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# Prayer: An Instrument for Assessment of Spiritual and Psychological Concerns for Burundian Refugee Women in Maison Shalom Rwanda

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PRAYER: AN INSTRUMENT FOR ASSESSMENT OF SPIRITUAL AND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCERNS FOR BURUNDIAN REFUGEE WOMEN IN  
MAISON SHALOM RWANDA

A PROJECT  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
OF THE M. CHRISTOPHER WHITE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY  
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BOILING SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
ORNELLA UMUBYEYI

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APPROVAL FORM

PRAYER: AN INSTRUMENT FOR ASSESSMENT OF SPIRITUAL AND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCERNS FOR BURUNDIAN REFUGEE WOMEN IN  
MAISON SHALOM RWANDA

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I dedicate this work to my grandfather, Ngendahonankwa Matthias, I hope you are proud of me from above.

To my parents, I am continually shaped by your love, wisdom and leadership in my life.

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## ABSTRACT

A qualitative research methodology was designed to analyze how prayer can be used as an instrument to reveal various spiritual and psychological issues Burundian women refugees face in Rwanda. Six Burundian refugee women were surveyed throughout the seven weeks of the research. Various modalities of prayer were used to assess different concerns that they might have had. Participants met in both one-on-ones and group sessions. Data gathered suggested that prayer was a crucial tool that allowed the participants to reveal their traumatic events and created a strong bond among participants. The collected data indicates that the practice of prayer became therapeutic for the participants. The results gathered from this research will be one of the building blocks in building a future a program based on prayer to assess the needs of Christian Burundian women.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Prayer is the most common spiritual coping mechanism currently practiced by those of the Christian faith. Prayer gives a sense of hope and relief because to Christians, it is assumed that God hears their prayers. Praying is an act of direct communication between humans and God needing no intermediary or substitute. For most, prayer is an unspoken expectation for Christians to be heard by God ever since Jesus taught them how to pray (Matt 6:5-14). In the Burundi culture, prayer is ever present throughout their daily lives. I grew up watching people in Burundi and Rwanda pray at funerals, birthday parties, schools before classes start and in almost every important and mundane event of their lives. Prayer has always been an important aspect both spiritually and culturally. It has been used as a tool for spiritual growth and as a tool that was used to deal with trauma and grief, and sometimes to overcome hatred.

As in Rwanda, the Burundian culture does not easily embrace the idea of expressing sadness, anger, pain publicly or even privately out loud. Growing up in Burundi, I noticed that Christians were not encouraged to express anger or question God because it was viewed as the individual having either an absence of faith or a lack of trust in God's will. I also noticed growing up that expressing our religious feelings and emotions with each other was uncommon and mostly unexpected. Using words such as anger, depression, fear or anxiety when referring to oneself was often viewed not only as weakness but also as lack of faith. I was raised in a culture that socializes and interacts as a part of its core modes of expression and yet any religious emotional expressions were frowned upon. From my observations, the use of open prayer can be the tool that allows

Burundians to express their feelings, both with God and with each other without the stigma of “weakness” or “faithlessness”.

The reader may ask, "Why this project with Burundian women?" I chose to focus on Burundian women in my project for three main reasons. First, women in Burundi are marginalized and inadequately represented at every level of decision making both in the government and the society. The Initiative for Peacebuilding<sup>1</sup> discovered a strong connection between immense occurrences of sexual violence and areas of military activity. According to Amnesty International USA, judicial authorities and police in Burundi do not take rape victims seriously. Therefore Burundian women rarely report rape crimes. Second, as a minister who has a calling to work with Burundian women in the near future, it was important that my project focused on them. On a more personal level, perhaps the third reason was the most important. My mother’s ancestry and family origin is of Burundian heritage. My grandmother still lives in her home in Burundi. Perhaps helping begins "at home."

Looking at the findings of this project, it is undeniable that healing and restoration will be needed to re-build the nation. In order for this to take place, honest expression of grief, anger, shame, and hurt will be needed to build a bridge between the nation’s sorrows of the past to the hopes for the future. This project contributed in my personal growth as a minister who wants to offer biblical, pastoral care to Burundians, especially women in the future. This project has equipped me with skills to offer safe spaces for Burundian refugee women to express freely their concerns

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<sup>1</sup> The Initiative for Peacebuilding (IfP) was a consortium led by International Alert and funded by the European Commission.

### **a. STATEMENT OF NEEDS**

History shows that both internal and external conflicts have had spiritual and psychological impacts on humankind. The effects have been on individuals and families. War and genocide have caused many to flee out of their countries to take refuge on foreign soil, forcing the relocated to not only question themselves but their relationship with God.

A refugee is a person who exiles to a new place in order to run away from persecution, national disaster, or war. This project sought to use prayer as a common instrument to help analyze the different multifaceted issues Burundian refugee women deal with in their exilic situations.

The intent of the research was to use prayer to identify various issues that have impacted the Burundian women taking refuge in Rwanda. This project was not meant to use prayer as the focus; but rather, as an instrument to detect and identify those concerns the refugees have. The purpose of this research was to analyze the spiritual and psychological issues that arose during the sessions with Burundian refugee women. The majority of the women have been in Rwanda since 2015, which seemed an adequate length of time for them to come to grips with their grief while they face various problems that come with being a refugee in a foreign country. This project approached prayer simply as a tool that assisted Burundian refugee women to express their concerns both psychologically and spiritually. Living in a different country and among different cultures can have a strong impact both spiritually and psychologically on refugees.

There were different concerns that affected refugees either individually or as a family. This project used a methodology specifically tailored that utilized prayer as a way

to uncover and address the hidden and suppressed psychological and spiritual issues affecting Burundian women in Rwanda. Five different kinds of prayers were used as tools to help the women share their concerns without feeling forced or unsafe. Prayer represents a good tool to create communication because it does not push one to feel forced, to feel examined, or to feel uncomfortable. This project did assess which issues that affected them the most.

### **b. MINISTRY QUESTION**

The primary concern that prompted this project was the need to uncover and hopefully understand those issues the refugee Burundian women face, yet suppressed within themselves. No matter the culture, the belief, or the language, it is undeniable that trauma and grief is a global experience. To say that prayer alone can fix trauma and grief would not be an accurate statement. From watching the misuse of prayer to suppress anger, sadness, and pain, rather than to uplift the individual out of these emotions, it became obvious that the outward expression of emotions of these women did not reflect how Christians Burundian refugee women must truly feel.

As a starting reference point, I began looking at how these emotions are portrayed in the Bible and important questions were raised in me, such as:

What various kind of issues were Burundian women facing in Rwanda, both as refugees and diaspora? Was it possible to have prayer be used as a tool for assessment? Was it possible that there were other issues Burundian women were facing other than grieving? What were those specific issues other than grief Christian women from Burundi were facing?

All these questions led me to see how this project was important and will continue to be in the future for Burundi. The main question that made me realize the importance of prayer was: “Can we use prayer to communicate with one another as well as to communicate with God?” All these questions set the tone and helped to shape this project.

### **c. PROJECT SETTING**

Rwanda is a landlocked East African country. Officially known as the Republic of Rwanda, the country received its independence from Belgium in 1962. It is a sovereign state in Central and East Africa and one of the smallest countries on the African continent. Kinyarwanda is the main language in Rwanda. Rwanda shares its borders with Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The project took place in Rwanda, in the capital city Kigali. Maison Shalom (which means “House of Peace” in English) is a non-profit organization founded in 1993 by Marguerite Barankitse in Burundi. Maison Shalom has an office in Rwanda aiming to support and help Burundian refugees. Maison Shalom is situated in Kicukiro District, in the Kigali Province. Since April 2015, UNHCR<sup>2</sup>'s latest figures reveals that 250,473 people have been listed as refugees in Democratic Republic of the Congo (21,186), Rwanda (73,926), Tanzania (131,834), Uganda (22,330), and Zambia (1,197).

Burundi is similar to Rwanda as it is also a landlocked country in East Africa. It is bordered by Rwanda from the North side. Burundi is one the world's poorest nations. The country has been struggling to come out from ethnic conflict since it gained its independence in 1962. Throughout history, tensions have been prevailing between Tutsi

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<sup>2</sup> The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN refugee agency

minority and the Hutu majority. In April 2015, the current president, announced his refusal to leave the presidential position and violated the constitution to run for a third term. This announcement created civil and ethnic conflicts, which led to 600 protesters' arrests and more than two hundred thousand of Tutsi refugees are fleeing to the neighboring countries. Due to the ethnic violence, many Burundians are still refugees until now in Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda, as large populated camps were installed to receive them. Kirundi, which is the main language in Burundi, is quite similar to Kinyarwanda. These languages are quite similar even though the accents and some words do not mean the same.

I worked with Burundian women refugees that Maison Shalom helped identify. I stayed in Kigali city, and I was able to reach Maison Shalom after taking a fifteen-minute drive. The psychologist working at Maison Shalom would then call each participant individually and encouraged them to come. All of the one-on-one and the group sessions took place within the perimeter of Maison Shalom.

The purpose of this study was to discern the issues Burundian women were dealing with throughout the two years they have been residing in Rwanda. Burundi, as it is in Rwanda, is a dominantly Christian nation. Christianity has influenced many aspects of the culture. My ultimate goal is to develop a type of ministry in the future that will be able to address the underlying needs that were discovered during this project. This project was not aimed at fixing the participants, or alleviating their physical conditions in any way but rather have the participants help mold and develop my projected ministry by ascertaining their needs and concerns.



There were six women participants in my project. Each of whom identified themselves as Christians. Some participants were Catholics and others Protestants. The small group participated in exercises and invocations that helped them express themselves through different types of prayers.

While seven weeks seems like a short time to make a conclusion, the results of this project far outweighed my expectations and formulated a foundation in making a program in my ministry that will respond best to the kind of issues Burundian women will be dealing with.

#### **d. PROJECT GOAL**

The current goal of this research was: to analyze how prayer could be used as an instrument that revealed spiritual and psychological issues Burundian women refugees faced.

