

**AFRICAN WOMEN OVERCOMING PATRIARCHY: A STUDY OF WOMEN
IN APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION (AFM) CHURCH IN
RUSTENBURG – SOUTH AFRICA**

BY

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Declaration

Unless specifically indicated in the text, this dissertation is my original work. I therefore declare that I have not submitted it to any other institution, for examination, apart from this university

Name of Student

Date

As supervisor, I agree to the submission of the dissertation.



Name of Supervisor

24 February 2006
Date

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Dedication

I dedicate this piece of work to my late mother, Mapula Lenah Selokela, who became my strength during the difficult struggles of life in my childhood especially defending me from cultural oppression and abuse of young girls. I also dedicate my work to all women of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) Church in South Africa for nourishing my faith.

Abstract

This study is an investigation and description of ways in which the Apostolic Faith Mission churchwomen are succeeding in overcoming patriarchy. It also gives a critical evaluation of the extent to which these women are successful in their endeavour to overcome it. Fifteen women from the AFM Church were interviewed using the narrative methodology. This method was chosen to give women freedom to narrate their stories without interference. The data collected was analysed using a feminist theoretical framework on what it means to be human and to be a church. To avoid repetition and to give a room for a detailed analysis, the study was limited to four stories of the AFM churchwomen. Furthermore library research and fieldwork were also used to give a broader picture in analysing the field research work.

The findings of this study indicated that women ministries are not taken seriously and are not fully supported by the church. They are still struggling with the issue of partnership because the church does not trust them to be good leaders. It has been noted in this study that patriarchy is the root cause of the marginalization of women of the AFM church. However, the study has demonstrated that women are resisting patriarchy despite the struggles that they are facing inside this church.

The study went further to investigate some Biblical texts that advocate for gender equality and to find ways in which the Bible can be used as the source of liberation for both women and men of the AFM church. It has been suggested that the church should engage in the pursuit of Biblical directives for the Body of Christ. The scriptures prove that men and women are given equality by God and also some differences that clearly express the human diversity in general. So, the AFM women are challenging the church to recognise, affirm and celebrate them.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

1.1 The Problem and the Background of the research.

The Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) Church is one of the many large Pentecostal churches that are found within and around the Rustenburg area in the North West province of South Africa. An American missionary, John G. Lake, commonly known as the Apostle, founded the church in 1910. He was born in Canada in 1870 and he came to South Africa in 1908 to spread the Pentecostal message throughout the country. The present president of the united AFM church in South Africa is Dr. Isak Burger. According to Burger's testimony, before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1999), the church consisted of 1200 congregations, 1800 pastors and 650,000 members (East London, 19 November 1999).¹

Gordon Lindsay asserts that John G. Lake's anointed and miraculous ministry resulted in what has been described by other missionaries as "the most extensive and powerful missionary movement in all Africa."² He continued by saying, "during that time he spent five history-making years in South Africa, engaged in the ministry which respectfully challenged that of the early church."³ In addition, Cecil Rhodes, in Gordon Lindsay, the South African 'Empire Builder'⁴ says, "Lake's message has swept Africa. He has done more towards South Africa's future peace than any other man." Perhaps the highest accolade was given by no less a personage than Mahatma Ghandi who said of Lake, "Dr. Lake's teachings will eventually be accepted by the entire world."

The truth of the matter is that Rustenburg is one of the places in South Africa that was impacted by the backwash of Dr. Lake's teachings. The AFM church in South Africa

¹ 15/10/2004. Untitled Document. http://www.afm-ags.org/office_bearers.htm

² This was the expression that specified his miraculous mission work in Africa by other missionaries and those who received his message and appreciated it.

³ G. Lindsay, 15/10/2004. Untitled Document <http://www.afm-ags.org/History.htm>.

⁴ The attempt by the state to expand its power or sphere of influence, whether it is by the direct military control, diplomatic manipulation, on economic superiority over another state. This is what Cecil Rhodes did in Africa. He painted as much as possible of Africa, 'British Red', that was to bring Africa into the British Empire.

is now divided into 17 Regions. The Executive Council at National level comprises the president and the office-bearers of the departmental sections of the church.

This church has many assemblies, for example, Tlhabane, Mabieskraal, Chaneng, Phokeng, Bapong, Monakato, Ledig, Church of Acts, Deogracia and others. It has a growing population of about 6,500 people of which the biggest percentage are women who form the 60 percent of the church, 25 percent are youths, 10 percent are children and 5 percent are men. According to the historical evidence of the AFM church, many missionaries were male as it is reported that, 'Lake and his church had one hundred and twenty-five men out in the field at one time.'⁵ Indeed even up to 2005 women are not wholly involved in the governing structure of the AFM church.

The discussion in this study is focussed on the AFM church in Rustenburg, North West Region. This dissertation will show that the women of the AFM church are resisting patriarchy. Women in this church, as shall be demonstrated in the course of the study, have realised that patriarchal structures have been formed by one gender to institutionalise the perceived inferiority of women before men. For example, there are a lot of stereotypical generalisations that have been passed over from one generation to another. They include the idea that: to be born a woman is an inferior status; women are Eve incarnate; a girl-child is a little piece of property; men are entitled to women and women and men are not equal; God ordained men to be superior to women from the very beginning; sin came into the world as a result of the weakness and embedded wickedness of women; and that women are fragile and cannot be leaders.

Furthermore, there are other issues that affect women more than their male counterparts such as: marriage, polygamy, divorce, domestic violence, barrenness, widowhood, prostitution and the division of labour. Nevertheless, in doing this research it was revealed that women Christians of the AFM church are developing a deep inner life that makes them more aware of the supernatural. They are also getting more conscious of the role that they can play in the church and society as a whole. They are working towards eradicating the oppressive system of patriarchy. For that

⁵ A. Strom, & R. Holmes, File://A:/John G Lake.htm: 2004: 5.

reason, this study intends to investigate and describe how the women of the AFM church are resisting patriarchy. Furthermore, the study will give a critical evaluation of the extent to which these women are successful in their endeavour to overcome their male-inflicted disparities. Therefore, to understand the working title of this study, “African Women overcoming Patriarchy: A Study of Women of the AFM Church in Rustenburg” the study intends to first define the word patriarchy.

1.2 Definition of Patriarchy

Patriarchy is defined as “father rule.” According to Ackermann (1991: 95), patriarchy means

The legal, economic and social system that validates and enforces the sovereignty of the male head of the family over its other members. These members in classical patriarchal systems were the wives, children, servants and slaves. Today patriarchy describes the male-dominated world that we live in.

The patriarchal system is the phenomenon that is found in many cultures world-wide and has been influential in many aspects of human life. As noted by Ackermann, this patriarchal culture does not recognise the full humanity of women, in churches and in societies. Russell advances Ackermann’s explanation by providing a definition of patriarchy as “a form of social organization in which the father is recognised as the head of the family” (1990: 3). This implies that the supremacy of males who dominate women in private and public life needs to be revised so as to cope with modern Christian living. For indeed, patriarchal systems have been used to undermine women and in turn, churchwomen have accepted patriarchy for a long time as the will of God.

Villa Vicencio acknowledges that, “discrimination against women in South Africa is older than the colonially imposed scourge of apartheid” (1992: 20). However, the good news is that some church women are now studying theology for themselves and they have come to realise that patriarchy is sin. Therefore, some women in general are now resisting patriarchy in the church and society. In view of this, this dissertation will focus on how some women of the AFM church in Rustenburg are resisting patriarchy.

1.3 Motivation for the research

Several factors have motivated the researcher to choose this area of study. First, being a member of the AFM church since 1989 has given the researcher an opportunity to observe that there is tension between women and men in church leadership and participation of women is limited to certain roles prescribed by this male dominated denomination. The question was: why this tension? The formulation of the answer began when the researcher got an opportunity to study African Women's Theologies in 2003 at the then University of Natal, PMB (now University of KwaZulu Natal).

As a required module for the researcher's accomplishment for her Masters Degree, African Women Theologians, opened the researcher's eyes and led to discovery that her struggle as a girl was against oppression and the system that is in control of the society and the church, namely patriarchy. Coming into contact with African women theologians' literature, the motivation grew further. For example, Oduyoye's (1995: iii) poem strengthened the researcher's motivation. In her poem she says,

... I am in the process of giving birth
to myself – recreating Me
of being, the Me that God sees.
I am a woman.
I am African...

The above stanza restores the researcher's sense of being born as a girl in an African family of the Batswana culture, where culture and the church constructed her identity. In fact, many questions were raised in the researcher's life because the Batswana culture recognizes the birth of a boy-child as an honour while a birth of the girl-child is seen as humiliation. More emphasis was placed on the furtherance of the bloodline of the boy child so that the girl child is relegated to a position of insignificance in the family. This kind of situation instilled an awareness of worthlessness that bred a fighting spirit in the researcher's life. The researcher then understood that she was created with many abilities and gifts though patriarchy denied her the right of growing to full maturation and realization of her potential as a human person. Thus her experience motivated her to conduct this research. Hence the study is advocating for women's affirmation in resisting patriarchy.

Further, the researcher was given the opportunity to attend meetings of 'The Circle of the Concerned African Women Theologians.'⁶ In the Circle meetings that took place at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, women were encouraged and empowered to contribute their critical thinking and analysis on religion and culture in particular. The main aim of the Circle is to undertake research and publish theological literature written by African women out of their experiences, with special focus on religion and culture. On 1st August 2003 another meeting of the Circle was attended and this further encouraged the pursuing of this research. The meeting encouraged women to read the scriptures for liberation and for empowerment. The researcher also attended the launching of the Programme for "Gender and Theology"⁷ where Oduyoye was the key speaker. Her words of wisdom encouraged this study for she talked about the boldness of the women who were not stopped by the stone to go to Jesus' tomb. They did not sit and ask 'who will roll the stone for us?' but they stood-up and went to the cemetery, because they believed that God was with them all the time.

In addition, knowing the pain of being marginalized, the researcher was motivated by Paulo Freire who contends that, "Liberation is like a new birth, and a painful one. The person who emerges is a new person, no longer oppressor or oppressed, but a person in a process of achieving freedom" (1970: 25). This study contends that women have the ability to make a difference in their lives, rising above oppressive systems towards their own liberation, for they are the ones who know the pain of being oppressed. In line with what Freire says, Oduyoye states that, "oppression does not lie in the eye of the beholder, it tugs at the soul of the one who feels it" (1995: 81). This implies that unless women do something about this oppressive structure, they will forever live in oppression. Therefore, as Oduyoye (1995: 83) said, "Together we will soil our hands to make our theology to be alive."⁸ The AFM churchwomen are working together towards the community of men and women in the church. In addition Byaruhanga-Akiiki (1994: 46) seems to agree with the liberation of the whole community by

⁶ The Circle was inaugurated in 1989. It is a space for women from Africa to do communal theology based on their religious, cultural and social experience. These concerned women are engaged in theological dialogue of the cultures, religions, sacred writings and oral stories that shape the African context and define the women of this continent.

⁷ The Programme is designed for ministers, lay workers and scholars who are interested in developing their knowledge of and skills in the church's engagement in gender Issues.

⁸ Together, refers to the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians who vowed to obey God rather than men and society.

showing that oppression is a kind of sickness where both men and women need healing. He provides clear articulation when he says,

... We should take note that ideology of oppression affects both the oppressed and oppressors. Both need liberation, one from suffering and the other from ignorance and prejudice.

In support of the above contention, Moyana asserts that, “we should realize that...it is not only women who feel oppressed by the patriarchal system...” (1994: 21). These motivations have collectively provoked the need to conduct this research that aims at uplifting the women’s voices of hope with particular reference to the AFM church in Rustenburg. The study is thus focussing on the Christian women of the AFM church because they identify themselves with Christ and are passionate that Christ accepted them as they are.

1.4 Aims and objectives

As noted in the on going discussion, women have been oppressed and dehumanised by the patriarchal system. They have been seen as irresponsible people who are unable to take care of themselves. Patriarchy has always categorized them as inferior in all spheres of life. Nevertheless, some women in the AFM church are resisting all these patriarchal structures. They are now able to define themselves in the church and society, by telling stories about themselves. In view of this, the aims of this research are: firstly, to give examples of how women of the AFM church are resisting the damage that patriarchy has caused in the area of church leadership despite their dehumanising experiences in the ministry and society in general. Secondly, to suggest other ways in which women can deal with their circumstances.

In the process, it is hoped that this research will encourage women to explore their liberty, respect and recognition as well as to allow all their God-given talents, anointing and gifts to be expressed. This means that women should take full responsibility for themselves to live their lives in prosperity. The objective of this research is: to identify and record the stories of women who are rising above patriarchal structures in the AFM church of Rustenburg and how they have managed to engage these structures that dehumanise them, thus taking full responsibility for

their lives. Oduyoye supports women taking responsibility for themselves so as to be able to give an account of themselves before God and to avoid such statements as for example, “the men you gave me dictated what my talents ought to be, or what I did for your church” (1995: 189).

The above statement by Oduyoye points to Adam’s irresponsibility with regard to what God had commanded him to do in the Garden of Eden. As it is recorded, Adam used Eve as a scapegoat, when God visited them in the garden. He responded to God’s questions: “Where are you” (Gen.3: 9) and “Who told you that you were naked?” (Gen.3: 11) by saying, “The woman you put here with me gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it” (Gen.3: 12). A critical look at Oduyoye’s statement shows that women should not be irresponsible by allowing men to get in their way and thereby prevent God’s will in their lives.

In agreement with Oduyoye’s statement, this research will show that the AFM women are paving their way to re-claim their humanity, which was stolen from them through culture, social and religious patriarchal systems. In fact, they are refusing to be compelled to believe that culture and religions are their stumbling blocks. As this research seeks to demonstrate, the women in the AFM are challenging oppressive elements in culture and religion by focusing on the transformation of the church to cause it to consider the full participation of both men and women. In so doing, they are reviewing the mission of the church. They are also challenging traditional imagery of what constitutes power and authority. Having seen the aims and the objectives of the study, this now drives us to survey the research problem – to which we now turn.

1.5 Research problem

Women, particularly in Africa, are marginalized and even dehumanised by the patriarchal system in the church. This happens with the blessing of culture, religion and tradition. Therefore, the researcher investigated how patriarchy in a church setting can be transformed. The researcher will also give a critical evaluation of the extent to which women are successful in their endeavour to overcome patriarchy. In other words this study is answering the following questions:

- How can the effects of patriarchy in a church setting be transformed?
- What are the AFM churchwomen doing to get rid of patriarchy in their lives?

- How are women in the AFM church in Rustenburg empowering themselves?
- What lessons can the women of the AFM church in Rustenburg learn from the selected stories of some women who have succeeded to empower themselves in the same church?

1.6 Theoretical framework

The basic theoretical framework of this study is one of feminist ecclesiology and anthropology. It affirms that the history of the church globally has shown that women have consistently been treated as outsiders, mainly on the grounds that they were born women. After the Reformation, the churches that considered themselves as of “the Word,” allowed women to preach in some countries and not in others. Some churches that put emphasis on Sacraments, (except the Anglican Church in some countries) have rejected women’s participation in leadership on the basis of the assumed impurity of women’s bodies or on the understanding that Christ, who is the foundation of the Churches’ priesthood was male. The church then has a long history of institutional injustice towards women. It is a place where a theology is preached that defines womanhood in association with child bearing or a rejection of women’s sexuality.

While some women theologians like Mary Daly⁹ view the church as irredeemably patriarchal and have walked out of the church, others have stayed and claimed the church as their space and therefore work for its transformation from within to discover the liberating potential the church may still hold. African women theologians are among those who recognise God’s original intention for men and women to be counterparts in their dominion over the renewed creation (Gen.1: 28).

Kanyoro (2001: 163) emphasises that “any pattern of discrimination, domination or oppression is contrary to God’s justice.” Furthermore, Waston (2002: 4) states that when one is rethinking how women are ‘church,’

⁹ See Mary Daly’s two books 1967: *The Church and the Second Sex*, New York: Harper and Row, and 1973: *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation*, London: The Women’s Press.

One must learn to live with ambivalence, to somehow make sense of the reality of oppression and empowerment, of liberation and suffering, of silence and powerful speech at the same time...The question a feminist ecclesiology has to answer is not whether or not women ought to 'leave' the church or 'stay', but how is it possible to rethink what it means to be 'church' within a theological paradigm which aims at reconsidering the basics of Christian theology and practice in feminist terms.

The study will not thus talk about the church in general but will focus on the AFM church in Rustenburg, which is one of those churches that put emphasis on the Word and the Spirit.

It acknowledges that the women within this church take a different stand on the question of what it means to be church. However, it identifies the marginalisation of all women and suggests some commitments to correct the relationship of men and women in the church. The concerns of the women of the AFM church are valued as human concerns. Therefore, the study has adopted a paradigm that acknowledges women being the church.

The study also takes seriously women's experiences of faith. It examines the construction of gender by patriarchal church structures and how women themselves are constructing their identity within the church. Therefore the narrative framework of Oduyoye will be used to show how some women are overcoming patriarchy. Oduyoye has argued that "the normative role of stories in Africa's oral corpus, and the role of stories in biblical theology, gives women the paradigm for their theological reflection" (2001: 11). Yet this dissertation will be critical of those stories like some traditional proverbs, which consolidate the oppression of women in patriarchal traditions.

1.7 Research Methods

This research adopted two research methods, which are library research and field interviews. The library research method included a study of relevant

literature/materials that are of benefit to this research. The University of KwaZulu Natal library was used together with public libraries in Pietermaritzburg. Both published and unpublished documents were consulted, including books, magazines, theses, newspapers, articles and papers presented in various conferences. These were the sources for relevant information about oppression and liberation of women.

The fieldwork among women in the AFM church in Rustenburg has been conducted from different assemblies, such as: Deogracia, Agape, Church of Acts and others. The aim was to listen to and observe how women interpret the scriptures for their liberation in their assemblies, and how they empower themselves against patriarchy. Informal interviews were conducted which were more interactive and informative.

Fifteen women from different assemblies who are involved in different ministries were interviewed. Four of them were from the Deogracia assembly, one was the leader of the worship team of the church, two were church board members and one was a very active member of the church. Two were from the Church of Acts, one was involved in the church board leadership and a treasurer and one was a worship leader and a preacher.

