

# WOMEN'S DAY

09 AUGUST

Women's Day is a South African public holiday celebrated annually on 9 August. It commemorates the 1956 march of approximately 20,000 women to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to petition against the country's pass laws that required South Africans defined as "black" (under The Population Registration Act) to a pass, that served to maintain segregation, control urbanisation, and manage migrant labour during the apartheid era. The women left 100 000 petitions at the office doors of the prime minister. The women stood silently for 30 minutes and then started singing a protest song that was composed in honour of the occasion: Wathint'Abafazi Wathint'imbokodo! (Now you have touched the women, you have struck a rock.) In the years since, the phrase (or its latest incarnation: "you strike a woman, you strike a rock") has come to represent women's courage and strength in South Africa. The first National Women's Day was celebrated on 9 August 1994.



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## Why do we remember this day?

Women's Day remembers the events of the 1956 march described above but also keep women's issues in the spotlight. This holiday can be used to highlight the myriad of challenges that African women still face - such as parenting, domestic violence, sexual harassment in the workplace, pornography, unequal pay, and schooling for all girls. It can be used as a day to fight for or protest these ideas. There have been many significant advances in women being represented in government and gaining rights they once were not afforded, whilst there are still many important issues that should be addressed going forward.

## As Christ-followers, what can we do on this day?

- Ask the women in your life (family, friends, colleagues) what in our society is unjust toward women. Listen to their hearts and learn more about the stories of women in your spheres.
- Open the Word at home. Study some women from the New Testament: Women have been instrumental in God's work in the world. You could draw attention to:
  - Tabitha / Dorcas: (Acts 9:36-43). She was an influential woman who was known for her good deeds towards the poor. Upon her death, there was great mourning. God empowered Peter to raise her from the dead.
  - The mother of John Mark hosted a church in her home (Acts 12:6-19).
  - The rich businesswoman, Lydia, upon her conversion, hosted the apostolic team in Philippi (Acts 16:11-15)
  - The tent-making ministry couple of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-28) demonstrates how husband and wife partnered together to see fruitful business, ministry and mission.
- Allow this day to start ongoing conversations about how women are portrayed in music, movies, social media feeds, etc – are they honouring of women or not?
- Find organisations in your neighborhood that serve women and support their work – police stations, counsellors, crisis centers, maternity wards, etc. Ask the Spirit to speak to you about how you can take action in your spheres to support women to thrive.