On a realistic level, I hoped this project to be one of the building blocks that would be used to build a program through prayer to accurately assess the needs of Christian Burundian women. The project was designed to discover the concerns of its subjects that were expressed through prayer, both during group sessions and individual sessions. One of the many types of praying used to ascertain the true concerns of these women was the use of healing prayers. Prayer plays a prominent role in Christianity. This project's intentions were to analyze how the participants expressed their concerns and anxieties through their prayers.

Among the outcomes of this project, I gained a) a better understanding of the need for Burundian refugee women to have a safe space for expression; b) a better

understanding of how prayer can be a therapeutic tool in traumatic events; and c) a better understanding of the different concerns Burundian women refugees in Rwanda had.

#### **e. RESOURCES**

During the execution of this research, Maison Shalom offered their physical space as the meeting location for all the meetings. Exercises and group prayer sessions' papers were printed weekly at Maison Shalom. The participants were unpaid and volunteered to participate. Each participant was asked to offer one hour and half of their time during the meetings. However, one unexpected outcome was that participants who were normally reticent to divulge their feelings outwardly actually chose to spend an extra hour weekly talking with each other. At times, meals or/and refreshments were offered to the participants. For transportation, each participant was given weekly one thousand Rwandan Francs which equivalents to one dollar and sixteen cents. A one way bus ticket cost five hundred Rwanda Francs which equivalents to fifty-eight cents. The Gardner Webb University library and other online sources were consulted to gather information needed and to help develop the exercises and prayer sessions formats.

#### **f. STATEMENT OF LIMITATION**

The present research was limited in gathered the number of participants expected during the proposal of the project. Twelve participants were the expectant number of the project. However, this research worked with six participants. Some participants returned to Burundi and others went to other refugee camps. The project was effective due to the participation of each the group members and their interaction with me and each other. However, it would be pointless to make research calculations from a target group this

small. In addition, I am convinced that a larger group than this group may have limited participation and made hiding out in the group easier.

### **g. PERSONAL RATIONALE FOR PROJECT**

I am an ordained pastor in Zion Temple Celebration Center (ZTCC) Rwanda since 2012. ZTCC is an international non-denomination church founded in 1990. I have served as a youth pastor and an associate pastor in Zion Temple Celebration Center Illinois church. Serving as a minister in both Rwanda and Burundi led me to see the great need to minister to women. I have always found passion either teaching or leading Bible studies with women in the past. My call is to serve and minister in Burundi in the future. This project allowed me to assess the needs and concerns Burundian Christian women have. As a minister, this project allowed me to develop skills and prepared me to be able to assess the needs and concerns of those I am called to minister. Some of the skills I gained were crisis intervention skills, organizational skills, biblical teaching skills, and learning about trauma and the psychological wounds of refugees.

From biblical times up to today, warfare is still unfortunately part of our life experiences. Therefore, because we seem not to avoid death and wars, we cannot avoid, grief and trauma. Immigration has always been a part of our human history. In 2015, my grandmother who is Burundian, left her home and came to take refuge in Rwanda with my parents. Knowing her for years, I could see the pain on her face that she did not try hard to hide. She wanted one thing and one thing only: to go back to her home.

As I knew, without a doubt, of the call God placed in me to serve in Burundi, my grandmother's pain led me to wanting to understand what Burundian refugee women were going through. Understanding their concerns and creating a space for them for

expression was important to me because hearing every concern was if I was hearing them from my grandmother.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

#### **a. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology of this project was designed to address the research's project goal: to discern various psychological, cultural and spiritual concerns Burundian refugee women in Rwanda were facing. With this objective in mind, I worked for seven weeks with a group of women Maison Shalom was assisting in various ways. The project took place on a regular weekly schedule with two meeting sessions on different days. Tuesdays were group meetings and Thursdays were one-on-one meetings.

Communication about the application of the project was initiated with the Psychologist of Maison Shalom telephoning each participant to invite them to come and meet. Though fifteen people were contacted, six came and became committed. On the first day meeting, I communicated clearly with the participants that their participation in the research was completely voluntarily and anonymous. Their full names were not to be written on their exercises and/or their prayers; only their initials.

#### **b. RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

All the surveys, exercises, consent forms and questionnaires had to be translated in Kirundi. An expert in Kirundi assisted in translating without requiring any monetary rewards.

In order to reach an agreement and commitment, a hard copy of the research consent form was read out loud and explained in the group before they signed

As the exercises were done individually, I recorded each participant's answers and body language responses. Recording changes in body language and facial expressions were important as these are part of cultural communication patterns. This project used various surveys and exercises to assess the participants' views, usage of prayer, and determine the type of spiritual and psychological issues they faced in their lives. Surveys were made of Visual Analogue scales, Likert-type scales, and pre-test and post-test surveys. The intent was to find patterns and any inconsistencies in the participants' answers. This project's study and assessment lasted for seven weeks. Evaluations were given to each participant to analyze their perception of prayer, and the role prayer played in their daily lives.

After the introductions and meeting with each participant one-on-one, I asked each participant to tell me her life stories and how she arrived as a refugee in Rwanda. This allowed me to get to know each participant better. It also allowed me to determine the common needs they had and to evaluate how those common issues surfaced throughout the project. I used an interview questionnaire (see Appendix 6) as a consistent model during the first and last sessions.

Different kinds of prayers were used as tools to allow the participants to share and express themselves. Prayer was easily received since all participants were confessing Christians. These five different kinds of prayers were used each week of the research:

- I. Prayer of Thanksgiving
- II. Prayer of Intercession
- III. Prayer of Confession
- IV. Prayer of Forgiveness

## V. Prayer of Lament

Each group session addressed a different kind of prayer and allowed the participants to write their own prayers. Through *prayers of thanksgiving*, we evaluated what they were thankful for. The participants expressed their feelings about their present circumstances and presence in Rwanda as refugees. Through *prayers of intercession*, each person voiced what their main concerns were and who they were concerned about the most. The participants focused on their most important needs and whom they are most concerned about. All of the participants had children, and mentioned both in their prayers and exercises that they were worried about their futures. This kind of prayer permitted me to comprehend their common worries and fears.

Through *prayers of confession*, I evaluated my participants' views of their own sins. During the prayer of confession, some participants shared specific traumatic events they experienced that they had never shared with anyone else.

Through *prayers of forgiveness*, I discerned who my participants were willing to forgive. I also discerned whom they were not willing to forgive. I was able to observe how the process of forgiving looked like to them.

Through *prayers of lament*, I discovered what my participants were most angry about and even who they were most angry with. The phenomenon of lament helped them to unwrap their anger and sorrow. This prayer was effective in allowing participants to express their grief and fears with each other and with God.

Multiple assessment tools were used in this project: (1) Open-ended questions, (2) Surveys, (3) Writing/drawing assignments, (4) Prayers for group sessions, and (5) a personal journal. The use of cognitive behavioral therapy was beneficial in assessing their

thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This method was very useful in observing any changes throughout the project. My primary clinical approach was to use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. CBT techniques are generally very short term, averaging around 8-12 sessions, meeting once or twice weekly. These seemed to fit the parameters of my project. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) was used to form the questionnaires for the one-on-one sessions. CBT helped pinpoint more specifically their thoughts and behaviors. I explored how participants expressed their concerns in our individual sessions and what they did during the group sessions. CBT is effective at teaching coping strategies to deal with psychological conditions. CBT was chosen for this research because it is a type of psychotherapy that focuses on how one's thoughts and beliefs affect their feelings and behavior. Moreover, because teaching about various prayers (and connecting them with clinical issues) is compatible to the teaching/preaching and pastoral care ministries of the Church, the approach of CBT allowed me to easily utilize "cognitive processing therapy" in a manner acceptable to the Burundian women in my target group.

Every session taught and/or informed different content regarding a type of prayer.

Here is a **format for each group session** that lasted for almost two hours.

- Participants shared about their week and anything new that happened since the last time we met. (15-30 minutes)
- Read and elaborated on scriptures relating to each prayer type. (10 minutes)



- Shared my personal prayer for that session and elaborated on how the content of that prayer was important to my own experience. (10 minutes)
- Welcomed the participants to write or draw their own prayers. (15 minutes)
- Welcomed the participants to share their prayers and explained their meanings. (20 minutes)
- My closing prayer with the participant. (5 minutes)
- Participants stayed and talked about various things. (30 minutes)

Every one-on-one session consisted of exercises that my participant and I both completed and shared our answers.

Here is a **format for each one-on-one session** that lasted an hour:

- Participant completes exercise, shares and elaborated on answers. (30 minutes)
- Participant discussed further about any topic of their choices. (30 minutes)

#### **c. DATA STORING METHOD**

The data storing method consisted of recording by handwriting each group session prayers, one-on-ones exercises and journaling. Papers with the exercises or prayers were printed each week before the arrival of the participants. The surveys, questionnaires, field notes and prayers will be demolished one month after the successful oral defense of the research final report.

#### **d. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Looking at works and research that have been done in past relating to prayer as an instrument of assessment was very helpful for this project. A list of various resources that have contributed in framing this project have been included in the bibliography section. I

grew up in a family that has always encouraged me to pray; however, I always felt something missing. I could not pinpoint it then until I read, *Who we are is How we pray*, by Charles J. Keating. Keating strongly emphasizes in his book that who we are must match our spirituality. He argues that people should “pray out of who they are” and out of their own feelings, desires, experiences, and needs.<sup>3</sup> When I was reading his book and looking at every kind of prayer he framed for every personality, I realized that, instead of making a prayer for every personality type, I would rather use prayer as a tool to reveal personalities and emotions.

#### **e. PRAYER**

Prayer is an important part of the spiritual life. So, what happens when prayer is observed from a scientific perspective? Larry VandeCreek looks at prayer from a scientific view in his book entitled, *Scientific and Pastoral Perspectives on Intercessory Prayer*. The book gave me a good experience of watching science and religion being used to analyze what prayer does. VandeCreek selected health care chaplains to examine the role of prayer from different perspectives. VandeCreek and the various chaplains do not all see prayer the same way. Conversely, they all do seem to agree that intercessory prayer does something psychologically to the one who practices it.

