandment with a promise-so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth”.
- Motherhood is a blessing from God. It was so significant for God that He uses the metaphor of mothers to describe the way He loves and cares for his children in Isaiah 66:13.

The matriarchs of Israel serve as exemplary models of motherhood from which contemporary mothers can draw inspiration and guidance. Their roles were crucial within

God's redemptive plan for the world, as demonstrated through the sending of His Son to atone for our transgressions. Wilson (2019:41) mentions that God continued to use their motherhood as part of His redemptive purpose, despite their character shortcomings. He eventually birthed Jesus from these imperfect women, not only to demonstrate their imperfection and weaknesses but also His "strong mercy and compassion", overcoming human imperfection to establish His redemption plan (Wilson, 2019:42).

The following paragraphs present short descriptions to illustrate this:

- Despite Sarah initially laughing at God's promise that she would conceive and bear a son in her old age, God remained faithful to His word and fulfilled His promise to Abraham (Wilson, 2019:41).
- Rebekah, despite her deceptive actions, gave birth to twin sons, one of whom played a significant role in God's plan for redemption. Her motherhood exemplifies the reality that while sin may cause loss, God remains steadfast in His promises. God always stands his ground and fulfils the promises made to His people (Wilson, 2019:41). Rebekah lost the respect of Esau when she deceived his father to bless Jacob instead of him. Their relationship was not the same again. Rebekah said that if Jacob is going to marry a Hittite woman, she might as well die. She used the Hittite women as an excuse to send Jacob away, for she knew that Isaac forbade his sons to marry foreign women (Gen 27:46). She sent Jacob away to her brother Laban, for his protection.
- Rachel and Leah are remembered as the matriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel (Wilson, 2019:42). There was considerable jealousy and animosity between the two sisters (Wilson, 2019:42). Rachel enjoyed Jacob's favour, while Leah earned acknowledgment and favour for the sons she bore him, affirming her capacity as a mother (Wilson, 2019:42). If only the sisters had shown reverence for one another and set aside their animosity, they could have established a legacy lasting for generations. However, the lack of unity among their sons is evident. Joseph, Rachel's son, was sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen 37:12-28). The interaction between Rachel and Leah teaches us that mutual respect, collaboration, and reverence among women hold the potential to cultivate a legacy of God's love and contribute significantly to the restoration of humanity (Wilson, 2019:42).

## 2.4 GBV in South Africa

The purpose of this dissertation is to establish biblical principles that single-parent mothers can use to serve as mentors for their children. To begin this exploration, it is crucial to gain a clear understanding of the current circumstances faced by these women living in South Africa in the third decade of the twenty-first century. One significant aspect of their daily lives is the prevalence of GBV.

### 2.4.1 Definitions of GBV

Finchilescu and Dugard (2018:3) use the definition established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 to elucidate the concept of “gender-based violence”. GBV is defined as

*[V]iolence against [women] [mothers] means 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 acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.*

Wilson (2012:4) refers to GBV as a “term that broadly incorporates many behaviours that manifests as physical, sexual, or psychological damage to women and girls”.

Finchilescu and Dugard (2018:3) state that the term encompasses behaviours such as sexual harassment, assault, and rape. This dissertation argues that sexual harassment refers to any harm, sexual act, or violence inflicted by one individual upon another, regardless of location, and is not limited by gender.

Mayeza and Bhana (2021) highlight that ladies or young girls in South African school’s experience gender-based and sexual violence. They note that during the COVID-19 hard lockdown level 5, an increase in cases of GBV was reported due to families being confined to their homes. In reviewing various material on GBV, the researcher observed that during the lockdown, individuals spent more time with abusive partners, resulting in a greater psychological impact compared to the effects of COVID-19 on people worldwide (Mahlangu *et al.*, 2022).

## 2.4.2 Statistics of GBV

Mahlangu *et al.* (2022) report that one in every four adult women in South Africa experiences GBV. Furthermore, they have observed that one in three children experiences sexual violence and physical abuse before reaching the age of eighteen. Motene (as cited by Mile, 2020:4) suggests that these statistics only reveal half of the truth, as some cases go unreported to the police or charges are not filed against the perpetrators. Mohammed (as cited by Mile, 2020:4) states that one in three women will experience sexual assault, and two out of five women will suffer physical abuse from a partner. Lekabe (as cited by Mile, 2020:4) claims that during the 2019–2020 period, educational institutions reported 380 cases of rape, which highlights the alarming prevalence of GBV. Vallabh (2022) compares African American women to their counterparts in America, who constitute 20,8% of the American population and face a 35% higher likelihood of experiencing abuse.

StatsSA (2020) reports that females make up 51,1% of the total population of South Africa, which amounts to 30,5 million individuals. According to StatsSA (2018), the South African population in June 2020 reached 59,62 million people. The unemployment rate among women in South Africa stands at 32,4% (StatsSA, 2020). Furthermore, the data reveals that 39,2% of households led by females lack any financially contributing member (StatsSA, 2020). In the fiscal year 2018/2019, 49,8% of reported assaults were committed by individuals known to the victims (StatsSA, 2020). Additional findings from StatsSA (2020) indicate that 21% of women aged 18 and above in South Africa who have partners have experienced physical violence, while 6% have endured sexual violence during their lifetime. Moreover, 40% of divorced or separated women have encountered physical or sexual violence during their marriage (StatsSA, 2020).

Mahlalela (2022) highlights that a total of 10,818 rape cases were officially reported during the first three months of 2022. However, alarmingly, only one out of every 25 cases was actually reported to the police for further investigation (Mahlalela, 2022). Payne and Cruywagen (2022) present the crime statistics for South Africa for the period of October to December 2021 as follows: rape=674; common assault=15,142; sexual assault=104; and domestic violence-related murders=232.

### **2.4.3 Why do mothers, women, and girls experience GBV?**

#### ***Mothers and women's lived experiences of GBV***

Despite the South African government's efforts to address all forms of violence in the country, girls and women continue to experience GBV (Mayeza & Bhana, 2021). GBV within South African schools can result in various negative outcomes, including poor academic performance, absenteeism, anxiety, depression, psychological trauma, and even school dropout among victims (Mayeza & Bhana, 2021).

Mahlalela, a 15-year-old girl, uses poetry to articulate the experiences of GBV in South Africa (Mahlalela, 2022). She emphasises the importance of paying heed to the pleas of these victims, advocating for greater attention and support for those affected by GBV (Mahlalela, 2022).

Vallabh (2022) highlights that young black women from impoverished communities are among the most vulnerable and frequently subjected to GBV. There is a notable failure, particularly on the part of the government and law enforcement agencies such as the police, to adequately protect all women from the destructive behaviour of men in South Africa (Vallabh, 2022). Criminalising GBV alone is insufficient, asserts Vallabh (2022). It is imperative that women have unfettered access to law enforcement agencies to report incidents and initiate legal proceedings against their perpetrators (Vallabh, 2022). However, even when women do manage to access the police, they often encounter victimisation from both family members and the broader community (Vallabh, 2022). Furthermore, women frequently face discrimination and lack a supportive system to aid them in coping with the aftermath of victimisation.

Mayeza and Bhana (2021) assert the critical role of psychological intervention in addressing wrongdoing by perpetrators. Schools must create a safe environment where teaching and learning can take place freely, without any fear (Mayeza & Bhana, 2021). This study contends that perpetrators, upon grasping the nature of their transgressions, are more likely to acknowledge responsibility for their behaviour and actions.

Efforts to combat GBV should extend to empowering mothers within communities, particularly through initiatives led by churches. It is imperative to equip mothers with the

tools and support necessary to advocate for their right to live free from violence in South Africa.

#### **2.4.4 Immoral behaviour and crimes against women from a biblical perspective**

Crimes such as rape, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and verbal abuse have been present throughout history. Instances of rape can even be found in biblical texts, where women are subjected to such violence by men. Rape, in the researcher's understanding, occurs when a male compels a female to engage in sexual intercourse without mutual consent.

The Bible contains numerous accounts of women who were raped, and men who were potentially spared from such violence by divine intervention. Let us first examine cases of sodomy perpetrated against men. In Genesis 19, the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is recounted, wherein the men of the city surround Lot's house, demanding that he bring out the male visitors so that they may engage in sexual acts with them (Gen 19:5; Jud 19:22). This encounter reveals that men also acted immorally towards other men, not solely targeting women. In order to protect the men from a savage assault, Lot, according to Genesis 19:8, offers his two daughters to the men for sexual purposes. This raises a moral question: How could a father willingly subject his daughters to rape by men in order to safeguard two strangers? It is the researcher's opinion that Lot recognised the divine nature of the men and believed that by protecting their dignity, God would ensure the innocence of his daughters (Gen 19:1).

#### **2.4.5 Women from the Bible who were defiled (raped)**

Bach (1999b:389) posits that rape serves as a tool for men to assert dominance over females and instil fear in them. The researcher comprehends the profound fear any mother can experience during instances of violence. Hence, the researcher aligns with Bach's assertion that rape can indeed be wielded to instil fear in any female. Nevertheless, it's noteworthy that even men have been subjected to rape during times of war, underscoring the dynamics of fear, power, and dominance. These narratives, however, starkly reveal the atrocities committed, demonstrating how men leveraged their power over women to dominate them. Pertaining to these narratives, it was culturally acceptable to the Israelites and God.

In Judges 19:22, the text recounts the account of a Levite who, in an attempt to protect the honour of another man, offered his own daughter and her slave to be used by the men instead of his guest. Subsequently, according to Judges 20:25, the Levite also yielded his slave to them, allowing them to do as they pleased. Tragically, as stated in Judges 19:25, the men subjected her to rape and abuse throughout the night. Notably, in Genesis 19:28, she did not respond when spoken to by her master. Finally, in Genesis 19:29, upon returning home, the Levite dismembered her body into twelve pieces and distributed them throughout different regions of Israel. This distressing narrative highlights the brutal rape and murder of a woman, all to protect a guest of the Levite.

In Genesis 34, we come across the story of Dinah, the daughter of Leah and Jacob, who was raped by Shechem, the son of Hamor. Dinah was the only daughter of Jacob and was very beautiful. Shechem took her without her consent and raped her, as stated in Genesis 34:2. In Genesis 34:3-4, it is stated that Shechem was indeed captivated by Dinah's beauty and sought his father's help to arrange a marriage with her after committing the rape. However, his professed love for her does not excuse his violation of her. Dinah was the sole victim in this narrative. She was neither consulted when she was raped by Shechem, nor in the negotiations regarding a bridal price by her father and brothers.

We read in 2 Samuel 13 about the rape and humiliation that Tamar, the daughter of King David, went through at the hand of Amnon, David's son. In 2 Samuel 13:4, Amnon confessed his love for his half-sister Tamar, who was also the sister of Absalom. After overpowering and raping her, Amnon sent her away in hatred. In Genesis 13:16, Tamar pleaded with him not to send her away, just as she had pleaded with him in verses 12-14 not to rape her. She said to him, "don't my brother, [d]on't force me". Tamar was raped and rejected by her own brother. In revenge for the rape, Absalom killed Amnon, as stated in 2 Samuel 13:33. The defiling of Tamar by her older half-brother Amnon caused division within the house of David, as described in 2 Samuel 15.

The researcher opted to examine the case study of Amnon and Tamar from the Bible to underscore the ubiquity of rape, even among prominent figures like the King David dynasty. Despite its occurrence across all strata of society, rape remains unequivocally condemned as a sin by God (2 Sam 13:33; 2 Sam 15). Hence, it is morally unacceptable.

#### 2.4.6 The prevalence of rape in South Africa

Gouws (2022:1) states that rape in South Africa is a general and prevalent issue. She bases her statement on the police crime statistics of South Africa, which reported 42,289 rapes and 7,749 sexual assault crimes against women in 2019/2020. She continues to say that South Africa has the highest rape statistics in the world, even higher than in war-torn countries. Authorities often fail to comprehend the underlying motivations behind rape (Gouws, 2022:2). They tend to treat these incidents as isolated cases, overlooking the societal roots of rape, wherein men seek to assert power over their victims rather than acting out of mere lust or sexual desire (Gouws, 2022:2). Gouws (2022:2) criticises the recommendation made by the African National Congress (ANC) Women's League during the party's policy conference in Gauteng, proposing chemical castration for convicted rapists. She argues that such measures fail to address the fundamental power dynamics at play in rape cases (Gouws, 2022:2). When men perpetrate rape, they often view women as possessions, exerting control over their bodies through acts of violation (Gouws, 2022:2).

The rape of eight young women in Krugersdorp sparked the article written by Amanda Gouws, a professor in political science at the University of Stellenbosch, published by *The Conversation* on 4 August 2022. The rape of eight young women, who were filming a music video, reportedly involved over 80 undocumented, illegal mineworkers near an abandoned mine in Krugersdorp, as outlined by Govender (2022:2). Eyewitness News (2022) further revealed that the DNA of 17 individuals will be examined as part of the ongoing investigation into the Krugersdorp gang rape.

Pule Mabe of the ANC, as reported by News24, emphasised that the incident should serve as a wake-up call (Pijoo, 2022), urging the government of South Africa to act against both illegal miners and immigrants. However, Gouws (2022:2) contends that the state is "missing the point", emphasising that their focus should be on addressing the immediate issue at hand: the rape and violation of eight young women (Gouws, 2022:3).

This dissertation aligns with Gouws's criticism of the government for its confusion and lack of focus on the primary issue at hand, which is the rape of women. Instead of addressing the gravity of the situation, the state appears poised to trivialise it by

prioritising the apprehension of illegal miners solely for their immigration status, rather than holding them accountable for the rape of eight young women.

Landman (2012:5) shares a story about an interview she had with Mmankwanti, who was raped by the father of her unborn child while she was only worried about money and the emotional well-being of her soon-to-be-born child. She had two other children and was financially dependent on her mother (Landman, 2012:5). The mother was more concerned about the well-being of her children, making sure she could provide for them, and she did not really worry about being raped. In the researcher's opinion, she has prioritised the well-being of her child above her own trauma of being raped.

Landman (2012:6) further recounts another story involving Lerato, whom she also interviewed. Lerato's daughter was raped by her mother's stepbrother when she was five years old (Landman, 2012:6). This event triggered emotions in Lerato, who now refuses to let her 13-year-old daughter wear tightly fitting and revealing clothing because she believes it will increase the risk of her being raped again.

Lerato feels responsible for the trauma of rape on her daughter to such an extent that she is willing to risk a jail sentence by whipping her child when she wears tight-fitting and revealing clothing. The latter was suggested by the pastor of their church, basing his advice on Proverbs 22:15: "Children just naturally do silly, careless things, but a good spanking will teach them how to behave" (Bible, 2009). According to the researcher's personal experience as a teacher and principal of a high school, spanking sometimes does more harm than good. Lerato must deal with her emotional trauma as the mother who feels guilty for not protecting her child when her daughter was violated and abused. No individual has the right to commit rape or engage in sexual abuse. The responsibility for these heinous acts always lies with the perpetrator, and the victim is never at fault, irrespective of their attire. The question of whether clothing is a factor is irrelevant; factors such as poverty, lack of education, and other societal issues are far more pertinent, issues that many of these mothers and women may not have been adequately informed about.

This is evidence of a society that has historically oppressed women, depriving them of their rights as leaders in their own homes and undervaluing their unique ability to conceive and nurture children. The root cause of mothers lacking empowerment lies within the prevailing culture, not in God or Jesus. Despite men's misconduct and their unwillingness

to support their families, society continues to prioritise men's interests over women's, solely to maintain their own power. This issue revolves around power dynamics, with gender being just one aspect of power in our society. Building on the preceding discussion, the subsequent section will delve into additional contextual factors pertaining to single-parent (mother) families in South Africa.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Freeks (cited by Matlakala et al., 2019) states that fathers are ideal role models for children. It is also mentioned that in the absence of fathers, children may lack a moral compass in life. The researcher aims to prove that with the right help and support, mothers can also become suitable mentors and role models to guide children towards achieving moral direction. Single mothers face numerous challenges on a daily basis. However, this proposed mentorship programme aims to address these challenges and rectify any mistakes. By incorporating biblical perspectives, young single mothers will be guided and educated to become self-reliant mentors, in order to combat GBV in communities.

Women from both the Old and New Testaments played a pivotal role in raising children and young women. As Drennan (2020:17-18) mentions, Hebrew women and mothers were responsible not only for giving birth, but also for managing their households and serving as teachers to their children and young women. These roles of motherhood and mentorship were significant. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that both parents share responsibility for disciplining their children. Proverbs 1:8 states, "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching". As parents, we have a responsibility to instil values and morals in our children. The Bible emphasises that parents must teach their children the importance of God's Word and its laws, as stated in Exodus 10:2, 12:26-27, 13:8, 14, and Deuteronomy 4:9-10, 6:6-7, and 11:19.

Rape and the abuse that mothers had to endure during biblical times did not change the way women were treated as objects by men. Rape does not discriminate based on social status or wealth. Why are women prevented from taking leadership roles because of rape? According to Mkhize *et al.* (2020:388), the culture of rape is a global phenomenon that affects all of humanity. Based on statistics, the researcher believes that GBV has significantly increased in South Africa over the past decade (Gouws, 2022:2). Criminals even disregard National Women's Month in South Africa. Instead of celebrating women's

personhood and their equal importance to men, women are subjected to rape, murder, and abuse. We should acknowledge, honour, and protect women as our mothers, daughters, aunts, and loved ones. GBV is a harsh reality worldwide. President Ramaphosa has stressed the necessity of mentoring young boys by mothers or women to combat this GBV pandemic.

Finally, it is imperative that both fathers and mothers assume the responsibility of correcting and educating their children. However, it is crucial to provide mothers with appropriate training, resources, and empowerment to effectively fulfil their mentoring role, particularly in single-parent households and in the absence of fathers.

In Chapter 3, attention shifts to a biblical-theological view of mothers as mentors in single-parent families.

## CHAPTER 3 WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

### *Exploration of biblical-theological perspectives on mothers as mentors in single-parent families*

#### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided insights into the role of single mothers as parents. It is evident that they encounter significant challenges when it comes to fulfilling their responsibilities as mentors to their fatherless children, as discussed in Chapter 2. These challenges encompass a wide range of issues, including poverty, abuse, GBV, rape, familial obligations, financial constraints, limited income, inadequate qualifications for managerial positions, child-related concerns, poor health, mental health issues, and a lack of access to childcare facilities.

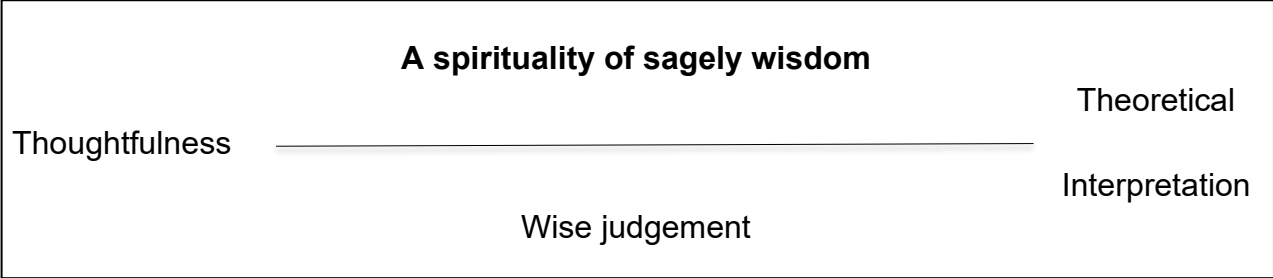
Chapter 3 will continue by asking the following question: “Why is this happening?”, which pertains to Osmer’s second task: the *interpretive* task of practical theology (Osmer, 2008:79-128). The research question is: “What are the biblical-theological views of mothers as mentors in single-parent families?” The objective is: “To explore the biblical-theological views of mothers as mentors in single-parent families”. The problem to be answered is: “Why is this currently happening?” We have a need for reputable mentors in the form of mothers or any other women to step up in the absence of fathers.

We cannot ignore the fact that fathers are indeed absent from their homes, and the phenomenon of family absence has become worldwide. For example, in America, according to the US Census Bureau (Statista, 2021), the number of children living with single mothers has increased by over one-quarter. This absent father phenomenon is also present in South Africa.

Dow (as cited by Fagan, 2022:1) states that single black mothers are experiencing many challenges and limitations related to the impact of racism and sexism. There are many mothers and women who have shown resilience and grit in raising young men, according to Fagan (2022:3). The reason for this is that successful children are raised by a resilient mother in a single-parent family (Fagan, 2022:7). The researcher argues that mothers and women are ideal mentors to equip children to become successful in the absence of

fathers. In most instances, fathers are not present in their homes, making it necessary to rely on mothers and women to raise and nurture their children to become successful.

According to Osmer, the interpretive task consists of three aspects: thoughtfulness, theoretical interpretation, and wise judgement, as illustrated below.



**Figure 3-1: A spirituality of sagely wisdom**

(Osmer, 2008:82)

*Thoughtfulness* encompasses contemplation on diverse facets of life, including individuals, communities, living conditions, emotional and psychological struggles, spiritual endeavours, and engagements with others and reality. Thoughtful leaders aspire to understand the context and real-life situations of others when interacting with them. This means taking the time to gather more information beyond what is obvious and to deeply reflect on people's experiences and the underlying reasons for their behaviour. This ability may even cause leaders, including the researcher of this study, to re-evaluate their own perspectives on specific issues.

*Theoretical interpretation* challenges researchers (and church leaders) to consider various theories and perspectives to achieve a deeper understanding of the topics they are examining. It is important for researchers to acknowledge that there is not a singular truth about everything or anything. Human knowledge is limited and fallible, a reality vividly demonstrated by the history of science. This is also true for Christian theology and the interpretation of the Bible.

This leads us to the aspect of *wise judgement*. This skill involves engaging one's intellect to thoroughly contemplate various scenarios and carefully weigh relevant factors when developing practical and effective solutions. In addition to regarding the Christian Bible as a fundamental document, the study delves into various theories, discussions,

paradigms, and research concerning single-parent families to achieve its objectives (cf. section 6.2.2).

Sanders (cited by Schoelles, 2009:32) defines “leadership” as the “ability of one person to influence others to follow his or her lead”. Sanders (cited by Schoelles, 2009:32) further elaborates on spiritual leadership as the “active behaviour of parents to influence their children to participate with them in spiritual practices”. Schoelles (2009:32) emphasises that parents must take the initiative to start faith-based activities at home and instruct their children how to take part in these practices. While Schoelles (2009:33) does not explicitly mention mothers or fathers, the term “parents” is utilised to underscore the significance of unity in spiritual leadership.

Schoelles (2009:83) asserts that women exhibit a greater inclination towards spirituality and play a leading role in seeking out a church and involving the family in attending religious services, even in the absence of their husbands. He further suggests that children perceive their mothers as more actively engaged in and vocally expressive about religious matters than their fathers. Educational research has also confirmed the likelihood of mothers being more supportive and involved in their children's education (Schoelles, 2009:83). The researcher fully concurs with Schoelles' argument that mothers are more extensively involved in religious activities than fathers. When children are young, mothers are more likely to serve as effective spiritual leaders, guiding their religious beliefs and practices.

The Tyndale House Publishers (2005:2343) define “leadership” as “guidance by direction or example”. While numerous biblical texts support this notion, the following examples, though not exhaustive, illustrate its premise:

- Judges 1:1-2 – God appointed judges over Israel to lead the nation, but God is our real and only leader.
- Exodus 3:1 – This passage highlights how God prepares individuals for leadership, with Moses serving as a prime example.
- Numbers 33:1 – Describes the stages of the Israelites' journey from Egypt, led by Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

- 1 Samuel 7:6 – When they had gathered at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the Lord. On that day they fasted and there they confessed that they have sinned against the Lord. Samuel was the leader of Israel at Mizpah.
- 1 Samuel 12:2 – The Israelites have a king as a leader.
- Psalm 109:8 – May his days be limited; may another take his place of leadership. Acts 1:20 confirms the second part of Psalm 109:8.
- Romans 12:8 – If you are part of leadership, you must govern meticulously.
- Hebrews 13:7 – People must remember their leaders who spoke the Word of God to them.
- Numbers 27:15-17 and Deuteronomy 13:1-3 – Outline the characteristics of a good leader.
- Deuteronomy 1:13-18 – Discusses the inner qualities of a good leader.

A concise review of this history reveals that numerous churches have appointed women to leadership positions for several decades. For instance, the Anglican Church commenced ordaining women as priests as early as 1944 (Lee, 2020:2). Similarly, Protestant churches have integrated women into their leadership roles, although not all Protestant denominations have adopted this practice (Lee, 2020:2). Women occupy numerous leadership positions within local congregations, where they chair committees, preach, and participate in evangelism, showcasing their involvement across various aspects of the church.

The researcher agrees with Lee (2020:2) that many women play influential roles in the day-to-day operations of the church, including ministering. As an example, the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFMSA), specifically the church the researcher is co-pastoring (AFMSA – the Word Congregation in Daniëlskuil), has women who contribute significantly to creating a sacred worship environment. In fact, our second pastor was a woman who did an exceptional job leading the congregation. However, it is worth noting that some churches, such as the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (*Gereformeerde*

*Kerke van Suid-Afrika*) and the Afrikaans Protestant Church in South Africa, do not ordain women as part of their leadership.

