



World Vision



It takes a world
to end violence against children



ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

DEVOTIONAL +
DISCUSSION POINTS

MAY 2021

DOLA - YOUNG LEADER FROM BANGLADESH



“Many people of Bangladesh treat girl children as a burden. My mother was also a victim of that kind of mentality,” Dola shared. She remembered asking her mother to describe memories from her childhood, but her mother struggled to recall much. She had been forced into child marriage at 13. “From her childhood she had to manage a family.”

“She dreamed of becoming a banker, but her father and mother treated her as a burden,” Dola said. “They forced her to get married. She faced physical and mental violence from her husband.”

Dola nearly suffered the same fate at 12 years old when community members insisted that she be married off to “a very good boy”. Dola’s mother turned them away, determined to keep her child in school. She didn’t see Dola as a burden. She knew her daughter was a blessing.

Since she was 10 years old, Dola has been advocating with World Vision to end child marriage. Now 16, Dola continues to show that girls are a blessing to their families and can achieve their dreams. Addressing the United Nations on Day of the Girl Child 2019, she declared, “Girls are not a burden. Girls can go further than we imagined.”

Children like Dola are not a burden. World Vision believes that children are a blessing from God, a sign of God's presence within God's creation and of hope for the future. This hope is shown in the coming of the King of Kings, for children were important – indeed, central – to Jesus' self-understanding. He was a child, the Son of David, the Son of Man, the Son of God who was and is his father.

Child marriage is a result of many different factors, but one of the common themes in child marriage is that children, especially girls, are not valued. Their worth is tied to a price, many times the result of poverty.

But, we see that **Jesus** is clear in how we should value children:

“Whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me welcomes not Me, but the one who sent Me.”

Mark 9:36-37

Q: *What are ways we diminish, devalue or are indifferent to children?*

Q: *What are practical ways we can value children around us?*

CHILDREN ARE A BLESSING

“I need to educate [others] about the validity of [the truth that] children are also made in the image and likeness of God just as adults are. Children should be placed in high esteem, with love, care, discipline, guidance, protection, and participation.”

Pastor - Channels of Hope CP,
Sierra Leone 2012

The Little Children and Jesus

Read Mark 10:13-16

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. **14** When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **15** Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” **16** And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Q: *What are key takeaways from this passage?*

Q: *How can you bless, receive or pray for children and young people that you know?*

Q: *Do you feel disconnected with younger generations? What are some ways to listen and find common ground with them?*



PRAYERS FROM CHILDREN + YOUNG PEOPLE

Pray for girls to be able to access education and continue to fight child marriage and injustice all over the world

Pray for children's dreams to come true and that they live a life in all its fullness, in spite of the violence and abuses they face everyday

Pray that people's hearts will be burdened to end child marriage and that voices will rise from around the world.

Key Statistics Around **Child Marriage**

Unless we accelerate our efforts to end child marriage globally, 110 million more girls under age 18 will be married by 2030.

Globally, 21 percent of young women (ages 20-24) were married as children.

Nearly 40% of girls in the world's poorest countries are married as children, twice the global average.

Each year, 12 million girls are married before the age of 18. That's 22 girls every minute whose childhood, dreams, and education are cut short.

GROUP PRAYER

Jesus, Creator and Sustainer of all things, you are King of Kings and Lord of Lords – nothing escapes your gaze.

Every child is fearfully and wonderfully made in your image. You long for each precious child to flourish in safety and wellbeing, coming to a full and life-giving knowledge of you.

Your heart must break whenever violence is perpetrated against your children. Lord, give us your heart for children and unite us in our effort to be ambassadors for you on behalf of children around the world.

We know it will take a world to end violence against children – here we are, send us, use us. Pour your light into the darkest areas of violence, rescue and protect for your Name's sake.

Amen

This prayer and portions of this devotion were adapted from John Baxter-Brown's "[A Biblical and Theological Basis for Ending Violence Against Children](#)" found on [WVI.org](#).

**“Girls should
be princesses,
not brides...”**



**Early marriage
robs the magic
of childhood.”**

— Teodora, 17
Romania