It is undeniable that refugees experience different issues both spiritually and psychologically, and there is a need to express those issues. Makay, Tuchardt, and Schwartz’s article, *Public Prayer: A Field for Research in Public Address* focuses on using prayer as a form of speech-communication. This article helped me to see how using

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<sup>3</sup> Charles J. Keating, *Who We Are is How We Pray* (Mystic: Twenty-Third publications, 1987), 20-25.

prayer as an instrument for refugees to express their issues was beneficial and achievable. The article argues that different techniques of prayers are identical to those of public speech. Even though this article focuses on using prayer as a public communication tool, my project approached prayer as an instrument to discern the types of concerns the participants had.

In 2014, Johnson-Agbakwu published his research through the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*. His research was entitled, “Adaptation of Acculturation Scale for African Refugee Women.” In his research, Agbakwu and the co-authors state that African refugees are a vulnerable group of immigrants that have no acculturation measurements. Acculturation by definition is the process of psychological and cultural change from one culture to another. Reading Agbakwu’s research made me realize that, in my project, I did encounter acculturation with some participants. Agbakwu adapted the Bicultural Involvement Questionnaire (BIQ) and looked at Somali, Somali Bantu, and Burundian women refugees in Arizona. Even though he was focused on Burundian women refugees in the United States, I was encouraged to see that there has been some work done to analyze how Burundian women adapt as refugees and what their experiences are. I found some similarities with Agbakwu’s project results and my project regarding cultural change.

#### **f. PRAYER AS A COPING MECHANISM**

Prayer can be defined in many ways and can be used for various reasons. This project approached prayer as an instrument that assessed psychological and spiritual concerns during one-on-one and group sessions. Prayer is the coping mechanism that many Burundian Christians turn to during crisis and traumatic events. The study explored

how the Burundian women prayed and what role prayer played when it came to their spiritual and psychological issues. Prayer was a therapeutic tool that helped them to cope with their anger and hopelessness.

Prayer is a tool to help cope with various issues. Mouna El-Khadiri Derose from Roosevelt University published her thesis for her Master of Arts degree on prayer as a coping mechanism. Derose thesis entitled, *An Exploratory Study of Prayer as Coping Mechanism for Chronic Pain*, used prayer as a tool for her participants to deal with their pain. Derose used various prayers with her participants to cope with their pain. What I found very intriguing in Derose' research was that half of her participants said that they believed in the power of prayer, and the other half view prayer as an aid to cope with their pain. Seeing how her participants viewed prayer from different perspectives led me to view my project as an opportunity to assess not only the emotional, psychological, and spiritual issues refugee women face, but also only what prayer represents for each one of them. Like Derose's findings, some participants in my project viewed prayer as an escape from pain and some as a powerful tool that can change their life situation.

#### **g. DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRAYER**

There are different kinds of prayers. The reason why there are many different ways to pray is because there are different issues and matters to pray for. Prayer does not only take place during crisis and tragic situations; there are also prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of benedictions. Therefore, since there are different types of Christian prayers, these types can allow us to assess where people are and what issues they are dealing with through each kind of prayer. In 2000, Robert John Cox worked on his research project entitled, *Relating different types of Christian prayer to religious and*

*psychological measures of well-Being*. In his research, Cox explores whether people who practice different types of Christian prayer can be differentiated according to measures of spiritual and clinical well-being. In his study, he talks about the different types of prayer and how petitionary prayer and conversational prayer became characteristically adopted by Protestantism, and meditation prayer became the primary form of prayer by Catholicism. This is very important to note because some participants in my project felt more comfortable with petitionary prayers and others with conversational prayers. This was probably due to the fact that some participants were Catholics and others were Protestants. Offering different types of prayers each week allowed participants to express themselves in the type of prayers they felt comfortable with.

Leading prayer sessions with a group was a task that required preparation and skills. *Learning to Pray*, a book written by Carolyn Shealy Self and her husband William Self, suggests procedures to lead prayer sessions for groups. The book addresses what the group leader can do to prepare, and offers suggested Scriptures to help in leading each prayer session. The book was very informative and helped me have a better idea on how to form effective prayer sessions for my participants. The book made me aware before I began my project of how physical and mental preparations were necessary in order to lead a successful prayer group.

## CHAPTER THREE

### BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

Is it possible for one to endure suffering without losing hope? Can one endure suffering without losing faith? Can we put the words “suffering” and “faith” in the same sentence? In the Burundian culture, suffering is seen through two ways. First, one must not question God when he or she is going through suffering. Second, suffering can be a sign of the lack of faith. In this chapter, I will discuss suffering from five perspectives: a) the reality of suffering in the human existence; b) the place of prayer in the human suffering; c) the role of God in the human suffering; d) suffering from a diaspora context; and e) woman theology rooted in suffering.

This section will identify main points that look at suffering and prayer from a biblical and theological perspective. In this segment, I am going to analyze suffering and prayer in human experiences. I will divide these two into five categories, identify them, and elaborate on them. First, I will address the reality of suffering in human experiences. I will use Job, the Apostle Paul, and Jesus as demonstrations of biblical examples. Second, I will address the role of God in human suffering. I will use Isaiah 53 and Jesus as examples to understand and clarify the context of the suffering servant. Third, I will take a look at the place prayer holds in human suffering. Fourth, I will use a few Psalms of Lament and Paul’s suffering to defend and explain this argument, and consider the diaspora as a context for human suffering. The Babylonian captivity story and the Book of Exodus will be some of the models used to illuminate my point. Fifth, I will address the context of womanist theology and how it is rooted in and occasioned by suffering. I

will use some contemporary theologies such as liberation theology and womanist theology to see how they narrate and deal with human suffering.

We cannot deny the existence of suffering. The Burundian theology of suffering believes that there are two types of sufferings. First, one suffers because he or she has sinned against God, and therefore, God punishes them by inflicting suffering. Second, one is suffering because of Satan. To understand the course of this idea that suffering is upon us because of God, we have to look at the saying, “we must rejoice in suffering” that comes from the biblical text in Colossians 1:24. In this text, Paul speaks of how he is glad in his suffering by stating, “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.” Many Burundian clergies have taken this text and preached it as a message from Paul that suffering as Christians should be rejoiced in because Paul was suffering emotionally and physically because of his faith.

Suffering is part of the human condition. No one is exempt from suffering. Moore argues that suffering is universal and is not limited to race, nationality, or gender.<sup>4</sup>Therefore, if all humans experience suffering, we can agree that dealing with suffering is important. Not only do all human beings experience suffering, but Christians as well experience hardships. Faith in God does not exempt us from experiencing all that life brings us, good or bad. The Bible demonstrates stories of people dealing with loss of loved ones and even persecution that led them to exile. The great Christian writer, C. S. Lewis, struggled to understand God when he was mourning the death of his wife. He laments: “If God’s goodness is inconsistent with hurting us, then either God is not good

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<sup>4</sup> R.Kelvin Moore, *The Psalms of Lamentation and The Enigma of Suffering* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 3.

or there is no God: for in the only life we know He hurts us beyond our worst fears and beyond all we can imagine...<sup>5</sup> We have all been in places where we have been hurt and too confused to understand why God would allow tragedies to happen to us.

Suffering experiences shape our faith and are part of the Christian life. 2 Timothy does address suffering and indicates that believers must expect hardships. Paul accepts his suffering for the sake of his faith, as he states in 2 Timothy 2:8-9, “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained.” Many preachers then have encouraged Burundian Christians women to accept suffering, since Paul gladly accepted his own. Preachers have not offered space and opportunities to Burundians to use the Lament Psalms as a tool to help bring change and reveal various issues Burundian Christians face in their personal lives. Brueggemann also agrees that there is a lack of use of the Lament Psalms and says: “I think that serious religious use of the lament psalms has been minimal because we have believed that faith does not mean to acknowledge and embrace negativity. We have thought that acknowledgement of negativity was somehow an act of unfaith, as though the very speech about it conceded too much about God’s ‘loss of control.’”<sup>6</sup> Brueggemann strongly believes that allowing people to use the psalms of Lamentation is not a sign of weakness, but rather as a sign of faith for willingness to experience the world for all that it is and not in some pretended way. I believe that denying one’s suffering is denying a part of one’s self. It is to deny the spiritual aspect that suffering plays in human

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Olson, *Ask Anything: A Pastoral Theology of Inquiry* (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2006), 104-105.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of The Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 52.



experiences. The best way to deal with our suffering is by first facing our suffering as a process as we feel it and not as something to accept without understanding it.

How can I believe that God is good, that God is for me when I am suffering? This is a question that many of us have dealt with at some point in our lives. “Why me” is another theological question we wrestle with to know where God is, and this question cries out for a response.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to keep faith when one is suffering. Throughout time, many have used the argument that evil and suffering are proof of the absence and non-existence of God. The secular view of suffering is separate from God. God’s love cannot be present where suffering exists. The Christian views suffering not as separate from God. The fact that God gave his only Son to go through suffering and death shows that God is not disconnected from suffering. But rather, God understands it.

#### **a. The Reality of Suffering in Human Experience**

The word “suffering,” also known as *ταλαιπωρία* in the Greek, means the process of going through pain, loss, and emotional or physical hardship. Moore argues that suffering is a common denominator among humans by citing Simundson and says: “Daniel J. Simundson adequately expresses the extensiveness of suffering: ‘Suffering is the great common denominator among human beings. Everyone has an experience of profound hurt and loneliness and suffering.’”<sup>8</sup> Suffering is a part of the human experience. Both the secular person and Christian can agree that suffering is a human experience. The Bible gives us examples of several stories of human suffering. I will use three examples to illustrate the different types of suffering. I will look at Job’s suffering,

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Olson, *Ask Anything: A Pastoral Theology of Inquiry* (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2006), 105.