Landman (2019:3) mentions that the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid-Afrika*) only began ordaining women as ministers in 1990, years after the researcher's Grade 11 (Standard 9) year. On the other hand, the Lutheran, Anglican, and Methodist churches allow women to become bishops and occupy leadership positions within congregations. Bentley and Molobi (2019:4) note that the Methodist Church of South Africa (MCSA) celebrated the 40th anniversary of the first woman's ordination, which was also the first in South Africa. According to Bentley and Molobi (2019:4), the MCSA was the first church to ordain women for ministering the "Word" and "Sacraments".

Landman (2019:3) provides a comprehensive account of her role as a female theologian in Southern Africa and highlights the transformative impact of the United Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) on the leadership role of women within the church. Prof. Landman faced marginalisation and exclusion from studying theology at the University of Pretoria, ultimately opting to pursue a BA Admission degree instead (Landman, 2019:3). Despite her exceptional performance in this programme, she was still unable to gain admission to the Theological Seminary at Pretoria University (Landman, 2019:3). However, Landman (2019:4) eventually embarked on theological studies and ultimately celebrated 40 years at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in the Theology Department. The researcher contends that Prof. Landman served as a voice for countless marginalised and oppressed women in Southern Africa, leading to the ordination of many women as pastors and ministers of the Word. Other theologians, like Miller-McLemore, also served as inspiring role models for women seeking to become disciples of God and fulfil the Great Commission outlined in Matthew 28:16-20 (Bible, 2013).

Gathogo (2019:1) highly lauds Christina Landman as an esteemed Professor of Theology at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at UNISA. Prof. Landman's significant contributions to theological education in East Africa and Kenya have been remarkable, as per Gathogo's (2019:1) observations.

Prof. Landman also holds the distinction of being the first woman and mother to attain the position of professor of theology at UNISA (Laubscher, 2019:1). In addition, Prof.

Landman is ordained as a minister in the Uniting Reformed Church and serves as the Actuary of the Synod of her church (Laubscher, 2019:1). The researcher concurs with Gathogo (2019) and Laubscher (2019) in recognising Prof. Landman as a woman of substance. Through her example and leadership, many women in South Africa and Kenya have been inspired to pursue careers as theologians.

### **3.2 What is mentoring?**

Chapter 3 examines the importance of gleaning suitable information from the Old Testament and the New Testament to examine the concepts of “mentor” and “mentoring”. More importantly, its aim is to determine whether it is possible to employ narratives about women and mothers in the Bible as meaningful stories about mentorship for mothers in the twenty-first century. A pivotal issue to consider here is how mothers in the biblical era navigated the role of guides and role models for others within patriarchal societies.

Miller-McLemore (1994:19) asks the following noteworthy question: “A good mother who can find?” She bases her question on Proverbs 31:10, where the author, Solomon, asks the question in relation to his own mother and describes the characteristics of a good mother. She continues to say that we must answer the question with “the courage to dispel the clouds of silence that enshroud the complexities of mothering, and with the first-hand knowledge of the power of a woman close to a child” (Miller-McLemore, 1994:19).

Bober (2017:vi) was raised in the presence of her sisters and mother, as well as other family members, but without her father. She expresses gratitude to her grandmother, mother, two daughters, and other family members for their contributions as she navigated single motherhood (Bober, 2017:vi). She acknowledges her ex-husband for his support, but does not mention her father, as he was not part of her life. With the support of her family, she successfully submitted her dissertation to Kent State University in 2017. The researcher shares Bober's viewpoint that women can raise successful children without the presence of men. Bober provides evidence for her claim by recounting the achievements of the single mothers she studied (2017:vi).

Lee (2020:1) emphasises the significance of "reclaiming the Biblical vision of Church leadership" in her scholarly work, *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament*. She

asserts that Mary holds the distinction of being the first woman recognised as the "apostle of apostles", as she was the first to witness Jesus after his resurrection and receive the fundamental message of the Christian Faith. In the researcher's view, women in the New Testament played a crucial role in Jesus' life, demonstrating unwavering loyalty and devotion to him.

Freeks (2011:34) uses examples from the Old and New Testament to show how men acted as leaders and mentors, helping, guiding, teaching, and making disciples of those who chose to follow them. For instance, Moses mentored Joshua, who went on to become a great leader himself. This study also explores the idea of mothers being able to fulfil a mentoring role for their children when fathers are absent. Although the term "mentoring" is not explicitly used in the Bible, the concept of "discipleship" is understood to encompass various aspects of mentorship. From the researcher's perspective, mentoring involves teaching and guiding younger, less experienced individuals to follow the lead of more experienced individuals in a particular field. The goal is to help the younger person make the right choices, rather than the wrong ones.

Mentoring, a crucial life skill, has gained prominence in its association with family dynamics (Freeks, 2021a:1). Moreover, mentoring serves as a pivotal and effective approach in aiding men to grasp the essence of fatherhood (Freeks, 2021a:1). In addition, Santora *et al.* (2013:427-428) define mentoring as a collaborative and personal relationship wherein the mentor guides and leads the mentee toward realising their full potential and achieving success. Tucker (2007: iii–vi) approaches this definition from the perspective of the mentee, stressing the importance of the mentee's readiness. He asserts that mentoring is a learning partnership in which the mentee must be prepared and eager to derive benefits from the exchange of learning, experience, knowledge, and insights.

Given the variation in explanations and definitions of the concepts of mentor and mentoring offered by different scholars and authors, it becomes imperative to elucidate their interpretation (Freeks, 2018:3), particularly within the context of this study. Mentoring, for example, is an extremely broad and complex concept that includes many components that are exceedingly difficult to define (Chiroma & Cloete, 2015:1). It is also true that there are examples of older people mentoring younger people in biblical

narratives that have the desired outcomes seen from the perspective of what a mentor should be (Acts 18:24-28). Aquila and Priscilla provided council and guidance to Apollos to develop his career and spiritual growth. Bock (2013:728-729) argues that Aquila and Priscilla came to the rescue of Apollos to teach him more about the “high standard; the willingness of fellow disciples to correct them is an important means of promoting health in church, and the willingness of teachers to be corrected is a key sign of their fitness for the teaching ministry”. In the researcher’s understanding of Scripture, it is not enough for us to have a “fervent spirit and to be powerful in Scriptures”; rather, one must also heed correction from mentoring teachers, as exemplified in the case of Apollos. Mentors should also be open to correction for the benefit of redemption.

Chiroma and Cloete (2015:1) define mentoring as a relationship process in which learning, experimentation, and the developing of potential skills can take place, and the desired outcomes can be measured in terms of competencies gained. The mentoring process must last for a certain period to be effective. Masango (2011:1) stresses that mentoring is a process of support which aims to change behaviour in such a way that the protégé functions fully and effectively. A mentor can be a person with applicable life experiences and wisdom who could provide the right guidance and support to a younger, inexperienced person. In most instances mentors are older than their mentees.

Chiroma and Cloete (2015:2) argue that many examples can be found of words that correspond and have the same meaning as “mentoring”. The example that they use for the purposes of their study and that will fit in with this one is the word *meno*, which means “enduring relationships” in the Greek language. Beisterling (cited by Chiroma & Cloete, 2015:2) mentions that the word “enduring” means “to persevere” and to be “steadfast” in building relationships with others. Jesus used the words “steadfast relationship”, showing that He enjoyed this type of a relationship with his disciples. Chiroma and Cloete (2015:2) highlight the concept of an older Christian coaching, developing, or assisting a young believer in their growth, development, and maturity, a notion abundantly evident throughout the Bible. Fransman (2020:2) refers to mentoring as the process of the “reciprocal relationship between mentor and mentee”. He continues further by saying “what happen during this process could be subjected to the reason, why this process was put in place” (Fransman, 2020:2).

God desires to restore women across all generations to a deep and affectionate relationship with Him (Wilson, 2019:33). Mothers, in particular, are called to cultivate a unique bond with God by forsaking their sinful ways and returning to Him (Wilson, 2019:33). It is God's intention that all women develop nurturing connections to guide and mentor other women. Furthermore, Wilson (2019:33) emphasises the importance of established female disciples and mentors in Christ providing support to sisters in need. The researcher concurs with her when she says that she views mentoring as a covenant formed between women “to help each other grow and develop into the women” (Wilson, 2019:19), that God intends for them. Wilson (2019:34) further asserts the significance of women's role as mentors in the past and ongoing involvement in teaching and mentoring young individuals. The concept of mentorship entails an older, more experienced individual providing guidance to a younger or older person, depending on their level of expertise and qualifications, in order to ensure the mentee comprehends the necessary actions. The author aligns with previous researchers in their comprehension and interpretation of mentoring.

Oss (cited by Wilson, 2019:21) asserts that during the era of the patriarchs, spanning from Abraham to David, their wives and women wielded significant influence in guiding their sons to fulfil God's covenant for Israel, beyond solely bearing children. Their role extended to not only bringing forth offspring but also equipping them to comprehend God's plan and purpose. The researcher aligns with Wilson's viewpoint, emphasising the pivotal role played by women, particularly the mothers of these patriarchs, in spearheading the successful teaching of children about God.

In Deuteronomy 6:7, God assigns the responsibility to both parents to instruct their children in His word and commandments. While the duty to teach is shared equally, the mother's responsibility is emphasised as she typically spends a significant portion of her time with the children during the day. In Deuteronomy 6:20-21, further explanation is provided regarding the importance of teaching these commandments and laws to their children: “We were slaves in Egypt and the Lord rescued us by His great power”. Gill and Cavaness (2009:21) argue that women and mothers played a pivotal role in the teaching and “transmission of godly values to the next generation”. In Exodus 10:2, it is noted that all parents bear the responsibility of instructing young children about the laws of God. Additionally, Joel 1:3 reinforces and affirms the teaching role for both parents and

grandparents. This teaching role involves guiding the young to understand who they are in God. The researcher concurs with various scholars that it is crucial to teach our children about God's laws and nurture them to be devout children of God.

In the Bible, numerous strong women played pivotal roles in raising children and worshiping our Lord. The researcher contends that in the contemporary world, there exist resilient women and maternal figures who can assume the role of an absent father, even in cases of barrenness. While they may not directly replace the father's role, they can embrace their God-given roles and responsibilities of mothers.

According to Lee (2020:39), the Bible highlights the significant contributions of numerous women as preachers and prophets. In the birth narratives of Jesus, several women are depicted as prophets, including Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna (Lee, 2020:39). Additionally, in Mark 1:29–31 and Mathew 8:14–15, we read about the instantaneous healing of Peter's mother-in-law, who, deeply moved by Jesus' healing power, began serving and following him (Lee, 2020:17). The Galilean women who devoted themselves to Jesus demonstrated exceptional faith in him (Lee, 2020:17).

The book of Luke mentions that women followed Jesus (Lk 8:20-23). What is profoundly significant about the teachings of Jesus is His gender-neutral approach; He treated men and women as equals. France (2013:138) confirms this aspect of Scripture by reflecting on its essence: (a) praising His mother and brothers for listening to His Word; and (b) emphasising the importance of family bonds. Mothers played pivotal roles as mentors and role models within single-parenting households and communities.

Galatians 3:28 in the New Testament reads as follows:

*The day is coming when myriads upon my myriads, millions upon millions of the spirit of those who have been redeemed will stand before the throne of God. In that day no one will ask, what race were you? No Jew or Greek, no male or female, bond or free, rich, or poor, intelligent, or unintelligent, but they will all be one in Christ Jesus.*

This is a highly significant prophetic statement that encompasses a wide range of individuals rather than specific groups. According to Fletcher (2012:90), women in the

Bible demonstrated leadership acumen when called upon by God for a specific purpose. The argument presented is that all women should recognise the leadership and mentorship opportunities available to them within their communities. Women are encouraged to prepare themselves and be open to spiritual guidance in order to effectively fulfil mentoring roles. Fletcher (2012:90) asserts that women should respond to the call of leadership and should not be deprived of the opportunity to lead. Moreover, she emphasises that women should acquire leadership awareness through engagement with their peers, executing their calling with confidence, authority, and obedience to the divine calling (Fletcher, 2012:90). Numerous house churches in the New Testament featured women holding leadership positions. Fletcher (2012:89) notes that many women led these groups, citing specific examples of women who held leadership roles and ensured the continuation of home churches:

*Acts 12:12 gives an account of Mary, the mother of John Mark, who gathered many people in her home praying for the release of Peter. I am sure that the young woman, Rhoda, was in a mentorship programme in the house of Mary, teaching her the Scriptures and how to pray.*

Other women were Lydia (Acts 16:40); Chloe (1 Cor 1:11); Aquila and Priscilla as leaders of a house church (Rom 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:19); Nympha (Col 4:15); and Apphia (Ps 2).

### **3.3 Matriarch from the Old Testament**

#### **3.3.1 Eve**

Eve holds the distinction of being the first woman, marking the beginning of humanity. The name “Eve” (*Hawwah*) means “to live”, embodying the “essential life-giving maternal function of women” (Fletcher, 2012:58). As the first matriarch, Eve initiated the creation of human beings. Wilson notes that without God’s creation of Eve, the existence of human beings would have ceased with Adam. God needed a woman to advance His creation. Luther further posits that God could not have used another man to assist him in creating humanity; rather, He had to use a woman “to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth” (Fletcher, 2012:58).

Adam and Eve were made in the image of God, receiving His blessing in Genesis 1:28 and His declaration in Genesis 1:31: “This is very good”. According to Genesis 2:23, Eve was the first woman and helper created by God. Adam exclaimed: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man”. The Hebrew words for “woman” (*ishshah*) and “man” (*ish*) sound similar. Hamilton (2012:12) explains that the Hebrew word for “suitable” means the same as “the one you cannot be without”. *Adama*, the female word for ground or soil, links man with the ground and woman with the man (Hess, 2018:29). Hess (2005:86) confirms the description of women as helpers as noted in the creation story in Genesis 2.

Adam named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all living beings, as stated in Genesis 3:20. Following the first sin committed by humanity, God pronounced judgement in Genesis 3:16, declaring: “I will increase your trouble in pregnancy and your pain in giving birth”. Eve acknowledges that without God's assistance, she would not have been able to give birth to her first child. The Bible recounts the birth of Cain and Abel, as well as the tragic event of Cain killing his brother. Genesis 4 provides the initial account of murder and depicts the sorrow of a mother mourning the loss of her child.

Genesis 4:25 recounts that Adam and his wife had another son whom they named Seth, a name resembling the Hebrew word for “has given”. Genesis 4:25b states: “God has given me a son to replace Abel, whom Cain killed”. Seth played a significant role in the lineage from which Jesus would be born. Additionally, his name carries the meaning of “appointed substitute”.

Eve, the first woman created by God, is depicted favourably in Genesis 1:31: “He was pleased with everything He made”. According to Genesis 2:18, Eve served as a helper to Adam. Hess (2018:29) interprets the phrase “bone of bones” as the man with a womb, while Hamilton (2012:12) suggests a different understanding, equating it to “through women and strength”. Hamilton explains that “bones” denotes strength in Hebrew (2012:12). In describing the creation of woman from man, the pronouncement of parity – “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” – signifies God's establishment of equality between male and female (Hess, 2005:87).

Genesis 3 describes God's judgement against Eve, stating that God will increase her trouble during pregnancy and pain during childbirth. According to Genesis 3:21, God

provided clothing to Adam and Eve. Eve would use this skill received from God to provide for her family and husband. The responsibility of feeding and clothing the family falls on the woman. God is faithful to His word. The researcher believes that through the birth of Jesus, God showed more leniency regarding His judgement. Modern advancements in science and technology now enable women to opt for caesarean section deliveries, offering an alternative to the natural birth process. Nonetheless, the healing process following childbirth often entails discomfort and pain.

The researcher chose Eve because she is described as the first woman and the mother of all human beings in Genesis 2:3-20. Fletcher (2012:58) affirms that Eve was the primary matriarch and referred to as the "mother of all creation". Adding to this, Fletcher states that Eve worked alongside Adam (Fletcher, 2012:58). It is crucial to recognise that Eve's responsibilities as a mother, nurturing children, extended beyond that role; she also shared authority and dominion with Adam over God's creation, as described in Genesis 1:28–30.

Fletcher (2012:54) asserts that God created Eve to partner with Adam, serving as his helper as outlined in Genesis 2:18-20. Eve was always present when Adam was called and instructed by God to lead and be in authority over creation, except when God told Adam not to eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge in the centre of the Garden of Eden, as recounted in Genesis 2:15-17. Hess (2005:87) aligns with Schreiner's argument that when God appointed Adam to name the animals, He gave Adam influence over women.

### **3.3.2 Sarah**

Sarah was the wife of the first patriarch, Abraham, as documented in Genesis 11:29. In Genesis 18:12, when Sarah heard God's promise of a son, she laughed and said: "This can never happen to me, I am too old". She added, "My husband is old too".

In Genesis 11, 12 and 16, Sarah is referred to as Sarai. However, in Genesis 17:15, her name was changed to Sarah, derived from the Hebrew word for "princess". Despite Sarah's initial disbelief, as depicted in Genesis 18:12-13, where she laughed at God's promise, she was brought into the covenant by God with her husband Abraham as "the

mother of the nation". God allowed Sarah to be fruitful and conceive at her old age (Wilson, 2019:37).

Sarah is one of only two women mentioned in the New Testament as part of the bloodline through which Jesus, as the redeemer, would come to the earth for His salvific purpose, as stated in Hebrews 11:11. In Genesis 21, we find the account of the birth of Isaac. Sarah permitted her servant, Hagar, to conceive with Abraham, leading to the birth of his first son, Ishmael, as recounted in Genesis 16. Genesis 21:9 reveals that she compelled Abraham to expel Ishmael and Hagar from their home because she believed that Ishmael could not partake in Isaac's inheritance. This action of cruelty and injustice exemplifies Sarah's indifference and lack of compassion toward others (Wilson, 2019:38). Nevertheless, despite this, God chose her as the first matriarch and included her in Jesus' bloodline (Wilson, 2019:37).

Genesis 23 portrays the death and burial of Sarah, emphasising her significance as the matriarch of Israel. She is the only woman in the Bible for whom a detailed account of her death and burial is provided, as depicted in Genesis 23:1-17 (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:42-43).

Sarah was beautiful, as the meaning of her name "princess" attests. In Genesis 20, we learn how King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him because of her beauty. According to Genesis 20:14, Abraham instructed her that if she were questioned, she should say she was his sister to protect him from harm, fearing for his life if it were known he was her husband. Sarah obediently followed Abraham's instructions, showing loyalty to her husband and faithfulness to God, honouring Him in all His dealings with her. Though she may have initially laughed out of ignorance regarding God's intentions for her, she was ultimately chosen to play a role in God's redemptive plan for His people. Walton and Keener (2016:53) introduce Sarah's story with "the lord has been gracious to Sarah". She then conceived and bore Isaac, fulfilling God's promise and covenant with Abraham.

The reason for choosing Sarah as an example is that God selected her to be the mother of kings and nations as part of the covenant promise He made with Abraham in Genesis 17:16. God used Sarah as the first matriarch of Israel, and through her bloodline, Jesus Christ was eventually born to fulfil God's redemptive plan for the world. Schipper

(2016:35) describes all the matriarchs in Genesis as very attractive women, including Sarah and Rebekah, to name a few.

Sarah, despite her shortcomings, including her treatment of Hagar and Ishmael, ultimately became a mother herself and a key figure in the lineage of the nation. Fletcher (2012:60) notes that Sarah was cognisant of her role in “God’s redemptive plan” and the ultimate salvation for the earth. Hamilton (2012: 25) provides insight into Abraham and Sarah’s reflection on their bareness, which led to Sarah’s decision to have Hagar lay with Abraham. Hamilton (2012:25) further confirms that Hagar became prideful after conceiving, leading to Sarah’s decision to banish her.

Arnold (2009:211) observes that Sarah is the only matriarch whose burial is described in full detail, as documented in Genesis 23. Additionally, Waltke and Fredericks (2001:317) highlight that only Sarah’s lifespan is specified in the Bible, underscoring her significance. In the researcher’s view, this emphasis on Sarah’s burial and the detailing of her lifespan underscores her importance as a chosen matriarch.

### **3.3.3 Hagar**

The narrative of Hagar is delineated in two distinct passages within the book of Genesis (Meyers, 1993:266). The initial account, located in Genesis 16:1-16, portrays Hagar’s emancipation from Sarah’s household subsequent to the revelation of her pregnancy. Genesis 21:8-21, on the other hand, narrates the birth of Sarah’s son, who was designated as Abraham’s heir almost 14 years following the events described in the former narrative (Meyers, 1993:266). Sarah celebrated the day of Isaac’s weaning (Meyers, 1993:266). It is recorded that Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born to Hagar (Walton & Keener, 2016:45).

Sarah was the head of the household, assuming the role of a dominant figure in managing household affairs. She had the power to instruct her slaves to perform tasks as she wished and to determine their fate (Meyers, 1993:266). Sarah instructed Hagar to sleep with Abraham (Gen 16:1-16). However, after falling pregnant, Hagar became “proud and despised” Sarah (Gen 16:4). Genesis 16:6 recounts Sarah’s harsh treatment of Hagar, which led her to flee. Meyers (1993:266) notes that Sarah expelled Hagar and Ishmael

from her household, sending them into the wilderness. This action is confirmed by Walton and Keener (2016:53).

The angel of the Lord encountered Hagar at a spring in the desert while she was en route to Shur. The angel assured her that the Lord had heard her cries and promised that she would bear a son (Gen 16:1-16). Walton and Keener (2016:45) confirm that the well was called Beer Lahai Roi in Hebrew, meaning "the Lord sees me" when translated into English. Meyers (1993:266) notes that Hagar and Ismael eventually ran out of food and drinking water. At this point, the angel of the Lord urged Hagar to return to Sarah.

Hagar, chosen by Sarah, was likely a beautiful young slave, selected to serve as her second-in-command or "servant wife" for significant reasons (Meyers, 1993:266). Beyond her physical beauty, Hagar may have also possessed a deep reverence for God, which led to her being chosen by God to become a matriarch for the Ishmaelites. Sarah occupied the primary managerial position within the household, and her commands were unquestioningly obeyed by all (Meyers, 1993:266). Hagar obediently fulfilled Sarah's instructions as she was directed (Meyers, 1993:266). Despite Sarah's assertion that Hagar harboured animosity towards her, particularly upon discovering her pregnancy with Abraham's child (Gen 16:4), Genesis 16:4 confirms Hagar's sense of pride and resentment towards Sarah.

Meyers (1993:266) mentions that there was always a close relationship between the Ishmaelites and the Israelites. The two nations were separated by territory but kept together as one by God (Meyers, 1993:266). The researcher argues that it was the matriarchal instinct that kept the Ishmaelites and Israelites united as sons of Abraham, even though they were not heirs to his estate.

Hagar bore Abraham's first child, although not necessarily the heir or firstborn son (Meyers, 1993:266). God chose Hagar to be the mother of Ishmael, who would become the ancestor of a great nation, namely the Ishmaelites (Meyers, 1993:266). Just like Sarah, Hagar is matriarch, but of the Ishmaelites. The Bible, according to Genesis 16:5, describes Hagar's reaction to her pregnancy, in the words of Sarah, as "Hagar despises me" (Bible, 2009). Hagar had little to offer Ishmael aside from the promise given to her by the angel of the Lord, that Ishmael would become the leader of a vast nation (Gen 16:10). Meyers (1993:266) portrays Hagar as an individual disadvantaged by her circumstances,

yet she and Ishmael not only survived but were also blessed with a promise of great significance. Despite being mistreated by Sarah, Hagar demonstrated obedience when she listened to and obeyed the voice of God spoken through the angel while in the wilderness (Meyers 1993:266).

### **3.3.4 Miriam**

The story of Miriam begins in Exodus 2 when a Levite's wife gives birth to a boy, her brother Moses. Exodus 2:3 states that she placed him in a basket and hid him in tall grass at the edge of the river. The boy's sister was always watching over him, as mentioned in Exodus 2:4. The narrative unfolds with Pharaoh's daughter bathing in the river and discovering the basket. She then asked her maid to bring it to her. Upon finding the boy in the basket, the baby's sister, Miriam, promptly went to the princess and offered to find a Hebrew woman to breastfeed the child on her behalf. She brought the boy's mother to feed him (Exod 2:7). When the boy's mother presented him to the princess, "she named him Moses, 'because', she said, 'I drew him out of the water'" (Exod 2:10). Miriam served alongside her brother Moses and their uncle Aaron. Polk (2017:20) asserts that according to Micah 6:4, God sent Miriam along with Moses and Aaron to lead Israel out of captivity. Polk (2017:20) further mentions that "God used women in ministry to Israel and in the New Testament". Miriam, as stated by Phillips (2012:64), was not privileged to enter the Promised Land like her brother Moses.

Sasson (2014:255) identifies Miriam as a Prophet of God, citing Exodus 15:20. He also notes that the wife of Isaiah was a prophet and bore a child, as stated in Isaiah 8:3. Furthermore, Sasson (2014:255) identifies Hulda as the only other female prophet mentioned in the Word of God. Rabbis have recognised Sarah, Deborah, Miriam, Hannah, Abigail, Hulda, and Esther as female prophets (Sasson, 2014:255), confirming that many women were indeed referred to as prophets. Deborah is specifically identified as a prophetess in the Word of God (Judg 4:4).