	Numbers	Percent
Deogracia	4	26.7
Agape	2	13.3
Deogloria	2	13.3
Church of Act	2	13.3
Mabieskraal	3	20.0
Bapong Assembly	2	13.3
Total	15	100.0

1.7.1 Table.1. Interviewed Women in Different Assemblies of the AFM Church

Three were from Mabieskraal assembly; two were qualified pastors, one managing her own church and one not yet ordained. One was involved in evangelism ministry. Two were from Agape assembly; one was a youth minister and one was an active member of the church. Two were from Deogloria assembly, one was in the leadership and a secretary and one Sunday school principal. The last two were from Bapong

assembly, one was an active member who was involved in youth ministries and one was a member of church board. Tables 1 and 2 show the names, assemblies, ministries and number of people interviewed in each assembly.

These participants were chosen basically to show how women from different assemblies are resisting patriarchy. The methods that the researcher used to choose these women (who are interviewed) were guided by factors of age, education, experience and availability. Consequently, elderly women were able to bring out the old tendencies in the gender debate while the middle aged and the educated women were able to drive this study through to the present and the changing scenario in the gender question.

In all of them, each group provided their remarkable contributions. In particular, the fifteen stories proved that these women are resisting patriarchy, but the four stories covered all the themes that the researcher wanted to cover in her interviews. Further, the four were able to relate to issues of theology and culture and gave a full explanation of how they are dealing with the situation that is present in the church. Again, they allowed the researcher to detail the situation of women experience in the church. The questions that were asked gave them a chance to give full information about their situation and the church.

Some of the main questions that were asked were: what is their experience of patriarchy? What do they think about the ordination of women in the church? Is it different from that of men? Is there any support that they get from the church? How are women of the AFM coping with the challenges in the church to their ministries - as women in the church? These women were randomly approached and interviewed on an individual basis. Their information emerges on tables, but four stories are discussed to show women experiences in the AFM church. These four stories are chosen as an example of this study. The desired data was to find out how some women of the AFM church are dealing with the patriarchal system.

	Numbers	Percent
Board Member	2	13.3
Treasurer	1	6.7
Secretary	1	6.7
Music (Worship)	2	13.3
Youth	2	13.3
Sunday school	1	6.7
Serviceable member	3	20.0
Pastors	2	13.3
Evangelists	1	6.7
Total	15	100.0

1.7.2 Table. 2. Interviewed Women in Various Leadership Positions

It was mainly the format of questions that were asked that motivated the interviewees to tell their stories easily. It is just what Ngaka T.J. Motala in Agar says that, “the life-history approach encourages the informant to talk about his or her own life in a chronologically ordered way” (1980: 106). This has made it easier to gather a lot of essential information within the narratives of the interviewees. The research adopted Agar’s (1980: 91) idea that,

You simply encourage the informant to keep talking by word or gesture. Next comes a reflection back of the informant’s last statement. He (sic) says something and you simply repeat it as an invitation to elaborate. Then there is a “probe” on the last remark. You ask some specific questions about the last statement, inviting elaboration in a specific direction. And so it continues, through probes on earlier material up to an interviewer-requested change in the topic of interview.

1.8 Limitations

The research aims at examining women’s spiritual lives and their experiences in the AFM church especially on how they deal with patriarchy. This was not an easy exercise for it reminded other women of the painful situations that they had gone through and were still experiencing. Rakoczy puts it clearly that “.... speaking about what has happened to them will bring back all the pain which they would rather forget” (2000: 7). Therefore, the research has been limited by the very fact that some

women have internalised their oppression. Though some remembered their pains, they mentioned their views in sorrow. So, the researcher did not follow-up some of the statements that provoked women's pains during the interviews and this was a limitation.

In addition to this, the fact that the interviews were based on a church where its members are brought-up knowing that to question the pastor, the sermon or the procedure of the church is sin, limited the outcome of our research. Some important information was reserved, such as the friction between men and women inside the church. Furthermore, some obstacles that hindered the perfecting of this study were:

- Limitation of the scope of research because it was only focussed on the AFM Church.
- Lack of funds to facilitate the binding and typing of the research findings as well as transport costs to go all over Rustenburg searching for information from women was a limitation, since the research was self sponsored.
- The privacy or the right of interviewees to limit their participation in answering some questions was also a disadvantage.

1.9 Thesis Outline

The study consists of five chapters of which the first is the introduction of the study. The first chapter includes the problem and the background of the research, the meaning of patriarchy, motivation for the study, aims and objectives, research problems, theoretical framework, methodology and limitations of the study.

The second chapter provides the recorded stories from the field work and which are meant to show how successful women are at overcoming patriarchy. Then the analysis of the stories follows.

Chapter three describes issues concerning the patriarchal system in the AFM church as oppressive to women. It is reflected in literature review that shows how far this issue has been dealt with in the church and society.

The fourth chapter investigates some Biblical texts that advocate for women and gender equality. It also seeks ways in which the Bible can be used to be a source of liberation for both women and men in the church.

In chapter five the recommendations in support of women's successes in the AFM church are given. This is followed by the final conclusion of this dissertation and the bibliography.

Having seen the introduction of the entire study, it has prepared us to study some relevant stories by AFM church-women who will enrich the study. This will help the entire church of Christ and us to get the nature of exclusion of women and their struggle in the AFM church in particular in general.

CHAPTER TWO

STORIES OF THE AFM CHURCH-WOMEN OVERCOMING PATRIARCHY

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to record the stories of women who are seeking liberation from patriarchal ideologies and overcoming patriarchal structures and procedures, which exclude the participation of women in the AFM church. Their stories show that they are venturing into constructing equalitarian structures in the church and in their societies. Fifteen women of different assemblies within the AFM church who showed courage by refusing patriarchy were successfully interviewed. They were interviewed according to the designed questionnaire, which is part of this study. The questionnaire was divided into five sections and the main sections were about their general information and their personal experience in the AFM church concerning their struggles with patriarchy. During the interview women took their time to relate their stories while occasionally displaying their emotions, through cries of anger. In all their expressions, they highlighted that patriarchy is the major problem in the church.

These women are not ignoring the problems that they are currently facing in the church but they are showing that they are using those struggles as a ladder towards their success of being fully recognised as human beings. They are in agreement with Numberger that all institutions, including the church have the potential of reaching the deeper levels of the human soul and persuading men and women to have their own new foundation (1978: 77). The aim of these stories is to inspire, motivate, empower and inform other women of their potential to overcome patriarchal structures and thereby undo patriarchy. Furthermore, through these stories, women are hoping and aiming to reconstruct the church so that it can be a better place for all women and men. However, as noted above, this study recognises people's confidentiality, the names that are used (in this study) from the stories are fictitious but the stories are real.

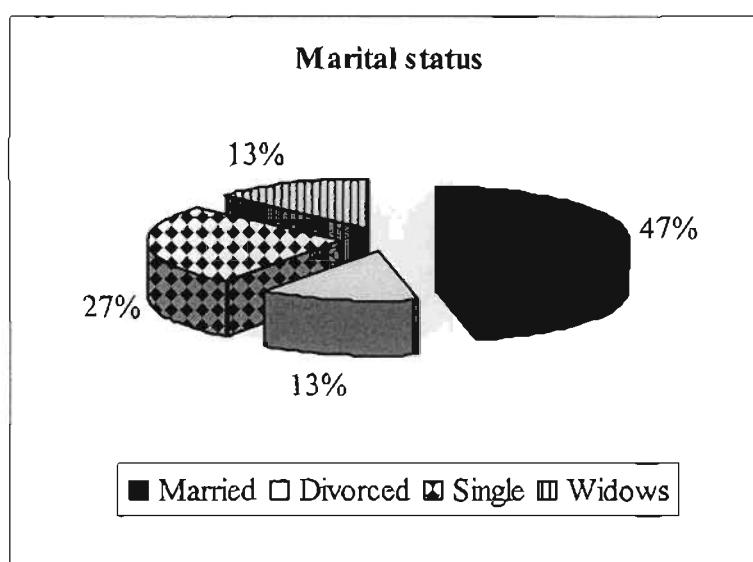
However, they decided to resist patriarchy because they believe that patriarchy is not in God's plan. In fact it is against the mission of God. They reveal descriptions of

extraordinary women who possess exceptional courage. They have a special awareness in being able to see the importance of the whole of humanity predominantly exonerating patriarchy. Each story shows the power of each woman, and a consciousness of the inner strength that reveals a spirit of determination to lead, serve and inspire those who come after them to continue the struggle to transform patriarchy. The demography of all participants will be shown in a chart form. Due to the limitation of space and time, four stories will be cited to demonstrate how women from different assemblies are managing to resist patriarchy.

2.2 Demography of the Participants

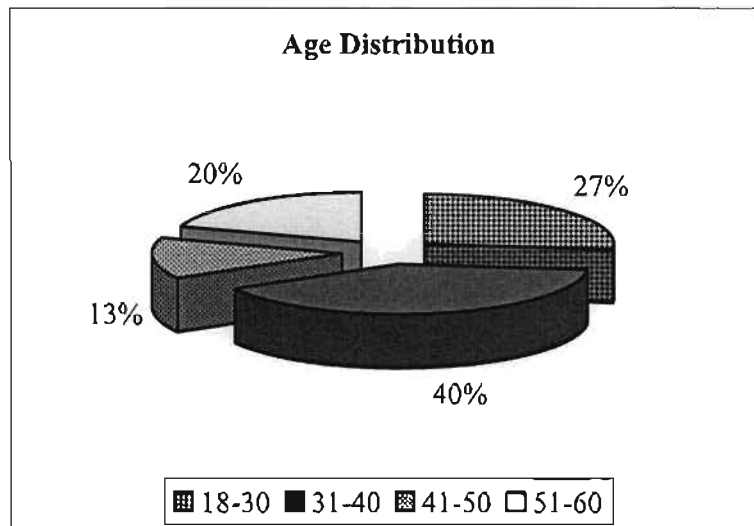
2.2.1 Marital Status

The chart shows that (47%) of these women are married, (13%) divorced, (27%) single and (13%) widows.



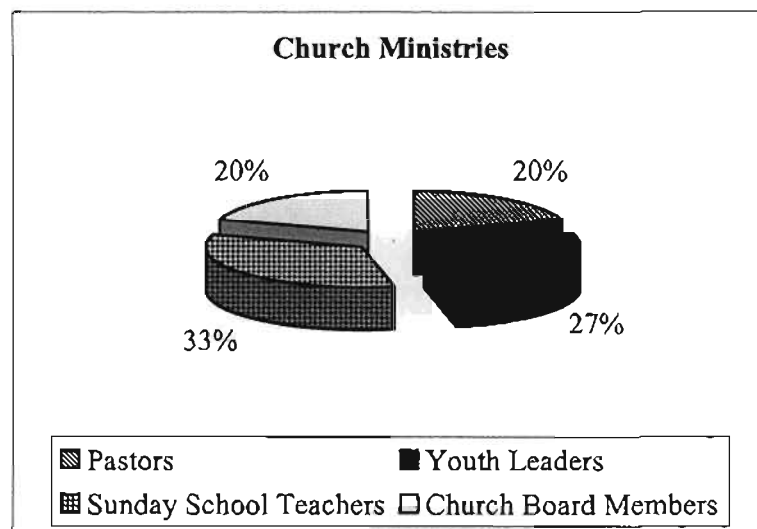
2.2.2 Age Distribution

According to the questionnaire women from the age of 18-60 were interviewed and (27%) were from age range of 18-30, (40%) from 31-40, (13%) from 41-50 and (20%) from 51-60.



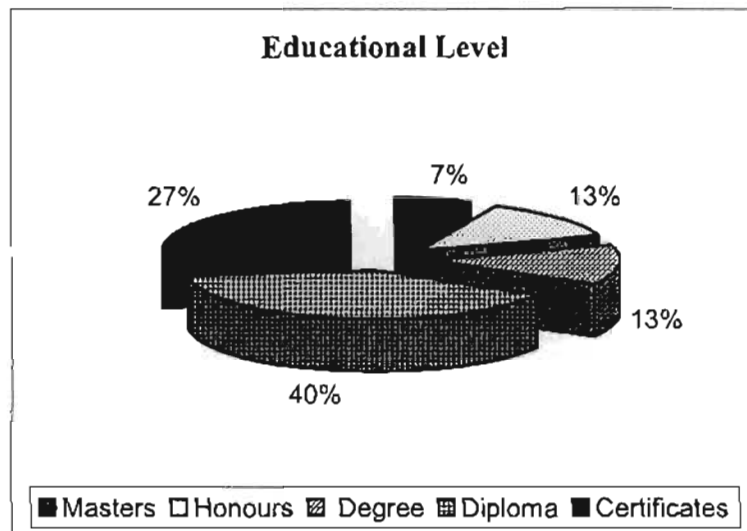
2.2.3 Church Ministries

Their ministries in the church shows that (20%) of the women are qualified pastors, (27%) youth leaders/pastors, (33%) Sunday school teachers and (20%) are in the leadership of the church.



2.2.4 Educational Level

Their education, (7%) are Masters, (13%) Honours Degree, (13%) Degree students, (27%) Diploma level and (40%) are Certificate holders.



These charts are showing the percentages of active women in the church. As it has been pointed out, the stories of eleven women are not for discussion, only four are chosen as the sample in this study as it has been explained earlier because the section will not discuss all of them owing to the limitation of time and space. However, the four women who will be cited will bring the true picture in AFM church.

2. The Stories

These stories show how successful this study is because the stories gave the entire picture of the AFM church in general and women in particular. The researcher used the sub-headings to direct the questions that the participants had provided to get the information that is relevant to this study. These sub-headings helped the researcher to understand what is occurring in every assembly and how women are emerging in the AFM church. This shows that women in the AFM are beginning to make a dent on patriarchy.

2.3. Pastor Lesego's Story

2.3.1 Her Ministry and Ordination

Pastor Lesego became a member of AFM church in 1939. She recognized the calling of God to ministry in her life in 1943. She decided to go through Theological Training in 1964 so that she could serve in the ministry effectively. During that time, women were discouraged from studying because the church's culture interpreted that theological education was good for men only. Despite the church's discouragement that indicated that pastoral education is for men, she still went to a Bible College and

acquired all the necessary qualifications for pastoral ministry. This act was defiance to patriarchy. During her training, women's issues were not mentioned and she knew that she still in the battle. After her training she applied for ordination and that is where she faced the bull by its horns. Sadly, she battled with the reality that women in the AFM church-women are not ordained and indeed the church did not ordain her. She explained that it was because of "the circumstances of the world" that undermined the abilities in women. She however remained a faithful member of the same church and was given the title, a 'Full time Lady Worker' because the title 'Pastor' was meant for male pastors only. In 1970 she was invited to Mamelodi to start Sunday school and youth ministry because the church did not have those kinds of ministries. And it was in these ministries that were designated for women – children and youth that her gifts were felt. Nevertheless, this was victory against patriarchy. She worked under a male pastor though she was un-ordained pastor in her own right.

2.3.2 Her Experience in the church.

I had a painful journey in the AFM church with relevant qualification without recognition just because I am a woman. I was undermined even though God was using me because I was pushed down and those who are defining themselves as my seniors came in front to take glory of what they did not work for.

She continued in that environment because she believed that God would make a way for her pastoral ministry to yield fruits. In her situation, the hope for a better life became her strength. Consequently, she humbly and submissively served under a male pastor, though she had full training for pastoral-hood like her male counterparts for many years, from 1970 up to 1997. The positive thing was that the refusal to ordain her did not alter the fact that she was called to pastoral ministry. She emphasised that ordination was not making her a pastor but she was a pastor by calling and training. Therefore, she did not perceive the pulpit as the only place for giving a sermon or serving God. She gave sermons everywhere while she was patiently waiting for her ordination.

In 1994 when the new post apartheid government came to power in South Africa, miracles happened in the AFM church. Women were recognized as pastors and allowed to be ordained, which became an encouragement to her. This change of

attitude in the AFM can be interpreted as political posturing and a quest for relevance. This therefore made the search for the transformation of patriarchy a political issue more than it was a theological one. Pastor Lesego then was ordained in 1997 though she had qualified for ordination a long time ago. She considered the whole scenario as another step of achievement though she believed that the struggle did not end there. She explained that gender discrimination in the AFM church was not a hidden issue. She says:

I went to the same Bible College with men, studied the same courses, and graduated at the same place, and when we went for practical work, I became less (just because I am a woman) and only men were “called” to ministry.

She goes on to say, “I was given a wrong title, (Full Time Lady Worker) and given a position where the church thought I will sink; (Sunday school and Youth) because they interpreted it as lower level ministry but God lifted me up.” She ministered the word of God to these groups with the mission of building up the church of tomorrow where recognition of everyone would be important. The situation empowered her because she realised the servant hood of God in her life and with God dismantling patriarchy. So, she refused to give up but struggled to be recognised for who she was, a woman and a pastor, by remaining in the church and continuing to preach to youth and Sunday school. She therefore sought to challenge patriarchy from within.

The struggle continued even after her ordination when she was managing a church by herself. There are some “men who still have an African traditional mind,” says Pastor Lesego, who maintains that a woman cannot be the leader of a church. Nevertheless, she gave praise unto the Lord that there are some who fear God and “submit under the leadership of my ministry.” Their submission reminded her of the late pastor Ngidi, (a former AFM pastor and a prophet) who called a meeting for all pastors before his death and declared, “These women are called by God, respect them, know that God is fighting their way through.” Through Pastor Ngidi’s prophetic words, Pastor Lesego considered it as part of her achievement to have shown patience and the knowledge that the one who called her would bring about good results and begin making entrances into the heart of patriarchy to transform it. Most women were encouraged to attend such meetings and some started to concentrate fully on their ministry. The

results of the meetings were not visible yet but women believed that it would happen and time was not their concern. According to Pastor Lesego, women believed that the late Ngidi paved the way for them to be recognised, for they believed that it is only through the Spirit of God that a man can speak for women's recognition especially with regard to ministry. She then gained the strength that carried her through various struggles.

She believes that the presence of women in the AFM Church Board meetings is a result of women's ordination and that a crack, which will result in total change, is being done to patriarchy. She is still hoping for more liberation for women in the church. According to her, these women's participation shapes women's ministry to show that God gives power equally to men and women. She recognises the power that is unfolding day after day. That is why she cannot give-up but occupies her 'rightful' position in the church. She is embracing the motto that says, 'backward never, forward ever' in the ministry because she is determined to see total harmony and transformation of the church before she leaves this world.