<sup>8</sup> R. Kelvin Moore, *The Psalms of Lamentation and The Enigma of Suffering* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1996), 3.

the Apostle Paul's suffering, and Jesus's suffering. Though all of them suffered, they seemed to have suffered for different reasons and therefore in different ways, which leads us to agree that suffering is experienced by all, but not for the same reasons or experienced in the same ways.

The book of Job defies the problem of human suffering but does not propose an answer for it. In the book of Job, Job suffers the loss of his wealth and children (Job 1:1-2:6). Job was a righteous man who lost almost everything in his life. Though Job was a man of faith, he could not help but express his grief and questions to God, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him that I might come even to his seat! I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments" (Job 23:3-4). Job was not afraid to be expressive to God, and God did respond to Job in dialogues. Throughout Job's suffering, God was present. God listened to Job's cry, questions, and grieving. We can actually define Job's interaction with God as a prayer. Job talked to God through prayer. Prayer became liberation for Job.

Job's suffering demonstrates the reality of how humans experience suffering. Like Job, humans question God; they are confused at where God is and the universal question 'why me'. The question 'why me' is a very complex one to deal with as a Christian who believes that God is good. Yet, we can agree that Job's way of suffering is human, and many of us can relate with his questions to God and to himself.

In the book of Acts, Luke demonstrates how Paul suffered and acknowledged his own suffering. He was persecuted. Even though Paul was called and was an Apostle of Jesus Christ, he still acknowledged that his faith did not exclude him from the human experience of suffering. Therefore, suffering does not exclude believers from suffering,

but rather believers come to the realization of Jesus' going through his own human suffering.

Jesus had his own human experience of suffering. Jesus' brutal physical suffering is similar to the human experience of suffering many have. One of the reasons is because though Jesus was the messianic Son of God, he was born from a woman in human flesh.<sup>9</sup> By becoming human, he embraced all that came with experiencing life and that included suffering. There are different types of suffering. Some suffer physically through wars, genocide, and slavery. Jesus, by accepting to face and go through suffering, was acknowledging the reality of suffering in human experiences.

### **b. The Place of Prayer in Human Suffering**

The word 'prayer' is *תְּפִלָּה* in Hebrew and is defined as interacting with God. Prayer plays a role not only to bring healing during suffering, but also comfort. The comfort in prayer is focused on the idea that God heals and cares for those who are broken and wounded, as Psalm 147:3 says: "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." From the book of Jeremiah or in Psalms, the writings are prayers of how God rescued, healed, and walked with those in suffering. Since we have looked at the role of God in human suffering, we can agree that God also listens to prayers that lift up suffering and concerns. I will use the Garden of Gethsemane and the Psalms of Lament.

The Psalms of Lament are good examples of seeing how prayer is a part of human suffering. Even though the Psalms of Lament are part of the human experience, the church has avoided them. Brueggemann argues that the reason why the church has not

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<sup>9</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 215.

included the Psalms of Lament in prayers is because Laments reveal the reality of the world we live in. He says:

It is no wonder that the church has intuitively avoided these psalms. They lead us into dangerous acknowledgement of how life really is. They lead us into the presence of God where everything is not polite and civil. They cause us to think unthinkable thoughts and utter unutterable words. Perhaps worst, they lead us away from the comfortable religious claims of ‘modernity’ in which everything is managed and controlled.<sup>10</sup>

The Old Testament gives us several examples of grief and lamentation, particularly throughout the book of Psalm. Moore believes that the book of Psalms demonstrates human suffering better than any other book in the Bible. He says: “I believe that the psalms of lamentation shed valuable light on the theme of suffering. Perhaps nowhere else in the Bible is suffering so illuminated. The authors of the psalms suffered for various reasons, reacted differently, and resolved their pain in numerous ways.”<sup>11</sup> Psalms are written with a mourning and grieving heart (e.g., “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18) or “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3). These verses are some examples that demonstrate that lamentation is in fact one type of prayer.

The book of Psalms is a collection of poems, hymns, and prayers that express emotions Jews felt and experienced. The book of Psalms delivers laments that express deep sorrows and expectations of what God can and should do. Psalm 142 is a good example of a Psalm of Lament:

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<sup>10</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of The Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 53.

<sup>11</sup> R. Kelvin Moore, *The Psalms of Lamentation and The Enigma of Suffering* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 6.

With my voice I cry to the Lord; with my voice I make supplication to the Lord. I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him. When my spirit is faint, you know my way. In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. Look on my right hand and see—there is no one who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for me. I cry to you, O Lord; I say, “You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.” Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low. Save me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me. Bring me out of prison, so that I may give thanks to your name. The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me.

It is undisputable that this psalm is a prayer offered up to God, prayed by David when he had to take shelter from Saul in a cave. David was in distress and prayed to God to be helped in his suffering. The most surprising someone, who called out to God in suffering, is Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

The garden of Gethsemane, was known as ‘oil press’, which was located on the Mount of Olives.<sup>12</sup> Jesus frequently went to Gethsemane to pray. He would often take his disciples along with him. After celebrating the Passover, Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the garden. Jesus asked the disciples to stay awake and watch with him so they would not fall into temptation. They fell asleep, and Jesus woke them up and reminded them to pray so they would not fall into temptation. In that garden, Jesus asked his Father to remove the cup he was about to drink. Jesus knew the suffering he was about to experience and prayed for endurance. Jesus was teaching Peter, James, and John the role and place that prayer should hold before and during human suffering. Jesus asked: “Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me” (Jn 18:11) to make a statement about his suffering and human suffering. Richard Olson believes that Jesus’s suffering is connected to our suffering: “Jesus makes this statement to stop Peter’s resistance as Jesus

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<sup>12</sup> John Barton and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 880.

is being arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. Somehow we know that our suffering is connected to Jesus' suffering."<sup>13</sup>

Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane with a lamentation. Waltke argues that Jesus in fact cried out loud, lamenting to God as His followers lamented in their sufferings: "As the epistle to the Hebrews comments, 'in the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence' (Heb.5:7). Likewise, in the persecution and suffering of his followers, Paul and Silas were chanted and sang psalms at midnight while they were imprisoned (Acts 16:25)."<sup>14</sup>

### **c. The Role of God in Human Suffering**

Contrary to the aspect of the Burundian theology that believes that God only inflicts suffering on humans; God does care about human suffering. Indeed, God does suffer and grieve with humans. Brueggemann, in his work, *Reality, Grief, Hope*, agrees that God is always present in human crisis.<sup>15</sup> I will address how God understands suffering, even though God never created it. I will also elaborate on the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 and on Jesus as a suffering servant.

God understands suffering, but never created it. The book of Genesis shows us God turning the chaos into something with purpose, good, and meaningful. The goodness

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Olson, *Ask Anything: A Pastoral Theology of Inquiry* (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2006), 108.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce Waltke, James Archibald Houston and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), xiii.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Brueggemann and Louis Stulman, *Reality, Grief, Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 10-19.

of God is demonstrated in God's creation. Genesis 1:4 states, "And God saw that it was good..." which sheds light that suffering was never authored by God from the beginning. Since suffering was not a part of God's creation, which leads us to conclude that there was a time when there was no suffering.

God does suffer with humans and also uses suffering for good. In Isaiah 53, the prophet Isaiah states that even though the Servant himself will suffer, God will be exalted, and the Servant will receive honor. Stanley J. Grenz, a professor of Theology and Ethics, argues that God does acknowledge the suffering servant and promises honor to him: "Primarily, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah's poem is the servant of God. God acknowledges him as 'my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight' (Isa. 42:1). Through him, God himself will display his splendor (Isa 49:3). At the same time, as he acts in obedience to God's will, this figure is also the servant of the people, suffering on their behalf: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).<sup>16</sup>

Jesus suffered with us and suffered like us. Jesus, as the Son of God, becomes human to experience human suffering and to carry the suffering for us. Grenz speaks of Jesus being the Suffering Servant: "From Jesus' teaching and actions we conclude that, as the Suffering Servant, Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Messiah. Our Lord drew together the motif of suffering and his self-designation as the Son of Man, which in turn had implicit messianic overtones."<sup>17</sup> The book of Psalms does talk about the Messiah and his suffering. We can say that Jesus, as both man and God, is a symbol of God wanting to

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<sup>16</sup> Stanley James Grenz, *Theology for The Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 337.

<sup>17</sup> Grenz, 338.

be part of human suffering. The book of Psalms has been part of the Christian faith of African Christians both in sermons and Hymnals. The scholar, Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo from Nigeria argues that Psalms are not just words for worship, but rather, these words draw us near to God. He says: “Psalms are read in many mainstream Protestant churches across Africa each Sunday, as one of the three readings from Scripture. Besides this use in corporate worship, they are also often used in individual worship and in family devotions at home... While most of the Bible speaks to us about God and God’s ways, the psalms help us to speak to God. They are not given to be used as magic formulae. Rather, they draw us near to God and help us to cry out to him...”<sup>18</sup>

The Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 is another demonstration of the role of God in human suffering. The Servant in Isaiah 53 intentionally chooses suffering when he did not have to. Isaiah did have an understanding of how God can work through vicarious suffering of one person on behalf of another or many others. Jesus chose the model of Isaiah’s servant as his own. We must acknowledge that though Jesus was powerful and God, He chose to serve in a way that involved suffering. O’Day and Petersen believe that this allows us to reconsider what power is: “The construal of the Suffering Servant encourages us to rethink our perceptions about power. The Suffering Servant advocates a theology of vulnerability, showing that there is strength in weakness.”<sup>19</sup>

#### **d. Diaspora as a Context for Human Suffering**

The word ‘diaspora’ from the Greek word ‘διασπορά’ means being in dispersion or spreading apart. The Jewish diaspora, known in Hebrew as *Tfutzta*, תפוצת was the dispersion of Israelites. We cannot address human suffering without addressing the

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<sup>18</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive, 2006), 607.

<sup>19</sup> Gail R. O’Day and David L. Petersen, *Theological Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 221.



diaspora as a context of human suffering. There are issues, traumas, and consequences that come from living in exile or taking refuge for safety in a different and strange land. The Bible has something to say about living with immigrants and how God defends and provides for those who go into Exile.