Miriam emerged as a prominent figure alongside Moses and Aaron (Fletcher, 2012:61) as a leader in her own capacity. Following the triumphant events at the Sea of Reeds, Miriam took the initiative to introduce dance and worship in her role as a prophetess (Exod 15:20–21; Fletcher, 2012:61). Her actions reflected unwavering obedience and faithfulness to God, embodying a deep reverence as His devoted servant.

There are two primary reasons for selecting Miriam. Firstly, she demonstrated initiative by assuming responsibility for Moses' well-being (Exodus 2:4), ensuring his survival through a strategic decision to have their mother care for him on behalf of the Egyptian princess, nurturing him into adulthood. Miriam's leadership role is further underscored by her guidance of the people of God as a prophetess, leading them in praising God (Exod 15:20-21). Grabbe (2013:24) acknowledges and validates Miriam's status as one of the initial prophets explicitly named in the Old Testament, thereby confirming her familial ties to Moses as his elder sister.

Walton and Keener (2016:108) refer to Miriam as Moses' sister without mentioning her name, stating that she stood at a distance to ensure Moses' well-being. Phillips (2012:54) confirms that Miriam was old enough to care for Moses when his mother could no longer do so, establishing their relationship as brother and sister. Williamson (2018:110-111) provides a similar narrative of Moses' birth, mentioning Moses' sister watching over him from afar without naming her, as also noted by Walton and Keener (2016:108).

Phillips (2012:63-64) acknowledges and confirms Miriam's leadership role by composing a poem in honour of God for delivering the Israelites from Pharaoh's oppression. Psalms 78 and 106 also reference the song Miriam sang to honour God. Moses and Miriam taught this song of Praise to the Israelites (Phillips, 2012:64). Williamson (2018:132) also highlights Miriam's leadership alongside Moses and Aaron, particularly when she encourages them to participate in dance and song to honour God after the successful crossing of the Red Sea.

### **3.4 Mother figures as leaders in the Old Testament**

#### **3.4.1 Deborah**

This section focuses on the leadership role of Deborah. Judges 4 and 5 narrates the story of Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, as the only female judge of Israel. Her story reminds us of what we can achieve when we put God first in our lives. Deborah challenged people to become wise leaders who are obedient to God (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:349).

Polk (2017:18) describes Deborah as a "wife, judge, prophet, and military leader for Israel". She served as a judge over Israel for 40 years, during which there was peace

(Judg 5:31b). Deborah demonstrated her prophetic gift by accurately predicting Sisera's death by a woman and her divine gift as a liberator by leading Israel into battle alongside Barak (Judg 4:9). Her leadership role and being a woman were not questioned. How could God appoint a woman to lead the Israelites? Were there no other men available? According to numerous narratives in the Old Testament, God can appoint anyone as a leader for his people. Judges 4:6 mentions that Deborah summoned Barak to convey God's instructions to him. In verse 8, upon hearing Deborah's prophecy, Barak responded: "I will go if you go with me; if you don't, I will not go".

It seems clear that God can appoint any person, regardless of gender, to be a leader, preacher, or prophet if they are obedient. Polk (2017:18) states that Deborah preached the Word of God as a prophet, and as a military leader, she led young men into battle and gave them the command to start the war. Polk (2017:18) continues by saying that Deborah was willing, able, and obedient to God. She was a prophet of God. By conveying God's instructions to Barak, the Canaanites were destroyed: she obeyed the Lord her God as a woman and prophet.

Judges 5 recounts a song of praise dedicated to Deborah. Judges 5:7 reads: "The town of Israel stood abandoned, Deborah; they stood empty until you came, came like a mother for Israel." In Judges 5:12, Deborah is asked to lead on. These verses testify that God's decision to appoint Deborah was the best decision to aid His people at that time. In ancient times, it was common for people to compose and sing songs of victory to honour someone.

The fact that Judges 4:4 explicitly states that Deborah was married assumes that she possibly had some children. From the researcher's perspective, Deborah, as the wife of Lappidoth, likely fulfilled the role of a mother and family member (Judg 4:4). Bakon (2006:110) mentions that Deborah referred to herself as a mother in Israel, embracing her femininity as an important part of her leadership role and ultimate success. She was honoured and valued as a Judge and a prophet (Judg 4:8). The researcher agrees with Bakon (2006:110) that Deborah was the mother of Israel, and as Israel's Judge, she helped them overcome difficulties.

Deborah's story highlights a recurring theme in Old Testament narratives: God selects leaders according to His own standards rather than conforming to people's expectations. This principle is further exemplified in the story of Abigail.

### **3.4.2 Abigail**

The story of Abigail takes place in the wilderness of Paran and is recounted in 1 Samuel 25. She was married to Nabal from the clan of Caleb. Nabal was a resident of the town Maon and owned land near the town of Carmel (TLASB, 2005:435). The name Nabal means "fool". Schwartz (1999:344) suggests that Nabal could also mean "outcast". He was a wealthy man who possessed 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats (1 Sam 25:3).

Abigail was a beautiful and intelligent woman, whereas Nabal was mean and bad-tempered. As the story continues, David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep and sent ten young men to tell Nabal to receive them with kindness when they were going to visit him on the feast day. David and his men looked after the safety of his shepherds, and nothing was stolen. Nabal's response was foolish, and David's men returned to him with a message from Nabal. Merrill (2018:142) confirms that Nabal reacted to David's good gesture with disrespect. David's goodwill gesture towards Nabal was honourable according to 1 Samuel 25:6-11. David ordered his men to "buckle up their swords" and prepare for battle (1 Sam 25:12). A servant of Nabal went to Abigail and told her what he did (1 Sam 25:14).

Abigail approached David on behalf of Nabal without the latter's knowledge and consent. All who stayed with them, including the servants, brought peace offerings to David (1 Sam 25:18). Abigail completely humbled herself before David (1 Sam 25:23-30). Her family and servants were spared in the process, but her husband was killed by God.

After these events, Abigail accepted a marriage proposal from David and became his second wife (1 Sam 25:40). Merrill (2018:142) verifies the marriage proposal between David and Abigail. In the researcher's understanding of the Word of God, Abigail saved her people through her astute wisdom and benevolence. Acting promptly as a mother, she addressed a critical situation and resolved the issue to ensure the safety of all.

Abigail demonstrated a profound comprehension of her duties and obligations as a competent woman, drawing from the principles outlined in Proverbs 31:10-31. One could posit that Abigail assumed a mentorship position with her subordinates, as evidenced by a servant confiding in her regarding Nabal's imprudent actions (1 Sam 25:14-17). Guzik (2018) highlights the significance of time in Abigail's deliberations, particularly in her swift actions to protect her community from the repercussions of Nabal's ill-advised decision to offend David.

### **3.4.3 Bathsheba**

Various accounts of Bathsheba can be found in 2 Samuel 11-12 and 1 Kings 1-2. Psalm 51 is considered a psalm by David, composed as a plea for forgiveness from God for his relationship with Bathsheba (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:495, 880). Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, was known for her exceptional beauty and was married to Uriah, a soldier in David's army (2 Sam 11:2-3). Bathsheba was bathing on the roof of her house when she caught David's eye, prompting him to summon her to the palace. The accounts reveal that David and Bathsheba engaged in a sexual relationship, resulting in Bathsheba conceiving a child with David, despite David's efforts to involve Uriah in Bathsheba's life (2 Sam 11:6-13).

Bathsheba ascended to the position of queen consort by marrying King David following his involvement in the demise of Uriah (2 Sam 11:27). As the mother of Solomon, who would later reign as king of Israel (1 Kgs 1:28-46), she served as a significant link between the nation's two most renowned monarchs. Despite being implicated in adultery, she notably held a place in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:495). Bathsheba occupied a throne adjacent to that of Solomon (1 Kgs 2:19). The king displayed his respect for his mother, Bathsheba, when she came to meet him on behalf of Adonijah, by standing up and bowing before her before taking his seat (1 Kgs 2:19). His honour and regard for her extended further when Solomon arranged a throne for his mother and positioned her at his right hand, symbolising the king's trust. Solomon honoured his mother by fulfilling her wish even before she voiced it.

Bathsheba's importance lies in her pivotal role in Solomon's ascension to the throne after his father David (1 Kgs 1:15-21). Nathan's timely appearance following Bathsheba's plea to David secured the kingship for Solomon, confirming God's and King David's preference

for him as the successor (1 Kgs 1:22-31). Lee (2020:22) identifies Bathsheba as one of the four unexpected women in Jesus' lineage. Bathsheba's infidelity to her husband and subsequent marriage to David should not be solely attributed to her; she obeyed King David's summons. In the researcher's understanding of the Scriptures, God does not show favouritism towards individuals.

#### **3.4.4 Esther**

In Esther chapter 1, the author introduces Esther as the Jewish heroine (Bible, 2009:523). Esther is one of only two books in the Bible named after a woman, the other being Ruth. Ruth's leadership role from a biblical perspective will be discussed later (cf. section 4.4.3). An intriguing series of events unfolded in Esther's life, where she emerged as an unexpected heroine in challenging circumstances. Dallaire (2012:440) refers to Esther's story as a demonstration of God's sovereignty and faithfulness in delivering His people through a woman.

The authorship of the book of Esther remains unknown. Some scholars suggest it might be Mordecai, while others mention the names of Ezra and Nehemiah, as noted in the TLASB (2005:748). It is speculated that the book was likely written during Esther's reign as queen around 470 B.C. when Xerxes was the ruler of Persia and Media. At the time, King Xerxes was married to Queen Vashti and hosted a feast lasting for 180 days to showcase his power and riches. This elaborate showcase concluded with a 7-day banquet where wine was served, during which he desired to display Queen Vashti to his assembled eunuchs. However, when he summoned her, she refused to come. Seeking counsel on the matter, the king consulted with his advisors, who advised him to decree that Queen Vashti should never again appear before him (Martin, 2018:393). This confirms that King Xerxes consulted his wise men after summoning Queen Vashti, and their verdict was that Vashti should be excluded. This served as an example of the consequences for noble wives who disrespect their husbands. Esther succeeded Vashti as queen (Esth 2:17).

Esther, a beautiful Jewish girl, was adopted as a daughter by her uncle Mordecai (Esth 2:7, 15). Her beauty captivated all who saw her, and she gained more favour with the king than any of the other women (Esth 2:17). This implies that Esther was the most beautiful

young virgin the king had ever laid eyes on. Dallaire (2012:444) notes that Esther's beauty captured the heart of the Persian king.

Her beauty and character captivated the Persian king, enabling her to courageously devise effective plans to rescue the Jews from Haman's clutches. Esther exhibited unwavering obedience to Mordecai, reflecting her allegiance to the God of the Jews. She demonstrated a profound concern for the safety and security of her people over her own welfare, as illustrated in Esther 4:15-16. Queen Esther's actions serve as a powerful lesson that serving God may necessitate risking our lives for the salvation of others. Through Esther's story, it becomes clear that God is always in control of every situation, showcasing His loving care for His people.

Esther refrained from disclosing her nationality and family background to King Ahasuerus, following the advice of her uncle Mordecai (Esth 2:10). Martin (2018:393) confirms Mordecai as Esther's uncle who raised her after her parents passed away. God had already chosen Esther to save His people from Haman's plot. In Esther chapter 3, the Bible recounts how Haman, the army general, persuaded the king to annihilate Mordecai and the Jews. The subsequent chapters, from Esther chapter 4 to the end, detail how Esther utilised her trusted position as queen to help the Jews:

- She instructed Mordecai to fast and pray for three days before she approached the king (Esth 4:15). Dallaire (2012:444) highlights how Esther's beauty captured the heart of the Persian king.
- In chapters 5-7, Esther bravely approached the king, who welcomed her warmly (Esth 5:1-3). Esther interceded for the Jews by requesting a favour from the king at a banquet she planned to host for him and Haman. During the banquet, the king learned of Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews. In response, he ordered Haman to be hanged on the gallows meant for Mordecai. Esther was then granted Haman's estate, which she entrusted to Mordecai (Esth 8:2). Subsequently, the king authorised Mordecai to issue an edict in his name to protect the Jews, sealed with the king's signet ring (Esth 9; Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:760).

The Jews' rightful place was restored because of the leadership of Esther, who reaffirmed the presence of Jews in Ahasuerus' kingdom. They celebrated Purim, feasting and

rejoicing in their victory over the enemies of God's people (Esth 9:13-17; Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:762). Esther intervened on behalf of the Jews, securing their existence with the guidance and counsel of Mordecai. Jewish women were expected to be quiet, to serve in the home, and to remain on the periphery of religious and political affairs. However, these narratives recount tell a compelling story of how a Jewish woman not only became queen of a Gentile nation but also played a pivotal role in saving her people from extinction.

It is noteworthy to mention that, although God's name is never explicitly mentioned in the book of Esther, His involvement in saving His people can be perceived as the act of God. God works behind the scenes, much like a director of a movie: while the director never appears in the movie, his/her hand is visible in the behaviour of the characters as the story unfolds. In this case, a Jewish woman takes on the lead role to ensure the security of all Jewish people (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:748). In the researcher's view, God appointed Esther to fulfil His covenant of protecting His people.

The book of Esther does not explicitly mention the words "God" and "prayer", yet God's providence for the Jews is evident through Esther's actions. As noted earlier in this section, the only other book in the Christian Bible named after a woman is also named after its lead character, Ruth, which forms the topic of the next section.

### **3.4.5 Ruth**

The book of Ruth derives its name from a Moabite woman who married a Hebrew man in Moab (Reed, 2018:105). Greenstein (1999:215) corroborates Ruth's nationality as Moabite. Ruth forms part of the genealogy of Jesus and was the great-grandmother of David (Matt 1:5; Reed, 2018:105). Fuchs (1999:135) highlights Ruth's resilience and determination to claim what she deserves and desires in life.

The story of Ruth depicts the relationship between a mother-in-law (Naomi) and her daughter-in-law (Ruth) after they both lost their husbands, showcasing their enduring loyalty to each other. Tribble (cited by Fewell & Gunn, 1999:233) highlights the selfless character of Naomi, who prioritised Ruth's well-being. The author echoes Tribble's sentiments. In the mentoring process, the mentor must monitor the mentee's progress. Naomi and Ruth were inseparable, even when Naomi urged both daughters-in-law, Ruth

and Orpah, to return to their mothers (Ruth 1:11-13). Ruth's response was, "where you go, I will go, where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die and there will I be buried" (Ruth 1:16-17). Orpah bid her mother-in-law farewell and returned to her own people (Ruth 1:14). Lee (2020:21-22) describes Ruth as a Gentile woman who abandoned her homeland to embrace the God of the Hebrew people.

When Ruth married the son of Naomi, she committed herself to the family. This commitment was strengthened when Ruth accepted Naomi's people and God as her own. Ruth was from Moab, east of the Dead Sea, which was one of the countries that oppressed Israel (Judg 3:12). Ruth saw Naomi as a mother, and they both made a commitment to support and assist each other (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:383). This study posits that Naomi was a mentoring figure in Ruth's life.

Ruth, with the help of her mother-in-law, found love and happiness with Boaz, as described in Ruth chapters 3 and 4. Ruth and Naomi began working in Boaz's fields, where he noticed Ruth and eventually married her. Through her union with Boaz, Ruth, the Moabite woman, became an ancestor of Jesus (Matt 1:5). Lee (2020:22) affirms that Ruth was a Gentile woman of strong faith and determination. She left her homeland to join Israel, embraced the Jewish God, and married Boaz.

Reed (2018:105) confirms that there are only two books in the Bible named after women: Ruth and Esther, both of which are part of the Old Testament. However, the following section discusses female mentors in the New Testament.

### **3.5 Mother and female mentors in the New Testament**

Fletcher (2012:90) mentions that women in the Bible demonstrated leadership awareness when called by God to take action. In the researcher's opinion, all women should recognise the leadership and mentorship roles they can fulfil in their communities. They should prepare themselves and be open to spiritual preparation to effectively mentor others. Fletcher (2012:90) emphasises that women should respond to the call of leadership and never be deprived of the opportunity to lead. She goes on to say that women should "acquire" leadership "awareness" from their "peers by carrying out their call with confidence, authority and obedience to Him who called them to lead" (Fletcher,

2012:90). In the New Testament, numerous house churches are mentioned, where women often held leadership positions. Fletcher (2012:89) notes that many women led these groups and hosted gatherings for spiritual convergence in their homes.

Mary, the mother of John Mark, hosted a house church in her home (Acts 12:12). Other female house church leaders included Lydia (Acts 16:40); Chloe (1 Cor 1:11); Aquila and Priscilla (Rom 16:3–5; 1 Cor 16:19); Nympha (Col 4:15); and Apphia (Phlm 2).

Female leaders in the New Testament, such as the women who followed Jesus, were not granted titles akin to the 12 disciples who were officially recognised as followers of Jesus. Lloyd (2013:25) contends that these women who followed Jesus held an equal right to be acknowledged as disciples, just like their male counterparts. Jesus had a special bond and relationship with his mother, Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. These women spent most of their time learning from Jesus and benefited from his leadership style. We read in Mark 16:1 that Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalene, and Salome went to the graveside of Jesus with spices to anoint him (Matt 28:1-10; Lk 24:1-12; Jn 20:1-10).

Philippians 4:2-3 depicts Priscilla as a co-worker of Paul, while Acts 18:26 highlights her role in instructing Apollos in the accurate preaching of the Word. In Timothy's life, his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice played pivotal roles (2 Tim 1:5). These women exemplified faith and imparted spiritual growth to Timothy, instilling in him enduring values and ethical principles (Nicholls, 2012:150). They nurtured Timothy in accordance with their deeply held beliefs and ethical standards. Block (2003:47) asserts that mothers held significant dignity and authority within Hebrew households, embodying roles as child-bearers, managers, teachers, mediators, and symbols of Israel itself. Their authority extended to decision-making and conflict resolution for both their households and the wider community. Moreover, mothers served as educators not only for their own children but also for other women (Block, 2003:66-67).

Meyers (2018:396) highlights that women bore the primary responsibility for managing the household, which included tasks such as childbearing and education (Meyers, 2018:396, 399). Meyers (2018:396) notes that in addition to their domestic duties, women also shouldered the responsibility of caring for and serving other members of the

community. Furthermore, Meyers (2018:397) discusses how women engaged in economic activities within the household, including the production and processing of food.

The researcher asserts that the role of mothering has remained consistent throughout history, as women in both ancient times and the contemporary world continue to fulfil similar responsibilities. Despite the advancements of modernity, women, especially single mothers, still provide for their families and carry out essential caregiving duties.

### **3.5.1 Lois and Eunice, leaders in the Early Church**

The passage in Acts 16 provides an account of the Apostle Paul narrating the background of Timothy. Timothy resided in Lystra with his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, both devout Jewish believers. Notably, Timothy's father was of Greek descent, rendering Timothy of mixed heritage – Jewish and Greek. Some scholars suggest that Timothy might have been perceived as a hybrid individual by the Jewish community, akin to the Samaritans (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1846, 1847). Nevertheless, Paul ensured Timothy's circumcision to appease the Jewish population (Acts 16:3), as indicated by Bock (2013:719). Traditionally, Jewish women were tasked with instructing children in the Word of God. The Tyndale House Publishers (2005:2037) assert that Timothy had received comprehensive religious education from his mother and grandmother, rooted in Jewish scripture.

Wilson (2019:49) says that in the story of Lois and Eunice, the mother and grandmother portray “the strongest spiritual pairing stemming from the maternal line of any family group in the New Testament”. They exemplified qualities of faith and commitment as mothers and grandmothers, demonstrating how women can possess knowledge of God's teachings and pass them on to their offspring. The dynamic involving Lois, Eunice, and Timothy symbolises an elderly woman supporting a mother in the upbringing of children, akin to how Lois guided her daughter in raising Timothy within the reverence and devotion to God. They assumed authoritative roles in the collective nurturing of Timothy (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2046).

Wilson (2019:49-50) argues that Lois and Eunice constantly serve as a reminder of the importance of children learning about their "roots, faith, and mission". These two women,

who were significant in Timothy's life, provided guidance by teaching and nurturing his faith in God (2 Tim 1:5; Wilson, 2019:50).

They were faithful and devoted women of God, obedient to His teachings (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2046). The Bible emphasises the importance of parents instructing their children in God's precepts and laws, as outlined in Exodus 10:2, 12:26-27, 13:8, 14; Deuteronomy 4:9-10, 6:6-7, 11:19. This guidance includes teaching children to love and show compassion towards others, as well as to remain loyal and obedient to God. As Jewish mothers, they understood their responsibility to educate their children in God's laws and statutes. They serve as excellent role models and mentors. Lois, Eunice's mother, guided her to become a good mother, and in turn, Eunice mentored Timothy on how to live according to God's teachings (2 Tim 1:5).

### **3.5.2 Lydia of Thyatira as a leader in the Early Church**

In Acts 16, we encounter Lydia, introduced by Luke as a businesswoman in Acts 16:14: "One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira".

Polk (2017:20) notes that Lydia was a businesswoman involved in trading "valuable purple cloth that was worn by Roman leaders". Although Lydia was initially a worshipper not yet converted, God "opened her heart to respond to Paul's message" (Acts 16:14). According to Polk (2017:20-21), Lydia encountered Paul and the other evangelists during their mission to preach the gospel to the pagans and Gentiles. It was during one of these meetings that Lydia became a follower of Christ Jesus (Polk, 2017:21).

Acts 16:15 states that after Lydia and the members of her household were baptised, she invited Paul, Silas, and Timothy to stay with her and her family for some time. Polk (2017:21) mentions that Lydia received the "gift of hospitality". After Paul and Silas were released from prison, they went to Lydia's house and met the other believers there. This implies that her home became a home church for the entire community.

Polk (2017:21) further highlights Lydia's influence as a formidable woman who not only hosted the church at her home but also shared the Word of God and her faith with other women in the marketplace where she conducted her business. It could be argued that

the Spirit of God opened their hearts as well to be receptive to His word and to undergo conversion. Similar to Lydia's role, in Acts 12:12 we read about Mary the mother of John Mark whose house served as a home church for believers and played a role in the conversion of non-believing women. Lydia's journey led her to become a devoted follower of Christ (Polk, 2017:2).

***In summary, the following could be stated about Lydia:***

- Lydia and her household were baptised (Acts 16:15).
- Lydia played a pivotal role in the conversion of many people to Christianity.
- The fact that she attended the prayer session demonstrated her willingness to respond to God's calling on her life.
- Lydia provided accommodation to Paul and Silas after her conversion and baptism.
- Due to her success as a businesswoman, she was probably involved in spreading the gospel amongst many non-believers.

**3.5.3 The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well is narrated in John 4:1-42**

Jesus was traveling from Judea to Galilee after completing his preaching and baptising, which had garnered more followers than John the Baptist (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1745). Opposition from the Pharisees grew against Jesus, prompting him to depart for Galilee. The Pharisees were displeased with Jesus' teachings and his increasing popularity among the people. As depicted in John's Gospel, this period marked the early stages of Jesus' ministry, and it was not yet time for him to openly confront the Pharisees (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1745).

The story takes place in Sychar, a town in Samaria, about 38 km away from Jerusalem. Jesus was very tired; the terrain was mountainous. It was a challenging walk for Jesus and the disciples. Sychar is located on the south eastern slope of Mount Gerizim in Samaria, near the well of Jacob (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1745). The well is close to Shechem and was given to Joseph (Gen 33:18-19; 48:21-22). The Samaritan hills are made of limestone and permeable rock that allows water to seep down through the

cracks, explaining why the well was so deep (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1745). Water is scarce and valuable to the people of Samaria. Jesus stayed at Jacob's well while the disciples went to Sychar to buy food. This is where Jesus met the woman (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1745).

Köstenberger (2013:528) confirms that Jesus had to pass through Samaria because of the appointment he had with the woman at the well. The Bible highlights the "plan and will" of God through the following Scriptures: John 9:4; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9 (Köstenberger, 2013: 528). Based on the researcher's interpretation of the Word of God, every person, whether free or slave, has a place in the heart of God. Humanity is His creation. God will go the extra mile to help those who earnestly seek Him.

Jesus chose to travel directly from Jerusalem to Galilee through Samaria, despite the animosity between Jews and Samaritans. This route was the shortest path, but many Jews preferred longer routes to avoid contact with Samaritans, whom they considered impure due to their mixed ancestry from intermarriages with Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:24). Constable (2018b: 257-258) suggests that King Pekah likely permitted these interracial marriages, reflecting his immoral character. Although God prohibited such marriages, Jesus intentionally chose to travel through Samaria. He rested at Jacob's well along the way (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1745).

Jesus arrived at the well around noon, exhausted from the heat of the day. Feeling thirsty, he asked the Samaritan woman for water (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1745). She was surprised by his request, noting the historical animosity between Jews and Samaritans, as the two groups typically had no dealings with each other. She expressed her astonishment at encountering a Jew in Samaria, as they usually avoided traveling through the region (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1745).

The woman at the well possessed several notable characteristics: (1) She was a Samaritan, belonging to a mixed-race group; (2) She was despised by Jews (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746); and (3) She was living with her sixth partner without being married to him. Jesus encountered her at the well by divine appointment, with the intention that her salvation would lead to the salvation of other women in Samaria (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746).