2.3.3 An Evaluation on Lesego's Ministry

This story is in line with the story of Rev. Victory Nonvete Mbanjwa who was called at the age of twenty-seven but was ordained when she was seventy-three (Phiri 2000: 139-157). She did not give-up her calling. Again, the story exposes the soft hearts and mature responses of women in many painful situations of oppression by patriarchy. The story shows the strength of women in the church because of their ability to stand fast, with perseverance. Women are now active in public services, such as conducting the Lord's Supper, baptism, burying the dead and serving in marriage counselling. These are part of their achievements of the struggle against patriarchy in the church.

2.4 Lerato's Story

Lerato is a single woman of 40 years old without children. She is a teacher by profession and worked for thirteen years in the Education Department. She is a full member of the AFM church and has a Diploma in ministry, which she obtained from Rhema Bible Training Centre and is currently studying at the College of the AFM church in Johannesburg, Soweto.

2.4.1 Her experience and observation

Lerato said, “It will take a long time for me to recount the difficulties that I went through and which I am going through as a minister without recognition in this church.” The reality is that the nine years of her ministry in the AFM church were fraught with difficulties. According to her observation, the cause of women oppression in the church is men’s ego. Patriarchy cannot accept that women can seriously be pastors. According to her experience, women pastors are just tolerated, not accepted as yet. She asserts in her own words, “It is like the church is tolerating women to exhaust themselves and sit down because they are allegedly weak.” On the other hand women are toiling and trying their best to serve God but the church takes it for granted, and does not acknowledge and honour this effort.

She believes that “women pastors are taken as window dressing in this church, so that the church should be politically correct by allowing women to be in leadership and be allowed to preach.” In clarifying that statement, she said the church is not taking women pastors seriously as yet. The core of this statement was felt when she started the ministry where she realised that she was not really accommodated. But, in the exceptional cases where she was allowed to go a little bit further, the grace of God was recognised in her life. Basically, many difficulties and challenges that women meet in this church are not because they are unable but it is because of their allegedly low status and gender.

During the time of her ministry, she was invited to many conferences to preach and teach the word of God. The invitations came after she suffered the fate of rejection because no male pastors believed in her, because she is a woman and single. Ironically, the pastor who believed that her calling was from God was not from the AFM church. He invited her to speak at a church’s conference. AFM church pastors were invited too and they recognised what God was doing through her. It was from there that she started to receive invitations from the AFM church. She welcomed and appreciated the invitations because her fellow worker’s eyes were opened at last and patriarchy was beginning to see the light of day. She emphasizes that it does not matter how people view you, God will always make a way for you. Though many do not believe in you, one or two would recognise your importance.

Consequently, she was invited to preach in many conferences even in the local Assemblies. She was even involved in evangelistic ministries where ministers preach in evangelistic crusades so as to convert people. She was also involved in conducting Bible Studies for the young people in her assembly, with the mission of helping the youth to commit their lives to God. Throughout her time of ministry she did not have any income. She trusted God for her everyday living and God did it all for her. She gave herself to the service of the church but the church ignored her basic needs. But, because her faith and trust was based fully on God's mercy she did not lose hope for ministry. She is now a student, going through theological training as she did before because the AFM church did not recognise her qualifications that she had attained from Rhema Bible Training. Her courage is a clear indication that nothing will stop her from the call of God, and that patriarchy is not a divine norm for the calling to the ministry.

2.4.2 Struggle for ordination

Just like in many other churches, the AFM church is structured in a way that accommodates patriarchal cultures that disadvantage women as Lerato observed. She believes that primarily the church was trying to side with patriarchal culture, because according to Batswana culture it is an offence for a woman to preach. All the same, in nine years of her ministry, she observed that things have changed within the church, which had imbibed the Batswana culture. Women pastors were given more freedom to govern their own congregational services and were given the right to conduct public services such as funerals, which was hitherto or previously unheard of. According to her observation, women were only allowed to work under the supervision of a male pastor.

2.4.3 Women Ministries and their Abilities

It was not easy for Lerato to comment on women's ministry in the AFM because she indicated that there was no women's ministry in the church. In her view on this issue, she started by looking at the structures of the church, which she felt was the cause of the problem. Looking at this problem, she clarified that although the AFM church has integrated black and white people of South Africa together in the governing body, there are problems when it comes to women's issues. Even in the governing body, she indicated that the committee that exists for women in the AFM does not form part of

the church. The National leadership is aware of it, but is doing nothing about it. It is only seen as a sub-committee of the church in the sense that women's events are not included in the annual calendar of the church.

Hence, there is no genuine or authentic women's ministry in her assembly, which explains why women's issues are not addressed. The only issue that she identified as fully addressed in her church is that of viewing a woman as just a wife of a man and not in her own right as a person. She also mentioned that in her assembly the only practical ministry for women is the one conducted on Thursdays, which she labelled as "a traditional women's day of prayer." It is an indication that the church is not committed to improving women's ministry right from the Governing Body throughout.

Despite the church being exclusively patriarchal in structure, she believes that there are abilities in women. She emphasizes, "I believe without being biased that we as women are the future of the church especially in our crying country South Africa, in the context of HIV/AIDS, high rate of divorce and drug addiction." She stated that compassion should be preached to address issues of concern to people. Further she was also conscious that women are blessed with a compassion whereby they are able to relate to people at the same level and show them hope where there is no hope. So, she believes that only women can carry the church to the next generation. She said, "People need a tender heart to come close to them and help them through their lamentations." It is from this background that she was not totally discouraged by the patriarchal church structure – as cited above.

She called the church to recognise that women are called to the ministry just like men. She used the statement of St. Paul that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 28) to be taken very seriously by the church. She contended this would help the church to value ministry and gifts in women on the same level as with that of men. She went on to suggest that male pastors need to acknowledge women by saying, "I recognize you as a servant of God, called and anointed just like I am, and I will give you the opportunity to express that God has given you;" and this will encourage women to work freely.

She believes that women are not lost in the church and they know what to do even though they are ignored in many cases. They just carry the load, manage the church and comfort those who need comfort in the community and in the church even without having leadership positions in the church. They are looking at Jesus as their model, where women surrounded Him until his last resting place. She feels strongly that women will be part of the church until the church is transformed especially concerning the place of women in God's economy.

2.4.4 How Lerato is overcoming all the hardships.

The strategy that Lerato is using to overcome the hardships in the church is first, to believe in God for the strength she needs. Secondly, she also recognises her calling and takes initiative to go for theological training. In so doing, she made up her mind to lead a different life from that which patriarchal culture and the church has forced her into as a woman. She is developing an inner confidence that the freedom of women is drawing nearer. So, she is able to face the struggles on her journey in the church without despair. The main reason that encouraged her not to challenge the situation beforehand with anger is that "I realized that aggressive reaction against the whole situation alone would not make an impact on the situation or change anything. Instead, I became conscious that it could only give the church the reason not to trust women in ministry."

Though she claim to witnessed some hurting issues that are happening in the church that no one can ignore, such as bad treatment of women as if they do not exist, she refuses to act with haste, which would otherwise have amounted to immaturity. This is an indication that it is not an overnight achievement. However, she allowed the situation to push her closer to God, and prayerfully asked God to help her to carry the burden at a time when she was about to give up. These have helped her to trust God as "a reality not as a religious thing but a comforting presence all the time." Regardless of all that she went through, she is growing to trust God more everyday – fact that clearly points out that challenges can be turned to opportunities and curses can be turned to disguised blessings!

2.4.5 A Word of encouragement to all Women

Lerato is calling all women to continue in prayer, which is their gift from God for all generations for their survival. Looking at South Africa, which is suffering because of many issues, such as, like HIV/AIDS, high rate of divorce and rape, she says South Africa needs women as God's only hope for solutions to the country's problems.

Lerato believes that determination will not stop ways of communicating the gospel of correcting the malpractices in the church of Christ. The word of encouragement goes to her sisters in the ministry by saying that: "those whom I know gave-up their ministries to accommodate the situation in the church, should rise up and follow God's direction to correct the position of the church." She is also encouraging all women not to rest until they experience the hope for South Africa and the church that accommodates the whole Body of Christ.

2.4.6 An Evaluation on Lerato's Ministry.

Lerato's story brought out some sensitive issues of women's oppression. For instance, "women cannot be good leaders without help from men" and that women's ordination is not taken seriously. She also mentioned things that are hidden in the AFM church that need more strategies to overcome the link between patriarchies in the culture as reinforced by the church. It is most likely that people's concept of women's ordination means the end of struggle. According to this view there are more struggles for women in the church than before, because they are now hidden behind an ordination picture that portrays that women are now free, which the above story has sought to disagree with. The comment points directly at the governing body of the AFM church to revisit the structure of the church and consider women as part of the church. This step will help to hasten the liberated community of men and women in the AFM church.

2.5. Mpho's Story

Mpho is 38 years old and is a single mother with three children. She became a member of the AFM church in April 1989 and was baptized in the same church on the 12th of May 1989. She is currently a student undertaking a course in Hotel Management at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

2.5.1 Her Experience in the church

Mpho walked a very lonely road in the AFM church as a faithful member who is giving one tenth of her income. The church did not recognise her because of her single status. She felt like a stranger among members of the church, which promotes marriage before the oneness of the Body of Christ. When the church members go to their groups like couples, youth and Sunday school for various meetings she does not have a place to go. She would just go home even if she wanted to socialise with her own church people. “I can say I did not belong at all because I felt that the church treated me like an enemy,” she said. There was no category of ministry for her as a single unmarried woman.

She asserts that even today, the AFM church does not know what to do with single mothers in the church because there is no ministry for them. This is the group in the church that is left out and it has caused an inferiority complex among the group. This is where she felt that she was not taken as part of the body of Christ, because youth meetings cannot answer issues that she is concerned with. Despite all that, she forced herself to be comfortable with her loneliness in an unconcerned church because she understood that her being in the church is because she is God’s child and called to the ministry for all what it matters. She convinced herself that she had to survive as an individual in this church because she believed that God is on her side as a person. That is what, to her, matters most. She no longer cared about where the church structures and ministry groups positioned her.

2.5.2 Her ministry in the church

Subsequently, Mpho became a responsible, committed and dependable member of the church. This however did not give her full satisfaction as she still believes that she had a higher calling to the ministry of evangelism. Usually or naturally, men conduct this part of the ministry, but Mpho realized that her calling was not determined by the traditions and norms of the church but was from God. So “I broke barriers in the church by receiving invitations from other churches and God used me mightily,” she said. Even today, the church is still regarding her evangelistic ministry to other churches outside the AFM as disrespectful because she did not ask for permission from them, and continues preaching without the church’s permission or license.

At the moment, she is involved in different ministries. For instance, she is leading a youth ministry and is involved in missionary activities with charity homes for the homeless children, to minister the word of God and assist where help is needed, like cleaning the place and bathing children. The other home she is involved in is where the AIDS patients are staying. She is thus ministering, praying and feeding the sick.

2.5.3 A Word of encouragement to AFM Women

She is calling all women of the AFM church to recognize that God has entrusted them with creative minds. In her own word she says,

Women, you have eyes to see different colours, ears to listen carefully, mouths to speak all the positive things and no one can be able to press you down for the era of oppression is now over.

Mpho is calling women to draw strength from within themselves, which she calls an intrinsic motivation to encourage themselves. She sees her life as an inspiration to other women because she successfully refused to accept the tradition (as she calls it) of the church that despises women as human beings, by disregarding their active participation in the church. She also believes that nothing is wrong with her as a woman but is convinced that she is a unique creation of God. Her faith in God motivated her to find her identity thus far and she says, "I am now sure of where I am going though with a lot of struggles."

2.5.4 Evaluation of Mpho's Ministry

In evaluating Mpho's ministry, there is a realization that her story is different from the first two as she is a single mother. However her struggles in the church are not any different from the other two women. Her story also shows that, women's walk on the patriarchal journey is not easy, but those who have to survive patriarchal onslaught will have to be more focussed and believe God is calling them to serve in the church. The AFM women are looking at the struggles against patriarchy as everyday challenges that call for a commitment and determination in order to take the steps to another stage of life.

2.6 Kgalalelo's Story

Kgalalelo is a member of the Church of Acts Assembly. She is a married woman with one son. She has a certificate in Marketing and is currently studying Human Resources Courses. She is working permanently as a secretary in the Police Force. She became a member of the AFM church in 1995. Kgalalelo says that when she took a membership, the wall of shyness was “covering me as a dear friend because of the expectation of patriarchal culture from women” - and that was part of her struggle. She believed in herself but was limited by cultural norms from exploring who she is. Fortunately, the gospel of Jesus Christ unveiled her identity and she was now exposed to the reality of being a child of God with exuberant potential.

2.6.1 Her Encouragement to Seek for Liberation

When she became a member of her church, she realised that patriarchal structures are in every church department. Therefore, it came to her attention that just like in the case of the local cultures, the church is treating women as the weaker sex because of their misinterpretation of the verse that says, “Treat women as weak vessels” (2 Peter 3: 11). She discovered that the church manipulates the wisdom and strength in women by using this verse and refers it to women's bodily structure. In giving her own interpretation of 2 Peter 3: 11 she says that the verse explains how ‘fragile women are created and they need special treatment than men.’ She continued to say,

They need to be handled with care because they have been made from a different fibre from that used to make men. In the real sense, women are strong for the reason that the fibres that they were made from have a storage place of a person (a womb), which make them more special but not weaker. In any case, the world is full of people just because of a woman.

In the above words, Mpho is determined to reject silence, but looks forward to leading the church to a holistic life. Further, she looks at women as incubators that are able to incubate precious ‘thing’ that benefit all. She clarifies it by saying,

If you give a woman a meal she incubates it and gives the family food to eat. When you give her a house, she incubates it and

establishes a home for all. When you give her a sperm, she incubates it and produces a child.

She draws her strength from this knowledge and even from the other women in the church who wanted to see things changed for a better life for men and women. She defines them as women who victoriously turned down the norms of gender imbalance. She was encouraged by daring of women who liberated themselves and became unsettled for not participating in the church, and then she refused to go along with the comfortable place of being a spectator in the church, and took a front step to lead worship. “Today, I am a chief worshipper and that is one of my gifts” she said.

She did not merely settle as a worshipper but she recognised her gift of preaching the gospel. She stands in front of men and women and delivers a sermon, which was hitherto considered abnormal. Again, she does not see the pulpit as the only place to give a sermon. In counselling sessions, at work and at home “I am preaching” she said. That is the freedom that she will not let go easily as she continues to say, “I believe in myself and understand what I am doing because I think before I act. Moreover, I am God’s instrument, not peoples.”

She is not overlooking the fact that the Batswana tradition has disadvantaged women by denying women leadership – as they are rooted from the Batswana patriarchal culture, which says that man is the head of a woman just because “men were born first.” It does not however qualify the contention that men were born first – for as a pre-historic issue, how can one tell whom between the egg and the chicken came before the other? How can we trust our African myths, which are first and foremost informed by patriarchy?

Kgalalelo further acknowledges that even if men could have been created before women or vice versa, this is not equivalent to one gender being more important than the other. She is happy that God has made her to realize that she is a strong part of creation by allowing freedom in her heart despite patriarchy. In that way, she views the presence of men as strength and not necessarily intimidation because she is working towards her rightful position in the church. Though she realized that “some

men in the church are spoilt and are negative about women” she appreciates working with them.

She does not consider some job distribution on the basis of gender division. She believes that everybody, men and women have different gifts and abilities. As a member of the Church Board and as a treasurer, she is contributing in the policy making of the church. Her enthusiasm shows how strong women are and when they hold on to reality and leadership, nothing can stand on their way. Kgalalelo believes that women can undertake various responsibilities because they are tolerant. Their tolerance sometimes is interpreted as foolishness but that does not make them fools.

2.6.2 Words of Encouragement to other Women

Kgalalelo spoke with confidence that women are able, even without men’s help, but because the societal socialisation and the Bible inform them that God created men and women for partnership they allow working together with men. According to her, “women will not admit defeat because they accept trials as challenges.” So, they always bear trials and tribulations, which she realized are difficult with men when she observed that “men are very short tempered, that is, when they are in trials they easily lose hope.” All what she is saying points to the community of men and women who need each other for encouragement in life. She is also stereotyping men just as men do to women.

She continues to reveal that women’s strength is drawn from faith in Jesus who is their hope for life. Using herself as an example she says; “when I pray, I am always encouraged and the passion within me keeps on saying, ‘go on, go on, you can make it, and I press on despite negative situations.” In view of this, she believes that women can do much when they are determined. She encourages them by saying, “stand firm and show that God used you to bring life in this world.”

She does not give women any option for discouragement in their lives because she believes “that will kill the world.” She also believes that the church has been sustained this far because of the presence of women. In this regard, the withdrawal of women from the church, by giving-up will be the end of the church and the whole world. She is aware that there is no easy walk to freedom, but she encourages women to look at

Jesus as their role model. For Jesus' walk in the world was not without struggles but He moved from one level to the other to His destiny - being at the right hand of God in heaven. She trusts that moving from one difficult situation to the other, leads to a destiny of a liberated community of men and women.

2.7 The Analytic Reflection of the Four Stories

Getting to know myself is essentially about enabling women to find a language with which to talk about shared experiences in their gender role, their sexuality and the oppression they suffer because of it. It is the step in giving women back their right to themselves (Eade 1993: 181).

The statement above is real for the women of the AFM church who are the focus of this study. It has been and is still a difficult struggle for women but they are citing patriarchy as that which must be deconstructed in their bid to rejuvenate their efforts to seek for liberation. During the interviews, they have shown the interviewer how free they are in sharing their experiences at their own level and understanding. Indeed, the "rediscovering" of women and the sharing of their experiences is a step forward towards obtaining back their rights to themselves as Eade asserts.

Women's ordination and participation in the Church Board and in other activities of the church have become a turning point. Therefore, they are involved in the church with the attitude of true womanhood to express their talents and abilities for the glory of God. They have realized that it was a sin for patriarchal culture and the church to deprive them of the opportunity to express their God-given qualities. They have accepted who they are and agreed that they are different in bodily form but with the ability to lead. This has helped them to share their stories in the language that they both understand, in their gendered roles. The AFM women's action of participation in the church and society has made the church conscious that women are as capable as any human being created by God. They are showing that every individual is gifted with a rainbow array of moral and spiritual qualities and the church should see and appreciate that.