There are many biblical references that deal with immigrants and refugees in the Old Testament. From the beginning, according to the book of Genesis, Adam and Eve are forced out of the Garden. They were exiled to a new place they had never been before and adapted. In the same book, Noah builds an ark and takes animals and his family in the ark for refuge from the flood. Some might argue that the ark does not count, since it is not a location; however, Noah and his family had to immigrate. In the same book of Genesis, Jacob moves his family to Egypt to flee the famine. Jacob left his culture, home, and a part of his identity to take refuge in a new land.

Refugees are important in the Scriptures. In Exodus 12 and Exodus 22, Moses delivers the Law given to him by God not to oppress the alien or immigrants living among them. God reminds them that they were once immigrants in the land of Egypt. The same commandment comes back in Deuteronomy 10:18-19 where they are reminded to be generous to the diaspora living among them. The commandments are a demonstration of God's love and care for the refugees. Celestin Musekura, a professor and theologian from Rwanda, argues that God even cares for those who cause others to flee and be refugees. He says:

God cares about refugees. He even cared for Cain, whose circumstances were the result of his own sin (Gen 4:15). In 2004, some three and a half million Africans were refugees outside their own countries, and some ten million others were refugees within their own countries. Most were not fleeing natural disasters but internal political violence and power struggles that feed on religious, tribal and ethnic

differences. The Bible is familiar with immigrants, aliens, wanderers and refugees. Cain became a fugitive following his murder of Abel (Gen 4:12). Drought contributed to Jacob and his sons settling in a new area (Gen 47:3-4). Jesus himself was a refugee in Egypt (Matt 2:14).<sup>20</sup>

The book of Jeremiah is also firm on not “oppressing” those taking refuge among them. In matter of fact, Jeremiah 7: 5-7 says: “If you do not oppress the alien...then I will dwell with you in this place...” This verse, among the previous ones, shows us that taking care of refugees is important to God and is necessary. Throughout history, immigrants and refugees have been rejected and neglected. These biblical references remind us that those who are Diasporas and refugees should be noticed and valued. This project will help in assessing in which ways Burundian women refugees can be valued by finding their concerns both spiritually and psychologically.

Jeremiah 29 is very important to me because it is another example of how refugees are important enough to be in the Bible. Jeremiah 29 is a letter from the prophet Jeremiah writing to the Exiles from Jerusalem to the surviving elders who were taken away as captives. The prophet was given a message from God of encouragement of reassurance of God’s plans for them. This letter was another affirmation that Burundian women refugees are important, and this project can be one way of reminding them of God’s love for them. Barton and Muddiman argue that Jeremiah sent his messages to be delivered to those in exile: “The epistolary literary device allows Jeremiah to remain the authoritative source of the prophetic message even though he is not present among the exiles. He becomes the author of written prophecy addressed to elders, priests, and prophets, to everyone taken to Babylon after the deportation...”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive, 2006), 321.

<sup>21</sup> John Barton and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 511.

Joseph suffers in prison from false accusations by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:14-18). And Israel is afflicted and imprisoned for 430 years in Egypt (Exodus 12:40). Joseph and the Israelites were refugees in Egypt, who experienced the loss of their national identity, but also the trauma of what they experienced while taking refuge in a different land.

God suffers with human beings. When we think of suffering, we think of how suffering affects us personally and not how God walks with us in those hardships that we experience. God suffered with the Israelites but also grieved with them. The Israelites had to be refugees and immigrants in Egypt, a country that was not theirs. Israelites grieved tremendously when their children were massacred. The Israelites had to be refugees, mourn, and grieve for their sons or brothers. God did not ignore the cry and the suffering that the Israelites were facing. God calls upon Moses to get the Israelites out of bondage the Egyptians were keeping them in. The book of Exodus shows God hearing the suffering brought up to God, but also God responds to get them out of oppression.

There are relations to diaspora that Christians are to have. Mays says that it is to provide them with safety above all things: "Human relations are nourished by security, not anxiety..."<sup>22</sup> Offering food and shelter to those who are in exile is an expectation on Christians as serving those dear to God as Musekura stated it previously.

#### **e. The Context of Womanist Theology rooted In Suffering**

According to Reverend Robert Ash, womanist theology was formed in the mid-late 1980s by black female academics from different schools and universities. They drew their theology from liberation and black theology. Womanist theology tries to offer a

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<sup>22</sup> James Luther Mays, *The Harper Collins: Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1988), 1068.

form of constructive affirmation for black women while looking at the intersectionality of race, class, and gender that black women face. This theological framework analyzes and revises the traditions, Scriptures, and biblical interpretation through the lens to empower and/or liberate black women. Originally, this theology was formed to look at Scriptures and cultural traditions in a way that empowers black women in America. Moreover, this same theology can be used to do the same for women of color in other cultures as well. The goal of womanist theology is to look at the social constructs in the community that either oppresses, silence or diminish women's voices and issues, and the intersectionality of race, sex, and class concerns. This theology was tremendously helpful to me to understand the various oppression the Burundian refugee women experienced and how they have been silenced.

Women have suffered throughout time, and womanist theology was one of the tools that helped me view my participants in their experiences. It was important to value the laments of the Burundian refugee women, especially that lamentation is the mirror of the soul.<sup>23</sup> Womanist theology will be seen through the lenses of liberation theology. This helped me tremendously in my personal observation and offering dialogues that help biblical dialogues that engage with prayer as a tool to bring change and healing.

Meeting with the Burundian refugee women did not only give them space to express themselves, but also to interpret Scriptures from their perspectives and experiences as women. Newsom, Ringe, and Lapsley agree that women sharing their views of the Bible and reading together is empowering: "Contemporary feminist study of the Bible has not set out either to bring the Bible into judgment or to rescue it from its

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<sup>23</sup> Bruce Waltke, James Archibald Houston and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014) 1.

critics. But to read the Bible self-consciously as woman is a complex experience, alternately painful and exhilarating. There is a great sense of empowerment, however, that comes from reading the Bible as a woman in the company of other women.”<sup>24</sup>

Acknowledging, their suffering was a way of empowering these women. To give them the space to use prayer to communicate with God themselves and with each other was necessary and need since it is very difficult for African women to do so. Oduyoye, a woman theologian from Ghana, argues that African women do not usually have space to deal with their own suffering: “...African women are programmed to live for others. They live for children, family and community as these constitute the locus of one’s worthiness.”<sup>25</sup> Most women live through their husbands, children, and family’s expectations. It is important to look at how suffering is a part of the human experience with the Burundian refugee women, allowing them to come to God as they are with what they have. This will empower them and create a source of change in their personal interaction with God as women.

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<sup>24</sup> Carol A. Newsom, Jacqueline E. Lapsey and Sharon H. Ringe, *Women's Bible Commentary* (3rd ed.) (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Mercy Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2001), 31.

CHAPTER FOUR  
CRITICAL EVALUATION

This study examined how prayer can be an effective assessment tool to reveal spiritual and psychological concerns for women Burundian refugees at Maison Shalom in Rwanda. In this chapter, the findings are presented from the results of data analysis.

**a. Demographic Data**

The participants were composed of six Burundian women refugees in Kigali, Rwanda. The refugees were not living in a camp, but in an urban area. Concerning demographic description of the participants (see Table 1), the gender ratio was one hundred percent female (100%) and zero male (0%). The age ratio was 25-35 (20%) and 35-55 (80%). Therefore, there were older adult participants than younger ones. With marital status ratio, there were more widows (66.7%) than married participants (33.3%) and zero single participants). With regard to level of education, all of the participants were high school graduates (100%). All participants were able to read and write. One participant had graduated with a bachelor's degree (16.6%). All my participants had children (100%). Three participants (50%) have 3 children each and three participants (50%) have 1 child each. With regard to job status, two participants were employed (33.3%) and four participants were unemployed (66.7%). Two participants had disabilities as determined by their doctor's diagnosis: Psychiatric (16.7%) and Physical (16.7%). All my participants believed in the Christian God (100%). Three participants were Catholics (50%) and the other three participants were Protestants (50%).

The majority of the participants used the bus as a mean of transportation to arrive to our meeting location. Two participants (33.3%) travelled 30 minutes to the meeting location, one participant (16.6%) walked 10 minutes from her home to our meeting location, one participant (16.6%) traveled two hours and a half and two participants (33.3%) traveled 45 min to the location. I provided money to participants on a weekly basis for transportation. 82.2% traveled more than half an hour to participate. This reveals how motivated the participants were to come from far and be part of the study. They became dedicated and committed despite the long distance they were required to travel.

Demographic variables of age, marital status, job status, level of education and different denominations are statistically important in relation to the data collected in the study. The different variables help us see that despite the differences in age, denominations and marital status, the participants found the prayer sessions impactful for them. Some participants shared with me at beginning that they were not comfortable enough to share in group sessions with those who were younger or married because they would not understand how it feels to be a widow. Through time, participants became comfortable with each other to share their intimate concerns within the prayer group. Therefore, despite the variables in education, job status and others, prayer was able to help participants to share their spiritual and psychological concerns.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Demographic Data*

Variables	Range	Number	Variables	Range	
	Number				
Gender (83.3%)	Female	6 (100%)	Level	High School	5
Age (16.7%)	25-35	2 (33.3%)	Of Education	University	1
	35-45	3 (50.0%)			
	45-55	1 (16.7%)			
Marital (50.0%) (50.0%)	Married	2 (33.3%)	Denomination	Catholic	3
	Widow	4 (66.7%)		Protestant	3
	Single	0			
Job (16.7%) Status (16.7%)	Employed	2 (33.3%)	Disability	Psychiatric	1
	Unemployed	4 (66.7%)		Physical	1
Type Of Abuse	Shot	1 (16.7%)			
	Tortured	1 (16.7%)			
	Raped	3 (50.0%)			
	Domestic Abs.	1 (16.7%)			



## b. Prayer Sessions Results

Prior to participation in the study, it was required that each participant sign a consent form. (See Appendix 1). Participants offered helpful data which is acknowledged in this chapter. The research was a success because it addressed the research question and the participants expressed how impactful the prayer sessions have been to them.