Jesus spoke to her because for him, it was about saving souls and impacting the community of Samaria (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746). He explained to her that He could offer her "living water," which would quench her thirst forever, symbolising the spiritual fulfilment and eternal life He provides as the Messiah (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746). The concept of "living water" has roots in the Old Testament, where it symbolises God's provision and spiritual sustenance (Ps 42:1; Isa 55:1). Just as our physical bodies require water and food, our souls also thirst for spiritual nourishment (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746). The Samaritan woman misunderstood, thinking that Jesus meant literal water that would eliminate her need to draw from the well. She was drawn to Jesus's message because she believed it could alleviate the physical burden of fetching water (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1747).

The woman immediately recognised that Jesus knew details about her private life that no other Jew would know. She referred to him as a prophet (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746). As soon as she realised that Jesus knew about her, she changed the subject and started to speak about the correct place of worship (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746). She was referring to the place of worship on Mount Gerizim where the Samaritans worshipped God, indicating that the Samaritans had a relationship with God (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746). The Samaritans were God-fearing people who only used the first five books of the Bible as a reference for their worship. The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed 90 years earlier.

In John 4:22-26, Jesus identifies himself as the Jewish Messiah and explains that salvation will come for all people, whether Jew or non-Jew, only through Him (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746). Köstenberger (2013:529) also mentions these statements by both the woman and Jesus, confirming that Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah to a Samaritan woman. In the researcher's recollection and understanding of the Bible, the question was posed to Jesus about whether he is the Messiah who was to come in Luke 7:27 (Bible, 2013).

The Samaritan woman immediately shared her experience with others in her community (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746). Despite any prior prejudices, many welcomed her proposal to engage with Jesus, who offered life-giving water without physical exertion (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1747). Providing an unrestricted opportunity to partake

of the spiritual nourishment offered by Jesus Christ's well, one will never thirst for water but for the divine water sourced from God's well (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746). The woman at the well attentively heeded Jesus and consequently found salvation. Demonstrating her commitment as a disciple, she fulfilled her duty and responsibility by extending the invitation to others (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746).

It is inconsequential whether we have knowledge of Jesus or identify as Christians; we have the ability to attain the living water promised by Jesus to the Samaritan woman at the well. Upon encountering Him, the Messiah, we will find our spiritual thirst satisfied and cease to long for earthly water (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746).

The receptiveness of an individual to the teachings of Jesus not only provided an inclusive opportunity for others to embrace Him, but also led to an entire community acknowledging Him as the living God (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1747). Within a familial context, the belief of one member can serve as a catalyst for the spiritual transformation of other non-believing relatives, encouraging them to repent and accept Jesus as the living water. John 4:42 states the following: "They said to the woman, we no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man is the Saviour of the World".

There is no indication in the text whether she was a mother or not, although the reference in John 4:16-18, indicating that she had multiple husbands, may suggest she may have had children (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1746). Even if she did not have any children of her own, she brought redemption to all other children within her community (Jn 4:39-40). Many Samaritans became believers because of her testimony (Jn 4:41). The researcher posits that the first church in Samaria may have been established because of the encounter with Jesus the Messiah, which led to the conversion of many to believe in Jesus as the Son of God.

Malina and Rohrbauch (1998:101) confirm that the woman, upon returning from her conversation with Jesus, shared the details of their encounter with the community, leading many Samaritans to turn their hearts to Jesus.

### **3.5.4 The woman with the alabaster jar (Matt 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9; Lk 7:36-50; Jn 12:1-7)**

The narrative of the woman with the alabaster jar, who breaks it and anoints Jesus shortly before his crucifixion, holds profound significance as she prepares him for the impending ordeal and his eventual death. This story is recounted in all four Gospels: Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, Luke 7:36-50, and John 12:1-7. An analysis of each of account will be provided below, beginning with John's version.

The woman who anointed Jesus is not explicitly named in the accounts provided by Matthew, Luke, and Mark. Only the apostle John, in John 12:3, specifically mentions her. Furthermore, John 12:9-11 confirms the relationship between Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, the man whom Jesus raised from the dead. The Tyndale House Publishers (2005:1589) suggest that the woman is likely Mary, the sister of Martha, particularly because Jesus had previously raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. Wilkins (2013:161) similarly asserts that the woman's name is Mary, specifically identifying her as the sister of Martha and Lazarus. John confirms the identity of the woman who anointed Jesus in preparation for his death and burial (Jn 12:3; Köstenberger, 2013:579).

According to John 12:1, the Passover was just six days away, indicating that the anointing at Bethany occurred shortly before the crucifixion (Lee, 2020:25). While Matthew and Mark do not mention the woman's name, only John identifies her. She prophetically anointed Jesus' feet, preparing him for his burial. This act holds significant importance in the declaration of the gospel and its profound meaning. Lee (2020:25) emphasises that no other disciple's action has received as much attention as the anointing of Jesus. Mary exhibited leadership by allowing God to use her in this profound manner and exercise her ministry to anoint Jesus.

Matthew's account (Matt 26:6) begins in the city of Bethany. The woman approached Jesus with an alabaster jar containing expensive perfumed oil and poured it over his head while he was reclining at the table. This event occurred six days before the crucifixion (Lee, 2020:25). Judas Iscariot objected, arguing that the costly oil could have been sold to benefit the poor (Matt 26:6). However, the woman was simply obeying God's instruction to prepare Jesus for his impending crucifixion and death. Jesus defended her actions, affirming their significance (Matt 26:10).

In Mark 14:3-9, the narrative closely mirrors that of Matthew. In Mark 14:8-9, Jesus acknowledges that the woman's act of anointing him was in preparation for his burial. Evans (2013:288) suggests that Jesus perceived the anointing as a preparation for his body's burial. Jesus concludes by affirming that wherever the gospel is proclaimed, her deed will be remembered and honoured. This signifies Jesus' understanding of the significance of the woman's action, her role in preparing him for his burial, and the lasting impact of her act of devotion (Lee, 2020:25).

The three accounts of the anointing found in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-7 are generally regarded as describing the same event (Wilkins 2013:161). Wilkins (2013:161) notes that other scholars also consider all four anointing narratives to be referring to the same incident. However, Wilkins (2013:161) points out that Luke's version differs from the other three gospels in several aspects: (a) the timing and location of the event; (b) the identification of the woman involved, who in Luke's account is described as sinful, unlike in the other gospels where she is identified as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus; and (c) the setting, which is in the house of Simon the Pharisee according to Luke's Gospel (Wilkins, 2013:161).

The final version of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet was the woman Luke referred to as the "sinful" woman in Luke 7:36-50. During a dinner hosted by a Pharisee, this woman approached Jesus, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. She then wiped them with her hair and anointed them with expensive perfumed oil. The Pharisee, witnessing this act, questioned Jesus' status as a prophet, assuming he would have known the woman's sinful reputation and prevented her from touching him. Jesus said to Simon and in the presence of everyone at the dinner that they should not judge the woman because her sins were forgiven by her deed of anointing his feet (Bock, 2013:393-394). Gane (2017:8) mentions that Jesus focuses on the forgiving part and not on the sinning part. Jesus, in the researcher's understanding of the Word of God, set a new standard in emphasising the importance of forgiveness.

France (2013:138) confirms that according to John's Gospel, the woman in the anointing story of Jesus is identified as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. France (2013:139) provides insight in the social status of women in the Jewish society, noting their inferior status compared to men. Women were typically not permitted to be in the company of

men, and the fact that this woman was viewed as a sinner likely exacerbated her situation. Despite societal norms, Jesus spoke words of forgiveness and honour to the woman in the presence of Simon the Pharisee, affirming her actions and forgiving her sins (Bible, 2013).

During the researcher's reading and exegesis of all four Gospels regarding the anointing of Jesus' feet, he observed discrepancies in the accounts regarding the time frame, setting, and the identity of the woman who performed the anointing. However, he concluded that regardless of these differences, the overarching purpose of the anointing remained consistent: to prepare Jesus for his impending crucifixion, subsequent death, and the three days he would spend in the grave.

### **3.5.5 The women were always around Jesus**

According to Lee (2020:17), the Galilean women were dedicated and surrounded Jesus by showing extraordinary faith according to (Mk 1:30-31). Evans (2013: 217) mentions that the healing of Simon's mother-in-law was a miracle made possible by God, as confirmed by Luke 4:39. A similar event is recorded in Matthew 8:14-15, where Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law. She fully recovered and immediately began "to serve and minister" to them (Lee, 2020:17).

Mark is the only evangelist who does not give an account or recollection of the birth story of Jesus (Lee, 2020:21).

Many women played crucial roles in the life of Jesus and served as his disciples. We must begin at the very beginning. Jesus was born from a woman, as recounted in Matthew 1:18-25. Wilson (2019:49) highlights Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the most renowned and honoured among all the women who played a part in his life. Mary conceived Jesus miraculously by the Holy Spirit, a divine act that set her apart from any other mother (Wilson, 2019:49).

Many other women played significant roles in the life of Jesus. Mark highlights three prominent women (Lee, 2020:26). Mary Magdalene is named first in two of the Gospels, Mark 15:40-41 and Matthew 27:55-57 (Lee, 2020:26). The second woman named is also called Mary, but she is not the mother of Jesus (Lee, 2020:27). In Mark 15:40 and

Matthew 27:56, she is identified as the mother of James the Less and Joseph. The two brothers are mentioned in Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55 (Lee, 2020:27). Lee (2020:27) argues that this Mary is only identified in recognition of her sons James and Joseph. The third woman is Salome, referred to in the Bible as the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Lee, 2020:26). In Matthew 20:20-21, she is mentioned but not named, only referred to as the mother of the apostles John and James. Mark 15:40 and Matthew 27:55 mention other women who were present during Jesus' suffering and resurrection. Evans (2013:310) notes that that many women followed Jesus and therefore witnessed the crucifixion. John 19:26-27 depicts the presence of Jesus' mother when he was nailed to the cross. Köstenberger (2013:616) reaffirms the presence of Mary, the mother of Jesus, at his crucifixion.

The women at the tomb serve as witnesses to the empty grave and the resurrection of Jesus (Lee, 2020:33). Among them are Mary, not Jesus' mother but referred to as the other Mary (Matt 28:1), and Mary Magdalene. The other Mary could have been the wife of Clopas (Jn 19:25-27), Jesus' mother, Mary's sister (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1784), or she could have been the mother of James and John (Matt 27:56). In Matthew 28:5-7, the angel of the Lord announces the good news of Jesus' resurrection (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1600). According to the researcher's recollection of the Scriptures, it was the same women who were at the grave of Jesus (resurrection Sunday) who went back to balm his body, as was customary for the Jews. Wilkins (2013:188) confirms the presence of the mothers who were at the grave of Jesus.

According to Matthew 28:5, the apostle refers to an angel addressing the women (Bible, 2013). While women are not mentioned as frequently as their male counterparts, they play pivotal roles during the most significant moments in the life of Jesus (Lee, 2020:35). This depiction of women reflects Jesus' unconventional openness to them as disciples (Lee, 2020:35). Luke particularly supports women's ministry, and Lee continues to advocate for women's ministry and leadership (Lee, 2020:38). Luke refers to the women in his Gospel as disciples and therefore followers of Jesus (Lk 8:2-3; Lee, 2020:39). Bock (2013:394) suggests that Joanna, being the wife of Chuza, Herod's head butler, might have been utilised by Herod's administration to gather information on Jesus' activities.

### 3.6 Conclusion

There are effective and equipped mothers and women who, from a biblical perspective, can mentor and guide single-parent families without the presence of father figures. The women discussed in Chapter 3 serve as ideal examples of mentoring. Therefore, it is crucial to train, equip, empower, and educate women and mothers to fulfil the mentoring role in single-parent families.

The matriarchs from the Old and New Testaments are included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Some women initially faced barrenness but were eventually able to conceive through divine intervention. For instance, Sarah, the first of the matriarchs, initially doubted God's promise of a child to Abraham. However, in her old age, God remembered her and opened her womb, leading to the birth of Isaac as the promised heir. As Tribble (1999:272) confirms, although delayed, God fulfilled His promise to Sarah and Abraham. The research concurs with Tribble that God always delivers on His promises.

Similarly, Isaac's wife Rebekah and Rachel overcame barrenness through divine intervention. Hannah, through persistent prayers, was blessed with a son named Samuel. God also used Rahab, a prostitute, to execute His plans. Imperfect individuals were part of God's redemptive plan to bring forth the Messiah and redeem the world from sin.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, shared a significant moment with Elizabeth, where the baby in Elizabeth's womb leapt, indicating recognition of the coming Messiah. Elizabeth acknowledged Mary as the mother of her Lord and blessed her for carrying the Messiah. Elizabeth's faith in God's promise of a child was unwavering, contrasting with Elkanah's initial doubts. Mary and Elizabeth exemplified faith and obedience in God's plan.

The Bible showcases strong and effective mothers who ensured their children received proper education, guidance, and care to follow Jesus the Messiah.

Chapter 4 will explore women leaders in the Bible. Biblical evidence supports the notion that women were intended to assume leadership roles and become successful leaders within the church and society. Women are portrayed in the Bible as leaders (e.g. Miriam in Ex 15:20) , judges (Judg 4), reformers (2 Ki 22), queens (e.g. in the book of Esther),

prophets (Joel 2:28), mothers (Matt 1:18; Lk 1; 2:1-7), disciples (Lk 8:1-3), witnesses (Jn 20:14), businesswomen (Acts 16:14-15), teachers (Acts 18:26), and deacons (Rom 16:1).

The Bible offers evidence that all women who aspire to leadership can assume leadership roles in their households and communities. Women naturally step into leadership and mentoring roles in the absence of fathers, despite societal expectations or constraints. It is essential to raise awareness among women regarding their inherent leadership roles, rights, and responsibilities. They do not need to choose what they already embody.

## CHAPTER 4 WHAT OUGHT TO BE HAPPENING?

### *Practical theological guidelines to equip mothers to mentor children in single-parent families*

#### 4.1 Introduction

The literature demonstrates that the concept of motherhood encompasses various perspectives. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2021), a mother is defined as a female parent, which may include foster mothers, adoptive mothers, grandmothers, or other maternal figures. Wilson (2019:34) suggests that a mother's role extends beyond biological ties, encompassing responsibilities such as ensuring children receive education, nutrition, a clean environment, and quality time with both parents. Thus, any female with children is considered a mother.

Specific references are made by Drennan (2020:17) of the esteemed role of mothers within Hebrew contemporary systems of legislation and morals. This reverence for mothers is evident in texts such as Exodus 20:12, Leviticus 19:3 and 5:16, and Deuteronomy 21:18 and 21:21. In Jewish tradition, the king's mother holds a position of great honour, as highlighted in passages like 1 Kings 2:29, Proverbs 10:1, 15:20, 17:25, 29:15, 31:1, and 31:31. Constable (2018a:182) describes how King Solomon would rise and greet his mother, Bathsheba, with utmost respect upon her entrance into the throne room, seating her at his right hand to facilitate their conversations (Constable, 2018a:182).

The definition of a mother adopted in this dissertation is *a female person who gives birth to children and cares for them*. The viewpoint expressed is that a mother must adopt a holistic approach to the upbringing of her children. This encompasses caring for all her children, regardless of whether she is their biological mother or primary caregiver.

While Chapter 2 focused on examining the data from the literature and delving into the reasons behind the circumstances faced by female single parents, the aim of this chapter is to explore Osmer's third question, "What should be going on?" (2008:129-173), to establish biblical norms that may hold significance for these mothers. The central research question guiding this endeavour is: *What practical-theological guidelines can be*

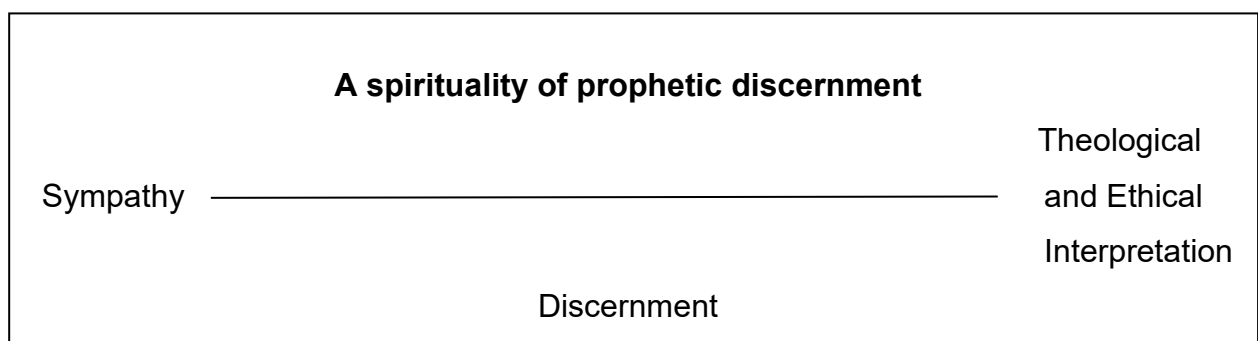
*used to equip mothers to mentor children in single-parent families?* The objective is: *to propose practical theological guidelines for the mother as mentor in single-parent families.* The next section will discuss the applicability of Osmer's question and theoretical framework for this dissertation.

#### **4.2 The normative task (What ought to be going on?)**

Osmer (2008:136-160) labels this task as “a spirituality of prophetic discernment” and distinguishes three waves, so to speak, within this process – namely:

- Theological interpretation
- Ethical interpretation
- Good practice and normative reflection.

The following figure presents a schematic representation of this aspect of Osmer's model (Osmer 2008:13).



**Figure 4-1: A spirituality of prophetic discernment**

(Osmer, 2008:136)

The aim of this chapter is to advocate for normative guidelines for mothers serving as sole mentors for their children. These guidelines are derived from biblical narratives, focusing on the stories of a specific group of women from the Bible. The selected individuals include:

### **4.3 Biblical-theological views of mothers in the Old Testament**

#### **4.3.1 Rebekah the wife of Isaac**

Walton and Keener (2016:16) mention that Abraham's instruction to his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac from his father's people was in line with the practice of endogamy, defined as the practice of keeping the inheritance within the family and marrying in a social group that is related to you.

Rebekah is also part of the lineage of Jesus and a matriarch just like her mother-in-law Sarah (Wilson, 2019:38). The story of how she became the wife of Isaac is found in Genesis 24. Abraham instructed Eliezer to find a wife for his son from his relatives in Canaan (Gen 24:3). Walton and Keener (2016:57) mention that Abraham's servant prayed to God to reveal to him a perfect wife for Isaac.

Rebekah was a beautiful young virgin woman who was very friendly, well-mannered, and supportive (Wilson, 2019:38). She offered Eliezer a drink and provided water for his contingent that came with him, including the animals. Eliezer was so impressed by her manners and hospitality that he asked her about her family and specifically her parents (Wilson, 2019:38). Walton and Keener (2016:57) confirm that her hospitality was a positive aspect of her behaviour, as women were expected to be the hostesses of the Hebrew family and to be hospitable.

Genesis 24:15 gives a brief explanation of who she was – namely, the daughter of Bethuel and Milcah. Bethuel was the son of Abraham's brother Nahor. After he finished speaking to Rebekah, Eliezer put a gold ring on her nose and two bracelets on her arms. In Genesis 24:25, she invited Eliezer to her family home, offering feed for his animals and a place for him to stay.

Rebekah's mother and brother initially did not want her to immediately marry Isaac and asked her to stay with them for another ten days. Despite this, Rebekah chose to trust Abraham's servant and immediately left with him to become Isaac's bride. Wilson (2019:38) mentions that Rebekah's courage and faith inspired her to leave her family and join Abraham's unknown family for a new life. Her decisions and behaviour demonstrated that Rebekah was trustworthy, honest, and adventurous (Wilson, 2019:38). Genesis

24:67 records Isaac and Rebekah's marriage. Arnold (2009:217) notes that Rebekah became Isaac's wife after Sarah's death.

Genesis 27:8-17 recounts how Rebekah deceived her husband to secure a blessing for Jacob instead of Esau. Wilson (2019:39) notes that Rebekah "transgressed a serious social prohibition". The Law of God (Moses) condemned her actions as seen in Deuteronomy 27:18, which states: "God's curse on anyone who leads the blind in the wrong direction". Despite her wrongdoing, God still chose her as a direct ancestor of Jesus. She favoured Jacob to be the heir Isaac based on God's revelation to her in Genesis 25:23: "Two nations are within you; you will give birth to two rival peoples. One will be stronger than the other; the older will serve the younger". Rebekah's favouritism toward Jacob began at his birth, where he held onto Esau's heel (Gen 25:26). Rebekah had to ensure that God's prophetic word about Jacob came to pass. Charry (2012:267) validates God's prophecy about the twins, the conflict in Rebekah's womb, the nations they would become, and the younger ruling over the older.

Wilson (2019:39) contends that although favouritism is wrong, both parents practiced it. In the researcher's opinion, God allowed Rebekah to choose sides, which is why He did not hold her lies and deceit against her.

### ***Rebekah's mentoring role***

Rebekah served as a mentor to her son Jacob in preparing him to assume the role of patriarch of the Israelites. She played a central role in devising and implementing the plan for Jacob to fulfil God's purpose by becoming the ancestor of Jesus. Rebekah acted as a divine instrument to ensure the fulfilment of God's word, as documented in Genesis 25:19-27.

Rebekah instructed Jacob in the art of deceiving his father Isaac to secure the firstborn blessing (Gen 27), which he had acquired from his brother Esau (Gen 25:29-34). However, Jacob himself fell victim to deception on two occasions. The first instance was when he was tricked by his father-in-law into marrying Leah instead of Rachel, as recounted in Genesis 29. The second deception occurred when his sons falsely claimed that his beloved Joseph had been killed by wild animals (Gen 37).

As a Hebrew mother, Rebekah bore the responsibility of teaching her children to adhere to the Law and to honour God by obeying His commandments. She set a precedent for young Israelite women, emphasising the necessity of fulfilling God's redemption plan. Contemporary women can draw valuable lessons from Rebekah's example of obedience and reverence in carrying out God's will.

Rebekah epitomised humility and embodied the ideal of a devoted mother. As the daughter-in-law of Sarah, she held a revered position in Hebrew society despite never having met her mother-in-law, who had passed away before Rebekah married Isaac. Rebekah exemplified the virtues expected of a daughter-in-law in Hebrew culture.

Bøsterud (2021:3) characterises Rebekah as a woman who exerts significant influence, guiding the actions of the men around her as if they were puppets on strings, as depicted in Genesis 24:1-67; 25:19-28, and 26:1-11. However, the researcher disagrees with Bøsterud's portrayal of Rebekah as a master manipulator, as implied by his suggestive description.

#### **4.3.2 Rachel, the second wife of Jacob**

We know the story of how Laban tricked Jacob into working for him for seven years to take Rachel as his wife, but then gave him his older daughter, Leah, to marry according to Genesis 28:23-25. However, because Jacob loved Rachel, he worked for his father-in-law for another 7 years (Wilson, 2019:39). Just like her mother-in-law, Rebekah, and her grandmother-in-law, Leah was infertile for a time (Wilson, 2019:39). God, however, opened their wombs and they bore children that would be part of the lineage of Jesus (Gen 21:1-4, 25:21, 30:22).

Rachel was Jacob's favourite wife and he loved her more than all the other women in his life. Just like her mother-in-law, Rachel was a deceiver and stole Laban's pagan gods (Wilson, 2019:40). Genesis 31:32-35 tells that she lied to Jacob and Laban about what she did. Rachel died bringing Benjamin into the world on their way to Bethel according to Genesis 35:16-18. Rachel was jealous and showed animosity towards Leah because she was barren and Leah fertile (Wilson, 2019:40). Wilson (2019:40) argues that because Rachel was Jacob's favourite wife it influenced his integrity, and even her son Joseph became his favourite son. Wilson (2019:42) also said that God used Rachel to become

the mother of a great leader and governor in Egypt despite her mistakes. Due to Rachel's characteristics of leadership, it can assume her mentoring role. All the lies in the narrative of Rachel were eliminated by the love Jacob had for Rachel according to Bøsterud (2021:3).

### **4.3.3 Tamar**

The story of Tamar is told in Genesis 38. Tamar was not like Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel who were barren. Tamar eventually bore twin sons who were directly part of the bloodline and lineage of Jesus (Wilson, 2019:42). Amid (2009:216) refers to Tamar as a Canaanite woman, originally from Timna. She was married to Er, the son of Judah, who died early in his life because he was evil and annoyed God (Gen 38:7), so God killed him. The Levirate marriage laws were clear that when a man died without leaving a male heir, his brother had to marry the widow to conceive a son on behalf of the brother. The reason for this was that the brother should have a son with the widow and therefore ensure the continuance of the bloodline and the family name (Ryan, 2019; Gen 38:8). Tamar eventually married her brother-in-law, Onan, who refused to impregnate her and wasted his seed on the ground. This was against the laws of God and God killed him (Gen 38:10). We must understand that God is who he says he is. The God of Israel will show grace, mercy, and love to whom he wants. He is the God who, as much as he loves his creation, can kill us.