Through self-discipline and hard work some of these women have attained positions of leadership in the church. They are now addressing many issues that need serious attention, such as lack of church support for their ordination. Despite those issues, they are not just speaking against patriarchy and dehumanisation but they are resisting it through action. The other point that the above stories have portrayed is that education is one of the key issues for positive action in life. Interestingly, they are all professionals but (they) are still continuing with education to equip themselves with more skills for reflection. Their education does not include feminist theology because some are not theologians but their stories challenge the cultural norms and encourage mutuality in the church, the community of men and women of the AFM church that believes that Jesus came to unite the world. Their participation in the church ministries, as their stories have showed, is a sign of hope for unity and they are hoping to see men and women working together in their church.

According to Lesego's story, the reason that she is ordained and managing her own congregation today, is because of the strength that she tapped from God to reach where she is. Her perseverance was not a show-off that she can do something in life, but to serve God's people through a pastoral ministry, which she believes is her authentic calling. She rose with unusual wisdom without competing with anyone. Her focus was to learn from her past and concentrate on the present, where she does not allow any limitation of any patriarchal structure. She served in Sunday school and youth in the church under the title 'Lady Worker' but waited for God to change her circumstances that were blocking her ordination.

The stories have further showed that women's ordination is still a contentious issue in the AFM church. This was highlighted by the story of Lerato where she mentioned that women pastors are taken as window dressing in the church, so as to give a good impression on the church thereby making it "politically correct." It is not genuinely encouraging. However, they do not show frustration in their participation in the church though there are still some pockets of struggle.

Again, Mpho who completely believes that she is called for evangelistic ministry was not stopped by any patriarchal church structure. Her story shows that her ministry is prospering and she has freedom to serve God according to the leadership of God's

Spirit. She takes the command of Christ very seriously, “Go unto the world and make disciples ...” (Mark 16: 15) and ironically ignores the command of the AFM church that advocates that evangelism is for men only.

Further, the story of Kgalalelo shows that women are free to serve the Lord in the midst of male passive resistance. She confirmed it in how she views men’s presence; that they are no longer an intimidation to some of the AFM churchwomen. Actually, the stories show that against all odds, women are making breakthroughs in the AFM church. They have reached beyond the social and racial stereotyping that was internalised by predecessors. According to the voices of the AFM churchwomen in this study, women felt the weight of patriarchal tradition but their faith in God and quest for improving themselves and their lot broke through the pains. This shows that instead of women accepting the bonds of patriarchal culture, they are challenging it by acting with their conscience. Gradually their voices were heard; in fact, they are recognized though with some difficulties. This has made history in the AFM church that women are getting acknowledged by both genders as having been anointed just way as men. It is clear that women in these stories managed to create the space for themselves in the church structure to deal with their issues.

The voices of these women are audible and their contributions need not get forgotten in the AFM church just like a woman without a name in the Bible who ministered to Jesus by anointing Him with alabaster perfume. Lastly, the stories show spiritual intuition that the church should start to cultivate to its advantage. This means that they are clearly conscious in what they are doing or saying. It is this intuition that makes the AFM women work towards the liberated community of men and women with love and respect. In other words, the AFM churchwomen are making the church a better place that is bringing healing not only to them but also to whole communities. In this respect, the AFM women took further what African Women theologians addressed by acting on it, to build the community of men and women as God created them at the beginning and as it is reflected. As a consequence, the main desire of the researcher is to search for more voices of the AFM churchwomen who are resisting patriarchal dehumanisation so that others may be encouraged by their stories and to discover the power they have to control their lives and to improve their situations. It is held in this study that women are not in the leadership of the church or in ministries to boast, but

to serve God and to transform the church to be holistic – and make it reflect the true image of God the creator.

According to these stories, the participation of women in the AFM church brings life and healing to the Body of Christ. Therefore the church should make an effort to help women to speak more about their issues without any intimidation whatsoever. Having said that, it is however important to acknowledge that the AFM women are working for a liberated church where the Spirit of God would be at work, where all are equal before the Lord. They are appreciating Ruether's (1983: 213) definition of the church as the place

Where the good news of liberation from sexism is preached,
where the Spirit is present to empower us, to renounce
patriarchy, where the community committed to the new life of
mutuality is gathered together and nurtured and where the
community is spreading this vision and struggle to others.

This statement is very important because it addresses the concerns and the stumbling blocks for women in the church ministry such as sexism, patriarchy and exclusiveness. The poor structuring of the church have caused all this pain in women. The church has failed to recognise the gifts and talents of women and failed to involve them fully in leadership in the life of the church at all levels (Phiri 1997: 72) - as will be seen in the following chapters.

2.8 Conclusion

On the whole, the chapter has showed the process of women's self-discovery. In particular, the women's stories have shown the process of discovery of self whereby a woman confronts the depths of her own being to experience who she is in the midst of a resilient and yet surmountable patriarchy. These women discovered from their struggles that believing in themselves is the secret to their liberation. Their stories have shown that every person is responsible for allowing change in her/his lives and have shown that women have had the power to change their situation though they have not been conscious of it. They have now realised that God is within them, so they re-interpret scriptures in their context to answer their experiences. Therefore

women in this study have been shown to be using their personal experiences to reclaim themselves by defining themselves. The stories are encouraging women to draw their strength from within - something, which they call an intensive/ intrinsic motivation.

Consequently, women have raised some important issues, which includes the view that ordination is not yet accepted fully in the church. That is, women's issues are not shared in the pulpit but shared in their meetings. They also shared their commitment in the church, which as noted, is insensitive to their plight. Moreover, women have shown the growth in their life where they do not see any gender as more important than the other but acknowledging God given gifts in each other's life. They do not acknowledge the negligence of the church. Despite the neglect of women's experiences by the church, this chapter has shown the positive part of women who discovered themselves. They have discovered the uniqueness of their lives and they value their presences in the church. Again, they believe they are the instruments of the new life in the church. Furthermore, the stories have showed that women are measured according to men. Men are still the norm, for example '... like I am ... I will give you the opportunity' in Lerato's story. Thus as noted above, men like to control but women are in turn seeking to reclaim their rights by refusing to be defined by men. Consequently, they are challenging the church to obtain the strategy to work together to build a "new" church that benefits all. Again, their stories encourage other women to liberate themselves. May all women honour and take courage from these women.

Having heard the stories from the selected women members of the AFM church, the chapter has given us the true picture of the AFM church – that needs deconstruction and reconstruction in order to reflect image of God. Subsequently, it has prepared us to study the third chapter on the anthropology of "women and patriarchy."

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN AND PATRIARCHY

3.1. Introduction

Having seen how women are attempting to overcome patriarchy in the previous two chapters, this chapter describes issues that concern the patriarchal system in the AFM church, which are oppressive to women. Further, the chapter describes women's journeys within and outside the boundaries of a patriarchal system. It also emphasises how women have been marginalized by patriarchal cultures, religions, economics, education and politics. The chapter thus addresses: women's experiences and African culture, women's experiences of patriarchal culture and women's experiences of patriarchy in the church.

The experiences of women in the Church have been marked by struggle with patriarchal structures. Oduyoye (1990: 56) has compared it with the stone that was in front of the entrance of Jesus' tomb that was too heavy to be rolled away. However, the researcher, as a member of the AFM church, believes that as the stone was rolled away by God, with the help of the same God, patriarchy will be rolled away from the AFM church though it will be a lengthy process. Again, looking at the theology of Golgotha there is no spiritual journey without stumbling blocks (Njoroge 1996: 9).

However, as noted in chapter two, it is also acknowledged in this chapter that in the AFM Church, some women are seeking liberation despite the fact that they are going through patriarchal domination. They are resisting what patriarchy is forcing them to be and they are trying to be the being that they were created to be.

3.2. Women's experiences and African culture

The word culture means a way of life in a particular community in a given area. It includes the way we name children and the language we speak, the food we eat and the manner of dress, ethics and values as well as thought forms and beliefs. It is something that a person learns from his or her parents while s/he grows up and because culture is dynamic it includes what we learn every day. Anthony Giddens (1996: 48) has a very fair definition on culture. He defines culture as something that

consists of the values that the members of a given group hold, the norms they follow and the material goods they create. Therefore, African women are or will always embrace and protect culture because it gives them their identity. Though African women broke the silence by speaking for themselves, they are still part of African culture. Musimbi Kanyoro (2002: 35) affirms that by saying,

We discovered that we are heavily attached to traditions and cultures and that we must name these as subjects of analysis and critique within the field of Theology.

Seen in Kanyoro's view, patriarchal culture is observed to be a social custom and traditional institution, which forms part of support systems for misogyny which fuel the advocacy of violence against women. These systems such as family, marriage and cultural ceremonies and teachings encourage and exonerate men to be abusive to women. As a person who has been passionate in African culture, the researcher has some expectations on how women should respond to men's treatment, which unfortunately excludes women from many privileges in life. This makes women to submit to choices made for them and to conform to a role in society that is determined for them by men even to the point where they become invisible as persons. Similarly, Kanyoro (1996: 5) argues that,

Culture is the leading issue, which has pre-occupied the theology of African women. Culture has silenced many women in Africa and made us unable to experience the liberating promises of God.

Njoroge (1997: 81) agrees with Njoroge's view when she holds that within African culture, which gives us identity, negative cultural practices are also prevalent – for example, patriarchy. She defines patriarchy as “destructive powerhouse, with systematic and normative inequalities as its hallmark.” According to Njoroge this affects the rest of the created order. She goes on to say that “its roots are well established in the society as well as in the church and to tackle this problem will need well equipped and committed men and women to bring patriarchy to its end” (Njoroge 1997: 81).

In attempting to demonstrate how the destructive nature of the 'powerhouse' of patriarchy could be, the AFM church made a choice for Pastor Lesego to be Sunday school teacher and youth leader, though she was a qualified pastor (see chapter two). She says, 'I was undermined and pushed down, and those who are defining themselves as my seniors came in front to take the glory for what they did not work for.' She submitted to the leadership of the church that was oppressive without complaint. This is an example that patriarchy is rooted in African culture, nevertheless some women are resisting it.

Wu (2003: 9) says that the wife's body is the property of her husband. This is confirmed in Phiri (2002: 24) quoting Malinga's story of an African man who was proud to share how he was treating his wife. And according to this story, the African man explained plainly, thus,

In African culture my wife is not my equal. She is my property.
She is like one of my children. I have paid *lobola* (dowry) for
her. Therefore we cannot be equals.

Accordingly, *lobola* "licenced" the husbands to do as they like with their wives in some families. In Setswana culture it is believed that men who abuse women are living up to cultural standards, so it was normal to witness a husband beating his wife in the neighbourhood, even in public. This behaviour is common in all families even the educated ones. Coward (1997: 5) proved it by writing about the confession of an educated man who confidently said, "I am educated but I beat my wife if she makes a mistake. This is the only way of running the house. If we do not beat them they will not maintain the house well." This control over women within the family context is one of the factors that encourage violence. It confirms that men are using their physical might to enforce their dominance over women. And as noted above, they even use *lobola* as a license to control their wives, as they feel necessary.

The behaviour of men as quoted above undermines the potential of women in the families because it has encouraged the exclusion of female voices in the families. In view of this, it is obvious that the family is not ideally structured, because unless both man and woman run it, it is an incomplete entity. It also unveils the patriarchal social

system, it crushes women and their personalities, thereby creating disharmony and breaking up families. Though conditions have been hard for women, as the ongoing research has strived to show, they have not however, folded their hands and given up; rather they have continued to uphold their responsibility to the community in the church, in their families, and throughout the country as a whole. Seen in this light, they do it by the sweat of their brows and they are managing their families without the help of their husbands who claim to be in control of families according to cultural norms.

Culturally, the girl-child was discriminated against from her very birth because parents in a patriarchal society prefer a boy-child for education rather than a girl-child. This puts girls in a vulnerable position as illiteracy, prostitution and early marriages reduce their bargaining power. That is why women learn at an early age that men are their protectors. Customarily a girl child is seen as an unwanted addition in the family. She will be tolerated until she gets married, not to someone of her own will, but to an elderly husband who was chosen for her by the family. African customs “forbid a girl to question a male person, however unreasonable he appears to be” (Oduyoye 1995: 54). This of course means that a girl finds herself in double yoke. She must not question adult authority as a young person, and since she is usually married to an older man, her subordinate position is doubly established. “She makes no choices, except as pertaining to her sphere of operation as a housekeeper or as a homemaker. What she thinks and how she sees life are always never ascertained in the conjugal home, usually not until she reaches the position of the oldest member of her family” (Oduyoye 1995: 54). This brings us to the conclusion that a girl-child grows up knowing her duties but not her rights as a person.

Oduyoye asserts, “Common traditional non-formal education aims at preparing a girl for her future home so that she does not become useless in society or a liability to her future husband” (1995: 53). This agrees with what Khin Thida Nyunt affirms that, “When the woman is pregnant, she usually wishes that the baby would be a girl because she will help her with housework” (2004: 19). Women’s happiness that the girl is born in the family explains that their workload is too heavy for them so it is only logical that they pray that another ‘helper’ comes to team up with them in reducing the workload. It also means that the value of the girl child is mainly seen as

she serves which prepares them for marriage. Oduyoye contends that a woman's life is defined as male-centred and community oriented; she achieves nothing if she fails in this respect (1995: 53). Phiri confirms this by saying that “women are valued not for what they are but for what they can produce for the society” (1997: 71). This shows that gender plays an important role in the activities that are attributed to women. Additionally, women are expected to get what is needed out of the provision store, tread the mill and do the cooking so that the food tastes good for the husband (discussion with Khawulani Ntuli: 10/ 08/2004).

According to the Batswana culture, wives are told on the wedding day not to ask about their husbands' whereabouts. In the Setswana version it says, *Monna ga a botswe gore o ya kae, le gore otswa kae*, (A husband is not asked where he is going nor where he comes from). Ironically, men always want to know where their wives have been whom they were with and what they were doing. Pagelow acknowledges the state of affairs by asserting that husbands monitor their wives' movements and they must account for any extra time spent away (1984: 309-310). This is very common and is also taken to the extent that the husbands choose friends for their wives. The sad part was that this action was believed to be a sign of the love of the husband for the wife. In the Batswana culture, it is common that men are jealous or protective and it is how they demonstrate their love to their wives. Therefore, (*manna o bontsha mosadi wa gagwe gore o rata ka nnete ka gonna lefufa*), “A husband shows his love to his wife by being jealous.” That has made some women to depend on men completely for physical protection even though they abuse them on an almost daily basis.

On the other hand, boys are not supposed to cry in public even when they get hurt because they should grow up in the notion that they are the heads of the family. And on that account, they should copy the behaviour of their fathers that “fathers do not cry” because crying is associated with feminine behaviour. That is why Archer and Lloyd (1985: 220) have attempted to prove that children at six months were responding according to their gender – as the society has socialized them. They narrate a story of mothers who were invited in one laboratory to play with babies who were dressed either as a girl or a boy. When the baby is dressed as a boy, the women responded to the baby's initiatives with physical action and play. But when the same

baby appeared dressed as a girl and did the same thing, the women soothed and comforted her/him. This was an encouragement to the boys to fight even when they are aware of their inability to do so, while girls were to respect themselves and be silent and calm, which encourages submissiveness.

Box argued that for one to be called a man, he should be strong, powerful and independent (1983: 45). This notion gives the picture that for one to be a woman she should be weak, powerless and dependent. This patriarchal notion has promoted the abuse of women from the home state of affairs because they are expected to be weak, powerless and dependent, starting in the home. This gives the picture that the main reason that culture denied girls education was because girls were seen as useless people in the family, so they just had to prepare them to leave for another family by way of marriage.

Again women in a patriarchal society are not treated with respect but as possessions. They are told to be obedient to God by obeying their social superiors, as men think of themselves as superior to women and that is why they did not see any good in them. Gnanadason (1993: 8) asserts that,

... a woman is conditioned from the moment she is born into accepting that her only purpose in life is to be married at all costs. This implies submissiveness to a man no matter how cruel or violent he may be.

Gnanadason's statement is echoed in the Batswana culture where a woman was trained from childhood that she had to be weak and respectable and to be married. Girls are trained to be what patriarchy wants them to be. Both parents teach girls that to be happy wives must not ask anything for themselves. In all the social gatherings girls are given only two messages, that is, be a good girl, and become a good mother as if it is the only thing that women can do in life. But as chapter one set our hypothesis, this study agrees that women have a potential in life that they should exploit in our bid to build a modern Africa that will be the cradle of humanity.

Our contention that there is untapped ability in women is seen in the fact that many women act as breadwinners in their families even when some of their husbands, who should “naturally” be ‘breadwinners’ - as “culture” dictates, are still alive. Narayan (2000: 202) asserts that, “the so-called ‘bread-winners’ of the family are sometimes migrant workers, or sometimes present but do not contribute financially to the household.” In South Africa for instance, some husbands are unable to maintain their families due to lack of jobs. It is confirmed that “some husbands in the families fail completely even to raise money to pay their own taxes, buy basic essentials such as clothes, soap, salt and pay school fees for their children” (Besigye. 2002: 2). Therefore, women resort to small-scale business, by selling food crops and vegetables, second-hand clothes in market places and teaming up with women's groups and societies, which provide affordable loans to boost their small businesses. The whole responsibility for the family is in the hands of women and out of their sweat they do their best to maintain their families. In other words, women are not children and will not be, because they are able to care for their children and husbands independently, though patriarchy tends to ignore that fact.

On many occasions, women experience oppression in the name of love for their husbands and children. Again, this is because of the illusion about being perfect wives, and that has pushed some of them to the periphery. Hooks explains women's position as a place of systematic devaluation. She says: “to be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body” (1984: ix). In reality, the AFM churchwomen became part of the Church but were not part of the decision-making team in the church for a long time. The cited stories in chapter two evidences this statement. For example, Pastor Lesego, in this study, was treated just like someone who cannot contribute to church matters. Hook's view is evidence to the fact that women were not part of the church because the significance of women was cheapened and overlooked, which can be likened to the life of Jesus, who became a servant leader – a model for women. This explains that to be a servant is not to be lowered as African tradition is doing. The AFM churchwomen's recognition of Jesus in their lives encouraged them to participate in the church despite the abusive structure and patriarchy; and they are participating in their right positions in the church of Christ.