I did observe and evaluate participants' body language and gestures. I am aware that I am no expert in evaluating body language and gestures. My conclusions were made from my observations, knowing the vocabulary of body language within the culture and the use of authors who have researched and written on body language and gestures. According to Morris, Collect, Marsh and O'Shaughnessy<sup>26</sup>, the importance of human gestures has been greatly underestimated. Though we mainly focus on verbal communications, the authors of '*Gestures*' argue that social interaction depends greatly on the movements, postures and expressions of the talking bodies. The book illustrates the different types of gestures and their meaning. Allan and Barbara Pease, studied each component of body language and gave me the basic vocabulary to read emotions and attitudes through behaviors in their book '*The Definitive Book of Body Language*'<sup>27</sup>. With representation taken from more than thirty years in the field, the authors share their techniques to read body language signals. This book helped me understand how body language reveals emotions and thoughts. Peter Bull gives us a better understanding of

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<sup>26</sup> Morris, Demond, Peter Collect, Peter Marsh, and Marie O'Shaughnessy. *Gestures*. (Briarcliff Manor, NY: Scarborough House, 1979).

<sup>27</sup> Pease, Allan, and Barbara Pease. *The Definitive Book of Body Language*. (New York, NY: Random House, 2004).

what non-verbal communication is in his book '*Body Movement and Interpersonal Communication*'. He states: "If the verbal elements in conversation are taken to mean only the actual words used, then the term 'non-verbal' can refer to non-verbal vocal features such as tone of voice, stress and intonation. It can also refer to facial movement, gaze, pupil size, body movement and interpersonal distance" (1)<sup>28</sup>. Non-verbal communication is as important as verbal communication. That is why I found it necessary to include my observations of all participants' body movements and language.

At the beginning of the study, participants restrained themselves by choice from expressing anger, hurt, disappointments and sadness in prayer. At first, all participants focused solely on their children either during one-on-one or group prayer sessions. Participants did not want to focus on their own feelings but rather focused on the needs of their children. Every meeting before we started sessions, participants would talk about their children. They worried about what their children had to eat and mostly where their school fees will come from. Participants explained that they were not receiving any financial assistance from any organization to help them put their children in school. In this chapter, I will demonstrate the change that took place for each participant during their one-on-one sessions and group sessions.

*There were two types of expressions through prayer that I was expecting to encounter with my participants.* The first one was, "This is God's will" case. These cases were those who have refused to even start the process to address the reality of what has happened to them. Many had to flee Burundi so quickly that it was probable that some might have not dealt with their losses, their shame, and their feelings of helpless. I

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<sup>28</sup> Bull, Peter. *Body Movement and Interpersonal Communication*. (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 1984), 37.

expected them to seem numb and emotionally distant. However, my expectations were not reality: my participants barely mentioned “God’s will” and they did express their anger and frustration with God.

The second expression through prayer was the “Why me” case. These women were those who have been questioning God, and wondering what they did to deserve living in exile. In other words, they had lament as their only kind of prayer. My expectations were right: these participants lamented and questioned God. This research did not compare the way my participants prayed; rather, it assessed their experiences and concerns and their ability to include lament in their prayers.

Moreover, *I was also expecting to be their spiritual guide during our sessions.* As an ordained minister, my position made them feel like I ought to show them how to pray and what to say. Ministers in Burundi are highly honored and regarded as spiritual guides and as bridges to God. Being aware of this, the sessions were not about me, but about all of us. The sessions were about creating a safe and loving space for prayer and expression. We are all important in God’s sight, and we have something to share with one another. Since I was aware of the expectations they placed on me, the questionnaires and exercises were designed in a way that gave them opportunities and space for expression. My expectations were correct: they had more hope of their prayers being heard by God, since I was a minister who is supposed to have a closer relationship with God.

Notwithstanding, *I also expected different reactions when it came to discussing prayers on forgiveness in group sessions.* There were mainly two types of reaction on forgiveness that I anticipated to come up during sessions. The first one was, “forgiveness with justice” type of forgiveness. This type was where one needed to get justice in order

to forgive. These cases would be of people who could refuse to return to Burundi until the current president leaves power or gets brought to justice. These people would not want to discuss forgiveness unless they felt it was fair, and that someone would pay for what was done to them or their loved ones. The second type of forgiveness possibility I anticipated was the “forgive mercifully” type of forgiveness. This approach would have been one in which the person does not need to seek justice in order to forgive. They would believe that, as God forgives them mercifully, they also must do the same for others. It would not be an easy process for them, but they would be willing to at least consider offering their forgiveness to those who have oppressed them. I was surprised that none of the participants needed justice in order to forgive. This project clearly surprised me and challenged my assumptions.

Since all participants could read and write, they were asked to write their own prayers, with the exception of one woman. This participant had been shot and her right arm was paralyzed. I had to write for her during all the sessions. She told me what to write and I exactly wrote what she said. From the beginning, all the participants expressed how prayer was important to them and therefore they were curious each week to know what type of prayer we were going to approach. One participant however, expressed her concern about how she would participate since she was full of anger towards God. While she seemed willing to participate, she doubted that God would hear her if she was full of anger. This participant was still mourning the loss of her husband. I had met her two weeks after the death of her husband.

The first week of the research it was revealed that the participants believed in the power of prayer but simultaneously they were confused as to why God does not respond

to their pain and problems. In our first one-on-ones sessions, every participant was given a questionnaire (see Appendix 3) discussing their view and use of prayer. Through our discussions, participants revealed that they prayed because they believe in God but yet were unsure as to why they are still suffering. In our one-on-ones sessions most participants expressed their anger at God's silence toward their suffering. Having different types of prayer revealed different types of concerns they had. All the participants wrote long prayers in each week, except for the prayer of confession. The prayer of confession was the hardest for my participants to write. They wrote very short prayers and barely shared anything with the group. Some participants wrote their confessions for only me to read but not to share with others. This might be due to the belief that confession ought to be done to only an ordained minister or a priest.

Each type of prayer revealed different types of concerns and emotions they had. The common emotions they all had were; anger, hopelessness, loneliness and depression. Throughout the sessions, participants started revealing and expressing their anger more freely. At the beginning of the research, I read and expressed my first prayer with my participants in our first group sessions. Seeing me vulnerable and transparent encouraged them to do the same in their prayers. Once they realized that I didn't have any specific agenda I was looking for in their prayers, they became even more comfortable expressing how they felt. Another element that helped facilitate this process was when they discovered that I was an ordained pastor. My ordination, education and pastoral experience gave them more trust in me and my spirituality. Two participants verbally expressed that me being a pastor was going to help them grow spiritually.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> According to Aristotle's modes for persuasion: Ethos is an appeal to the authority or credibility of the presenter. Ethos serves to convince an audience through knowledge or an established authority.

### c. Field Notes Summary

I will clarify my field note summaries in three categories: first, I will share my observations during various stages of the project (prior stage; during the process; and at the conclusion of the process). Second, I will present notes of each participant's process throughout the project; and third I will present significant emotional and spiritual concerns which surfaced through the project.

During the research, I gathered notes from my observations. Here are my observations.

#### 1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS PRIOR TO AND IN THE EARLY STAGE OF THE PROJECT:

- Participants did not have eye-contact on the first day meeting.
- Most of the participants have been raped.
- All participants initially expressed that they had "better things to do" but since it's a project about prayer, they were somewhat interested.
- Participants did not have money for transportation.

#### 2. OBSERVATIONS ABOUT INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP CHANGES

##### DURING THE PROCESS AND GROUP SESSIONS:

- Most participants became comfortable around each other at the thirteenth sessions during the project. (I observed these changes: body language, more sarcasm and increased sensitivity humor toward other participants).
- Participants started crying and expressing their emotions during group sessions half way through the research.

- Participants started leaving together to take the bus together half way through the research.
- Participants became friends and called each other on days we didn't meet to check on each other.
- Participants comfortably joked with me and teased me half way through the research.
- Participants started mentioning me in their prayers half way through the research.

### 3. OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE GROUP EXPERIENCE AT THE

#### CONCLUSION

#### OF THE PROJECT:

- Participants committed to praying for each other and trying to maintain some relationships.
- Some participants spoke of what they planned to do to continue to work on issues raised during sessions.
- I offered a meal with all the participants at the end of the project.
- Some participants cried on the last day of the research. They said they were sad I was leaving.

I will share my observations as the leader and as participant in this research in chapter five.

#### **d. Findings**

*Participant one* was the youngest in the group. She was only 25 years old and was grieving her husband who was killed two weeks before we started meeting. She was deeply saddened that she could not do a burial for her husband since his body was in a

different country. *Participant one* was the most reserved. She refused to speak in the group but her body language showed that she wanted to be there. She arrived before everyone else and left after everyone else. During our first one-on-one session, she could not stop crying. I made it clear that I did not have a problem with her crying and God welcomes our tears. During our first group session, when it came time to share our prayers, this participant said two words before breaking down in tears. The group was respectful and stayed silent. She apologized for crying and the two participants spoke up to let her know that they knew how she felt. They shared about losing their husbands and they too started to cry. By doing so, these participants gave *participant one* the courage to be comfortable with her tears but also to cry in prayer. When doing a prayer survey at the beginning, *participant one* expressed that she was never spiritual. She started praying because her husband (who was deeply spiritual) encouraged her to have a relationship with God. When her husband died, she said that she could not help but resent God for “taking her husband.”