Judah was worried that the same fate will become Shelah his youngest son if he allows him to marry Tamar according to Genesis 38:11. After the death of Judah's wife Tamar tricked Judah into having intercourse with her, by changing her clothes and covering her face with a veil so she would not be recognised. She had intercourse with Judah, got pregnant, and gave birth to twins (Gen 38:27-30). Perez's name means "breaking out" (Gen 38:29; Bible, 2009:44). According to Wilson (2019:42-43), Tamar deceived Judah like Rebekah did, to receive the inheritance for Perez as the firstborn son, although Zerah's hand was out first, but Perez pressed and pushed his way to be born first and to receive the blessing of the firstborn son.

Tamar represents one of the "imperfect branches of Jesus's family tree" (Wilson, 2019:43). McKay (1999:218) refers and mentions how Tamar used deceiving strategies to ensure that her children receive their portion of inheritance from Judah. By disguising herself and deceiving Judah she ensured that Jesus would be born from the bloodline of

Judah through Perez (Gen 38:29; Matt 1:2-6a). Fuerst (cited by Wilson, 2019:43) argues that when Tamar was mistreated by Judah, she simply took matters in her own hands to correct the wrong. Tamar, through desperation, acted and disguised herself as a prostitute to ensure an inheritance for her sons (Gen 38:26). Tamar is mentioned with five other mothers as the ancestors of Jesus (Wilson, 2019:44).

Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 9:1, 13:1, and 23:30 corroborate Amid's (2009:216) assertion. Hamilton (2012:41) lends credence to the narrative of Tamar and Judah. Matthew 22:23-28, Mark 12:18-22, and Luke 20: 27-32 recount the practice where if a husband dies without leaving a son, the widow is expected to marry his brother.

The researcher is of the opinion that every mother only wants what is best for her children. Tamar faced possible stoning if found to have behaved improperly by having sex with her father-in-law. Tamar did this only after her mother-in-law passed away, so this act cannot be viewed as adultery. This implies that she could not marry Hebrew sons because of the law against intermarriage that forbade interracial marriages (Amid, 2009:216). However, the Old Testament forbids marriage to unbelievers (Gen 24:3; Ex 34:15-16; Deut 7:1-4; Ezra 9:1; 10:1-44) (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005).

She did not have children, so can it be argued that the deed was best for her children, or the best for her own position? The fact is she would have been husbandless if she did not do so and surely would be outcast. Even if women and mothers are fallible, they are strong, and they must do whatever is necessary for survival. God uses Tamar's deception to continue the lineage of Jesus as planned.

Bøsterud (2021:3) refers to Tamar as a wise woman, using deception to fight for the survival of her children.

#### **4.3.4 Rahab**

The narrative of Rahab is recounted in Joshua 2. After assuming leadership from Moses, Joshua dispatched spies to Jericho. Rahab, who is also part of Jesus' lineage as the mother of Boaz (Matt 1:2-6a) and an ancestor of David, played a crucial role. Despite her profession as a prostitute, God employed her to ensure the safety and concealment of

His spies, thus earning Rahab a place among the "heroes of faith". Remarkably, unlike the disobedient inhabitants of Jericho, Rahab survived its destruction.

Rahab did not grow up in a Hebrew family but was a Gentile, a Canaanite, and a prostitute by profession (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2084). She did not know who God was nor did she have a relationship with God (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:309). The following list gives possible reasons why the spies went to Rahab's house:

- She was a prostitute. Many other men would have visited her house, and they could provide the information needed and requested by Joshua (Josh 2:1).
- No one would be suspicious of who they were.
- Her house was built into the wall of the city, which made it easy to use as an escape route if there were problems (Josh 2:15).
- God directed the spies to Rahab's house because He knew her heart was open to Him and she would be instrumental in the victory over Jericho (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:303).
- The people of Jericho heard who God was and what He could do to His enemies (Josh 2:10-11).

Rahab provided false information to the king of Jericho when he requested the release of the spies after learning that they had entered the house of a prostitute. She deceived the king to safeguard God's people due to her reverence for the Lord (Josh 2:3-5). Rather than surrendering the spies to the soldiers, she concealed them on the roof of her house under a pile of flax (Josh 2:6-7). While lying is considered a transgression, neither the Bible nor God specifically mentioned the sin committed by Rahab (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:304). Instead, Rahab was praised for her faith in God and for protecting His people from the king of Jericho. Various theories have been proposed to explain why the Bible does not directly address her act of deception:

- God forgave her lie because of the faith she showed in God (Josh 2:8-12).

- Rahab was used by God to deceive the enemy (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:304).
- Rahab was not a Jew and cannot be held responsible to uphold the moral standards and conduct set out for Jews in the law of God (Moses) according to Exodus 20:16, 23:1, 7, and Ephesians 4:25.
- The sin Rahab committed was lesser and she upheld a higher principle, protecting God's people (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:304).

Rahab excelled under pressure and made the decision to rescue the people of God. She not only considered her own safety but also that of her family, as outlined in Joshua 2:12-13. In Joshua 2:9, she expressed her belief by stating, "I know that God has given this place into your hands and that a great fear has fallen on us". Rahab demonstrated trust in God, relying on Him to protect the spies and to orchestrate the conquest of the fortified city of Jericho (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2084). Campbell (2018:21) affirms Rahab's declaration of faith in God.

The promise made by the spies in Joshua 2:14, "Our lives for your lives", in which they guaranteed to spare her family if she did not betray them, was honoured as recorded in Joshua 6:22. Rahab placed her complete trust in the God of Joshua and became an example for many Jericho residents to place their faith in the Hebrew God. Despite facing adversity, she unwaveringly upheld her belief in God's ability to provide (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:309). Wilson (2019:44) asserts that Rahab's decision to assist Joshua and the two spies in conquering Jericho's fortified city was her "salvation". Due to her faith in God, Rahab was remembered by Him (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:309). Rahab later wed Salmon, a member of one of Israel's prominent families (Bøsterud, 2021:4).

#### **4.3.5 Hannah the wife of Elkanah and Samuel's mother**

The story of Hannah is recorded in 1 Samuel 1. She was married to Elkanah, who was also married to Peninnah. Merrill (2018:123) refers to Peninnah as the second wife of Elkanah. Like the matriarchs Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel before her, Hannah was barren at first. However, through God's divine intervention and their faith in God, they all became mothers in the lineage of Jesus. Merrill (2018:123) also confirms that Hannah

could not conceive children, but Elkanah's love for her did not diminish. The difference between Hannah and the other matriarchs is that Hannah longed for a son and brought her anguish directly to God (1 Sam 1:10). Hannah continued in prayer without ceasing (1 Sam 1:12). God allowed her womb to be opened, and Samuel was born (1 Sam 1:19-20). Hannah named her son Samuel, and he was brought up in the temple of God to honour her promise to God as narrated in 1 Samuel 1:11. After Samuel was weaned, she took him to the temple in Shiloh to be trained by Eli (1 Sam 1:24-27). Wilson (2019:45) argues that despite Hannah's agony before receiving a son from God, she had to go through that same agony again to release him to God. Hannah had great faith in God, which stands out as the best attribute and legacy she could leave her son, who became one of God's most prominent prophets (Wilson, 2019:45). In the ancient world, a woman's inability to conceive made her appear inferior to a second wife, her husband, her family, and the community (Wilson, 2019:45)

According to 1 Samuel 9–13, the Bible mentions that Hannah was enthusiastic in worship and efficient in prayer. Her enthusiasm in prayer made her honour the dedication she made to God after Samuel was born. In 1 Samuel 2:5, the Bible states that after she took Samuel to the temple in Shiloh, God opened her womb again and she brought seven other children into the world. Samuel became the last judge and prophet of Israel under the leadership and mentorship of Eli (Wilson, 2019:45).

The Old Testament provides vivid portrayals of matriarchs who, despite facing formidable challenges, effectively fulfilled their roles as mentors for other mothers. These women, characterised by their resilience and strength, emerged as leaders and demonstrated leadership whenever called upon by their families.

#### **4.4 Matriarchs from the New Testament**

##### **4.4.1 Mary the mother of Jesus**

The following women are mothers in the life of Jesus from the New Testament. The reasons why the researcher choose Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, the mother of John, is because they are directly part of the lineages of Jesus. Wilkins (2013:16) underscores the importance of accurately establishing Jesus' lineage to validate his

ancestry. Genealogies serve to affirm one's heritage, legitimacy, and entitlements, as noted by Johnson (cited by Wilkins, 2013:16).

The genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-16 records the patriarchs and matriarchs in Jesus's lineage. Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:24) mention the importance of establishing the correctness of the genealogy of Jesus so that His ancestry can be traced back to the patriarch Abraham. Matthew 1:2-16 gives an account of the ancestry of Jesus. Mary, the mother of Jesus, appears in the genealogy of Jesus because she was married to Joseph, but no bloodline binds Joseph with Jesus according to Matthew 1:18-25.

Malina (1996:102) contends that genealogy holds significance in shaping one's behaviour and appeal. The researcher aligns with Malina's perspective, as the father typically determines an individual's genealogy, which explains why Joseph was included in Jesus' lineage. God ensured that Jesus had a flesh-and-blood father, Joseph, while acknowledging Himself as Jesus' divine Father. Malina (1996:102) further suggests that Jesus, through His miraculous birth, performed something extraordinary for humanity. Unlike an ordinary king who acts with self-interest, Jesus acted selflessly. Mary's role as both a virgin and the mother of Jesus was crucial in this divine plan.

Wilson (2019:49) refers to Mary as the most famous and honoured amongst all the women who played a role in the life of Jesus. The mere fact that God chose her and set her apart from all other women to carry His seed testifies to this. Mary conceived Jesus miraculously by the Holy Spirit, totally set apart by God from any other mother (Wilson, 2019:49).

Fletcher (2012:65) identifies Jesus as the "seed" (Gen 3:15) and portrays Him as God's redemptive plan for humanity. In Luke 1:38, we encounter the angel Gabriel affirming to Mary that she will conceive the Messiah of the world. Mary's reaction to this announcement is described in Luke 1:29, where she is deeply troubled and puzzled by the angel's message. However, the angel reassures her in verse 30, saying, "Don't be afraid Mary, God has been gracious to you". In verse 31, the angel informs Mary that she will conceive and give birth to a son, whom she is to name Jesus. Continuing in verse 32: "He will be great, and He will be called the Son of the *Most-High*". As the conversation progresses, the angel emphasises the greatness of God to Mary. The angel also shares with her the miraculous conception of Elizabeth, who despite being barren, has conceived

in her old age. Luke 1:37 echoes this sentiment, with the angel affirming to Mary that "with God, all things are possible".

Matthew 1:23 reads: "A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel". Verse 25 further explains: "But he [Joseph] had no sexual relations with her before she gave birth to her son. And Joseph named him Jesus". Mary, a faithful maiden, was chosen by God as the vessel to carry the divine seed, fulfilling the prophecy of Genesis 3:15. Fletcher (2012:65) affirms Mary's obedience and underscores her responsibility in carrying the "seed of God". Wilson (2019:49) adds that Mary humbly accepted the will of God, even in the face of potential stoning as an unwed pregnant woman and the risk of Joseph breaking off their engagement.

Malina (1996:99) argues that God solely used women to communicate to them because of their ability to reproduce and because of their "gender-based" function. He further argues that nature typically expects sexual relations between men and women unless circumstances prevent it. In the researcher's opinion, God would never allow His Seed to be confused with the seed of Joseph (Matt 1:20-25). The passage states that Joseph refrained from knowing Mary sexually until after she gave birth to Jesus. Matthew 1:25 explicitly states: "And he knew her not, till she had brought forth her First born Son: and he called His name Jesus". Furthermore, according to Matthew 13:55-56, Joseph did have relations with Mary after Jesus' birth, resulting in the birth of four other sons and daughters from Joseph's seed.

The Gospel of Matthew (1:12-16) places Mary within Jesus's patrilineal genealogy.

In summary, Matthew, and Luke state that Mary was chosen by God to be the seed carrier according to the prophecy mentioned in Genesis 3:15. In Luke 1:46-54, Mary's song of praise (the *Magnificat*) is recorded to honour God for favouring and blessing her (Wilson, 2019:49).

#### **4.4.2 Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist**

Elizabeth was the wife of Zechariah and the mother of John the Baptist. The Gospel of Luke describes the circumstances surrounding John's conception and birth rather comprehensively (Lk 1:5-25, 39-45, 57-80). The angel Gabriel visited Zechariah and told

him that God heard their cry and will give them a son. God commanded Zechariah to name his son John. When Zechariah questioned the validity of the message from God (Lk 1:19), the angel Gabriel said: "I stand in the presence of God and have been sent to speak to you and bring you the good news". He continues to say that Zechariah will be silent and will not speak until the time arrives to name John (Lk 1:20).

After completing his service in the sanctuary, Zachariah returned home unable to speak, while Elizabeth, his wife, became pregnant and remained secluded for five months. In Luke 1:25, Elizabeth expresses gratitude to the Lord for His blessings in her life: "The Lord has done this for me. In these days He has shown His favour and taken away my disgrace among the people". Within the socio-cultural context of ancient Hebrew society, a woman's worth was primarily measured by her ability to bear children. Elizabeth's inability to conceive added to her hardship and societal stigma. As a descendant of Aaron from a priestly family, Elizabeth held a high position in both spiritual and social hierarchies in Israel. Despite their devoutness and obedience to God's laws (Luke 1:6), Elizabeth and Zachariah faced the painful reality of infertility, a source of deep anguish for them both.

According to the story, Mary, the mother of Jesus, visited Elizabeth, and upon their greeting, Elizabeth felt the baby in her womb leap for joy. At that moment, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:41). This was a sign to Elizabeth that she had just met the mother of her Lord (Lk 1:43). Thereafter, she blessed Mary for carrying the Messiah (Lk 1:45). While Zachariah doubted the angel's message, it is clear from Luke 1:24-25 that Elizabeth was convinced that her pregnancy was an act of God and that He would deliver on His promise to give her a child. By giving her a child, God would also take away the public humiliation she suffered for being childless.

She continues by saying that as soon as young women reached the age of **childbearing**, their mothers continued to educate them (Drennan, 2020:18). Drennan (2020:16) emphasises the significance of Israelite mothers, highlighting their importance equivalent to that of fathers. According to Block (cited by Drennan, 2020:16-17), mothers within Hebrew families held considerable "dignity" and "influence" within their households. Block also notes that mothers occasionally had the authority to name their children.

In Luke 1:57-66, the author recounts the naming of John the Baptist. Despite his father Zachariah being muted by God, the neighbours suggested naming the child after his

father. However, Elizabeth insisted that he be named John, a decision confirmed by Zachariah through writing it on a tablet. John the Baptist later had the privilege of baptising Jesus in the River Jordan and preparing the way for Him (Matt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22).

***An exegesis on Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, and Luke 3: 21-22.***

The three disciples, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, offer significant and detailed accounts of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. Through their testimonies, they provide compelling evidence of John's role in preparing the way for Jesus and the proclamation of the Gospel.

If John is not worthy of tying Jesus' shoelaces, how can he be expected to baptise Jesus? John felt unqualified to baptise Jesus, and baptism implies that you, the person, must have sinned to be baptised, cleansed, and forgiven by God. Because Jesus never sinned, he was not supposed to be baptised. Jesus desired to be baptised to provide an example of being cleansed via baptism. Jesus introduces the concept of being "born again" in John 3.

Jesus was baptised because (1) he confessed sin on our behalf, (2) he supported what John was called to do, (3) he was introducing his overt ministry, and (4) he identified with God's contrite people. He did not need to be baptised because he was perfect, the Lamb, without sin, but he did it out of obedience to God. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, preparing him for the temptation of Satan.

Elizabeth, like many Hebrew women, adhered to God's commandment to be actively involved in her child's upbringing. They took on the role of mentors, imparting strong ideals and values to their children. Additionally, as Drennan (2020:17) notes, Hebrew women were tasked with managing the family and played a significant role in teaching other young women and children within their community.

Before these narratives are discussed, however, it is important to contextualise the relation of the researcher with the Christian Bible. Therefore, the next section is a short explanation of the authority of the Bible as it is viewed and utilised in this dissertation.

#### **4.5 What is the significance of families in the current context of South Africa?**

According to the Bible, the very first family structure may be found in Genesis 2:20-25, when God instituted the first marriage and dubbed Adam and Eve, man and wife (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005). Later, Eve became pregnant, and Cain and Abel were born and established a family (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:12). "Family" or "families" are defined in the Tyndale Life Application Study Bible lexicon as "a household unit of related people, possibly extending to an entire clan or tribe" (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2327).

According to Bardis (as cited by Meyer, 2018:1), the Roman culture and the incorporation of various barbarian practices during the Middle Ages significantly influenced the development of the Christian family. Jesus, as noted by Bogardus (as cited in Meyer, 2018:1), endorsed and advocated for the family structure through his teachings. Families, by definition, represent social units connected by blood relations, with shared DNA (Coert *et al.*, 2021:2). Families can be formed through marriage, adoption, and individuals brought together by circumstances. Various family systems exist, including nuclear families, child-headed families, extended families, single-parent families, and multi-generational families (Coert *et al.*, 2021:2).

The concept of families is twofold: (a) the fundamental social unit traditionally comprising two parents raising their children, and (b) any distinct social units diverging from, yet considered equal to, the traditional family (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019). A single-parent family is defined as a parent and their children (Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2019). The Merriam-Webster online dictionary elaborates on how the perception of family has evolved over time to encompass all members of a household (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019). In a legal context or within the definition of family, it encompasses "individuals related by blood, marriage, or adoption" (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019).

Kane (cited by Freeks, 2021b:4) defines the family as a distinctive social group with a specific purpose of providing care to ensure the success of its members. Schirrmacher (2019:14) observes that families are subject to ongoing transformations. Numerous scholars have addressed the constant evolution and intricate nature of family structures and dynamics (Clark & Clark, 2010:37; Freeks, 2011:83-84). In the South African context,

family structures are evolving due to factors such as paternal absence (Kesebonye & P'Olak, 2020:383).

Freeks (2021b:5) argues that families should serve as "havens" in a "heartless" world marked by "brutality, indifference, and bureaucracy", which children are increasingly exposed to. Families are commonly perceived as settings where violence is prevalent (Freeks, 2021b:5). The process of socialisation commences within the family unit, where fathers, mothers, and children collaborate and mutually inspire one another in their respective parental roles (Freeks, 2018:154). Families bear the responsibility of establishing their own aspirations, determining their life paths, and achieving the desired outcomes collectively (Freeks, 2021b:5). The researcher concurs with Freeks in asserting that families are accountable for realising their collective objectives.

The concept of family is rooted in the Christian Bible, where the first family is depicted (Gen 2:18-25; Gen 3:20), with subsequent references to the addition of children (Gen 4:1-2), establishing it as the foundational social structure (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005). Yi (cited by Freeks, 2021b:6) states that families are the "prime envoy of socialization" created by God. "Family is God's original building block for homes, church, and society" according to Freeks (2021b:6). While the family holds a sacred position in the divine order, a question arises regarding whether single-parent families are not entitled to happiness and honour equivalent to traditional or nuclear families.

#### **4.6 The authority of the Bible in the lives of single mothers**

When considering the authority of the Bible, the crucial aspect of hermeneutics comes into focus. Hermeneutics can be defined as the science of interpretation. Gadamer, often regarded as the 'father' of philosophical hermeneutics, stated that "Hermeneutics is above all a practice, the art of understanding" (Cited in Malcolm, 2018: xv). This dissertation posits that hermeneutics encompasses exegesis. The primary aim of this study is to equip and empower single mothers to serve as mentors for their children by interpreting the narratives of women in the Bible. Achieving this objective necessitates that the researcher not merely read these narratives as compelling stories, but also strive to interpret them for women in South Africa in the third millennium. A responsible interpretive approach acknowledges that the "current episodes, situations, and contexts" (Osmer, 2008:139) experienced by women in South Africa markedly differ from those of women in biblical

times. Consequently, the theological and ethical interpretation of biblical texts may be perceived as a form of translation from ancient words to a contemporary world – a world where single mothers grapple with creating significance in their own lives and the lives of their children. When discussing the 'female narratives' in this chapter, the intention is not to simply string together various biblical texts, but rather to earnestly seek insight into the meanings of these narratives for women contending with poverty, GBV, children affected by substance abuse and aggressive behaviour, unemployment, and dire living conditions. Additionally, this includes an exploration of the contextual realities of women in the Bible.

One of the most poignant and sorrowful narratives in recent South African history revolves around the case of Ellen Pakkies, a mother who tragically took the life of her drug-addicted son Abie at the age of 20 in 2007 (Joshua, 2018). It may be tempting to pass judgement on Ellen Pakkies for her actions, drawing upon numerous biblical references highlighting a mother's love for her children and the grave nature of a parent taking the life of their own offspring. Some might even draw parallels with the story of Abraham, whose faith in God averted Isaac's demise. Nonetheless, adopting such an approach would lack the necessary responsibility, ethical consideration, and empathy towards the complex realities faced by many contemporary South African women. Consequently, theological and ethical analyses of biblical narratives must earnestly engage with the lived experiences of individuals grappling with challenging circumstances.

Before we move on to interpreting the selected biblical passages, it is wise to take note – once again – of the importance of listening to the stories of others and treat those stories with the respect they deserve. Again, we will listen to the words of Gadamer (cited in Malcolm, 2018): “Hermeneutics encourages not objectification but *listening to one another* – for example, the listening to and belonging with (Zuhören) someone who knows how to tell a story”. Let us then move on and heed the role of mothers as mentors before looking at the Bible.

#### **4.7 The role of mothers**

Waltke (2007:237) states that God created human beings as male and female (Gen 1:27; cf. Matt 19:4). The first creation story is in Genesis 1:1-2:4a and the second creation story is in Genesis 2:4b-25. In the second creation story, God created the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:18 mentions that God blessed them as a couple to procreate (be fruitful and

multiply) and to govern. God consummated the marriage and emphasised the union by stating it was not good for Adam to be alone. God blessed their relationship and commanded them to have children (Gen 1:28). In the second creation narrative, God stated that it was not good for the man to be alone and that He would create a "helper" for him (Gen 2:18). God bestowed upon woman the capacity for motherhood in Genesis 1:28, marking the initial mention of motherhood in the Bible.

According to McCormack (2005:38), a "low-income" mother she interviewed defined a "good mother" as someone who prioritises her children's needs and ensures their provision. Additionally, good mothers invest their time in their children's well-being, endeavour to keep them out of trouble, and provide for their families. Frahm-Arp (2016:146) explains that the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in South Africa base their concepts of "mother" and "mothering" on four biblical texts, namely: 1 Timothy 2:13-15, Ephesians 5:21-6:9, Proverbs 31:9-31, and Titus 2:5. This dissertation explores the exegetical possibilities of these biblical texts to determine what a good mother should be according to certain biblical perspectives.

According to Frahm-Arp (2016:153), these mothers strive to ensure that their children receive a good education, have access to healthy food, live in clean and hygienic surroundings, and spend quality time with both their fathers and mothers, who actively participate in their children's lives and activities. Furthermore, Frahm-Arp (2016:146) suggests that the concept of motherhood is integral to the identity of a woman, implying that a significant aspect of womanhood involves being a mother.

#### **4.8 The role of mothers in mentoring**

Wilson (2019:34) highlights that God takes pleasure in women serving one another with love. It is God's desire for all Christian women to cultivate loving relationships in order to mentor or "disciple" other women effectively. This mutual support facilitates women in establishing a deeper connection with God and enhances their comprehension of His presence in their lives through learning about His nature and how to serve Him. It is imperative that women who are already disciples in Christ extend their assistance, support, and encouragement to their fellow sisters in Christ (Wilson, 2019:33).

The mentoring and teaching that takes place between women strengthens the “expression of love and compassion” (Wilson, 2019:33) among them. She continues further that mentoring can be viewed as a pledge between women to help nurture and mature them into the women God wants them to be (Wilson, 2019:33).

The New Testament shows how effective mentoring works between older and younger women (Wilson, 2019:35). Titus 2 is based on the principle that older women must teach younger women to be effective and demonstrate to them how to grow (Wilson, 2019:35). Titus 2:3 states how older women must behave to set the perfect example for other women: “In the same way instruct the older women to behave as women should who live a holy life. They must not be slanderers or slaves to wine”.

#### **4.9 The role of effective mothers in the Bible**

In Genesis 3:16, God pronounced judgement on Eve, declaring: “I will increase your trouble in pregnancy and your pain in giving birth”. Despite the challenges she faced, Eve acknowledged that without God's help, she would not have been able to give birth to her children. Eve bore Cain and Abel, and following Abel's death, she also gave birth to Seth (Gen 4). It is noteworthy that Eve holds the distinction of being the first woman in the lineage of Jesus (Wilson, 2019:36).

There are numerous strong women in the Bible who played crucial roles in nurturing and guiding children, serving as exemplary figures for modern-day women who may not have children but can still fulfil the role of an absent father. Additionally, the Bible portrays women who served as preachers and prophets. For instance, Judges 4:4 identifies Deborah as a prophetess, who was appointed by God to serve as a judge.

Porter (cited by Plant, 2016:74) argues that midwives played a leadership role in ancient Egypt. The role the midwives played was pivotal in helping to bring life into the world by assisting women in labour. Pharaoh asked the two Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, to assist him in killing all male Hebrew babies at birth. However, Exodus 1:17 declares: “The midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live”. The midwives demonstrated bravery which is a distinct attribute of a leader.