Women experiences in the church are similar to what they go through in the Batswana

culture. For example, most rituals in the Batswana culture always seem to include the suffering of women in the community. Women are forced to drink traditional medicines after the death of their husband because culture believes that they are dirty and they will bring bad luck in the family. They are not allowed to have any relationship with a man until a year is over after the death of their husband. In contrast to this, men can do whatever they want to do after the death of their wives even to get married before a year is over. This does not make sense, for if the husband and wife were one in marriage then they should mourn the same way if one dies before the other. Again, it encourages the wrong perception that men are better than women.

Furthermore, Batswana patriarchal culture does not allow women to conduct public services such as funerals and weddings. This then has affected them in the church - where their suffering is justified by their loyalty to the church. Their silence is enforced by the advice they receive from male spiritual leaders. Pastor Lesego was given a lower position in the church though she was highly qualified – which amounts to an attempt at silencing her in a way. Nevertheless, that did not mean that patriarchy succeeded in blocking women from participation in the church, because some AFM women who shared their stories in this research resisted by speaking out and participating in the church leadership.

3.2.1. Sexism in Africa: Gender and Sexuality

Sexuality is the term that is concerned with the biological, psychological, sociological and spiritual variables of life that affect personality development and interpersonal relations. It includes one's self-perception, self-esteem, personal history, personality, concept of love and intimacy, body image etc. Sexuality is one of the serious issues in African culture. African cultural assumptions on issues of sexuality are a clear indication that sexuality is an issue that advocates the oppression of women in Africa. In this regard, Oduyoye (1992: 138) asserts that,

Depending on the woman's docility or assertiveness, the myth portrays a woman in two categories, if passive she is noble, saintly and pure, and inspires men. If assertive then she is evil, distracting a man from his religious and worldly pursuits...

African myths and sexuality portrayed women as being responsible for all the evil in the world and for the rift between God and humanity. Just because of their sex, women in Africa experience unfair treatment in various spheres of their lives because even the Church is very suspicious of any mention of gender equality. They compare it to rebelliousness, disobedience, man-haters and havoc-creators. Musimbi Kanyoro (2002: 98) argues that,

Women blame themselves for being self-promoting if they speak out, and those who do speak out are branded with such names as 'feminist,' which to many Church people seems to mean a bad woman. So, most women suffered in silence, fearing that if they were to speak out, they would lose respect and embarrass themselves and their Churches.

Besides the myths, there are also taboos, which are closely related to the sexuality of the persons in a community. In general, taboos on menstruating women are observed all over Africa. The Batswana culture consider women ritually unclean during their menses. Menstruating women were expect to remain separated from men, especially chiefs. They were not allowed to prepare food for chiefs, sometimes not even for their husbands and men going on business trips. Mostly the women were relegated to an outside hut or asked to keep away from areas where men were. Again, they were not allowed to participate in religious activities. For example, they were not allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. Although most myths and taboos in the African context may sound puzzling to people from other parts of the world, it is clear that they have rules that are largely in favour of men and against women.

In the Batswana culture, male domination was accepted as a way of life and this was evident even in the traditional behaviours and customs such as sexual initiatory practices. Young girls were taught that the sexuality of women is the pride of men. Even in marriages women were not allowed to seek for their own sexual gratification. Indeed a woman who becomes sexually aroused may not, as a rule, directly invite her partner to sexual pleasure. In so doing, she would seem too sensually inclined, and thus vulnerable to the temptations of misconduct and adultery. It is clear that sex is for

men, not for both partners as man and woman. In relation to that, Dalin points out that the life-nourishing method of 'bedroom art' treats women only as a tool for men to train his body by absorbing women essence. Men's nourishing and strengthening are the sole concern, without any consideration of the well-being of women or the responsibility for posterity (1993: 368).

This has led to a very cruel practice of circumcising girls at an early age in some parts of Africa. They cut off the part that gives her sexual pleasure, the clitoris. That is why some girls wish they were born as men instead of women - according to the research that was conducted in Nigeria. Nasimiyu-Wasike confirms this in Oduyoye and Kanyoro, showing the results of the research among young and old, male and female. "Forty-eight percent of the girls wanted to be born as boys whereas only six percent of boys wanted to be born as girls" (1992: 112). This shows how women are treated badly in culture that takes away their right of being who they are, because of the stereotypes that are rooted in patriarchal anthropology that define women.

3.2.2 Widowhood

Widowhood is one practice that belittles women just like domestic violence in Batswana culture. Mostly, when the husband dies, his wife mourns him for a year in black clothes, some in blue,¹⁰ which is itself a torture or a punishment that ironically befits the murderer of the husband. She is not allowed to change her mourning clothes and should stay indoors for three months without relating to people who are not members of the family. She would be given traditional medication to prevent bad-luck in the family. Sadly, she is made to use mats rather than her bed. This is more of a punishment than a consolation.

The situation is further worsened by other issues such as the inheritance, whereby a woman is not allowed to inherit the material assets like the house and land of the family. When a woman is not yet married and the parents died, the properties would be for the male child even if he happens to be a last-born. When the parents are still alive, only the male child can stay at home until both parents die even though he did

¹⁰ The difference in the color of clothes depends on which church one belongs to. Mostly, the Apostolic Churches uses blue and white clothes.

not contribute anything for the property to be found. Like any other property, a woman was not expected to have a say as to what should happen because her superiors (men) will make the decision. This amounts to robbery. It is no wonder that most African societies did not see any problem with such behaviours.

3.3. Women's experience of patriarchy in the Bible

It has been argued by feminist scholars that patriarchy existed in the Biblical worldview. This has led many male traditionalists to argue that God is the architect of patriarchy. An examination of male Jewish morning prayers explains why it has been argued that patriarchy is God's creation. According to Talmud, Jewish men could pray and say, "I thank you God for you did not make me a woman, a slave or a Gentile." Mollenkott also mentioned that, "males were taught to thank God daily that they are males" (1988: 2).

Similarly, in the Old Testament (refer to the Mosaic Law), wives were seen as the property of the husband. According to the ninth and the tenth commandments, a woman was counted among the possessions of the man, which are a house, wife, servants, donkeys, and other things (Exodus 20: 17) that really shows the very heavy male-dominated structure in the Bible. In support to that Kiven Harris (1984: 31) lashes out that women,

are portrayed in the Bible quite consistently as appendages of men; as possessions of men; as goods which may be sold, disposed of; given away, traded and even as things which, in particular situations are better be seen but not heard; and even as things which in particular situations are better not even seen.

This shows that scriptures are shaped and influenced by Jewish culture and religion, which is well known for its androcentricism.

Biblical culture designated the place and role of the women on the basis of her body that she is physically and mentally weak so she should be treated as a child. Kgalalelo cites an example when she argues that there is misunderstanding in 2 Peter 3: 18 because it is a text that is misused to treat women like children. Mpho advances by

accepting that women are uniquely created and nothing is wrong with them (see her story in chapter two). They are just different, not weak and this shows that it is unfair to be judged as weak even in the mind. In this regard, there is need to revise the traditional structure in the AFM that is patriarchal and hierarchical which churchwomen are familiar with. For indeed, it is not denied that the power is always in the hands of men. Even in religious organizations the hierarchical structure limits the rights of the individuals, especially women. The Bible is often misused in our churches for the benefit of men. Thus one female student said, “The problem appears to be that if one takes the Bible seriously and honestly one must come to the reluctant conclusion that there is sexual hierarchy in the Bible” (Furlong 1984: 44). No one can hide this notion because it is conspicuous everywhere, especially in the church. This however calls for new social –cultural hermeneutics.

Biblically, the AFM church still holds to the belief that women are inferior to men. They are not taken seriously in their ministry as Lerato argued. She said they are just as window dressing in the church and being tolerated to exhaust themselves and sit down. Oduyoye affirms this perception by asserting that:

It is not unusual to hear negative reminders of what the Bible says about women instead of promoting a new style of life appropriate to people who are living with God who has made all things new. The churches in Africa continue to use the Hebrew Scriptures and the epistles of Saint Paul to reinforce the norms of traditional religion and culture (1995: 173-175).

Nevertheless, some women of the AFM church are resisting such sermons by reinterpreting those scriptures to accommodate all members of the church. The scriptures are thus reinterpreted in women’s context to affirm their humanity and to accept the reality of who they are – as *Imago Dei*.

Again, the AFM churchwomen do not doubt that the Bible plays an important role in the lives of many and it is seen as the source of the solution to their problems. Banana agrees with this statement for he recognizes the Bible as an important book of the church and that it includes a “liberating message.... (1993: 29).” Banana’s statement

strikes a chord with AFM churchwomen who have also discovered the liberating scriptures in the Bible and they are working towards the liberation of the church through the same Bible. The clear problem with the Bible is that it was written and translated within an andocentric cultural background. For example, in the King James Version, which is the version that is used in the AFM church, the word 'man' is used to refer to all human beings. Male pronouns are meant to apply wrongly to all people. This has been so for a very long time. Abbey asserts "for many centuries, the image of God as male has been accepted almost without question" (2001: 150). That is the reason the women of AFM church are resisting the misinterpretation of the Bible because they have discovered that the interpretation of the Bible is not God's word but the interpreters,' so it is not infallible and that is why they are re-interpreting it.

Women have been persistent in resisting misinterpretation of the Bible and the patriarchal structure in the AFM church. They have continued making efforts to participate in the church and the society. This shows that they are unique individuals and God deals with them in a special way. It also relates well with Oduyoye's statement that women's solidarity is "through the eyes of Jesus" (2001: 83). The eyes of Jesus sparkle with mercy and truth, love and compassion, inclusiveness and liberation. It also ties well with Lerato's story from the previous chapter where she called the church to take Galatians 3: 28 seriously because through the help of Jesus, women are able to understand that they are all equal with other humans before God. This is the confirmation that even if they are shaken by patriarchal socialisations that define our societies; they cannot give up their humanity.

According to Mollenkott, at the historical time of the birth of Jesus, the status of women was still low. She says that women were restricted to the level of education that they were allowed to attain. She goes on to say that women were not permitted to read from the Torah during prayer services because of the dignity of the congregation. Women were not even allowed to pray aloud at their own table. They were also not allowed to view the sacrifices that male priests performed in the Temple. It was so irrational that it went to an extent of pronouncing a curse on any man who allowed his wife to recite a blessing over wine on behalf of the whole family. Some even considered it preferable to burn the Torah rather than to place it in female hands (Mollenkott 1988: 2). My experience has shown me that this is how the AFM church

perceived women. They were not allowed to open the service with a word of prayer; rather they were allowed to lead songs during the service. Nevertheless, AFM women took that as one opportunity to serve God.

In contrast, Jesus allowed women to do everything even though His disciples were not comfortable with it. This is evidenced by their astonishment when they found Him discussing theological matters with the Samaritan woman in John 4: 27, "...and they were greatly surprised to find Him talking with a woman." They could not imagine a Jewish rabbi¹¹ speaking to a woman whom they considered evil. Despite all that, Jesus treated women in a remarkable way. He allowed them to sit at His feet. He allowed them to participate in ministry. Jesus was involved with women until his last day in this world – that is, even after resurrection (Matthew 28).

3.4 Women's Experiences of Patriarchy in the Church

Conversely, women in the church are treated unfairly the same as in the rest of the society even though they are mostly a majority in churches. They are treated as inferior and are often excluded in high positions of the church. However, Paul writes in Galatians.3: 26-27, "For in Christ we use baptism and we are a new creation." This means that because in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, female nor male, we are all made equal before God.

From the stories of women in this study, as were discussed in chapter 2; one sees the church as one of the institutions that are oppressive to women. Incidentally, women in the church are perceived as nothing except for what they can do to benefit the church. Ramodibe (1998: 17) tabulates few things that the church needs from women. She asserts,

This church, the male dominated church, wants women but does not need them. Women are wanted because they are workers (cleaning the church, making cakes, fundraising, etc.) for the comfort of men. Men are like Pharaoh who wanted the children of Israel as slaves, but did not need them as people.

Despite the above factual analysis, the AFM churchwomen are sensitising the church to the fact that women and men are equal in the eyes of God, created in God's image, and any argument that goes against this makes Genesis 1: 26 a lie. For example, Pastor Lesego is managing her own assembly where she performs all services in the church. Women today are reading and interpreting scriptures in their context, and still are proud to be Africans. In support of those women's stories some verses were used to oppress them. And again, African women were still faced with many challenges inside the churches and in the community. They fought against domination by men who defined their lives, and again fought against white domination, which held that by being black, one is inferior and cannot think for him/herself. They also experienced poverty, disease, civil wars and the repercussions that disrupted family lives. As a result, in the church, just as at home, the woman was relegated to the periphery.

The AFM church's doctrinal issues were decided by men and mostly emphasise the supremacy of the man above the woman, but women continued to be part of the church. The reality is that the church did not and continues to deny women the dignity that they deserve as human beings. Additionally, the interpretation of sin and evil has always tended to focus on women and their sexuality. Indeed, the writings of the early church fathers portrayed women as sinners. An illustration on this: according to Clement of Alexandria, women and men are identical as far as virtue is concerned, except when it comes to their nature. The male sex is therefore called to a higher capacity of knowledge than the female. He continues to argue that he is not saying that women's nature is the same as that of men. Since there is sameness respect of the soul, women will attain the same virtue. However, since there is a difference with regard to the peculiar construction of the body (he means pregnancy and child bearing), she is destined for child bearing and house keeping (Heine 1987:34-35).

In addition, according to Ruether, the prominent church father, Thomas Aquinas, did not acknowledge the full humanity of a woman. He believed that a woman received her soul directly from God and this is what makes her a bearer of God's image. In spite of this, a woman is not equal to a man. According to this line of thinking, just

¹¹ Jewish teachers or scholars qualified to rule on questions of Jewish law. They are the chief religious

like Augustine's contemplation, to be truly human is to be male. Aquinas continued the Augustinian tradition that only men are truly human, and by going further to justify the inferiority of women using a pseudo-biological argument whereby he referred to the 'subversion by female matters' to produce a 'defective human species' - female (Ruether 1983: 96). Ruether builds this argument further by stating that according to Thomas Aquinas, a woman was inferior in every way. This includes a weak body being less capable of reasoning and morally inferior. This inferiority, he asserted, is compounded by sin.

Further, Gnanadason (1998: 70) quotes Tertullian (c.160-c.225 AD) accusing women. He says,

Women you are the devil's gateway, you have led astray the one whom the devil would not dare attack directly. It is your fault (*that*) the Son of God had to die; you should always be in mourning and rags.

This is an unfair accusation because the real essence of the matter is that a man who was close to Jesus and a disciple, Judas Iscariot, betrayed him (Matt. 26: 47-49). Ironically, evil was blamed on women and resulted in the negative view of them that has been passed on from one generation to the other and it accounts for women's negative experience in the church. Even the scriptural texts were misinterpreted to perpetuate patriarchal dominion in the church that encouraged the voicelessness of women inside the church. As in the secular setting, a woman's worth was defined for her by those who call themselves 'heads' over her. God was synonymous with the male species and the sin of Adam and Eve (in the Garden of Eden) brands all female as evil. The fact of the matter is, when Adam and Eve fell into sin, God punished both of them, for Eve the punishment includes dominion by Adam, "...your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen.3: 16).

The dominant church interpretation of Genesis 3: 16 suggest that God wanted men to exercise dominion over women. This however in itself is a repetition of Adam's sin, by blaming a woman, "the woman you put here with me gave me the fruit, and I ate

officials who are trained usually in Synagogues.

it" (Gen.3: 12), instead of confessing it as his own. The story itself hardly has that meaning. In the mean time, Genesis 3: 6 shows that Adam was present at the snake's conversation with Eve, "...the man was with her." In this case Adam agreed to that which happened, so he is as guilty as Eve.

Nonetheless, we should notice that when God pronounced that punishment, it was out of anger and this was a curse. The question that comes out of this today is, 'can we continue to live under the curse?' No. For Jesus dealt once and for all with all sins on the cross (Galatians 3: 13). For as St. Paul tells us, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'cursed is everyone who is hung on the tree.' He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the spirit" (Galatians 3: 13-14). Women of the AFM church believe the above point and that justifies their resistance to the patriarchal domination. Indeed, Mpho showed a powerful move of breaking the barrier in the church by receiving invitations from other churches to evangelise as part of her calling (see chapter two on interview with Mpho).

Gnanadason identifies patriarchy as a system of "graded subjugation" in which some have power over others. According to Gnanadason a man was to regard a woman as representing a part of himself that must be repressed and it was quite reasonable to keep her under control, to prevent another fall into sin and to maintain order (1993: 4). This implies that the fall of humanity in Genesis 3 was heavily attributed to a woman and this led to the wrong conclusion that women have an inferior nature and they should continue under punishment for that 'original sin.' To this, Ruether adds that, "this pattern of patriarchal anthropology can be illustrated in the entire line of classical Christian theology from ancient to (*the*) modern time" (1983: 95).

In relation to that, Phiri confirms that when she talks of Chewa Christian initiation where the girls were being prepared to take up their future roles as mothers (2000: 85). In this respect, women thought this oppression gave glory to God and so they became silent in all situations. Gnanadason (1993: 1) further proves this statement by quoting one priest who was counselling a woman who was battered by her husband several times. He said to the woman,

Go back to him...learn to adjust to his moods...don't do anything that will provoke his anger... Christ suffered and died for you on the cross... Can't you bear some suffering too?

The priest was sincere about the suffering of Jesus on the cross, but he forgot that Jesus has moved away from the cross to resurrection, which is a guarantee for women to move away from cultural norms of suffering for better living as human beings. The study is not suggesting that Jesus suffered because he wanted women to suffer rather it takes Jesus sufferings as a liberative tool for women's lives. This suffering of Christ also provides women with an opportunity to reconstruct themselves and share the joys of his resurrection. For Christ himself went on to build his body (the church and society) upon his resurrection. Phiri (1998: 14) give an emphasis to it when she says,

Christ the liberator (*and the re-builder*) does not call African women to remain at the cross and suffer with Him. They are called to climb the cross and be lifted up to view the world with Jesus.