*Participant one* made it clear that she felt that she could not be a meaningful participant in my project because of the anger she had against God. She said that she wanted to pray but she did not know what to say to God because God “took” her husband. Her body language at the beginning was very distant. She avoided eye-contact in the group and never responded to humor when another participant did. She did not smile or laugh. From her responses in her surveys and prayers, she was taught at a young age, growing up in a Catholic family, to read the prayers in the Catholic booklets but was not taught how to form her own prayers. She thought that there was a certain way one must come to God. One cannot come in prayer with any emotion that is not joy or



happiness. During our one-on-one with *participant one*, I shared with her how I prayed in pain and sorrow when my grandfather passed away in Burundi. She was surprised to find out I was half Burundian but also that I could cry out to God with my sorrow and not be resented by God.

In our second one-on-one, *participant one* tells me that she has a child out of the country. To my surprise, she said that “no one else know about it but me.” When I asked her why she decided to share that with me, she said “So we can pray for my daughter who is living with my other family members abroad.” As we continued to write down our prayers of intercession, she wrote down the men who raped her. *Participant one* started to bring up different issues that no one else knew so we could pray about them but also discuss them. In all of her prayers throughout the study, this participant closed her prayers with “Umpe gutahura kuvyabaye.” This means “Help me understand what happened”. In every prayer she made, she asked God “why?” or “why me?” She did not question the goodness of God, but she seemed to question how God viewed her if God did not help her when she was being raped or why God did not protect her husband from being killed. In session four *participant one* started becoming more open in the group and became comfortable with eye-contact and smiling often. In the survey evaluating me, she wrote in the comment section: “Ndagushimiye nuko watwigishije” which means “I thank you for the way you taught us”. *Participant one* was thankful to have seen prayer in a new way that helped build a transparent relationship with God. She expressed that the prayers were helping her share everything with God in her personal prayers.

***Participant two*** was 39 years old. She had three children, had a part-time job and was proud to be Catholic. This participant was very outgoing and outspoken. She

constantly made eye-contact and was the participant who was most excited about the study. She talked about her children every time we met either in one-on-ones or in group sessions. She was always smiling and joking. During our first group session, she said “if we don’t laugh, our pain will kill us”. As she shared her prayer of thanksgiving, she prayed thanking God for the strength she has developed after her husband died of illness. As she said that, she started crying quietly. The group was silent and respectful. She did not know how she was going to make it, but she felt that the prayer sessions would be good for her. She then, became angry. She started talking about how UNHCR<sup>30</sup> refused to help pay for medication for her husband. She said that the UNHCR does not help refugees as much as outsiders think they do. At the moment she said that, the whole group shook their heads in agreement. That was the first time everyone in the group agreed on something.

*Participant two* talked about her children during our one-on-one sessions. It was in session four toward the end of the prayer of lament that she shared with the group how she resented her in-laws. Since her husband died, they have not given her any support of any kind. Mostly, she resented them because they did not help her financially in arranging for her husband’s funeral and burial. In her prayers, she seemed to have a lot of anxiety and fear for the future of her children.

*Participant two* said that prayer was something of a formal ritual to her but meaningful. She was raised Catholic and prayer was more of an act that a believer had to do rather than having a meaningful conversation with God. The first two weeks, this participant’s prayers were more about her children and the last weeks, she shifted towards herself and her need to forgive her in-laws.

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<sup>30</sup> The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

*Participant two* appeared to be suffering from some type of trauma. She often had difficulty concentrating during group sessions. She would often suddenly change topics during our one-on-one sessions. She easily became irritated by someone's comment or opinions especially regarding her children. The group quickly noticed from the beginning of our sessions that this participant was in denial. She said that she was "well off" financially and that leaving Burundi as a refugee has not affected her. She refused for a while to tell her children that their deceased father was not going to come back. She refused to tell her children "no" whenever they wanted something. She would do anything possible to get it for them because when they lived in Burundi, they had everything. Other participants encouraged her to sit her children down and explain to them the reality because that is what each of them had to do. *Participant two* refused by making it clear to them that she could not and would not do this.

*Participant three* challenged me the most at the beginning of this study. She was 39 years old, with three children and unemployed. She made it very clear from the start that she was a person of faith. When I met her the first time, she was sitting in the garden at Maison Shalom reading her Bible, while patiently waiting for others. Her body language spoke clearly of her undesired choice to be there. She said that she came because the social worker of Maison Shalom called her and since she trusted her, she did so. She crossed her arms throughout the first meeting with the group and avoided eye contact. Whenever I spoke, she tilted her head down and looked at me. In the Burundian culture, that can either mean a lack of respect or lack of trust toward the other person. Being the most problematical, I anticipated that *participant three* would either drop out after the first meeting or at some point during the project.

When I met with *participant three* during our first one-on-one, I found her body language intimidating thus I was anxious. Her demeanor immediately changed once she learned that I was an ordained pastor. There was a sense of excitement on her face as she shared that she used to be Catholic and now was attending a non-denominational church with the family that was hosting her and her children. She has been finding strength and hope in reading her Bible. When she then learned that I was attending the same church that she did, she smiled (which she did not do often). We had something in common and that was a good ice-breaker.

The second week we met in a group she arrived early and was eager to start writing her prayer. It rained that day but it did not prevent her from coming. She wrote every prayer attentively. She spent more time writing her prayers than any other participant. At times we had to wait 10-15 minutes until she finished writing. The second week of group meeting her body language changed; she smiled at me when she was greeting me with a hand shake (or high five at times) and she was not avoiding eye-contact.

*Participant three* seemed angry in every one-on-one meeting we had. She did intense-sighing a lot and loudly almost every 10 minutes. In the Burundian culture, that can mean being angry or being highly frustrated. In the middle of our first one-on-one meeting, I stopped talking and calmly looked at her. I felt as though she wanted to talk about something else other than prayer. She avoided eye contact for a while and when she turned to look at me, she shared her life story. She was ashamed of being poor. She expressed that before the conflict in Burundi, she was a very proud person. She was wealthy, educated and her children were never in need. When filling up the prayer survey

in the first week, this participant admitted to praying only when she had a problem and needed God's help. She said: "I grew up watching people pray a lot but it never worked. So I decided to over work myself, so I never have to pray". She said at our last one-on-one prayer session: "Coming here to these sessions is the only thing that helps me to not get more depressed". It's during that time she revealed to me that she was raped by soldiers who came into her home. I cried when she told me but I contained my tears.

*Participant four* was paralyzed. When we were going over consent forms and explaining what the research was about, she read everything then she said that she couldn't write and asked me to write for her. Planning for this research, I thought about possible participants who could not read or write and I did not think of those with disabilities. All her questionnaires, surveys and prayers were written and reported by me. She was 40 years old, with 3 children and a strong Catholic believer. She and participant two were the most outspoken ones who brought humor and sarcasm to our meetings. From the moment we met in our first week, this participant had no problem sharing what happened to her. She showed me, in the presence of other participants, where she was shot. She showed me and the others where the bullet went in and came out. She told the traumatic event as if it was something usual that happens every time. She had no tears or sadness in her voice.

When we met during our first one-on-one, she did not know how to describe prayer. To her, she prayed because she had to and she was raised to honor "Hail Mary" prayers. She believed that God heard prayers and we had to give God all our burdens and problems. When I asked her about praying to have a dialogue with God sharing how we felt, she did not know what to say, almost as if she never thought about it. From the

beginning, *participant four*'s prayers were focused on her children's needs and hers. On week 3, this participant started praying for others and expressing her emotions.

During her prayer of intercession, I was writing her prayer. I listened carefully to make sure I wrote what she said. Towards the end of the prayer she prayed:

“Ndogeye gusabira Ornella ko ibi bikorwa arimo ko vyomugirira akamaro mu ntumbero y'ifuje ko byoshikako. Iki gitabo yifuza kwandika ki kazamugirira akamaro mu biwe no mu bana azoronka. Tusavye twizeye mw'izina ryawe. Amen.”

Which translated in English means:

“I intercede for Ornella that this study she is doing will be meaningful in the goal she hopes it will reach. I pray that the dissertation she wants to write will be meaningful to her loved ones and her children she will have. We ask believing in your name. Amen.”

I was very emotional when I was writing the end of this prayer. I was touched that this participant valued me enough to intercede for me but also to see the study succeed. During our last group session, this participant was very sad. This participant and I moved to a different room so as to not disturb other participants while writing their prayers. When I mentioned that she seemed sad, she expressed her anger of being unable to do things for herself. She wanted to work but she cannot be hired if she cannot use her hands. We quietly sat as I let her cry. In her own words, she prayed “Ndiheba cane, ufashe” which means “I easily give up, help me”.

***Participant five*** was 32 years old with one child and attended a non-denominational church. During our first group meeting, this participant was very quiet and barely spoke up. She would laugh if someone said something funny but she never initiated a conversation. When I asked her what prayer was to her, she said that she

usually prays so God can change her. I was surprised by the answer and asked for further explanation. She told me that if maybe God changed her, her husband will stop beating her. I asked her if she deserved the beating and she quickly responded with a yes. At this point, we did not talk about prayer for the rest of the meeting but rather about why she believed that God allows her husband to beat her.

*Participant five* told me about when her parents took her in a psychiatric hospital because they were concerned about her. She talked about how she is very forgetful and because of that, her husband yells at her often. She asked me to pray for her often and to pray with her. At first, she prayed focusing on God to change her and at the end, she was praying for her husband to change. Here are some questions that she asked God:

- Will I be able to go to heaven?
- Could you give me peace?
- Could I live longer?

It is only at the end of this study that this participant started questioning if maybe her husband might not be saying the truth about her. This participant shared that her biggest battle is with her low self-esteem. However she went to say that her husband frequently calls her names such as: stupid, worthless, useless, and possessed by demons. This participant said that she deserved what her husband said about her, however toward the end of our sessions, she seemed to have more confidence in herself. When we met, I focused on discussing who God says she was and why God loved us and found us worthy.

*Participant six* was 44 years old with one child. She had a handicapped husband. From our first one-on-one to our last, this participant was very transparent and open

compared to other participants. She was a Protestant who believed in God and in prayer. In our first encounter she described how men in military uniforms came into her home and cut off her husband's legs. I was feeling helpless as she shared her story but as I was listening I could not help but thinking about my grandmother who at that time was still in Burundi, and my fear for her safety in living at home alone.