#### **4.10 The role of mothers in Hebrew families**

The Hebrew household served as the primary vehicle for imparting the "Prophetic Word of God" (Drennan, 2020:15). It was within this domestic sphere that parents held the crucial responsibility of transmitting the teachings of God to their children (Drennan, 2020:15). According to Block (cited in Drennan, 2020:16), mothers within Hebrew households were characterised by a strong sense of self-worth and played a significant role in fostering a sense of inspiration within the family unit. They were actively involved in naming their children and were staunch advocates for their daughters, safeguarding their virtue. Mothers fulfilled multifaceted roles as child-bearers, household managers, educators, mediators, and symbolic representations of Israel itself (Drennan, 2020:17).

In ancient Israel, mothers held significant power and authority in households, influencing decision-making processes and addressing issues related to children and land matters (Drennan, 2020:17). Apart from being responsible for childbirth, mothers also ensured the fertility of other women within the community (Drennan, 2020:17). Each mother possessed a form of "domestic authority", acting as the primary household manager (Drennan, 2020:17). The intimate bond formed between mother and child during pregnancy positioned mothers as the earliest educators of their offspring (Drennan, 2020:17). Consequently, mothers naturally assumed the roles of teachers and guides for their own children as well as for other young women (Drennan, 2020:17).

The father's role encompassed instructing young men in providing for and supporting their families, while mothers assumed the task of guiding young women in parenting skills as they prepared to start families. Drennan (2020:18) posits that mothers bear the responsibility of imparting numerous skills and knowledge to their children. This educational process included teaching practical skills, communication, household chores, agricultural tasks such as tending gardens and livestock, literacy, and storytelling (Drennan, 2020:18).

The mother also assumed an "ecclesial role" in the Hebrew family. They had to fulfil a purification ritual – they assisted their girls with the following: "menstruating, [they] sanctified sexual relations, conception and the issue of blood-flow during birth for young women" (Drennan, 2020:18). She also had to see to it that the home was cleaned, attended to the preparation, and eating of food, and all the requirements for creating an

acceptable home (Drennan, 2020:18). The main responsibility of mothers was to ensure that their children were brought up in honour of God.

Resane (cited by Van Wyk & Chisale, 2021:2) explains that ancient patriarchal systems marginalised women from owning land. The daughters of Zelophehad challenged the land issue as recounted in Numbers 27:1-11. Resane's contribution will encourage women in patriarchal societies to embrace justice education that promotes equality and social justice (Van Wyk & Chisale, 2021:2). In the opinion of the researcher, this insight will ensure that women are seen as owners of land to produce food equal to men.

Pietersen (2021:768) argues that the re-interpretation of the Deuteronomistic Code and the Covenant Code disempowered women in the Israelite society and its family-centred economy. Pietersen (2021:779) employs Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:21 to show how in Scripture that the wife comes first and is in a class of own and, only after that classification, does she become the husband's property. Deuteronomy also interprets houses as the only domestic property, so that the wife is not listed among items in the household and is therefore not the property of her husband.

Both Deuteronomy 15:12-18 and Exodus 21:2-11 state that male and female slaves must receive the same treatment, but this was not the case in practice. Deuteronomy 22:28-29 describes how women were violated by their own fathers. A daughter's sexual rights were not taken into consideration, and according to Exodus 22:16-17, a man was required to pay a "mohar price" (Pietersen, 2021:781). The father chose the husband on behalf of the daughter. The rights of the daughter were taken away by the father (Pietersen, 2021:781).

Malina (1996:50) notes that the structure of ancient Mediterranean families varied from one community to another, with some adhering to a "traditional endogamous communal structure" while others favoured "nuclear family" arrangements. In certain cultures, such as the Israelites, endogamous marriage within the family was common. Polygamy, akin to practices in Islam, was also legally accepted among these societies (Malina, 1996:50). Additionally, Malina (1996:53) observes that ancient Mediterranean societies tended to enforce stricter upbringing for girls compared to boys. They often implemented more stringent safety measures to protect boys, who were perceived as more valuable than girls within their cultural context (Malina, 1996:53).

Malina (1996:53) elaborates that within the cultural framework of ancient Mediterranean societies, it was believed that God did not directly communicate with women unless they were unmarried and under the guardianship of a father, as exemplified by the daughters of Philip in Acts 21:8-9. Conversely, married women were understood to receive divine communication in the presence of their husbands, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

Ancient Mediterranean people raised their children with the conviction that sex before marriage is a sin (Malina, 1996:49). Malina (1996:49) mentions that women were brought up to not allow any sexual advances made by men when they found themselves alone during ancient times. According to the researcher's understanding, no woman could consent to any sexual advances. Duties to manage households in ancient Egypt were delegated to wives or women, and it was their responsibility to ensure that housekeeping functions were diligently addressed (McKay, 1999:222).

Olyan (2011:72-73) argues that credible evidence supports the subordination of women to men. This perspective is reinforced by Genesis 1:27, which states: "male and female, He created them", implying that men take precedence over women in the order of creation. Genesis 2:7 provides the following explanation: Adam was created first by God and then the woman – Eve from his rib – making her second to man. However, we must not use excessive power to control wives, mothers, sisters – all women – as this can lead to GBV.

#### **4.11 Contemporary mothers in the New Testament world**

Hysten (2019:25) mentions that the importance of women was in their virginity as young girls and their ability to bear children as adults. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish philosopher, wrote the following about women: "The women are best suited for the indoor life which never strays from the house..." (Hysten, 2019:25). Hysten is of the opinion that in the contemporary world, women find themselves in the public domain, where they work to provide for jobless husbands or for single-parent families. The researcher agrees with the statement made by Hysten. The researcher's reasoning for agreeing with Hysten is twofold: (a) women work to provide and to add to the income of families, and (b) they own property. Hysten (2019:26) mentions that during the same period as Philo of Alexandria, many women owned property, ran their own businesses, and held positions in civic and religious offices.

Hysten (2019:27) asserts that numerous women played significant roles in their communities and therefore rejects the suggestion made by some scholars to eliminate female leadership roles. Hysten contends that if female leadership, as proposed by those scholars, were to be abolished, then the inclusion of female deacons in 1 Timothy 3:11 should also be removed from Scripture, as it undermines women's leadership. The researcher has cited numerous female leaders from both the New and Old Testaments to provide evidence supporting women's leadership roles.

Hysten (2019:41) contends that women are compelled by the principles of truthfulness to assume leadership roles within their households and communities, regardless of whether they are described as fair or stay-at-home mothers. Women bear the responsibility to influence and shape society for the betterment of children.

#### **4.12 Discovering biblical parity**

There has been a notable transformation in the role of women in ministry. Tucker (2005:24) provides an overview of female martyrs who sacrificed their lives for their Christian beliefs, refusing to renounce their faith in God. Tucker (2005:25) discusses how women endured torture and met their demise at the hands of men due to their unwavering faith in God. In contrast, she contrasts the bravery of these women with the account of Peter, who denied knowing Jesus when confronted during His arrest, as recounted in Matthew 26:31-35 and Matthew 26:69-74. The other disciples agree with Matthew, according to Mark 14:27-31, 14:66-72; Luke 22:31-34, 22:56-62; John 13:36-38, 18:15-18, and 18:25-27. Women stood up for God and did not disown him (Tucker, 2005:25), while other women denied their faith in Christ (Tucker, 2005:25).

Tucker (2005:26) mentions mothers in the church who played an important role in the success of the church. Tucker (2005:26) makes mention of Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, who was honoured by the Early Church because of her faithful prayers for her disobedient son – named “the Confessions”.

#### **4.13 Evangelical women in ministry a century ago**

Hassey (2005:39) mentions Mabel C. Thomas, an ordained pastor in Kansas, who was responsible for preaching, weekly Bible teaching, and baptising of converts. Additionally,

Hassey (2005:40) examines various ministers like Moody and Gordan, noting their reliance on the support of women as preachers. Furthermore, Hassey (2005:41) notes that as early as 1889, Baptist pastor A. J. Gordon established the Gordon Bible College, which was not restricted by gender but focused on individuals being Spirit-filled. Pastor Gordon's wife said that the Bible College prepared women to "answer any call of the Spirit" (Hassey, 2005:41). Subsequently, the Moody Bible Institute witnessed its first female pastor graduates in 1929 (Hassey, 2005:41). These women openly served as pastors, evangelists, and ordained preachers following their graduation from the Moody Bible Institute (Hassey, 2005:41).

#### **4.14 Conclusion**

Professor Landman is a prominent figure in the theological landscape of Southern Africa, with numerous scholars praising her significant contributions to the development of theology. Her exemplary leadership has inspired many women to assume leadership roles within their assemblies. Professor Landman serves as a worthy leader, mentor, and role model in Southern Africa.

Mary became the mother of the Messiah. Similarly, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba played essential roles in ensuring the continuity of the "patrilineal genealogy" of the Messiah (Lee, 2020:22). The researcher emphasises the significance of genealogy, as it determines one's lineage, bloodline, and heritage. As Christians, our inheritance of God's kingdom is assured if we follow His will. Conversely, straying from His path prevents us from inheriting what God has planned for us.

The women discussed in this chapter lived exemplary lives as mentors and mothers to their children, serving as examples not only to their husbands and male relatives but to all around them. The Bible provides ample evidence of mothers who are capable leaders when given the opportunity. In times of need, mothers are willing to sacrifice their own well-being to step up and take leadership roles, particularly in the absence of a father figure, to safeguard and preserve their families.

We glean insights from the Word of God about Abigail, who courageously assumed leadership when her husband Nabal made a grievous error. Through her relationship with her servants, Abigail averted disaster and saved many lives from David's wrath. Every

woman in the Bible played a significant role in ensuring the well-being of their families, especially in the absence of men. The researcher asserts that every man can benefit from the wisdom and guidance of a capable woman by his side, as exemplified by Abigail's influence on David's life in honouring God.

Chapter 5 proposes biblical guidelines for mothers to serve as mentors in single-parent families. These guidelines can be invaluable resources for the church to support and empower mothers within their congregations and communities to effectively mentor their children in the absence of fathers or male mentors.

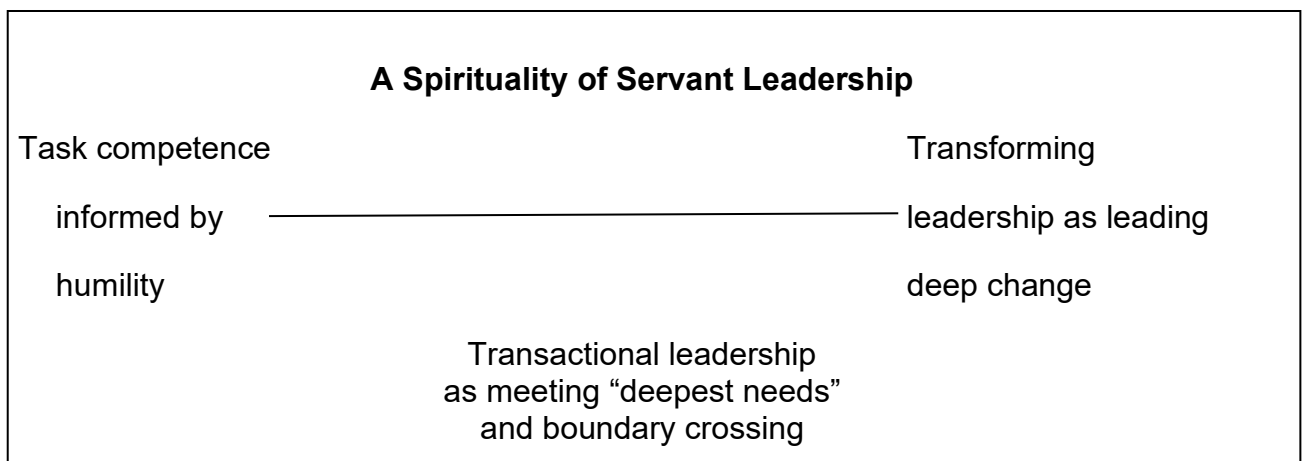
## CHAPTER 5 HOW MIGHT WE RESPOND?

### *Proposed biblical guidelines for mothers as mentors in single-parent families.*

#### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 addresses the question, “How might we respond?” (Osmer, 2008:4), with the purpose of developing and formulating practical guidelines and strategies for mothers serving as mentors in single-parent families. The sub-research question is: “*What practical-theological guidelines can be used to equip mothers to mentor children in single-parent families?*” And the objective is: “*To propose practical-theological guidelines regarding the mother as mentor in single parent families*”. Single mothers can utilise these suggested biblical guidelines to effectively mentor children in the absence of fathers. Osmer (2008:176) defines the pragmatic task of practical theological interpretation as “the task of forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable”.

The challenge faced by single mothers revolves around providing effective leadership for their children. Numerous forms of leadership have been explored, with Osmer discussing three distinct ones (Osmer, 2008:176-178). This dissertation proposes "servant leadership" as a guiding principle for single mothers acting as mentors (Osmer, 2008:183-199). The schematic diagram below depicts this model. (Osmer, 2008:193).



**Figure 5-1: The leadership model.**

The forthcoming sections of this chapter will delve into the specifics of these mentorship guidelines.

## **5.2 Objectives**

Chapter 2 explored into the pivotal role of mothers as mentors within single-parent families. The objective was to analyse and glean insights from the narratives of biblical women and mothers regarding mentorship, particularly for contemporary single mothers. It explored how women in the Bible served as exemplary role models for others in similar circumstances.

Chapter 3 scrutinised the biblical and theological perspectives on mothers as mentors within single-parent families. By presenting various definitions of leadership, it facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the concept as it applies to women. The chapter explored how women from diverse social statuses can effectively assume leadership roles, particularly within the church. Through consultations of both the Old and New Testaments, the leadership roles of women were thoroughly examined.

Chapter 4 delved into practical theological guidelines aimed at empowering mothers to mentor children in single-parent families, particularly in cases of father absence.

In Chapter 5, the focus shifts from theory to practical application as it proposes biblical guidelines for mothers acting as mentors in single-parent families. Building upon the suggested guidelines for single mothers as mentors, this chapter utilises insights gathered from Chapters 2, 3, and 4. The aim is to provide a practical and actionable guide to empower single mothers to become more effective mentors in the absence of fathers.

In Chapter 6, the subsequent chapter, recommendations, suggestions, and conclusions are put forth for women and single mothers to fulfil mentorship roles in the absence of fathers. The proposed biblical guidelines outlined in this chapter can be utilised by the church, ministers, and other leaders involved with children and women to offer mentorship. Additionally, Chapter 6 explores potential avenues for future research in related fields of study.

### 5.3 Proposed praxis-theological guidelines

Proverbs 31:10-31 portrays the virtuous woman, often referred to as the capable woman in the Tyndale Life Application Bible (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1042). She is depicted as a paragon of wisdom and strength. The preceding verses, Proverbs 31:1-9, introduce her as the mother of King Lemuel, who may have been King Solomon. She imparts wise counsel to guide him in his life journey, aspiring for him to become a wise and just ruler following in the footsteps of his father, David (cf. Chapter 2).

King Solomon portrays his mother, Bathsheba, as the epitome of the capable woman – a figure who not only fulfilled her maternal role but also served as a mentor in shaping his life as a king and guiding his subjects. Throughout Chapters 2 and 4, we have explored Bathsheba's dual role as a mother and leader. In the upcoming discussion, the researcher intends to extract 11 segments of Scripture from Proverbs 31:10-31, shedding light on qualities that every woman can emulate to become effective mentors to their children. Additionally, the researcher will draw parallels from other passages in the Old and New Testament that offer similar exegesis and explanations (cf. Chapter 2, section 2.1.).

**Table 5-1: The 11 attributes single mothers can identify with to be effective mentors.**

<b>Proverbs 31:10-31 Epilogue: A wife of noble character</b>	<b>Meaning to mothers and women who want to be mentors</b>	<b>Other passages from the Old and New Testaments referring to mothers and women</b>
1. Proverbs 31:10-11  “A wife of noble character, who can find?”  “Her husband has full confidence in her and nothing of value”. (Trustworthy)	A woman should not value material wealth. If she is confident in herself, the Lord our God will provide all that is necessary. Your character must speak for itself as a woman to the people you aim to serve.	Boaz refers to Ruth as a woman of noble character in Ruth 3:9-12. Proverbs 12:4 says: “A wife of noble character is her husband’s crown”. Proverbs 18:22 says: “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord”. Proverbs 19:14 says: “Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the Lord”.

<p><b>Proverbs 31:10-31</b>  <b>Epilogue: A wife of noble character</b></p>	<p><b>Meaning to mothers and women who want to be mentors</b></p>	<p><b>Other passages from the Old and New Testaments referring to mothers and women</b></p>
<p>2. Proverbs 31:12a:            “She brings him good not harm...”            (A loving, caring wife)</p>	<p>Abigail’s intention was to save her husband Laban from a certain death after he treated David with contempt. Any married woman can learn from this: to respect and to protect your husband from harm.</p>	<p>1 Samuel 25:            The story of Abigail and David has reference. Abigail acted in good will and wanted to protect her husband from David. Instead, Laban was killed by God, and Abigail married David.</p>
<p>3. Proverbs 31:13:            “She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands”.            (work ethics)</p>	<p>The work of women was to ensure that flax was harvested from the field and placed on the roof to let the sun dry it for further use. In African countries, it is expected that women do the work of gathering wood and producing food. Women must bear children, discipline, feed, and educate them.</p>	<p>In Joshua 2, the Bible tells the story of Rahab and how she hid the spies under flax on the roof of her house. Rahab worked with eager hands to hide the spies from the soldiers.</p>
<p>4. Proverbs 31:14:            “She is like a merchant ship, bringing her food from afar”.            (Dedicated to her family and provide)</p>	<p>Women and mothers can pursue employment to ensure they can provide for their children in every possible way. In today's world, there is nothing amiss if both parents contribute to sustaining their families. Single parents, especially, bear the responsibility of ensuring their children have access to necessities like food.</p>	<p>In the story of Ruth, we encounter Naomi and Ruth. Ruth diligently worked in the fields of Boaz to ensure that her mother-in-law, Naomi, had enough food to eat. Ruth assumed the role of provider, as depicted in Ruth 2:2-4.</p>
<p>5. Proverbs 31:18            “She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night”.            (Financial planning and Management)</p>	<p>Women can draw inspiration from Lydia's example to become successful businesswomen, capable of providing for their families and children even in the absence of a male provider. They can follow her lead in accommodating and hosting men of God in their households and utilise their homes for establishing house churches or cell groups.</p>	<p>Acts 16 talks about Lydia of Thyatira who was a businesswoman who traded in purple cloth. With her income she accommodated Paul and other evangelists in her house and started the first house church.</p>

<b>Proverbs 31:10-31 Epilogue: A wife of noble character</b>	<b>Meaning to mothers and women who want to be mentors</b>	<b>Other passages from the Old and New Testaments referring to mothers and women</b>
	<p>Lydia worked tirelessly to ensure her children had both physical sustenance and spiritual nourishment. As a result of her dedication, her entire family embraced Jesus and was baptised.</p>	
<p>6. Proverbs 31:20: “She opens her arms for the poor and extends her hands to the needy”. (The Good Samaritan Principle)</p>	<p>A woman of noble character consistently gives and provides for the poor. It's crucial for young women to recognise that this directive is a command from the Lord. We are responsible for each other's welfare and must support those in need. Additionally, we should labour to provide for those who are unable to work.</p> <p>It's imperative that we attend to the needs of widows and orphans, as emphasised in Luke 18:3 and James 1:27.</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 15:11 says: “There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be openhanded towards your brothers and towards the poor and needy in the land”. Ephesians 4:28 says: “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need”.</p>
<p>7. Proverbs 31:23: “Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat amongst the elders of the land”. (Taking pride in serving her husband as the head of the house as Jesus is the Head of the Church)</p>	<p>The actions of many women can significantly influence their husbands' success or failure. Esther's example illustrates this power, as she faithfully served her uncle Mordecai, obeying his directives in reverence to God. Her obedience played a pivotal role in thwarting Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews.</p> <p>A woman's behaviour towards her husband can elevate him to a position of honour before God, akin to a place at the table of the King, Almighty God. Other men will hold him in high regard due to the valuable contributions of his wife.</p>	<p>The story of Esther reveals how Esther, with the guidance of Mordecai, intervened to save the lives of the Jews threatened by Haman's plot. Esther's courage and wisdom ultimately led to her becoming queen, while Mordecai rose to the position of second in command to King Xerxes. This remarkable turn of events demonstrates how obedience to the God of the Jews resulted in Mordecai, once seated at the city gates, receiving the highest honour.</p>

<b>Proverbs 31:10-31 Epilogue: A wife of noble character</b>	<b>Meaning to mothers and women who want to be mentors</b>	<b>Other passages from the Old and New Testaments referring to mothers and women</b>
<p>8. Proverbs 31:25:</p> <p>“She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh for the days to come”.</p> <p>(Setting the perfect example on how to overcome problems)</p>	<p>If women allow God to strengthen and to clothe them with dignity, they can become the mentor of their children in the absence of men. She will be proud when her children come back with the accolades they have received for hard work.</p>	<p>In Judges 4, we encounter the story of Deborah. Deborah was divinely endowed with strength by God to serve His people as a judge and prophetess. Barak, the military leader, refused to go to war without Deborah's presence, as recorded in Judges 4:8.</p>
<p>9. Proverbs 31:26:</p> <p>“She speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue”</p>	<p>Mothers and women should employ a composed demeanour when addressing children. The tongue holds immense power and can either uplift or condemn a child (and likewise, let's extend this to men). Therefore, it is crucial to use words carefully and refrain from cursing or speaking harshly.</p>	<p>Proverbs 31:1-9 states that the mother of King Lemuel spoke wise words and gave instruction to him about what is important in life. She advised him how to behave properly and to serve his subordinates in humbleness and with respect.</p>
<p>10. Proverbs 31:28:</p> <p>“Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also and praises her”.</p> <p>(Respectful behaviour)</p>	<p>The absence of the king's father during his upbringing may place the responsibility on his mother to instil in him the values of effective behaviour and respect for everyone within the community where he was raised.</p>	<p>Proverbs 31:9-31: In response, King Lemuel bestowed this prophecy in honour of his mother. Through her guidance, she nurtured him to become a successful king, one who would honour God and serve Him faithfully.</p>
<p>11. Proverbs 31: 30</p> <p>“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised”.</p> <p>(Honouring and serving God first)</p>	<p>Women must understand that beauty will fade with age. Hannah knew she could not measure up and compete with Peninnah. Hannah had reverence for the Lord, feared the Lord, and continued in prayer until God heard and provided her with a child. She honoured God by giving her son back to serve the Lord.</p>	<p>The story of Hannah according to 1 Samuel 1 reminds me about a God-fearing woman who only wanted a child so that she could compete with Peninnah, wife to her husband, Elkanah. The only way she knew was to honour the Lord through prayer. She never mentioned her beauty but in humbleness declared her love and fear for the Lord.</p>

Miller-McLemore (1994) poses the question "A capable woman, who can find?" in her book titled *Also a mother: Work and family as a theological dilemma*. Drawing from Proverbs 31:10-31, Miller-McLemore (1994:19) carefully examines this query. Can contemporary women be equated with the woman described in Proverbs 31:10-31? As the researcher reflects on Miller-McLemore's analysis, it becomes apparent that women today grapple with multifaceted challenges and complexities in the realm of motherhood. Balancing the demands of caregiving, professional responsibilities, and household chores, mothers navigate a plethora of roles and expectations (Miller-McLemore, 1994:19). Women are thus tasked with fulfilling a myriad of essential duties, encompassing nurturing their offspring, providing for their families through employment, tending to domestic chores, caring for ill children, preparing meals, and tending to the emotional needs of their spouses (Miller-McLemore, 1994:20).

#### **5.4 Exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:9, 11, 15**

According to 1 Timothy 2:9, 11, 15, women are encouraged to conduct themselves in a specific manner. Kaiser and Silva (2007:21) define exegesis as the interpretation of Scripture, emphasizing the diligent investigation of its meaning (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:21). The concept of "*grammatico-historical*" interpretation involves considering both the language in which the original text was written and the cultural context of Scriptures. Essentially, this approach reminds us that Scripture should not be read, applied, or interpreted in a strictly literal manner.

It is important to do an exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 to understand the intended meaning behind God's message conveyed through Paul. First Timothy 2:9 states: "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes" (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2036). The Good News Bible (2009:277) presents 1 Timothy 2:9 as follows: "I also want women to be modest and sensible about their clothes and to dress properly; not with fancy hairstyles or gold ornaments or pearls or expensive dresses", and verse 10, "but with good deeds, as is proper for women who claim to be religious".

The context of these Scriptures remains consistent, though there may be variations in wording between different translations. According to the Tyndale House Publishers (2005:2036), there is no Scripture in the Bible that opposes women wanting to adorn

themselves beautifully. First Peter 3:3-5 emphasises that a woman's beauty should not solely rely on external adornments like braided hair, jewellery, or fine clothing. Instead, verse 4 underscores the importance of inner beauty, which is of greater value and pleasing to God (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2106).

