

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Prepared by the WDP of the Philippines

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“Am I Being Unfair to You?”

Bible Study 2 - Numbers 27:1-11

The book of Numbers is the fourth book of the Old Testament. It is the chronicle of Israel's journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. It starts with a census of males over twenty one years old that could be enlisted as warriors. It is a book of laws, such as the laws of purification. It also includes the arrangement of the tent cities. Here the division of inheritance was initiated. These all happened in the wilderness of Sinai at about 1410 B.C. The prominent personalities in the book are Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

This is the story of a family during that time of the Exodus. Zelophehad is the first born son of the tribe of Manasseh. During the journey to Israel Zelophehad died, leaving his five daughters behind. At the time of the census, it turned out that Zelophehad was no longer in the list because of his death. So his survivors - the five daughters - were non-existent, as no law provided for women to inherit. Therefore the family of Zelophehad is no longer part of the tribe of Manasseh.

So what is to be done? They are facing physical and social exclusion. They have no home, no family, and no means to support themselves. Poverty would mean hunger and homelessness. Furthermore, this situation will make them possible victims from opportunists because they are women. Therefore there is a real and urgent need for the sisters to address their situation and to work together for an alternative. They need to claim their rightful place in the community, and sustain themselves without being a burden to anyone else.

The daughters decided to approach the tent of Moses to raise two legal issues (Numbers 27:4a):

1. The name of their father, who was a descendant of the tribe of Manasseh and was no longer in the list because he had no sons to inherit;
2. To not be left without their father's possession.

The daughters' demand from Moses (Numbers 27:4b):

1. Give us a possession among our father's brothers so that we can provide for ourselves. They need to inherit as women.
2. Reinstate the name of our father in the tribes of Israel.

Moses' response (Numbers 27:5-7):

1. Moses took the case to the Lord and the Lord confirmed the rightness of the demand. The answer therefore was, "Give them a possession among their uncles and cause the inheritance of their father to pass onto them"
2. And that would be extended to others in similar situations (Numbers 27:8), so they helped change the law for all of Israel.

All over the world women live in the periphery of society. In this case, five brave women faced the legal issues and presented the problem to the elders. This action gives us an example of taking hold of our own lives so that the future looks brighter, not only for the present but for

generations to come. It is refreshing to know that a group of women can change the laws for the benefit of women in the community.

Exercise for group conversation:

Swapping ideas:

- Use this exercise to motivate the group to find an advocacy action to support women in the community as an expression of faith, witness, and service.
- On a piece of paper ask the participants to share their ideas on how women might be able to equip themselves and others to fight for their rights.
- Discuss each idea; consider how WDP and church women's organizations can be helpful.
- Get the group to agree on one advocacy idea which they might take on.
- Draw up a practical action plan with a time frame, to be engaged in WDP's motto: informed prayer and prayerful action.

Everywhere in the world women are left excluded in the home, work and even at church. The fact of the matter is that women, when given their rightful place, will double their capabilities. It makes a more productive and happier home, a more responsive church, an active women's group, and a progressive community.

The question that begged to be answered everywhere is: Am I being unfair to you? Is the family fair to its mothers and daughters? Is the church being fair to her women members? Are women sitting as decision makers in churches? More importantly, do women know that they have such rights? How do women's rights impact economic justice?

Is the community fair to its women? We do not need to prove that women can be influencers and decision makers. All around us women have proven to the world that they are leaders in their own right. It is time that women claim their rightful place as provided for by the Creator.

This material is part of the worship service and educational resource for the 2017 WDP annual celebration.

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