What the priest above did was to encourage staying silent in an abusive marriage. This is one of the reasons that even today, some women are reluctant to break the silence on the abusive situations that characterise their families, because the Church has unfortunately been in solidarity with it for a long time. According to Phiri, women have lived in these painful environments for a long time because of patriarchy. Phiri encourages women to reclaim their victory over suffering. Further, Phiri (1998: 14) says,

Jesus' suffering was for a purpose - to bring deliverance. It is a plan of victory. He did all the suffering that there is. The part of the follower of Jesus is to maintain the victory that has already been won.

In view of this, women cannot relax until the dehumanizing situations are over-come. For the victory is for all human beings hence they are resisting all kinds of oppressive

structures as they search for the authentic Gospel for all. Though the true Gospel of liberation with reference to Christ's mission statement¹² is the one that has been used to oppress and imprison women - both in the church and the society at large, but the victory for women is here and now. The AFM churchwomen are moving away from the pain of all kinds of oppression, and that is affirmation that they are focusing on. They are following the steps of Jesus as their model. The researcher believes that as women of the AFM church are seeking for liberation, they are moving away from the cross of humiliation caused by patriarchy as Phiri describes it to be with Christ the liberator. The purpose of women's suffering was to bring unity amongst the families and in the church since Jesus' suffering was to liberate the whole cosmos. This view of women's liberation presents an urgent need for the church to go back to the "cross" and closely walk with Jesus for it to understand how far it has moved away from the true liberating gospel. Again, it is necessary to mention that women are aware that the battle is continuing but they acknowledge the vision of how to handle patriarchy in their everyday life.

In addition, Gnanadason continues to confirm the damage of patriarchy in women's lives, by quoting Musimbi Kanyoro's report that, "Many women who have been victims of violence feel guilty because they have been socialized to believe that they provoke men's violence towards them" (1993: 41). Looking back in Batswana culture, women were known to be silent though hard workers. This means that their social lives were less active than the modern generation. That is the reason why some women chose to be silent even in situations where they should be speaking. For example, Lerato explained that challenging the church situation beforehand would not make an impact on the situation or change anything. She said that could give the church the reason not to trust women in ministry. She decided to be silent because of the legacy inherited from the past (patriarchal system), but though there was silence, it did not mean satisfaction. Interestingly, women had a powerful communication in their silence for they believed more in action than in making a lot of speeches. Pastor Lesego's story proves that clearly for she was silent but active in the church working under a wrong title, "Full Time Lady Worker." In her story, she says:

¹² Luke 4: 18, "The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord.

I went to the same Bible College with men, studied the same courses, graduated in the same place and when we went for practical work, I became less (just because I am a woman) and only men were called to ministry. I was given a wrong title, (Full Time Lady Worker) and given a position where the church thought I will sink (Sunday School and Youth Ministry) because they interpreted it as lower level but God lifted me up.

During this difficult time, pastor Lesego did not utter a word but working in the church faithfully. She knew that to say a word would be useless so she decided to trust God for a better solution than her situation. Again, the story of Lerato who was denied ordination though went through Bible training confirms women's power in silence. She proved God's calling in her ministry by preaching in the church and conferences but did not complain unnecessarily for the refusal of her ordination. She, however, accepted the invitation to minister in diverse ways because she understood that the one who called her "is faithful and will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5: 24).

Without any complains, she is now at the Bible College, which the AFM church approves, and is going through thorough theological training again. This is an indication that women now know what they ought to do, in spite of circumstances, and when and where to talk and what to say. This behaviour proves that women know where it is safe for them to speak and communicate their dominated expressions of faith. For previously, it did not give them satisfaction to keep on talking to the church community that did not listen to them, but they express themselves through many ways, action, verbal and speaking, which have proved to be challenging to the church.

3.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has handled issues that affect the AFM women as a result of culture and the theology of the church. It has demonstrated that patriarchal societies do not value women's humanity. For traditions have put many constraints on women who are the burden bearers of the community. African societies have thus sinned against the Creator by institutionalising patriarchal anthropology. The study is thus in agreement with Oduyoye's suggestion that there is need to search for an empowering

anthropology by beginning with a probe into African myths of origins, asking fresh questions in order to “untangle the thread which ties women to iniquity” (2001: 63). These oppressive myths are not only found in the African traditional society but also in the Biblical narratives.

In the case of the Bible, proper exegesis is necessary in order to bring a new hermeneutics which says No” to oppression of women recognises their God given rights - as true children of God. Consequently, the AFM church should look at its patriarchal structure as a sin and confess it and subsequently discard it - as a result, they should be able to accept women’s humanity as they are placed in their rightful positions of leadership in the church and the society as a whole. Seen in this way, the church should correctly view patriarchy as a deviation from God’s plan and against the mission of God. This will lead to a healthy community where all experience the love of God as the true image of God. Therefore, the question to reflect over is: What can the AFM church do to create family, church and social customs and structures that are just and life giving to all members?

Having seen the experiences of women in both the church and the society, the chapter has prepared us to address ourselves, in the coming chapter, the quest for a liberated community of men and women.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARDS A LIBERATED COMMUNITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

4.1 Introduction

The quest for a table that is truly round continues among those who reject hierarchy and competition and, instead, search for alternative models of partnership in which "moving up the table" is no longer the issue... Appealing to the experience of the early house churches as well as the Gospel stories of Jesus' own ministry, feminists are moving on to overturn "the masters' tables" and to challenge the tradition of the patriarchal household (Russell 1993: 47).

In the quotation above, Russell emphasizes that there is a great need for women to overturn patriarchal tables because it is not in line with the gospel of Christ, to exclude women from their God-given roles in the church. This chapter argues that the Bible has been used to perpetuate women oppression. However, the researcher holds that the same Bible can best be used for women's liberation if it is read from an inclusive perspective. This study shows that the problem is not so much with the Bible but with those who interpret it. For example, most of the interpreters of the Bible have been largely male, who have wrongly emphasised it from the male perspective rather than from an all-embracing perspective.

Nevertheless, women have discovered their presence in the Biblical literature, and they are moving on to deconstruct patriarchy to allow for the new community of male and female to emerge. This is the community that flows from cooperation rather than subordination or domination. There are women in the scriptures who are frequently held forth as examples for women preachers today. The stories of women who are models of renewed leadership will be analysed, like Miriam in Exodus, Deborah in Judges, Mary Magdalene, Johanna and Susanna, the Samaritan woman and the nameless woman who poured an expensive ointment on Jesus' head (Mark 14: 3). In

the process, this chapter will uphold the Bible as the ideal authority in the church and as a source for the truth about women's equality with men and not just in worth, but also in service.

4.2 The Misinterpretation of the Bible

Looking at different views and trajectories both from the Old and the New Testament, the implication is that the scriptures bless men's domination of women. However, some women in the AFM church are challenging some scriptural texts in this chapter. Kgalalelo challenges the misinterpretation of 2 Peter 3: 18 in her story that was always used to subjugate women. Further, Lerato argued that Galatians 3: 28 includes women and it should be taken seriously in the church because a woman can do what a man does including priestly ministry. In that way, they are building a dynamic faith community that is holistic in perspective. Their starting point is in agreement with Ruether that "we need to start with language for the Divine as redeemer, as liberator, as one who fosters full person-hood" (1983: 70).

In relation to that, Abraham concurs with Ruether when she argues, "when you strive to change the world, you need to work with people. In order to do so successfully, you need to understand them and speak their language" (2003: 71-76). Women are trying to expose the reality about the power of language that can build or destroy lives. May advances women's ideas about languages based on leadership. She emphasizes that, "The exercise of leadership is shaped by the language we use to refer to it" (1991: 90). In this way, women are maintaining the inclusiveness of language particularly with regard to religious language; they really understand the effect of the power of language. They seek a leadership style that is relational and connectional because women are relational beings. Ackermann defines relationality as opposed to apathy, which is "inability to suffer" (1991: 101) where people do not want to be involved in relationship as is shown by male leaders in the church that they do not want to be in relation with women in leadership.

While looking at the South African context Rakoczy (2000b: 70) brings forth the holistic life that seeks and finds God in all circumstances of life that encourages the good relationship between humanity. She says,

A Christian feminist spirituality for our South African context is an approach to life which seeks and finds God in all circumstances of life affirms life and growth in others, works with others to bring a greater fullness of life (wholeness and right relationships) into every situation and structure of culture and society, including the church (2000b: 70).

It is imperative to mention that the Bible is not innocent in the oppression of women, but in most cases it is the cursory reading of the Bible that leads to the idea that the Bible supports such acts. Let us take as an example Genesis 3: 1-16. When reading this text, it is clear that both Adam and Eve sinned against God. But the general perception is that Eve sinned or caused Adam to sin. Another example is the creation story in Genesis chapter one and chapter two. Traditionally, the story that most people like to refer to is the one in chapter two because it states that a man was created first in the image of God and a woman second from a rib of a man. In Genesis 1: 26-27 it tells that God created both male and female in God's image. However, biblical scholars point out that there are two different accounts of creation in Genesis one and two (see West 1994). The fact that the two versions are presented is clear evidence that there is no one single version of creation but different traditions and interpretations. The researcher contend that those who like to interpret Genesis two as putting the male first have their own agenda, which they want to push. While Genesis declares that God created male and female in God's image it has been argued by some that men have gone and created God in their image. Why do they not read Genesis one before Genesis two? The researcher is in agreement with West (1993: 20) when he says,

While most of us can accept that interpretations of the Bible are shaped by the interests and experiences of those who read it, we find it hard to accept that the Bible itself is shaped by the interests and experiences of those who produced it. However, in the same way that various interpretations of the Bible represent differing (and sometimes conflicting) perspectives so too is the various texts of the Bible.

What West in the passage cited above argued is true in as far as this study is concerned. In order to prove it the issue of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Bible would be used as an example. An illustration on this: 1 Corinthians 15: 5, “that he appeared to Peter and then to all twelve apostles.” Paul puts Peter as the first witness of the resurrection of Christ. However, the Gospel according to John 20: 1 reports that the first witness of the risen Christ was a woman and that was Mary Magdalene who first saw Christ and in turn went to tell other disciples including Peter. The researcher does not believe that Paul reversed this order accidentally because the gospels puts it very clearly that Jesus approaches Mary Magdalene in John 20:16. He erupts into the assembled disciples (John 20:19) and then He appeared to them as they discuss these things with each other. It seems that Paul’s statement was the early church’s traditionally accepted account of the resurrection narrative; that is why he changed the order of Jesus resurrection appearances.

Again, the issues about the birth and the life of Jesus were not Paul’s primary concerns. Yet again, the fact that the Bible was written by men (males) has determined the language, characters and images used in the Bible. While God is often referred to as “Father” in the Bible, there are other texts such as Matthew 23: 37 where the feminine image of a mother hen is used to refer to God. But these kinds of imageries are often ignored. In fact,

The history of the Bible and its interpretation has been a history of silenced women. Women of the Bible have been silenced and women who have interpreted the Bible have been silenced. However, the history of the Bible and its interpretation has not only been a history of the silencing of women, it is also been a history of women refusing to be silenced (West 1993: 52).

Jesus the Son of God is an ultimate example of how communal life should be in the church. Male though He was, He attributes to Himself the tenderness of feeling that men regard as weak. For example, in Luke 13: 31-35 Jesus likened His love for His people to the love of a mother hen for its little chicks. He also compared the Kingdom of God to woman baking bread (Luke 13: 21). Correspondingly, Hurty quoted Russell using the metaphor of God as Housekeeper of all creation when she talks about

authority, “Like woman searching high and low for the lost coin, for all the outcasts and lost persons of society and rejoicing when they are found” (1991: 95).

The coming of missionaries to Africa confused the African concept of God, for Africans used to address God in many names that show the maleness and femaleness of God. God was known as father to some, as mother amongst others and was portrayed as father-mother to others, which takes the whole humanity into account. For example, among the Zulu there is a concept of a female divinity known as *Nomkhumbulwana* (goddess), associated with fertility and rain. God was also known as *Nape* amongst the Bapedi, who is said to be the deity of the female initiation ceremony and is mentioned in various acts of divination. Again, amongst the Sotho’ God was known as *Modimako*, terminology of *Bogwera*. The question is what happened to the female metaphors when missionaries presented the gospel in Africa? Why have only the male names been chosen? The answer to these questions is that, the 19th century missionaries hardly saw any good in African religion and they interpreted the African way of worship, clothing, speaking, even their names as evil, which was their greatest mistake - taking a dim view of African religions. They omitted names that show God’s femaleness and that has encouraged marginalisation of women to the present day. There are only male African names of God that are used in the church. The female African names of God will be important if they can be used to show the importance of women and men in life.

The missionaries who came to Africa encouraged the silencing of women in churches and society. Pui-lan Kwok (1994: 68) advanced that fact by asserting that,

When missionaries arrived in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, trying to convert people, they condemned our ancestors, trashed our gods and goddesses and severed us from our indigenous cultures. Many missionaries, both male and female, accused indigenous traditions of being oppressive to women without the slightest recognition of the sexist ideology of Christianity...

Thus, the reality of the problem points to sexism, especially in the church where others (women) were denied the ability to worship freely. Actually, missionaries

thought they were bringing God to Africa, but because God has always been in Africa, for God is omnipresent, they just successfully managed to encourage the patriarchal structures that were already present in Africa. They also succeeded in planting their culture in Africa in the name of Christianity. Heretofore, Christianity was known as foreign and as the white people's religion in Africa. Up to this time, the condemnation of missionaries' dogma has been evident in the AFM church. For example, the missionaries of the AFM church made women to believe that leadership positions are only for men. Pastor Sarah was given a wrong title (Full Time Lady Worker) after her graduation from the Bible College because the church has a policy that was designed by the missionaries that said women could not lead. This was in line with the Western Christianity of the time and with African cultural interpretation of the role of women. As noted previously, culture changes from one generation to another. Therefore culture can change to accommodate partnership to develop between men and women, which in turn can promote a holistic life in the church.

The church should re-visit the theology of Christ and interpretation of the scriptures because as argued by Oduyoye, gender does not define God and it does not apply to God, for God is Spirit. We cannot therefore use the scripture to legitimise the "non-inclusion of the femaleness on the norm of humanness, to be authentic, Christian theology must promote the independence of distinctive beings and stand by the principles of inclusiveness and interdependence" (1995: 181). Nevertheless, despite the exclusion of women in the church, some women of the AFM church are busy restructuring the church through their actions to make it to be more democratic and participatory for all. For example, the AFM churchwomen are participating in the church as preachers and worshippers. They choose to do what they believe is good for all humanity despite the church policies which are to the contrary. They are attempting to eradicate the confusion of patriarchy in Africa that Adam was created first, so man should be a leader of a woman. Patriarchy fails to acknowledge that men and women are created equal by God and they should be respected.

However, the AFM churchwomen, in this study, are working for mutual respect as they appreciate the equality of God's creation between men and women. They are in agreement with Masenya who points to "a need for men and women to cooperate on the basis of mutuality. For God's plans of differentiation of God's creature are not

meant to disadvantage others but that each sex will enrich the other” (1995: 189-201). In that respect the women in the AFM church are challenging patriarchy in their endeavour of going back to the origins of God’s creation of mutuality.

4.3 The Vision of the New Church

In relation to this, Fiorenza speaks of the discipleship of equals where women and men have equal status, dignity and rights with equal access to the Spiritual gifts. All enrich the discipleship community of equals with the different experiences, vocations and talents (1993: 2). This will be a very wonderful community because there will be a sharing of responsibilities and roles between men and women to show respect for each other. Barnhouse (1994: 74) advances Fiorenza in this matter by asserting:

... There must be a mutual respect between men and women. They must learn to cherish the difference in their outlook, and also to recognize and cultivate the similarities of their common goals. As men and women they may differ considerably in the style and technique of approaching those goals. They must learn not to let these differences be a source of contention, but to appreciate the fullness of their complementary.

Furthermore, Antone describes the envisioning of black women leaders during the civil rights movement. One of them, Ella Baker, articulated the concept of participatory, democratic leadership. Her work consisted of grassroots empowerment in a decision-making, group-centred rather than hierarchical leadership and direct action on sources of injustice (1998: 45-52). This shows that the emerging of women of the AFM church is coming up with a new direction of leadership structures that include men and women working together for the glory of God. Kgalalelo made it clear that the presence of men is strength to women and not an intimidation. This shows their appreciation that they are happy to work together with men. In support of that, Lerato suggested the structure that includes women’s events in the yearly calendar of the AFM church and women the committee in the church to be part of the Governing Church.

Women would like to see a church, which is non-hierarchical, democratic and uses inclusive language. Campbell (1991: 79) in May advances this vision in the words of Reverend Paul Washington, the preacher at the ordination of Barbara Clementine Harris, the first woman bishop in the Anglican Communion. The preacher said to those who came to witness the woman's ordination,

You didn't just come here to see a woman being consecrated.
You have come to see God, who with God's mighty hand has
lifted up one who was at the bottom of society and has exalted
her to sit on the chair... The word of God is once again being
made flesh in our midst.

The preacher spoke in relation to Mary's word in Luke 1: 52 where a woman, Mary, recognises that God loves women and considers them important as God's creation, by allowing the Lord to be born through a woman in the world without any interference of a male person. For such a new structure and pattern of leadership to be successful in the church, there has to be a common vision between men and women. Men also testify about the rising of women, which is an encouragement to women. Reverend Paul Washington is thus a good example here.

4.3 Women and the Scriptures

Several Old Testament women were very famous for their faith though little has been mentioned about them in the AFM church. This is an obstacle to the fulfilling of a successful church from the great commission of evangelism to the whole world as Jesus commanded. Right from the beginning, the story of creation includes women. The story recorded in Genesis 1: 27 is the foundation that no one will shake away, even patriarchy itself will not. It says "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them, **male** and **female** he created them." Genesis 2: 18 is in support of that verse. It says, "The Lord God said, it is not good for a man to stay alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him." The 'helper' in this verse means two different people who are at the same level, with the same interest and working towards the same goal. This means partnership between men and women who sees the importance of each other.

The Bible continues in Genesis 1: 28 that God blessed both of them, male and female. This simply means that men and women have leadership and authority right from creation. West supports this in his paper that God's creative work has established two differentiated beings, *issa* (woman) and *is* (man), from one sexually undifferentiated being ha-adam (the earth creature). This becomes even clearer when it is read in verse 24, 'Therefore, a man (*is*) leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his woman (*issa*) and they become one flesh.' West goes on to say "God begins the creation of human beings with a unity, the earth creature. Two sexually differentiated human beings, a man and a woman, are then produced through a process of separation. And we are then told that it is the purpose of the man and the woman to become united again" (2004: 8).