According to Genesis 18:12, Sarah obeyed Abraham by addressing him as her master. Women and wives today should follow the example of their foremothers by submitting to their husbands. However, imitation should not be the motivation; obedience to God is key. The second part of verse 6 is particularly important to the researcher. It states that women should not "fear" their husbands. First Peter 3:7 reminds us as husbands and men to be kind and to treat our wives with respect, recognising them as the more vulnerable partner in the marriage (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2106). According to the researcher, women should strive to be beautiful both inside and out, and their external appearance should not impact their relationship with God.

In Acts 16:29-33, we encounter the Philippian jailer who, upon his conversion to Christianity, brought his entire family to church (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1849). While some women who become saved may initially attend church alone, Lydia ensured that every member of her household embraced salvation and was baptised. In fact, she even initiated a house church to ensure her family's continued participation in church activities, as depicted in Acts 16:13-15 (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1847-1848). In the researcher's opinion, many women may go to church alone because they choose to submit to their husbands, viewing them as the head of the household. Consequently, wives and families feel compelled to obey the husband's decision regarding church attendance. In the case of Lydia, there is no mention of a husband in Acts 16:13-15. Therefore, in the author's view, Lydia, lacking a husband to submit to, took it upon herself to ensure the spiritual well-being of her family (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1847-1848).

The same translations will be used to explore 1 Timothy 1:11-15, examining the behavioural aspects of women as mentioned in the Bible. This passage is applicable for all women, irrespective of marital status or parental responsibilities:

*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission". 12. "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent". 13. "For Adam*

*was formed first, then Eve". 14. "And Adam was not deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner". 15" But women will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety.*

In interpreting the Scriptures, one should understand the context and circumstances under which Paul wrote and what he heard from God. The Tyndale House Publishers (2005:2036) provide an explanation of how to grasp God's intended meaning in these words. Paul and Timothy faced challenges due to the Jewish culture in which they lived. The Jewish culture in the first century did not permit women to study the Scriptures. When Paul mentioned that women should learn in quietness and full compliance, he meant to offer them the chance to hear the Word of God by being present and silent. He was referring to an attitude of quietness and composure that women should exhibit.

According to 1 Corinthians 11:5, Paul knew that women prophesied and prayed openly. The women in Ephesus mistreated the new converts because they did not have the necessary knowledge of the Scriptures. The researcher interprets verse 12 as follows: Paul suggested that women should not minister in churches, but according to Acts 18:24-26, Paul allowed Priscilla to instruct Apollos (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1855). In Romans 16:1, Paul mentions other women who held important leadership roles in the church, such as Phoebe (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1908). Mary, Tryphena, and Tryphosa are cited as servants of the Lord in Romans 16:6, 12 (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:1908-1909). Additionally, Euodia and Syntyche are mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:2-3 as fellow workers for Jesus (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2002). Paul discouraged the Ephesian women from teaching due to their lack of knowledge of the Word (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2036).

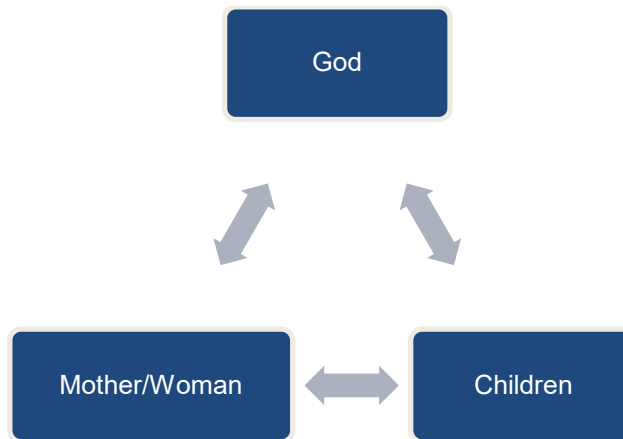
In 1 Timothy 2:13-14, Paul discusses the role of men in Ephesus. Adam was created first and had authority over the woman, so he should be the first to teach and speak when it comes to Scripture training (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2036). Paul's instructions were specifically for the women in Ephesus. Paul further emphasises the importance of maintaining order as established by God and promoting harmony within both the family and the church (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2036). It is crucial to interpret 1 Timothy 2:15 accurately. The phrase "women will be saved through childbearing" has been subject to various interpretations (Tyndale House Publishers, 2005:2036-2037):

- It could be understood in the context of the consequences of sin, where men's labour and women's childbirth became toilsome. Yet, Jesus came to offer salvation to both men and women through His birth, death, and resurrection.
- Another interpretation suggests that the most significant role a mother can fulfil is caring for her family with loyalty, submissiveness, and obedience to God.
- Some interpret "childbearing" as representing the birth of Christ, through whom salvation comes.
- Women can develop qualities that will teach them about love and affection, faith, compliance, assistance, and care.

While we can strive to understand and interpret Scripture, it is crucial to recognise that we cannot assign meaning to it arbitrarily. *Eisegesis* occurs when individuals impose their own interpretations onto Scripture, rather than deriving meaning from the text itself. Young's Biblical Dictionary (2007:185) defines the "eisegesis" as "the procedure of reading one's own ideas into a biblical text, as opposed to the practice of exegesis—drawing out the meaning that is already there". Based on the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit gives interpretation to Scripture, and we can understand the thoughts of God (Lk 24:45; 1 Cor 2:15, 16). In the researcher's view, we cannot enforce our own interpretation on other people based on how we understand Scripture.

## **5.5 The proposed guidelines**

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, various guidelines were explored, drawing from biblical insights and other resources, to propose effective mentorship strategies for mothers in single-parent families and broader society. These guidelines aim to empower mothers to succeed as mentors in the absence of fathers. Additionally, the church can utilise these guidelines to support and empower mothers within their congregations, enabling them to mentor children and families within their communities.



**Figure 5-2: The proposed guidelines**

The diagram above (Figure 5-2), created by the researcher, illustrates the essential reliance of women and children on the Word of God for the restoration of their lives. It is through God that we find healing, power, and the Holy Spirit, enabling us to serve as mentors in lieu of absent fathers.

As stated in 1 Timothy 3:16, all Scriptures are inspired by God. Thus, the Scriptures serve as a guiding light for mentoring mothers and women in the absence of fathers. In the researcher's perspective, all Scriptures direct us towards God, serving as a source of assistance, wisdom, and divine guidance to aid us in becoming better individuals. God, the Godhead, the Alpha and the Omega, offers understanding of our identity in Jesus Christ when we honour and obey Him.

### **5.6 How can mothers fulfil a mentoring role in the absence of fathers?**

From Scripture, we can glean that mothers can fulfil the mentor role in the absence of fathers. It's crucial to equip and guide mothers to excel in the upbringing of children. However, we must also acknowledge the vital role that both parents play in raising children. If the father is not present, however, should we leave mothers to fend for themselves? The researcher's understanding of *Ubuntu* is to assist other community members in raising children and looking out for one another's children. *Ubuntu* signifies that it takes a nation to raise a child. Mothers can fulfil a mentoring role in the absence of fathers if they are willing to follow the proposed guidelines.

The literature reviewed by the researcher has unveiled the myriad possibilities of leveraging biblical perspectives and practices to mentor mothers in fostering the development of model citizens among children. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, numerous examples abound of mothers playing pivotal roles in guiding their children to serve the Lord and adhere to righteous instructions.

In summary, the researcher presents the following reflections and questions:

- **What insights can we glean from the literature study on maternal mentors from the Old Testament?**

Mothers are called to approach the Lord with humility and submission, and to support their families and friends by submitting to their husbands. They should actively collaborate and work alongside their husbands for the well-being of their children in all aspects. In the absence of fathers, mothers are tasked with taking on authority within the family and assuming leadership roles. Despite the inevitable disappointments from men, mothers must maintain faith that God will prevail. Contemporary mothers have a crucial role in participating in God's redemptive plan through their mentoring efforts, safeguarding their families' lives, and working towards the salvation of their communities.

The example of Hagar, once a slave who rose to become the queen of the Arab nation, underscores the importance of showing reverence and honouring God through life's challenges and triumphs. Mothers should strive to be self-sufficient and reliant on the Lord, while also taking initiative to lead, minister, prophesy the word, and disciple others within society. They are called to adhere to the word of God and to teach and mentor other mothers in the profound manner of obedience to God's will.

- **What insights can we glean from the literature study on maternal mentors from the New Testament?**

We are called to accept God's plan for us within His redemptive scheme, as articulated in Jeremiah 29:11. This entails humbling ourselves before the Lord and embracing His purpose for our lives. Mothers are encouraged to embody a servant-hearted character, serving one another with profound respect and gratitude. Obedience to God and to fellow humans is paramount. We can draw wisdom and guidance from previous generations, learning and being mentored from one generation to the next.

Following the example of Lydia, mothers can lead and inspire others to salvation regardless of their marital status. Hospitality and graciousness, as demonstrated by Lydia, should be cultivated when welcoming guests into our homes. Prayer and fasting should be integral components of our daily lives, fostering spiritual growth and honouring God. Single-parent families must rely on God's strength and guidance as they navigate their unique challenges, ensuring that assistance is given with a spirit of spirituality and reverence.

- **What can contemporary women learn from biblical women?**

The role of the mother and wife holds immense importance among the Mongo women of the Congo (Kondemo, 2021:557). They perceive marriage as endowing them with the status of womanhood, suggesting that they fully embrace their womanhood upon entering marriage (Kondemo, 2021:557). Additionally, according to Mongo women, a good wife is expected to remain at home, taking on the responsibility of educating and guiding the children, while the father is tasked with working and providing for the family's needs (Kondemo, 2021:557).

This research, conducted by Komdemo, aimed to provide Mongo women from the Congolese region with suitable biblical role models from the Old Testament. These role models serve as examples for women to emulate, guiding them towards greater liberation and understanding of what constitutes good or bad motherhood. This is exemplified through the examination of characters such as Vashti and Esther.

### ***The narrative of Esther in the Mongo context***

In the narrative of the book of Esther, two queens, Vashti and her successor Esther, represent contrasting stories. However, for the purposes of this study, the focus will be on Esther, characterised as the submissive wife.

Kondemo (2021:558) depicts Queen Esther as an effective woman who employed "traditional guile" to rescue her people. Esther is celebrated as a model for women navigating within a predominantly male-dominated society (Kondemo, 2021:558).

### ***Esther – the model for contemporary women***

According to Kondemo (2021:560), Queen Esther is depicted as passive and submissive in comparison to her predecessor, Queen Vashti. Despite this portrayal, Esther's unwavering commitment to God ultimately led to her being rewarded with the honour of becoming queen and saving her nation from impending death and defeat.

Esther is likened to Hannah, who devoted her life to God and received abundant blessings in return (Kondemo, 2021:560). Through her actions, Esther emerges as a model of strength, faithfulness, and hope, not only for the Mongo of the Congo but for women worldwide. Despite facing challenges, Esther remained humble and obedient, demonstrating compassion and self-sacrifice for the well-being of others (Kondemo, 2021:560).

In following the model of Esther, a young woman can indeed become a model of hope, faith, and strength by obediently waiting on the Lord. Despite the absence of God's name mentioned in the Book of Esther, Esther's unwavering commitment to God shines through her actions. She exemplifies wisdom by supporting her husband in all aspects of his work (Kondemo. 2021:561).

Esther's intelligence is evident in her willingness to heed the advice of others, such as Mordecai, in serving the interests of her people and the king (Kondemo, 2021:566). The narrative of hope found in the book of Esther resonates with many contemporary young mothers and women, offering valuable lessons and inspiration.

- **The meta-theoretical level**

#### ***Introduction***

This study employs the meta-theological perspectives outlined by Osmer (2008:58), which delve into conventions concerning realism, knowledge, and science that extend beyond individual research theories and projects. These perspectives will be further examined in the following discussion.

#### ***The theory-practical relationship***

The decision regarding the theory-praxis relationship impacts how singularities are analytically explored. However, for the purpose of this study, a literature review was

applied. The theory-praxis relationship also shapes the interpretive framework used by researchers to comprehend their findings (Osmer, 2005:307). These findings, in turn, influence the norms provided to the church and society, as well as the models utilised to guide and restructure current praxis (Osmer, 2005:307).

### ***The sources of justification***

It refers to the researcher's utilisation of traditional sources of theological truths to support theological and ethical propositions, which encompass Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason, as outlined by Osmer (2005:307).

### ***Models of cross-disciplinary work***

Osmer (2011:3) defines cross-disciplinary work as the task of bringing two or more fields of study into conversation with one another.

The study engaged in intra-disciplinary communication (Osmer, 2008:163) because the sub-discipline of practical theology is intricately intertwined within the framework of practical theological interpretation (Osmer, 2008:13).

The fundamental structure of practical theological interpretation can also be discerned within other sub-disciplines of practical theology (Osmer, 2008:13). As such, the researcher undertook cross-disciplinary work in the fields of education, social work, psychology, and sociology on the following topics: parenting, mothers, motherhood, single parents, father absence, families, and children. Cross-disciplinary dialogue was thus carried out across various fields of study.

Kondemo (2021:556) argues that “society” assigns women the social role primarily of caregiver and caretaker, with their main purpose being reproduction, while men are labelled as providers valued for their productivity. Motherhood is defined as women who have children, according to Kamendo (2021:556). Women are responsible for nurturing their children and guiding their daughters into womanhood and motherhood. Moreover, educating children, especially daughters, is crucial in preparing them for motherhood (Kamendo, 2021:556). Mongo women from the Congo view all mothers as mothers to all children (Kamendo, 2021:556).

The definitions of “motherhood” and “family” are subject to debate due to their profound implications, which extend beyond mere practical or descriptive considerations and are integral to discussions on gender. The discourse surrounding motherhood and fatherhood frequently takes precedence, as mothers are typically found to be more extensively involved in household responsibilities than fathers (Miller-McLemore, 1999:286). Furthermore, according to Miller-McLemore (1999:287), theologians have often been mothers, yet only a limited number have delved into the interrelation between mothering and theology.

The love and advocacy that God has for women is prominently displayed in biblical narratives, where women are depicted with pride, reverence, attention, and responsibility for motherhood by God. According to Wolstenholm (2021), motherhood is regarded as a "blessing" and "ordained" by God, as evidenced in Psalms 127:3 and 139:13. Throughout the Bible, motherhood is portrayed as an exceptional and significant calling. Wolstenholm (2021) further affirms that God established the family, as described in Genesis 3. Moreover, the Bible (2009:765) mentions in Isaiah 66:12-13 that God will care for His people, likened to a mother's care for her child. Numerous women cited as ancestors of Jesus initially faced barrenness, yet God intervened and opened their wombs; for instance, Sarah, the mother of Isaac (Gen 11:30; 21:2-3); Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau (Gen 25:21); Rachel, the mother of Joseph (Gen 29:31; 30:22-24); and Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1 Sam 1:2-7; 18-20).

Green and Chuang (2022:90) argue that adult women are responsible for nurturing families in Jamaica, and they may turn to religion and religious communities for help and assistance. Furthermore, 32% of Jamaican children between the ages of 0-14 years live in female-headed households. Moreover, 47% of all households in Jamaica are headed by women (Green & Chuang, 2022:90).

Research has indicated that religion plays a beneficial role in the subjective well-being of children (Green & Chuang, 2022:92). However, Petro *et al.* (2018) (as cited in Green & Chuang, 2022:90) have also shown that various aspects of "parental religiosity" can have both positive and negative impacts on their children's welfare. A significant responsibility for adults is the act of parenting, and religion can influence parents' values and beliefs (Green & Chuang, 2022:92). It has been observed that parents find satisfaction in

imparting religious principles to their children, as noted by Landor et al. (cited in Green & Chuang, 2022:92). The authors suggest that parents' religious beliefs are transmitted to their children through the process of raising and nurturing them.

*"In loco parentis"* is a term used in public schools that assigns the role of a parent to the teacher when parents are absent. According to Mampane (2018:183), this concept involves the teacher assuming responsibility for the students under their care while at school. Mampane's interpretation emphasises the teacher's duty of care, including ensuring safety and security measures are followed (Mampane, 2018:183). The teacher remains responsible for the child while they are at school until they return home, effectively acting as a parent in the parents' absence.

## **5.7 What can we learn from biblical matriarchs as mentors from the Old Testament?**

### **5.7.1 Eve**

Eve, as the first woman and mother created by God, was intended to provide support and assistance to Adam. This foundational role signifies that women are inherently designed to aid not only their spouses but also all those around them. The repercussions of the divine judgement pronounced upon humanity in the Garden of Eden still reverberate today. While the toil of men has become somewhat more manageable, women continue to endure the pains of childbirth, even with modern medical interventions like caesarean sections. Eve has been portrayed as Adam's co-labourer, emphasising the partnership and shared responsibility within marriage and family life. Eve's role as the bearer of life ensured that the human lineage persisted beyond her own existence. Furthermore, the authority bestowed upon both Adam and Eve by God over the earth signifies their shared stewardship of creation (cf. section 3.2.1).

### **5.7.2 Sarah**

Sarah doubted when God promised Abraham that he would become the father of a great nation. However, for this promise to come to fruition, Sarah, at the age of 95, had to bear a child. Despite her doubts, God miraculously opened Sarah's womb, and she gave birth to Isaac, who would later become a key figure in the lineage of Jesus. Although Sarah

initially laughed in disbelief at God's promise, she remained obedient and faithful to both her husband, Abraham, and to God. Despite her human shortcomings, Sarah's reverence for God remained intact, and she ultimately became a matriarch for countless other women. Sarah played a vital role in God's redemptive plan for humanity. Despite her advanced age, she patiently waited for the fulfilment of God's promise regarding her son. Every woman can draw inspiration from Sarah's example and actively participate in ensuring that their children and families are included in God's salvation plan (cf. section 3.2.2).

### **5.7.3 Hagar**

Hagar, the female slave, was instructed by Sarah to bear Abraham's first-born son, Ishmael. God subsequently chose Hagar to be the matriarch of the Ishmaelites and the Arab people. Ishmael, her son, later became the leader of the Ishmaelites. However, Hagar's pride, coupled with her pregnancy by Abraham, led to tension with Sarah. As a result, she was sent away to the wilderness. Alone, without provisions, Hagar cried out to the Lord in her bitterness, and He heard her plea. Hagar's experience teaches mothers to trust in the Lord's provision and to persevere in times of distress. It serves as a reminder that God hears the cries of His people and provides for their needs (cf. section 3.2.3).

### **5.7.4 Miriam**

Miriam, the elder sister of Moses, assumed a significant mentoring role from a young age. When Moses was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter, Miriam ensured that their mother, a Hebrew woman, was chosen to nurse and raise him in accordance with Hebrew culture. Throughout the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the promised land, Miriam served alongside Moses and their uncle Aaron, playing a crucial role in their leadership. She instigated songs and dances of celebration after the crossing of the Red Sea and was recognised as a prophetess of God. Miriam's leadership extended to guiding Moses in leading the Israelites and leading the women in songs of praise and worship, expressing gratitude to God for their safe passage through the Red Sea (cf. section 3.2.4).

## **5.8 Mothers as mentors from the Old Testament**

### **5.8.1 Deborah**

Deborah's legacy is marked by her multifaceted roles as a wife, judge, prophetess, and leader over a span of 40 years. Throughout her tenure, Deborah demonstrated unwavering willingness, capability, and obedience in her service to God. Her leadership was not only acknowledged but also esteemed by the people of Israel, with Barak regarding her as his respected leader. Deborah holds the distinction of being the sole female judge appointed by God to guide the Israelites. Deborah possessed a unique ability to inspire others to rise as wise leaders who honoured and obeyed the Lord. Through her prophetic gifts, she foretold the demise of Sisera by the hand of a woman. As both a prophet and a military leader, Deborah ministered the word of God and led numerous young men into battle, exemplifying her commitment to serving God and her people (cf. 3.3.1).

### **5.8.2 Abigail**

Abigail was a beautiful, intelligent, and God-fearing woman who saved her people from certain death at the hand of David. When one of her servants informed her that her husband, Nabal, had insulted David, Abigail acted quickly, demonstrating leadership by approaching and honouring David. She showed her family how to handle difficult situations and resolve issues that could lead to conflict and loss of life. Abigail's story is significant because only a true leader would rectify the situation her husband put their family and servants in. She persuaded David not to harm her family because of her husband's actions. Abigail took on the role of mentor from her husband and guided her servants on how to behave in challenging circumstances (cf. section 3.3.2).

### **5.8.3 Bathsheba**

Bathsheba, as the mother of Solomon, played a pivotal role in the succession of Israel's monarchy. She ensured Solomon's ascension to the throne as his father's successor, King David. Bathsheba held a significant position within the king's court, allowing her to participate in matters of governance. Notably, Bathsheba occupied a throne at the right hand of the king, symbolising his trust in her counsel. This gesture highlights King

Solomon's respect for his mother and her influential role in his life. Bathsheba raised Solomon alone, instilling in him values rooted in honouring the Lord (cf. section 3.3.3).

#### **5.8.4 Esther**

Esther's favour with King Xerxes of Persia led to her becoming queen, despite his initial intention to marry another woman. It was her beauty and character that captured Xerxes' heart, a transformation that many attribute to divine intervention. As a mother, the story of Esther, underscores the power of prayer to influence and change the hearts of loved ones. Her ascension to queenhood was not merely a stroke of luck but a strategic move by divine providence to assist Mordecai in delivering the Jews from the oppression and threat of death by Haman. Esther's courageous actions played a pivotal role in overcoming the challenges faced by the Jewish people. She risked her own life to intercede for her fellow Jews against the schemes of Haman, displaying immense bravery and selflessness. Despite the absence of direct mention of God in the book of Esther, Esther's upbringing under the guidance of her uncle Mordecai instilled in her a deep sense of faith and loyalty to her people (cf. section 3.3.4).

#### **5.8.5 Ruth**

The books of Ruth and Esther stand out in the Bible as the only two named after women, a testament to their remarkable leadership and the favour of God upon their lives. Naomi's mentoring of Ruth is a central theme in the book of Ruth, guiding her to become the wife of Boaz and eventually the mother of Obed, a significant figure in the lineage of Jesus. Ruth exemplifies the virtue of loyalty and servanthood, particularly towards her mother-in-law, Naomi, as she embraced a new life in Israel, forsaking her own heritage.

Naomi's influence in Ruth's life extended beyond mere familial ties, as she imparted spiritual guidance and wisdom, teaching Ruth to honour and serve the God of the Hebrews. In turn, Ruth's commitment to her newfound faith and her dedication to Naomi demonstrated the importance of mentorship and the transmission of religious values from one generation to the next.

Through Ruth's marriage to Boaz, she not only secured her place in the lineage of Jesus but also upheld the honour and respect due to her mother-in-law, Naomi. In a reciprocal

manner, Naomi cared for and assisted in raising Ruth and Boaz's son, Obed, continuing the tradition of mentoring and passing down knowledge from mother to daughter (cf. section 3.3.5).

## **5.9 How can effective mothers in the Bible play a role in mentoring?**

### **5.9.1 Rebekah**

Rebekah's character shines through her graciousness and hospitality when she encounters Eliezer, offering him and his company water, a gesture reflective of Hebrew customs of welcoming guests. By inviting Eliezer to her family home without consulting her parents, Rebekah demonstrates her adherence to Hebrew traditions of hospitality, indicating her cultural background.

In Hebrew society, mothers held significant domestic authority, responsible for imparting values and customs to their daughters, particularly regarding the treatment of guests and strangers. Rebekah's trustworthiness, faith, and courage are evident in her decision to leave with Eliezer to marry Isaac, illustrating her readiness to embrace her destiny.

As the mother of Jacob and Esau, Rebekah occupies a pivotal role in the lineage leading to Jesus. Rebekah played a pivotal role in the mentoring of her younger son, Jacob, the heir to Isaac (cf. section 4.3.1).

### **5.9.2 Rachel**

Rachel, Jacob's second wife, faced a similar challenge to her grandmother-in-law Sarah: she was initially barren. Through her prayers and worship of God, Rachel eventually bore two sons for Jacob, Joseph, and Benjamin. Tragically, Rachel passed away shortly after giving birth to Benjamin.

Despite her untimely death, Rachel played a significant role in shaping the destiny of her son Joseph. She instilled in him a deep reverence for God, which ultimately led to Joseph becoming a renowned leader and governor in Egypt, despite the country's pagan beliefs (cf. section 4.3.2).

### **5.9.3 Tamar**

Tamar resorted to deception to secure her children's inheritance from Judah, her father-in-law. This act, while morally complex, reflects a mother's unwavering determination to secure a future for her offspring. Tamar's willingness to go to great lengths, including disguising herself as a prostitute, underscores the depths of her commitment to ensuring her children's welfare. Ultimately, Perez, Tamar's son, became an integral part of the lineage of Jesus (cf. section 4.3.3).

### **5.9.4 Rahab**

Rahab, despite her past as a prostitute, holds a significant place in the lineage of Jesus as the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth and became the father of Obed. Her inclusion in Hebrews 11:31 among the heroes of faith highlights her obedience to God.

As a Canaanite woman, Rahab did not grow up in the Hebrew faith, yet she demonstrated remarkable faith and discernment when she recognised God's voice instructing her to shelter the Israelite spies. Her actions exemplified reverence for the Lord and a willingness to honour Him by protecting His servants.

In response to Rahab's faithfulness, God spared her and her family when the walls of Jericho crumbled (cf. section 4.3.4).

### **5.9.5 Hannah**

Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, could not have children. Despite this trial, she demonstrated unwavering persistence and perseverance in prayer until God answered her, granting her the blessing of conceiving and giving birth to a child. In gratitude for this miraculous gift, Hannah vowed to dedicate her son to the service of God at the temple. True to her word, she brought Samuel to serve the Lord, fulfilling her promise and instilling in him a deep sense of devotion and reverence for God. Hannah's diligence in worship and prayer set a powerful example for Samuel, whom she mentored in how to faithfully serve and honour God. Through the mentorship of Hannah, Samuel became the last leader and prophet of Israel (cf. section 4.3.5).

## **5.10 What can we learn from maternal mentors from the New Testament?**

### **5.10.1 Lois and Eunice**

Lois was the mother of Eunice, who in turn was the mother of Timothy. This passing down of the upbringing of children in the way of the Lord from generation to generation highlights the mentoring role these women played in Timothy's life. Lois mentored Eunice, and together they mentored Timothy to serve the Lord and spread the gospel alongside Paul. Lois and Eunice exemplify women of faith and dedicated mothers and grandmothers. They serve as a constant reminder of the importance for children to understand their roots, faith, and mission. Obedient and loyal to the Word of God, Lois and Eunice provided a perfect example for Timothy. As a mother and daughter, they guided Timothy in his path to becoming a minister of the Word of God. Paul was so impressed by Timothy that he wrote two letters to him on how believers should conduct themselves. As early church leaders, Lois and Eunice set examples for other women in the church on how to teach their children about the Word of God. Dedicated and obedient to God, Lois and Eunice were instrumental figures (cf. section 3.4.1).

### **5.10.2 Lydia of Thyatira**

Lydia, a successful businesswoman, exemplified a remarkable balance between her professional endeavours and her commitment to serving and worshiping God. Upon her conversion and baptism, she transformed her home into a place of worship, where she mentored and guided her entire family into embracing Christianity.

Her influence extended beyond her household, as she played a pivotal role in leading members of her community to accept Christ as their Saviour. Through her steadfast faith and dedication, Lydia inspired many other women and community members to follow her example in embracing Christianity and undergoing baptism.

Despite not having a husband, Lydia took it upon herself to ensure that her family embraced Christ, earning her recognition as a devoted disciple of God within her community. Her openness to God's Word led her to become the first Christian convert in Philippi.

Regardless of her busy schedule managing her business, Lydia prioritised worship by actively participating in church meetings. Her leadership was evident in guiding her family towards embracing Christ and in extending hospitality to visiting preachers.

Additionally, Lydia's respect for spiritual leaders was demonstrated through her hospitality towards them when they visited Thyatira to preach the gospel. By opening her home for church meetings and accommodating visiting ministers, Lydia demonstrated leadership and caring actions within her community (cf. section 3.4.2).

### **5.10.3 The significance of the woman at the well**

The Samaritan woman who encountered Jesus at Jacob's well experienced a divine appointment that led to a profound transformation in her life. Her obedience to Jesus and openness to His teachings inspired many other Samaritan women to follow suit and accept Jesus into their lives.

Through her encounter with Jesus, reconciliation between Jews and Samaritans began to take root in the city. The woman at the well demonstrated a remarkable humility and repentance, serving as a model for others by acknowledging her sins without hesitation and embracing conversion.

Despite her Samaritan background, she readily listened to Jesus and recognised Him as a prophet, displaying a deep reverence for God. Her discipleship was evident not only in her words but also in her actions, as she shared her experiences with Jesus with others in her community.

Despite any scepticism about her past, the woman's sincere testimony about Jesus was compelling, leading many in her community to believe in Him and follow His teachings without reservation (cf. section 3.4.2).

### **5.10.4 The significance of the woman with the alabaster jar**

The woman used the oil from her alabaster jar to anoint Jesus in anticipation of His crucifixion and burial. This act, chosen by God to be performed by a woman, serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of gentleness and reverence in preparing the ultimate sacrifice for the salvation of the world.

Through this woman's obedience and reverence for God, she played a crucial role in ensuring that Jesus was honoured and prepared for His impending sacrifice. Despite Judas' criticism, suggesting the oil could have been sold to benefit the poor, the woman's act of anointing Jesus symbolised her desire to be remembered for her obedience in preparing His body for death and burial.

In Luke 7, Jesus forgives the woman for her sins, demonstrating His boundless mercy and grace (cf. section 3.4.2).

### **5.10.5 The significance of the women at the cross and grave of Jesus**

Jesus was supported by women who played pivotal roles and mentored him during his ministry. The Galilean women showed tremendous faith in the Lord, being exceptionally obedient towards Jesus and his mission in the world. Despite not being given formal titles, these female leaders were acknowledged as disciples because of the significant contributions they made to Christianity. They learned from and were mentored by Jesus, ensuring the continuation and expansion of his ministry.

Notable women such as Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joseph, were mentioned to have been present at the crucifixion. Additionally, Mary and Mary Magdalene were among those who arrived at the tomb early on Sunday morning to anoint Jesus' body, only to discover it empty. These same women played a crucial role in spreading the news of Jesus' resurrection (cf. section 3.4.2).

## **5.11 What can we learn from mother leaders from the New Testament?**

### **5.11.1 Mary, the mother of Jesus**

Mary, in her conversation with the angel of the Lord, demonstrated profound humility and submission. She willingly accepted the divine will to carry and give birth to Jesus, the Saviour of the World. As the first mentor Jesus had, alongside Joseph, Mary exemplified servanthood and loyalty to God. Despite the societal risks, including the possibility of being stoned to death for being pregnant and unmarried, Mary humbly embraced God's will with unwavering faith and obedience (cf. section 4.4.1).

### **5.11.2 Elizabeth, the mother of John**

Elizabeth remained steadfast in her faith when God promised her and Zechariah a son. Her obedience to God never wavered, even in the face of her barrenness, knowing that with God, all things are possible. Elizabeth played a crucial role in preparing John for his destined purpose in the life of Jesus. She mentored him, emphasising the importance of honouring and obeying God's commands. As a Hebrew woman, Elizabeth responsibly managed her household, ensuring her child was brought up according to God's requirements and instilled with sound values.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth comprehended the significance of her role in birthing the man who would baptise Jesus. She recognised the vital role women played in the coming of the Messiah to fulfil his redemptive mission in the world. Elizabeth stood steadfastly beside her husband, respecting him and the decisions he made (cf. section 4.4.2).

### **5.12 Conclusion**

In this chapter, practical theoretical perspectives were presented on how mothers and women can be prepared to serve as mentors in the absence of fathers. Mothers and women can also equip male children to play a significant role in combating GBV.

The practical theoretical guidelines specifically refer to Proverbs 31:10-31 to explore whether contemporary mothers can be trained to embody virtues and capabilities, as described in the Christian Bible. King Lemuel used Proverbs 31 to honour his mother and provide an ideal description of how every mother should conduct herself in society. Lemuel's mother likely encouraged him to be different from his father, as his father was not involved in his upbringing. Raised by his mother, who groomed him for kingship, Lemuel's depiction of his mother can be used to identify needs, address problems, and seek solutions based on Scripture.

We draw upon passages from the Old and New Testaments that reference mothers to address issues. In the researcher's interpretation of Proverbs 31, Lemuel's respectful addressing of his mother reflects how all children should interact with their mothers, honouring rather than shaming them. The initial section praises Lemuel's mother and

expresses gratitude for her role in his upbringing. The subsequent part outlines the conduct of a capable mother in society, portraying her as the epitome of virtuous motherhood. Lemuel's mother foresaw his kingship and prepared him accordingly.

In 1 Timothy 2, Scripture provides clear instructions on how mothers should conduct themselves in the community. It is crucial to consider the historical context in which these Scriptures were written. Expecting contemporary mothers to unquestioningly adhere to instructions regarding submission and silence in church may not be appropriate. The researcher proposes that mothers should strive to balance work and motherhood.

Every mother in Jesus's lineage played a crucial role in his life. We can learn from these mothers' experiences as examples of effectively addressing challenges for the well-being of their children in the absence of fathers or father figures in communities.

Chapter 6 presents clear recommendations, suggestions, final conclusions, and possible avenues for further study.

## **CHAPTER 6 RECOMMENDATIONS, SUGGESTIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Drawing from the insights gathered in preceding chapters, this chapter delves into actionable recommendations aimed at implementing mentoring programmes and strategies to tackle GBV across diverse communities. Moreover, it identifies potential areas for further research and exploration.

The proposed recommendations are designed to enable comprehensive training for mothers and women by church leaders and other faith-based organisations (FBOs), empowering them to mentor their children effectively. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to equip young men and boys as proactive leaders in combating GBV, particularly in communities lacking father figures.

Crucially, forging partnerships among health, education, justice, police, and gender equality organisations is vital to fortify local support systems for both GBV victims and perpetrators. These collaborative efforts are essential for fostering safer and more inclusive communities.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

#### **6.2.1 Education**

Education serves as a fundamental platform for instilling respect for women, mothers, and girls, while fostering gender sensitivity and eliminating discrimination against any gender. Given that children spend a significant portion of their lives in educational institutions, it is imperative to integrate lifelong learning approaches to effectively address the multifaceted issues of GBV.

Recommendations for the education sector include:

- Incorporating gender-based violence studies into school curricula.
- Providing training for teachers on non-violent disciplinary methods.

- Including GBV awareness and response training as a requirement for teacher tertiary qualifications.
- Developing, workshopping, understanding, and implementing sexual harassment policies by all stakeholders.
- Prioritising the development of policies aimed at eradicating GBV within education departments.
- Establishing non-violent, gender-equal, and non-discriminatory institutional cultures as top priorities.
- Eliminating power struggles between different sexes to advocate for gender equality and demonstrate the equal importance of all genders.
- Implementing counselling and rehabilitation processes post-incidents to encourage constructive problem-solving among children.
- Fostering school-based partnerships to create and promote gender-inclusive institutions.
- Encouraging debates on GBV as part of learners' educational topics in Life Orientation.

### **6.2.2 Faith-based organisations and church leaders**

Collaborations among various forms of education, FBOs, and the church significantly contributes to the transformation of individuals who may have strayed from the right path. Drawing strength from Scripture, we strive to exemplify better role models, transcending gender, and beliefs, in order to gain a deeper understanding of our identity as human beings in Christ Jesus.

Key points to consider:

- FBOs and church leaders are instrumental in ensuring that young people are acquainted with and draw lessons from the Bible's spiritually inspired stories.

- Understanding the contextual and cultural aspects of the Word is essential for fulfilling God's purpose for humanity and the world.
- Prayer for divine insight and understanding is crucial for interpreting the Word accurately and aligning with God's will.
- The Word serves as a guiding light, directing individuals according to God's commandments.
- Churches must serve as safe spaces for women and children who are victims of abuse.
- It is the responsibility of churches to ensure the welfare and protection of victims of GBV within their congregations and broader society.
- Church leaders should undergo training to effectively address issues of GBV.
- Teaching men in the congregation about their societal roles and responsibilities is paramount.
- Gender equality workshops should be conducted within the church to foster a better understanding of gender roles.
- Father and motherhood mentorship programmes must be offered by the church.

### **6.2.3 Government**

The Government possesses both the resources and authority to enforce the rights of all individuals within the borders of South Africa. Therefore, it is imperative to advocate for the vulnerable women and children in the country who are facing various challenges. The Government has numerous organisations, such as the Department of Social Development, dedicated to addressing gender-related issues in communities.

Key points to consider:

- Human rights of women are enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa and must be upheld by all government institutions.

- The judiciary should ensure that perpetrators of crimes against women receive more severe sentences.
- Government departments must act swiftly and decisively to assist victims of GBV.
- Increased resources should be allocated to ensure the effective implementation of gender equality measures in South Africa.

#### **6.2.4 The management of violence in schools**

Violence in schools is a growing concern not only in South Africa but in educational institutions worldwide. Advocacy for stricter regulations regarding the use of violence in schools is crucial.

While the South African Schools Act prohibits corporal punishment, its full implementation remains a challenge. The Children's Act of 2005, addressing bullying, has only recently gained full support, highlighting the ongoing need to manage violence comprehensively.

Recognising that violence often originates at home or within the community, several measures can be taken:

- Cultivating a positive learning and teaching environment is essential for promoting non-violence in schools.
- Facilitating platforms for debates on children's rights fosters awareness within schools and communities.
- Advocacy efforts should prioritise the rights of children.
- Implementing access control measures in schools enhances safety.
- Establishing a supportive, protective atmosphere in schools is paramount.
- Cultivating a culture of non-violence within schools promotes a conducive learning environment.
- Addressing concerns among teachers about reprimanding learners requires addressing fears of victimisation.

- Developing and enforcing school acts and Codes of Conduct by all stakeholders, including dress codes, contributes to learners' sense of security.
- Ensuring learner safety is a collective responsibility of school management, teachers, and parents.
- Identifying and addressing violent behaviour early on is essential for transforming learners through moral and values education.
- Promoting a non-violent ethos in schools requires the involvement of the entire school community.
- Strengthening basic life skills in Life Orientation classes aids in conflict management.
- Addressing cultural diversity and fostering tolerance enhances inclusivity within schools.

### **6.2.5 Political organisations**

A discussion paper by the ANC (2019) on GBV highlights the high levels of sexual violence in South Africa, underscoring the urgent need for government to reassess its laws and policies. While there exists, a legislative framework aimed at eradicating violence against women, questions arise regarding the effectiveness of its implementation and whether the punishment aligns with the severity of the crime.

***The discussion paper includes the following recommendations:***

- Comprehensive training and ongoing development for all officials involved in handling both victims and perpetrators, including police officers and prosecutors.
- Specialised training for police officers in handling cases of sexual offences, recognising the sensitivity and complexity of such cases.
- Training programmes for personnel at community service centres, focusing on proper handling and treatment of victims.
- Enhancing understanding and interpretation of laws pertaining to GBV among all stakeholders.

- Implementing preventive measures, such as increased awareness campaigns on radio and television throughout the year, rather than just during specific events like Women's Day or the 16 Days of Activism against GBV in November and December.
- Ensuring the effective utilisation of victim support rooms at police stations by providing adequately trained personnel to manage these facilities and ensuring that every police station in South Africa is equipped with such rooms to assist GBV victims.

### **6.2.6 Policing and law enforcement**

The law plays a crucial role as the implementation agent in ensuring that women facing challenges are adequately equipped to serve as models and mentors for other mothers and women.

Key recommendations include:

- Equipping police stations with rape kits to aid victims in gathering evidence.
- Providing training on the usage of rape kits, as their proper utilisation is vital.
- Training police personnel in effectively registering cases and obtaining statements that facilitate the arrest of perpetrators.
- Advocating for the reporting of GBV by police authorities.
- Ensuring that victims receive appropriate support from law enforcement agencies.

### **6.2.7 Psychological support and health**

- Victims should undergo psychological analysis and support following any experience of GBV, especially in cases of rape.
- Support should be extended to victims, particularly married women or partners who may face divorce or abandonment after disclosing rape or sexual abuse.
- Health departments must ensure that all victims receive necessary assistance following such ordeals.

- Survivors of GBV require comprehensive support encompassing mental, social, physical, and economic aspects.

### **6.3 Suggested topics for future research**

- Investigate who exercises corporal punishment more in schools: male or female teachers.
- Examine mothers' perspectives on the banishment of corporal punishment.
- Study on the potential effectiveness of reintroducing corporal punishment in a regulated form to address behavioural issues.
- Assessment of the necessity and impact of reintroducing Christian Bible studies in schools.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of policies addressing GBV in South Africa and their impact on protecting women.
- Investigate the question of whether a mother can fulfil her role while balancing a full-time job, caregiving, and mentoring her family to prepare them for the world.
- Examine the compatibility of motherhood with maintaining one's intellectual and professional identity.

### **6.4 The Final Conclusion**

In this study, a literature review grounded in Scripture was conducted to demonstrate that mothers are fully capable of assuming the role of mentors in single-parent families where men are absent. Conversely, change is predominantly observed within communities and societies comprising various family structures, including heterosexual, homosexual, polygamous, monogamous, same-sex, cohabiting, gay, and lesbian families, among others. Moreover, the discourse on equality and equity, derived from biblical interpretations, should originate within families. The narratives of women, including those from the Bible, must be recounted and emphasised. The authority of mothers and women should be actively demonstrated, practiced, and declared. This takes place through communication, language, and rhetoric.

Policies undoubtedly shape behaviour, yet they alone cannot change the deeply ingrained attitudes and beliefs held by individuals. As long as churches and authorities continue to propagate the subjugation of women to men, addressing this issue remains complex. A comprehensive understanding of Jesus' life, teachings, and the character of God can provide valuable insights. Similarly, contextual awareness of historical contexts, coupled with critical thinking, is essential.

While implementing stricter measures for offenders may mitigate the severity of violence, there remains a significant lack of political will to prosecute perpetrators or discuss appropriate punishment. Moreover, many offenders are not even registered as sexual offenders, exacerbating the problem.

It is imperative to honour motherhood and properly cherish women, not merely acknowledging their contributions for a month but consistently recognising their worth and value.

Changing behaviour requires a shift in the human mindset. To transform one's actions, one must first change their mindset, which begins with a change of heart. It commences with fostering love and respect for all individuals and acknowledging our shared humanity under Christ. This transformation necessitates a shift in theological perspectives, with widespread recognition and support for feminist theology. However, feminist theology remains stigmatised and often viewed negatively. The journey toward acceptance and adoption of feminist theology starts with political declarations and unwavering determination to effect change.

Women should actively participate in advancing this agenda for change. Relying solely on men to drive this transformation will yield little progress. Women often lack power and are subjected to oppression, exhaustion, overburdening responsibilities, and economic marginalisation. From a young age, girls are still conditioned to believe in traditional gender roles, including the expectation to find a man to provide for them. This mindset needs to be challenged.

In Chapter 2, the researcher described the current state of single-parent families in South Africa, highlighting the challenges faced by mothers in these households and the

prevalence of GBV. The historical mistreatment of women, including rape and abuse during biblical times, mirrors the objectification of women by men throughout history.

The researcher firmly believes that GBV has escalated significantly in South Africa over the past decade. While we celebrate national women's month, it is essential for us as South Africans to recognise and celebrate women's personhood as equal to that of men, without whom humans would never exist. Instead, women continue to endure the horrors of rape, murder, and abuse. We must acknowledge, honour, and protect them as our mothers, daughters, aunts, and loved ones. GBV is a global reality, and President Cyril Ramaphosa rightly referred to it as the new pandemic threatening mothers, surpassing even COVID-19 in its impact.

It is crucial for both parents, fathers, and mothers, to take responsibility for correcting and educating their children. Nonetheless, mothers should receive training, resources, and empowerment to excel in their role as mentors, particularly in single-parent families or when fathers are absent.

Chapter 3 delved into the pivotal role of mothers as mentors within single-parent families. The narrative explored various biblical examples, such as Sarah and Rebekah, both initially barren until God intervened, transforming their inability to bear children into a blessing for their families. Sarah, once childless, became the mother of a great nation, fulfilling God's promise to her husband. Similarly, Hannah fervently prayed for a child, and God answered her prayers by granting her a son, Samuel. In gratitude, Hannah dedicated Samuel to God, and because of her obedience, she was blessed with five more children. These narratives exemplify the power of faith and obedience in the journey of motherhood.

God's plan for redemption often involves using imperfect individuals, as demonstrated by the story of Rahab, a prostitute whom God utilised to facilitate the conquest of Jericho. This narrative highlights God's ability to employ anyone in His redemptive plan, regardless of their past.

The meeting between John the Baptist and Jesus, even before their births, underscores the importance of faithful mothers in facilitating divine encounters. Elizabeth, John's mother, recognised the significance of Mary's role in carrying the Messiah (Lk 1:45) and

blessed her for it. Despite her husband Zachariah's initial doubt, Elizabeth remained steadfast in her faith, trusting in God's promise to provide (Lk 1:24-25).

Throughout history, God has employed strong and effective mothers to ensure that His children receive the necessary education, guidance, and care to follow Jesus, the Messiah. These mothers play a vital role in nurturing faith and obedience in their children, thereby contributing to God's redemptive plan for humanity.

Chapter 4 concentrated on and explored the biblical-theological views of mothers as mentors in single-parent families. The narrative highlighted prominent figures in the theological landscape of Southern Africa and beyond, particularly focusing on their leadership roles. The researcher cited examples such as Professor Christina Landman and Professor Bonny J. Miller-McLemore, who serve as inspirational figures for mothers, demonstrating that it is indeed possible to pursue academic study while raising a family. These scholars have been recognised for their significant contributions to the advancement of theology, and their examples have inspired numerous women to assume leadership roles within their respective communities and assemblies.

The lineage of Jesus is very important. The evidence of his bloodline ensures an inheritance for us. Mary's role as the mother of the Messiah is pivotal, yet other women like Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba also contributed to the patrilineal genealogy of the Messiah. The author emphasises the importance of genealogy, as it determines one's lineage, bloodline, and heritage. As Christians, our inheritance in God's kingdom is assured if we follow His will, but if we succumb to the temptations of the devil, we risk forfeiting what God has planned for us.

The women discussed in this chapter served as exemplary mentors and mothers, setting a powerful example for their children and families. They not only fulfilled their maternal roles but also influenced their husbands and male relatives positively. The Bible provides ample evidence of women who demonstrate leadership qualities if given the opportunity. In the absence of a father figure, mothers are willing to make sacrifices and step up to lead and safeguard their families.

Chapter 5 dealt with the proposed practical-theological guidelines regarding the mother as mentor in single-parent families. It emphasised the role of the church, church leaders,

and various societal and community agents in supporting mothers who are willing to take on the role of mentors for children in single-parent households. A set of suggested guidelines was presented to aid the church and ministers in equipping women and mothers in single-parent families to mentor children effectively in GBV.

The exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:9 provided insight into the behaviour expected of mothers when in public settings, while Proverbs 31 offered principles for mothers to emulate in becoming capable mentors.

Central to the model proposed is the recognition of God as the ultimate authority, provider, and centre of all things. Just as God provided and opened the wombs of the matriarchs, blessing them to secure the bloodline of Jesus, mothers are encouraged to rely on God and adhere to biblical principles in their mentorship roles. Through these principles, mothers can guide children to become better human beings and defend the honour of all females when it comes to GBV.

In Chapter 6, the researcher presented recommendations aimed at ensuring that contemporary mothers, with the assistance of mentors, utilise the guidelines to enhance their mothering skills in the absence of fathers, regardless of the circumstances. Additionally, topics for future studies have been proposed to further explore this topic and contribute to the body of knowledge. Final conclusions or deductions have also been provided.

The heartfelt prayer of the researcher is for the emergence of strong mother mentors who will rise to the occasion, equipped to enhance the lives of all fatherless children within their society and community.

*“Mentoring is: Sharing life’s experiences and God’s faithfulness”.*

– Janet Thompson (African Women in Technology, 2021).

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**ADDENDUM A: PROOF OF LANGUAGE EDITING**

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21 February 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**RE: LANGUAGE EDITING**

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis titled:

**Mothers as mentors in single-parent families: A practical theological study**

**By**

**Fritz William Malvern Steenkamp**

This certificate does not cover any alterations made subsequent to the editing process.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lee-Anne Roux

## **ADDENDUM B: PROOF OF TECHNICAL EDITING**

Ms. AGS COETZEE

PO Box 5333

KOCKSPARK

2523

Cell: 073 157 0502

4 April 2023

### **Technical editing of bibliography and text references**

I, AGS Coetzee, declare that I have edited the bibliography and text references of the manuscript of Mr. F Steenkamp.

The final completeness and accuracy remain the responsibility of the candidate.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Coetzee'.

AGS Coetzee

## ADDENDUM C: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



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**Senate Committee for Research Ethics**  
Tel: 018 299-4849  
Email: [nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za](mailto:nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za)

10 March 2022

### ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Theology Research Ethics Committee (TREC)** on 28/02/2022, the Theology Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

<b>Study title:</b> Mothers as mentors in single parent families: A practical theological study																														
<b>Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher:</b> Prof Fazel E Freeks																														
<b>Student:</b> FWM Steenkamp #12849456																														
<b>Ethics number:</b> <table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>8</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>S</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Institution</td><td colspan="5">Study Number</td><td colspan="2">Year</td><td colspan="5">Status</td></tr></table>	N	W	U	-	0	0	8	5	6	-	2	2	-	S	6	Institution			Study Number					Year		Status				
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<i>Status:</i> S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation																														
<b>Application Type:</b> Single Study																														
<b>Commencement date:</b> 2022/03/01	<b>Risk Category:</b> <table border="1"><tr><td>Low risk</td></tr></table>	Low risk																												
Low risk																														
<b>Expiry date:</b> 2023/02/28																														
<b>Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.</b>																														

#### Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

<b>General conditions:</b> <i>While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the TREC:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and</li><li>- without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.</li></ul></li></ul>
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- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the TREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and TREC reserves the right to:*
  - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
  - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
  - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
    - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
    - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the TREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
    - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
    - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*
- *TREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via [Rudy.Denton@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Rudy.Denton@nwu.ac.za).*

The TREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the TREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Dr Rudy Denton  
Chairperson NWU Theology Research Ethics Committee

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8 November 2018

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