West's ideas embraces the comment that,

They (men and women) are originated from one flesh, were separated into male and female and in the divine provision of marriage will again become one flesh. There is nothing about men ruling over women, only that he leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife, together they will form a new independent unit (Mc Nally 1994: 156).

That is why Abbey argues that in the African worldview God is seen as the source of every life, so everything is worth of respect. Any form of discrimination against the creation of God needs to speak up and advocate for the acknowledgement of all humanity. The biological differences between men and women do not cause psychological differences that justify traditional male and female stereotypes. For example, it was very sad to see Jesus suffering alone without any disciples around Him. The disciples of Jesus failed to stand by Him when He was experiencing the painful moment of facing death, as will be revealed later. On the contrary, Exodus 2 shows Miriam, the elder sister of Moses, as a remarkable girl who was very courageous to stay nearby when her brother was in a dangerous situation. Exodus 2: 4 say Miriam stood by Moses "...to watch what would be done to him." When Pharaoh's daughter discovered Moses, Miriam was brave enough to arrange for Moses's mother to nurse him - an act that saved Moses.

Again, Miriam the sister of Aaron, was chosen by God to be a leader. She is mentioned together with Moses and Aaron in delivering and leading the Israelites out of Egypt. In Micah 6: 4, "I brought you out of Egypt, I rescued you from slavery and I send Moses, Aaron and **Miriam** to lead you." This is an illustration of the authoritative, highly influential leadership role she exercised. Patriarchy has denied this role to women. Yet it is a role that the Holy Spirit gives to men and women even to this day. The story of Moses and Aaron as men used by God is mentioned everywhere to uplift the importance of men in leadership, while women's ministry was omitted in order to silence them even in the moments where women like Miriam was clearly in partnership with Moses and Aaron in leadership.

Miriam was not just a leader but also a prophet who led praise and worship. She had a prophetic and musical gift that made her a praise leader. After Pharaoh's army was drowned in the water of the Red Sea and the Israelites were safely in the desert, a great worship celebration led by women took place. Exodus 15: 20-21 states it very clearly, "Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine and danced." Miriam sang to them:

Sing to the Lord,
For he is highly exalted,
The horse and its rider
He has hurled into the sea.

Despite the fact that patriarchy failed to recognise the wonderful ministries of women in the churches, there are AFM churchwomen who specialize in praise and worship. Although the church leadership does not recognise them, the women know that they are doing it to give glory to God and not people. Hence, it is still right that women should participate in praise; worship and music ministry as Miriam and other women were doing in the music ministry and worship in the Old Testament.

Another example of women in a leadership position is Deborah. For as the book of Judges 4: 4-5 says,

Deborah a prophetess, the **wife** of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under The Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided.

Deborah was a prophetess and she was able to exercise spiritual and political leadership. This is a very good example to show that God can use women to lead. Barak, the captain of the armies of Israel, refused to go into battle unless Deborah went with him, “and Barak said unto her, if though wilts go with me, then I will go: but if thou will not go with me, then I will not go” (Jud.4: 8). Does this mean that men in Deborah’s time were very weak or cowards? Deborah had to remind Barak that God had said it is time for him to lead. Deborah had to encourage and challenge Barak to go; yet, Deborah had to go with him. It is argued here that Barak recognises the call of God in Deborah and knew that without her he will fail in the battle. Mostly in churches, especially the AFM church, there is a perception that leadership is tough therefore women cannot be good leaders and take care of their families, such as children, a husband and the in-laws too. Deborah proved this to be wrong because the people of Israel were liberated from a twenty-year-long occupation by an alien army under the leadership of a married woman - Deborah.

What should be considered then is that, if women were primary participants in the deliverance of Israel from their oppressors, it is still right for them in the AFM church to participate fully in the leadership of the church. It has happened in the history of Israel and it is still happening today. This is to say that God can call a man or a woman to do the same job, which is of the same value before God. In view of this, we can authoritatively assert that no one is weaker than the other even though patriarchy has used the scriptures to argue for the inferior nature of women.

4.4 Women as Disciples of Christ

First and foremost it needs to be stated that Jesus broke the power of sin so that in Christ, the world may live in newness of life. Jesus is both a moral teacher and the example for every Christian; therefore, the issue of human relations cannot be discussed apart from Jesus and His teachings. Heine contends that the New Testament presents the history of the origin of the Christian faith and this is regarded as the

beginning of the Gospel, authorized by the church (1987: 51). It is therefore not surprising that people want to know how Jesus treated women, as He stands at the centre of the New Testament. This fact is central in ecclesiology because Jesus is the founder of the church as an institution and as the body of Christ.

The New Testament reveals many women who played important roles but are hidden by the patriarchal structures. For example in the Gospels (Matthew 26: 10-11; Mark 14: 3; John 12:3), Jesus is at Bethany at the house of Simon the leper. A nameless woman pours an expensive ointment on Jesus' head. Some of those present (in Mark) or more specifically, "the disciples" (in Matthew) objected to this and said that the ointment could have been sold and the money given to the poor. Jesus defended the woman's action and said that "You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me" (Mark.14: 7). This is a picture that women disciples were present during Jesus' ministry and the Last Supper.

Jesus makes a connection between the event and being prepared for burial, and ends with the remarkable words: "Truly I tell you, whenever the Good News is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her" (Mark 14: 9). The truth is that by the time Mark first wrote down the story, they had forgotten her name for in the Synoptic Gospels she is not mentioned by her name. But John 11: 3 affirms that it was Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus. That was the good service that this woman has performed because Jesus explained that his death would be proclaimed in the whole world and the act of this woman should be part of the story. But the preachers have forgotten to proclaim this act when they preach the Good News as Jesus commanded, because it is never mentioned in our churches unless the preacher is preaching from that text, which is very uncommon. In this regard, one can say patriarchy refuses to be acquainted with the ministries done by women because that was one act that was more important than any other act done by Jesus' disciples. Her ministry of preparing the body of Christ not to rot when he was in the tomb for three days was remarkable. She was a real disciple of Christ according to her action of ministering to Jesus' body.

When investigating the relationship of women around Jesus, Luke affirms women's discipleship. In the Gospel of Luke 8: 1-3 women are mentioned in addition to the

twelve disciples, three of them by name: Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna. So the implication here is that Jesus did have female disciples despite the fact that Jewish rabbis never had female disciples. This is a good reflection of the person that Jesus Christ was and his subsequent critique of his Jewish contemporaries' prejudice of women. This is an indication that surely women's primary place is not necessarily in the kitchen as patriarchy portrays it, but at Jesus' feet.

The evidence is recorded in Luke 10: 38-42 where Jesus visited Mary and Martha's home. When Martha was busy preparing for a visitor - Jesus, Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to what he was saying, "She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet ..." (Luke 10: 39). This conversation explicitly proves that Mary sat at the feet of Jesus which was the position of a disciple. Jesus also clearly clarifies that the best thing a woman can do is to occupy herself with theology and not necessarily serve important persons like Him in Luke 10: 41-42 in His conversation with Martha, "... you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Rabbis would actually never have visited a home with two unmarried women or even discuss spiritual matters with them because they were regarded as unclean people. They would rather let the word of Torah be burnt than hand it over to women as was highlighted earlier in Mollenkott (1988: 2).

In the Gospels, Jesus is shown to have a positive attitude towards women. This is encouraging to some AFM churchwomen. Jesus' view of women is really in sharp contrast to the opinions and attitudes of those who were with Him. The researcher believes that there is nowhere in the social field where the new life makes such a strong breakthrough in the conditions of the everyday life as here. For Jesus healed women; He let them touch Him and they were allowed to follow him as disciples. Obviously, He was interested in them as people and not as sexual objects. The gospel gives a picture of Jesus as eager to restore to women their true value and dignity. Jesus dealt with women in a free and natural way. This cannot be described as anything less than a revolution when compared to the status of women in the Jewish and Roman societies of the time.

First, in the Gospels, Jesus often uses women in his parables and sayings, something most unusual for His prevailing culture. Second, the images of women which Jesus uses are never negative but rather always positive in dramatic contrast to His forerunners and contemporaries and there after him. Third, these positive images of women are often very exalted, at times being associated with the "reign of heaven" (Swidler 1979: 164). From these points, it is clear that Jesus envisaged women as of value. This is contrary to a typical picture of the way in which the writers of the Bible perceived women.

That is probably the reason that makes the AFM churchwomen today to be more active in the churches despite their experiences because they now realise that the command "Go into the entire world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16: 15), is a commission for every believer, regardless of sex, colour, race and culture. Again, it is because women were included among the group of 120 disciples (Acts 1: 14) who waited in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. There is no doubt that God gave the gift of prophecy to women just as men. For Peter, on the day of Pentecost, had promised that God will do this: "... even on my servants, both men and women, I would pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2: 18). Further, according to Luke's comments, women continued to be part of the growing church; "Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number" (Acts 5: 14).

The remarkable thing that shows the practicality of women is when they supported Jesus' ministry even with their money. Luke 8: 2-3 recorded that "... these women were helping to support them out of their own means." This gives a clear picture that mostly women supported Jesus' work. The fact is that the last person found at the cross was a woman, and the first person at the tomb was a woman. The question is, where were the men in those times? They failed to be brave like Moses' sister who stood by his brother's side in a time of sorrow. All of them went their own way to protect their lives, for their faith was not strong enough in what Jesus taught them when He was still with them, that He would be killed and rise again after three days. They were discouraged and thought it was the end of everything after the crucifixion, and then they decided to return to their old ways - to their fishing nets. For the Bible

plainly states that in those distressing moments of Jesus, his disciples had forsaken him, "... then all the disciples deserted him and fled" (Matt 26: 56).

Matthew continues to explain that one of them, Peter, followed at a distance, which was an indication of cowardice that resulted in him denying that he knew Jesus in public. Interestingly, nothing was mentioned about the other disciples except one young man who ran away for his life, "A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind" (Mark 14: 51-52). There has been a discussion on who the young man in this story was. Scholars cannot decide who the young man is because all the disciples had run away during that time. But some scholars have suggested, "it was John Mark himself, in whose home the Last Supper may have taken place" (Carson 1994: 973). This study is in agreement with Carson because this part of the story is recorded only in Mark's gospel. Matthew and Luke did not show any interest in it though they used Mark's gospel as one of their sources. The researcher believes that Mark was not brave enough to mention his name. What would be a good reason that any man who never followed Jesus would now follow Him when He was in trouble? It makes sense that he was one of the cowardly disciples who were filled with fear and fled to save their lives. It can be argued that the disciples' felt they had no option; if Jesus did not wish to resist his arrest, what else was there for them to do? Just to turn and run!

On the other hand, according to the scriptures, it is clear that women were there and it is a woman who first preached the sermon on the resurrection of Christ. The interesting part is that she preached this sermon to the male disciples themselves. Jesus commanded her to, "...Go tell my brothers that I am raised...." Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her" (John 20: 17-18). It would not make sense to women not to be in leadership positions today; because Jesus sent a woman with the message of his resurrection. Women are fulfilling their responsibility as Jesus' messengers in this world to preach the gospel as Jesus sent them to deliver the first news of His resurrection, which affirms that God can use anyone- male or female - according to their different gifts.

In view of this, women theologians need not fear to jeopardize their lives in their endeavour to build a new community for all humanity despite patriarchy, and the AFM churchwomen are learning from them. They have given their lives to fight for the rights of humanity. They are working for the independence of the whole creation of God as Pastor Lesego is determined to see. Kgalalelo sided with Pastor Lesego by not giving women any option for discouragement in their lives because she believes that it would kill the church. Women are very courageous because they believe that they are the instruments to be used by God to bring hope in the church and in society. They are maintaining Mahatma Gandhi's motto that,

I shall not fear anyone on earth; I shall fear only God, I shall not bear ill will towards anyone. I shall not submit to injustice from anyone. I shall conquer untruth by truth and in resisting untruth I shall put up with all suffering (Herold 1979: 19).

Doing theology for themselves is answering some questions that were hitherto a stumbling block in their lives. They have realised that God appreciates their full humanity. Mollenkott contends that proof of Jesus' concern for full female personhood arises when well-meaning women shout praise for Christ by focusing exclusively on the biological functions of his mother, "Happy is the womb that carried you and the breasts that suckled you" (1988: 8) in Luke. Other revealing incidents include the time Jesus was touched by a woman who had been haemorrhaging for twelve years. This woman had been ritually unclean all the time and would have rendered unclean any man whom she touched. No wonder she chose to touch the hem of Jesus' robe secretly. Instead of rejecting her and shouting at her, Jesus complimented her on her healing faith (Matt 9: 22). That became a great lesson for women that they are not alone and they continued to study the scriptures to challenge patriarchy.

4.5 Paul and Women in the ministry

Njoroge reminds the church that for too long, "the Bible, especially Paul's letters, have been misused and misinterpreted to subjugate and exclude women" (1996: 66). Some women of the AFM church have discovered the misinterpretation of Paul's letters that oppresses them and forbids them to speak in the church, as mentioned by

Njoroge, when they started to read the Bible for themselves and reinterpret it in their context as seen in the researched stories. They are maintaining the gospel of Jesus that includes them in the participation of the church and that encourages them to believe that they are as important as men. As it was mentioned in the Gospels about the record of Jesus' resurrection, it is interesting how the order was recorded in Paul's letters. There is ambiguity in Paul's writing about the first witness of resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to 1 Corinthians 15: 5-8 Paul states that,

Jesus first appeared to Peter and then to all twelve apostles. Then he appeared to more than five hundred of his followers at once, most of who are still alive, although some have died. Then he appeared to James, and afterwards to all the apostles. Last of all he appeared also to me ...

As already stated in this chapter, John's gospel states that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene first (John 20: 14-18). Could it be that Mary Magdalene is ignored in Paul's account of the resurrection of Jesus because she was a woman? Actually, Paul was caught in his male perspective and omitted the presence of women at Jesus' resurrection. It is believed that he found it very hard to mention them because patriarchy did not accept women as witnesses. His ignorance on the information of the resurrection is deliberate because its aim was to silence a woman, that is why he commanded, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission" (1Tim. 2: 11). Nevertheless, Mpho broke the barrier of the AFM church by accepting invitations to evangelise in other churches because she refused to accept the tradition that despises women to be active in the church. She decided to serve God according to the leadership of God's spirit not men's. Women are the witnesses that the stone has been rolled away so they are convinced that the stone of problems in their lives caused by patriarchal structure will be rolled away.

When Paul eventually recognises a woman's ministry, as is the case with Phoebe's ministry, he acknowledged it publicly. Paul talked about Phoebe as "... the helper of many including me" (Rom. 16: 2). Interestingly, according to Romans 16: 2, Phoebe was not just a deaconess of the women but of the whole church. This is the testimony

to the fact that women were active in the different ministries of the church and they are still continuing to the present day despite the patriarchal structures.

Paul continues to acknowledge the ministry of Euodia and Syntyche in Philippi when he says, "... Help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. 4: 3). When Paul speaks of these women as 'my fellow-labourers,' it implies they were doing similar work to that done by Paul. He also recommended two missionary couples for their dedication, Priscilla and Aquila, and Junia and Andronicus. Paul indicated that all Gentile churches were indebted to Priscilla and Aquila as "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (John 16: 3-4).

Newson notes significantly that Philippians 4: 2-3 and Acts 16: 14-15 indicate that women played significant roles in building the community and its preaching mission. The letter of Philippians, however, is ambiguous in the way it portrays their involvement. For example, the dominant images of athletic context and military service do not reflect their experience. Lydia, hosted the community in her household, "When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house. And she persuaded us" (Acts 16: 15). Lydia might be called a servant and so included among the leaders referred to in the greeting, but much of the imagery in Philippians speaks only of male experience (Newson 1992: 1). Actually, Lydia is one of those who planted churches in the early church. This shows that women too had gifts to start a church.

4.6 The Action and Change before us

In this chapter, the study has focused on Jesus and the New Testament for answers, which might give clues for the status of women in the church and in the community today. The authority of the Bible cannot be rejected when dealing with women's problems. West says, "It is naive to imagine that we can ignore the text, as long as it is there in the Bible we must engage with it." He goes on to say, "if we do not transact with it others will" (West 2004: 9). The normative role of the Bible is accepted in the church but we critically question the conservative use of the 'scripture principle' to

reinforce patriarchy and clericalism. Therefore one cannot ignore the fact that the Bible contains in it liberating themes and trajectory.¹³

Some women in the AFM church believe that the church is called upon to accelerate the process of gender equality using the very same Bible, which has been used to oppress them by reinterpreting it from their perspective. The powerful reinterpretation of 2 Peter 3: 11 by Kgalalelo is a good example. The interpretation deduced the speciality of being woman and not the weakness as it was interpreted in the church before. Colossians 2: 19 say, "Husbands love your wives." Further in Ephesians 5: 25 the command continues, "Husbands love your wives as Christ also loves the church and gave Himself for it." These commands are a reversal of the curse found in Genesis 3: 16. According to these verses, women must love the man and the man will rule over her. But through Jesus, a man knows that his wife is a human being in her own right. By love, he empties himself for her, as Jesus emptied Himself for all of humanity (Phil. 2: 7). This is the first step to a liberated community of men and women.

Russell contends that it is not enough for the church to create space for the women in the current patriarchal church structures. The AFM church is challenged to go beyond that and create positions that can empower women. This is because the experience of most women who have been given positions of leadership in other churches with the present patriarchal structures has shown that it does not work. That is why Ruether, in Phiri, has argued that:

Women in ministry like all women trying to function in public roles under male rule, find themselves in a double bind. They are allowed success only by being better than men at the games of masculinity, while at the same time they are rebuked for having lost their femininity. In such a system, it is not possible for women to be equal, but only to survive in a token and marginal way at tremendous physical and psychological cost (Phiri 1997: 139).

¹³ This is a borrowed word that is frequently use by Gerald West in his writings.

It is important that the community should move from the cultural taboos, which show no respect for humanity. If the AFM church is serious about faith in Jesus Christ, it needs to follow His steps. The church needs to look at the ways in which Jesus reacted to His time and contemporaries who were more legalistic in forbidding women any rights to participate as humans. Phiri (1997: 141) proposed the following for the change:

A starting point for changing African church's attitudes towards women is the realization that the context of African theology includes women as well. Therefore meaningful reflection in our experience of God should always be based on our past and present context. If the church is to be relevant to the needs of its people, its major concern should be to discern God's word and purpose in relation to our time and context that take women's experience seriously.

Even though Phiri in her writing was more concerned about African women's experience, her suggestion also applies to the church universally. For it is true that the marginalisation of women knows no boundaries. It is present in every culture, although in some it is more pronounced than in others. She goes on to say that the church needs to accept the fact that the way the female members of the church experience God is different from the way the male members do. This means accepting the view of those women's that interpretation and experience of the Bible is different from that of men.

In agreement with Phiri's argument, we realized that the words and actions of Jesus challenge the church to break the chains of an ignorant, oppressive system that is imposed on women by the patriarchal system. There is need to accept the reality that both males and females form humanity, and it is in the context of mutual submission that the church of Christ is founded. The AFM churchwomen always pray to God who encourages partnership between males and females and to relate to each other as God does to the persons of the Trinity. God is still encouraging partnership between men and women though there is a lot of ignorance.

The evidence of this fact (that God encourages partnership between men and women) is seen in the story of Pastor Lumwira and Bishop Mercy Yami narrated in the case study from Malawi by Phiri. According to this story, Pastor Lumwira teamed with Bishop Yami in the ministry that she started, as a sign that women have the ability to minister in the church and are used by God in the same way as men. God commanded Pastor Lumwira to team up with Bishop Yami but because of his disobedience, he allowed 1Timothy 2: 11-12 to overrule God's call to his work with a woman (Phiri 2000b: 285). This was God's plan for them to team up because Pastor Lumwira knew it before he met Bishop Yami, and when they did meet they were all convicted to work together and share responsibilities (Phiri 2000b: 285). What is deduced from this story confirms that women ought to avoid allowing any obstacle to stop their ministry. Bishop Yami did not give up her calling but she left the Blessed Hope Church that she started with Pastor Lumwira.

The story of Pastor Lumwira and Bishop Yami also suggests that partnership between women and men in ministry is not easy due to a male understanding of patriarchy. This case shows how Pastor Lumwira rejected the original God given partnership in favour of a patriarchal reading of the scriptures – a trend we should all guard against.

4.7 Engendering Theology

One of the important roles that the church can play to promote equal female-male relationships is to support the AFM women to engender theology. Therefore, the church should make sure that it creates an environment where both women and men are allowed to share their experiences. Women of the AFM church are organizing projects and groups in Bible studies. Haddad says it is important in the church to hear all voices. She asserts, "Voices shout, whisper, sing, laugh and cry out. Some voices remain silent. The project of en-gendering theology needs to ensure that all voices are heard particularly the whispering and the silent ones" (Haddad 1997: 1).

If the engendered theology project is to have any impact on the AFM church, questions of leadership, clericalism, lay participation and the role of ordained women within the church structures will be debated overly and specifically. Ackermann argued correctly when she said, "Women must be given greatly increased access to formal and informal theological education, and both women and men must be given

ecclesiastical responsibilities in accordance with their abilities and spiritual gifts rather than their gender” (1991: 116). Women of the AFM church, like Pastor Lesego, started to take responsibility in the church by managing it according to her ability.

If the church seeks to promote mutual relationships between males and females, the sexist language should change in the AFM church as was shown earlier. The pronouns referring to God must be used interchangeably, that is, if God is our Father it must also be said God is our Mother, as Kretzschmar outlines, "God is our Mother and Father: yet paradoxically, God is at once neither male nor female and both male and female. Our translations of the Bible our liturgies, doctrines and documents must all reflect these truths"(1991: 117).

Due to the impact of a male-dominated interpretation of the scripture, the AFM church needs to look for some ways of working out this problem in order to equalize gender and partnership with women. One of the possible solutions proposed by Oduyoye is that the church needs to organise “joint groups of women and men to study scripture guided by historical-critical methods that take into account both the circumstances of the original writers and readers/hearers as well as our own cultural, political and economic situation” (1995: 186).

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter it has been argued that the Bible was used to perpetuate women’s oppression and how the same Bible was used for women’s liberation when read from the women’s perspective. Again, it has been showed that the problem is caused by the interpreters of the Bible and as it has been a norm that preachers are males, the whole emphasis of the biblical interpretation has been from the male perspective. Some biblical texts that advocate for women and gender equality have been successfully investigated and revealed. And ways in which the Bible can be used to be a source of liberation for both women and men in the church has been suggested.

Nevertheless, the chapter has showed that women have rediscovered their presence in the biblical literature. Therefore, they are building the new community of both male and female in the AFM church - as they learn from women’s experiences in the scriptures. According to this chapter, the AFM women have portrayed good intentions

that should be considered by the church. It will be more effective when the church makes an effort to help women to speak more about the issues that concern them openly even through the pulpit. Are there any commitments that the church can consider in building the community of partnership between men and women?

Having explored the possibility of a “liberated community” that does recognise both male and female as equal children of God, the climactic chapter (four) has prepared us to move towards the conclusion and the recommendations of the entire study.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONCLUSION AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion of the study

Women whose voices have been highlighted in this study recognised patriarchy as the cause of women's dehumanisation. They believe that it is because of patriarchy that the AFM church sadly neglected to meet God's demand to be truly a community of equal human beings by not fully including women in the Body of Christ. Further, it was established that culture in the Bible and society is the originator of women's oppression, especially its impact in the church. However, as shown in the sample of women interviewed, they challenged patriarchal structures by resisting it and strived to participate in leadership positions. Despite the many obstacles that tried to hold these women back, they continued to struggle for a liberated community of men and women. Therefore, this study was successfully researched and has accomplished its aim and objectives.

The first chapter, which is the introduction of the whole study, brought out some important issues such as the problems and the background of the research that motivated the writing of this study. It also gave the definition of patriarchy, which is believed to be the cause of trouble in women's lives. The motivation for the research was instigated by referring to the experience of the researcher who is a member of the same church.

The study investigated and described ways in which the AFM churchwomen are succeeding in overcoming patriarchy. It also gave a critical evaluation of the extent to which these women are successful in their endeavour. The study used the narrative methodology where women were free to narrate their stories without interference of any system or anyone. Library research and fieldwork were also used to conduct this study.

The second chapter narrated the stories of four AFM churchwomen from the fieldwork as an example of how successful some women have been at overcoming patriarchy. The stories were followed by a word of encouragement to all women,

especially women of the AFM church. Then there was an analysis of the stories where positive words and actions were deduced, like faith, boldness and confidence in women. The stories were of women who chose to fear God rather than men. Therefore the voice of hope from the women of the AFM church to all women is recorded in this chapter.

The third chapter described issues concerning the patriarchal system in the AFM church, which was considered as oppressive to women. It was revealed that women's ministries are not taken seriously and are not fully supported by the church. They are still struggling with the issue of partnership because the church does not trust them as good leaders. It has been concluded in this chapter that patriarchy is the root cause of the marginalization of women of the AFM church to fail to support them in their struggles. However, this chapter demonstrated that women are resisting patriarchy despite the struggles they are facing inside this church.

Chapter four investigated some Biblical texts that advocate for gender equality and to find ways in which the Bible can be used as the source of liberation for both women and men of the AFM church. It has been argued that the church should engage in the pursuit of Biblical directives for the Body of Christ. The scriptures prove that men and women are given equality by God and also some differences. So, the AFM women challenged the church to recognise, affirm and celebrate them by individual and corporate submission to God and each other as God intended. Further, the chapter considered the work of restoring the pride and identity of all people, women and men to be of vital importance. It also promoted a female-male relationship where both men and women are allowed to share responsibilities in the church according to their ability.

The voices of the AFM churchwomen are in agreement with the government of South Africa. For in South Africa, the government is struggling and using all means to eradicate all forms of racism and sexism in order to build a new post apartheid society. The International Conference on Racism that was held in Durban August-September 2001 clearly marked this. Again, there are nine women ministers and eight deputy ministers in the South African Parliament. The most encouraging one is the

fact that the Deputy President of the country, Phumzile Mulambo Ncuka, is a woman who was appointed by the president of South Africa on 22 June 2005.

The South African Constitution contains values of human rights and dignity. Therefore, the study believes that women's issues in South Africa will not be ignored but will be taken care unlike before – as there is a general awakening along this line. So, the process of renewal and of addressing the problems of women's marginalization and oppression should also be the concern of the church. For, the suggestion by Kretzschmar is true when she says, "We need to ask not only how South Africa can become 'non-racial' but also how it can become non-sexist" (1998: 169). It is in this vein that the women of the AFM church challenged the issues of marginalization and oppression of women as a concern of the church. They confronted the AFM church on how to become a community of men and women. Therefore, it is prudent that the AFM church finds a way in which it can support women to deconstruct the patriarchal structures as it reconstructs the society in which we are living in.

5.2 Recommendations

As the study has shown, some of the AFM churchwomen have created a new self-image for themselves in order to regain their self-confidence as well as influence the future generation. They started by saying 'no' to the abuse of all kinds caused by patriarchy. Further, they refused the positions that culture or the church reserved for them and started to work towards the creation of a community of men and women that treat each other with respect and mutuality. Their action interpreted the separation of men and women in leadership of the church as discrimination against women on the basis of gender.

The role of the church is to promote mutuality and partnership in female-male relationships. Chopp advances this fact by calling for a new creation of a "community of emancipatory transformation" (1989: 71). So, it has been suggested that the AFM church should revisit their ways of addressing issues about women in the church. All that women of this church need is encouragement and support in what they have started in the church, such as resisting patriarchal structures that oppress and exclude

them in life. So, the church needs to find ways to encourage and support them for the empowerment and improvement of the church.

A successful way in which the church can promote mutuality between male and female partnership is to get rid of sexism with which it is permeated in all the structures of the church. So, our theologies, languages and liturgy need to be liberated from sexism as Kretzschmar said. Russell (1985: 141) therefore is correct when she says,

For theology to be freed from sexism it must recognize that both Old and New Testament were written within male-dominated societies and religious communities. Therefore it reflects andocentric imagery and patriarchal beliefs and values of the Bible that constitute the form but not the content of the biblical message.

The church also needs to change its hierarchical structures, which in most cases subordinate women. It needs to rediscover the understanding of leadership as servanthood (Mark 9: 35). This calls for the church to change its theology and church practices. Both males and females must take up the process of change in the church. Hence the idea is to have a shared theology of men and women. The pulpit also must include an element of awareness of women oppression in its sermons. This study is in agreement with Banana's call "for editing, revising, and adding to the Bible with the noble aim of embracing the rich plurality of women's experience in response to God" (1993: 30). Banana is suggesting for editing and revising the Bible that includes the importance of male and female as one before God. In addition, Phiri (1997: 141) argues that,

In the process of the transformation of African church's theology toward women, there is also a need for it to implement a genuine programme of empowerment for women. This would involve the church going beyond re-examination of its own structures. It would need to motivate women to accept their position as equal partners of men in the eyes of God. Since Christianity

empowered men through introducing them to the Word of God and providing them with general education as well as theological education, the African church is being asked to use the same instruments to empower women. In order to reach this position the African churches need to recognize that sexism is as evil as racism.

The other change should be the use of interpretation tools. The AFM church needs to use tools, which attempt to draw out from the biblical text the secrets about women that are buried beneath its andocentric surface especially the hidden history of women, which has been obscured and distorted by male control of tradition. This action would help the AFM church to reflect the true community of God where male and female are equal. This sense of being equal should be demonstrated in all life areas of the same church. Mpumulwana (1991: 174) supports it when she says,

Women should be able to do anything that they are gifted and called to do in the church without being hindered by biological factors. If a woman is gifted to decorate the church with flowers let it be, but if a man is equally gifted to play that role, why not? The same applies to leadership at all levels from class leaders to being Bishops or moderators.

The main aim of suggesting what the church should do to counter the problem of women's oppression is to work with women to bring back the order of God as it was in creation before the fall. AFM women are intending to build an egalitarian church and society. In relation to Fiorenza's idea of reconstruction of the church to its origin the aim is "not only to put women back into history but also to restore the history of Christian beginnings to women" (1983: xx).

The AFM women are emerging with love and working for whole church community to be healthy for all humanity, men and women. Further, this study recommends that the AFM church should work for greater solidarity and love between men and women of this church.

5.3 Suggested Commitments for the AFM Church.

Firstly, the four stories show that these women know and understand what it means to be slaves, and how authority or power can be misused to subjugate others. Consequently, they do not have to seek leadership positions to revenge the pain they have experienced. In any case, they will always remember the loneliness of how it was to be marginalised. For that reason, as women have broken the bondage of silence, and also have the space to speak for themselves, the church should find a way to support them. It will assist the church to remember that all human beings are reflections of God's image. They are made for togetherness, not for sameness or for exclusiveness. So, there is a need for the church to be liberated from the bondage of patriarchy. Again, the blessed voices of women should be respected and the church should be in total solidarity to enhance women's well-being and their individuality.

Secondly, the commitment of building a just and caring community is needed within the AFM church. This will ensure that there will be clear provisions of basic needs for all. In that way, the whole church community will experience a life together of relationships and mutuality and that will enhance human values.

Thirdly, the church should be committed to a culture of harmony, and respect life. The church needs to be a peacemaker in this world. The church should learn that 'war' does not bring peace because it always avoids the root of the matter and that only deepens the wound that is already there. The AFM women are more concerned about providing the right foundation for the church, which is unity between men and women.

Fourthly, the church should be committed to a life of truthfulness in order to resist the dehumanising manipulation of women. In so doing the human freedom will be clearly revitalized. So, for the church to live faithfully to the calling of the incarnate Jesus Christ, it should allow more freedom for women's participation. That will enable the church to act as an agent to empower the powerless. Fiorenza (1994: 305) is in support of this idea when she says,

The true reflection of Jesus' ministry is to create a movement of equality from below, and to reject the patriarchal hierarchical pyramids.

Fifth, the AFM church needs a sharing and participatory model of ministry to engender a new church that lives up to Jesus' vision of community. Therefore, it is necessary to have programmes, seminars, workshops, that address women's issues in full. Rhoda Reddock argues that women's involvement in all levels of development [leadership], that is thinking, planning and implementation, will make a difference not only to women but also to the society's capacity to envision social change and its implementation. She asserts that women are a tremendous social resource, which no society can afford any longer to undervalue or under use and more so, women will no longer accept being treated as workhorses for development strategies planned by others; they require to be treated as partners (2000: 53).

Lastly, the church should honour the words of President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa – where he encouraged women not to despair but be bold to rise above the old structures of patriarchy. He says,

Our society should guarantee the dignity of every citizen on the basis of the good quality of life for every woman, man and child, without regard to race, colour or dignity. ... None should be driven to the level of despair that drives them to the fringes of the mainstream. None of us should feel a sense of alienation. Nor should we allow that those who were denied their identity continue to exist in the shadow....¹⁴

Mbeki's words echoed the words of the former President Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela on 10 May 1994, who spoke about a political freedom of South Africa emphasising that freedom is for all. He said,

¹⁴ A short Published Pamphlet of President Thabo Mbeki's speech in Parliament, 25 June 1999.

Never, never, and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another.... The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement. Let freedom reign. God bless Africa (Mandela 1994: 151).

As a result, the truth is that whether or not the church decides to be sensitive to gender in its development and leadership plans, women will no longer be in despair or silenced for they have discovered their identity. The liberating Christ will come to set His people free. This is trying to emphasise the fact that either the church becomes proactive to work with women and address issues of gender relations or men will be spectators of women recreating the new AFM church. It is a great challenge for the church to live up to Christ's words that only the truth will set us free (John 8: 32). This truth will empower every one to appreciate his/her fellow human being without getting bogged down to the triviality of asking, "which sex?" True to St. Paul's words, there is no Jew nor Greek, neither man nor woman – for Jesus has made us equal (Galatians 3: 28). May God help us to appreciate this fact, in church activities and in the society at large!

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Self-introduction

I am Oniccah N. Selokela, a Masters student in the school of Religion and Theology from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am conducting a research as part of my studies on African women overcoming patriarchy within the AFM church in Rustenburg. The aim of the research is to contribute to the South African women's voices of hope. This is to encourage AFM women to live their lives in abundance despite the existence of patriarchy in their lives. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested to hear your experiences. Be assured that the information you are going to share would be kept confidential. Please feel free to share your story and your experiences.

SECTION A

General Information

Name (if she is willing)

Have you been to school?

Qualification

Year of graduation

Marital Status

Married ()

Divorced ()

Single ()

Widow ()

Age

18-30 ()

31-40 ()

41-50 ()

51-60 ()

SECTION B

Women's Personal Experiences in AFM Church

1. How did you become a member of this church?
2. What influenced you to be a member of this church?
3. Is the pastor of your church male/female?
4. a. What is the role of women in your congregation?
b. Do the women in your church work as:
Volunteers?
Church Leaders?
Church Co-Workers?
5. a. Are there any differences between the job descriptions of female church leaders
and male church leaders?
b. If so, how are they different?
c. What are traditional Biblical reasons for the difference?
6. a. Do you prefer that the female pastor should be married or be single?

Married () Single ()

b. Give reasons for your answer.

SECTION C

Ordination (for women pastors only)

1. When did the church ordain you?
2. a. Does your church recognize female ordained pastors in the same way it does with male pastors?
b. Give reasons for your answer in 2.a
3. As an ordained female pastor, what are the difficulties that you are facing in your ministry?
4. Which are the special meetings or programs for women in your church?
5. How does the AFM church leadership promote or hinder women's ministry?
6. Do you find the way the AFM church addresses women's issues beneficial to women?
7. As the pastor what abilities have you realized in women of this church?
8. According to your view how can the status of females be improved in the churches in your assembly?

9. Tell the story of how you have successfully overcome issues that make women inferior or useless.

SECTION D

For Women Church Leadership only

1. What ministry are you involved in as a woman?
2. On top of being a leader, which other ministry are you involved in?
3. a. Are there any differences between the status of females and males in the church?
b. Give reasons for your answer.
4. How do you want your ministry to relate to that of men in your church?
5. How many women are included in church council?
6. a. What abilities you realized in women of this church?
b. Give reasons for your answer.
7. In your opinion what can the AFM church do to raise the ministry of women?
8. From your point of view, why are there more females than males in the churches?