Anger grew strongly in my heart as I heard the horrific trauma that this participant and her husband had to endure. At our first encounter, during the prayer survey, she said that she prayed so she can be able to sleep. When she did not pray, she had a hard time falling asleep. Prayer to her was to confess to God, to gain hope and to fall asleep. During our first encounter, this participant often did cry during our conversation and during prayer.

On our last one-on-one, this participant was smiling and had eye contact, relating comfortably with me. This participant had more questions for God than anything else. Here are the questions she wrote to God:

- Where were you when it happened?
- Where were you when it happened to me?
- Why did you not stop it (war)?
- You saved me to live so I can be miserable here. What did I do to deserve this?
- Why have you forsaken me?

This participant had a strong influence on me for some reason. Maybe it was because she was the oldest member in the group. Or maybe she came the farthest. She despaired seeing her husband suffering and not being able to do anything. She felt hopeless that she could not get her only daughter into school. In Burundi she was an



entrepreneur. In her current situation not being able to do anything or provide for the family drove her into depression. She wanted to put her child in school because she was afraid that if she did not go to school, she would have then gone into prostitution.

**e. CONCERNS DISCOVERED DURING THE SIX SESSIONS**

There were multiple differing issues that the participants in this study expressed. Following are various psychological and spiritual concerns that were expressed during the project:

- Low self-esteem
- Loss of identity
- Shame
- Grief
- Trauma
- Anger
- Fear
- Unwillingness to forgive
- Sexual assaults/Abuse
- Anxiety
- Poverty
- Difficulty adjusting in a new country/culture

## **f. EVALUATION**

All participants were given surveys to evaluate the prayer sessions. Participants were asked to rate their answers to the questions by using the scale 1-5 in which 1 represented “poor” and 5 “excellent”.

The five questions given to the participants were:

1. Instructor was well prepared for every group session
2. Instructor spoke clearly and audibly
3. Instructor used time effectively
4. Instructor was respectful
5. Instructor valued everyone’s point of view

Five out of six participants believed the instructor was prepared for every group session with ranking of 5 and one participant with a 4. Six out of six participants stated the instructor spoke clearly and audibly with a 5. Four out of six participants said time was used well with a 5 and two with a 4. Six out of six participants answered the instructor was respectful with a 5. Six out of six participants stated that the instructor valued their point of view with a ranking of 5.

Participants were given an “additional comment” section for further comments, evaluations and suggestions. Participants expressed how they looked forward to each prayer sessions because they were meaningful for them. The prayer sessions helped them release their frustrations and anger with each other and mostly to God. Some comments also highlighted how the prayer sessions brought them closer to God and how they felt more connected to God than before. All participants ended their comments with a cry out for financial help for their children education fees. They stated that UNHCR, the UN

refugee agency has not been giving them financial support and therefore they are really worried about the future of their children.

A prayer survey (see Appendix C) was given to the participant during the first week and during the seventh week. The questions were the same but the answers were slightly different from the first to last sessions. What seems different was their attitudes regarding expressing emotions to God. The first week, the participants didn't see the importance of expressing emotions to God. When I asked my participants why they pray five out six said they pray because they want a solution to their problems. Only one out six participants said she prayed to talk with God. The final prayer survey demonstrated how prayer started to mean something different for them. Their prayers began to include lamenting and a willingness to express many feelings that they have with God.

Participants were able to evaluate the project at the end. The following paragraph included quotes which identify some of the key learnings which each participant shared in their evaluations:

<sup>31</sup>“This gathering we had was helpful to me. It gave me something to do than to stay home. I hated being at home. Being with my fellow sisters and Ornella helped me forget about many of my problems. I feel lonely most of the time. But when I was here with them, I forgot the feeling of being lonely. That was nice. Ornella did not speak a lot. Sometimes we spoke too much and forgot that she was there. She was very kind and listened to my whining. She was okay with my anger I had towards God. These meetings helped me connected again with God. I feel comfortable talking to God again. I am still angry at him but I can pray and I know God loves me. These prayers were good for me because since I moved to Rwanda, I have not been fellowshiping with others, especially

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<sup>31</sup> Evaluations have been translated from Kirundi to English.

women. We laughed and we complained so much it was nice! Oh! I am sad this is over but I will miss these meetings very much. I will miss praying with others. I hope they will miss me too. I pray we will all meet again, with God's help! I hope we all stay in touch with each other despite the distance and the end of this program.”

Here is the summary from the psychologist:

“This project was a good experience for the women. The women expressed to me directly how the project helped them cope with their anxieties and grief. They were offered space and time to talk which many of them do not get to do. I was impressed at how committed they became toward the project. They showed up regularly and on time. The women expressed both their disappointments and sadness that the project was coming to an end. The project seemed to have helped them move from focusing on their past to envisioning a future. Their stress level seemed to reduce throughout the project. This project had a significant impact on the women both spiritually and psychologically. They will miss the community that they formed among each other”.

In summary, the evaluations of these participants identified the benefits and growth which came to them as: (a) overcoming loneliness and boredom, (b) helping them find a new sense of community, (c) giving them opportunity and a safe place to "voice" deep emotional, psychological, and spiritual concerns which they previously felt should not be expressed, (d) renewing connections with God, even while expressing anger and lament, (e) helped them to recover the spiritual resource of prayer--even new forms of prayers for them.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

Throughout history, wars and genocides have caused people to flee their homes and leave their families to become refugees in different countries. This project used prayer to identify various issues that impacted Burundian refugee women at Maison Shalom located in Rwanda. This project did not intend only to use prayer as the focus, but rather also used prayer as an instrument to detect the concerns the refugees had. In this conclusion, I will explore the results of this project and the implications for how the churches in Burundi will use prayer as an assessment tool to discern various spiritual and psychological concerns Burundian women will be facing when they return to their country. This final chapter will address: (1) what I have learned personally and pastorally; (2) the implications this project had on the Burundian refugee women in Maison Shalom; and (3) the implications this project may have on the church at large in Burundi, Rwanda and other nations experiencing trauma.

#### **a. Personal and Pastoral Learning**

As I reflected on this project, I realized how much I was drawn to this project for a variety of personal reasons. From a young age I always dreamed of seeing the church offering more than Bible studies and Sunday services. Whenever I was in church with my family, I would feel at times as if something very crucial was missing. Where is the space to talk about our challenges? Where can we be allowed to cry and express our anger or frustrations with God? These questions drove me and fueled me after the death of my grandfather. I was very close to him and his death affected me deeply. Whenever I mourned or cried, I was told “Everything works out for good for those who love Him” or

“Do not cry, he is in a better place”. These frequent comments made me realize that grief was not easily embraced. Grief is a global experience that goes beyond culture and race. However, growing up in both the Rwandan and Burundian cultures, I realized that in the Christian community we did not come to God with our pain and sorrow. I could connect with my participants during the study because I also struggled bringing up my own sorrow to God.

I respected my participants’ anger because no one respected mine when I was angry after my grandfather’s death. I was told that I “did not have faith and that God was never pleased with those who did not have faith”. I suppressed my anger and frustrations because I was never given the space to pray as I wanted. Though I have never been a refugee, I discovered that pain is inescapable no matter who you are. I was joyful whenever I encouraged the participants of this project to come to God as they wanted to. Reading scriptures during every session helped them to see that even scriptures allowed us to weep and lament as an indication of our authentic relationship to God as a loving parent.

The first three weeks of the study, I was very uneasy. I would go home after meeting the women filled with sadness and hopelessness. I wanted to help them and at times I felt my heart breaking as they shared their stories. There are a few things I wish I could have done differently. I wish I could have shared how I felt hearing their stories. I wish I could have expressed more that I cared verbally. Though, it seemed as if they knew that I cared because they asked me the farewell day to never forget them and to help them get sponsors so their children can go to school.

As a pastor who hopes in the coming years to serve in Burundi, this project has helped me grow spiritually. As I wrote my own prayers with the women, I realized how important this ministry is to me. I became fully aware of how much I want to create a ministry that will welcome people to encounter God with their grief, sorrow and/or lamentations. Those encounters will happen in groups and one-on-ones sessions using prayer. As a minister, there are times in my life I find myself asking God “Why?” and I used to think that my approach to God was a sign of lack of belief in God’s abilities. I then decided to look at Psalm 22 where the author cried out: “Why have you forsaken me?” The psalmist was experiencing hardships and God seemed distant.

In Matthew 27:46 Jesus cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus cried out in a loud voice to God because He was in pain and suffering, and God never denied Him. My participants helped me reconnect the suffering of Jesus on the cross with our own personal suffering. Many refugees around the world have asked themselves “Why have we been forsaken?” What I learned in this project that has changed me on a personal and pastoral level, is that lament is as spiritual as worship. It allows us to accept our reality (confession) and share it with God. Allowing people to come to God with lament, means we are allowing them to experience God from where they are emotionally. This project helped me realize how important lament is to me as a meaningful expression of my faith.

I have always had a passion to work with women. I have various women in my family that have experienced sexual assaults but have never opened up their experiences. I grew up watching churches silence women. When I see women silenced because their pain is not valued, it angers me and frustrates me. Silencing women is a way of keeping

them in bondage. I see my ministry not only as a tool for women to express themselves but to feel free by being heard.

I also grew up watching the church telling women how to grieve. My passion for women led me to not only want to work with them but to also create a safe environment that allows them to grieve in their own way and in their own pace. Kass Dotterweich says: “Grief is not something we plan, like getting an education, buying a house, or taking a trip. Even when lingering and terminal illness brings an expected death, we’re never ready to grieve. Rather, grief moves in and, like a rude and unwelcome house guest, takes over and wreaks havoc. This havoc is called change”. (17)<sup>32</sup> Therefore, grief is a process that cannot be timed or measured.

This project has helped me understand how prayer can be an effective tool to assess the various concerns Burundians will have as they will return to their home countries. Another area of personal growth has been in my understanding of the role of church must play with lamentation. As more conflicts have been rising around the globe, more refugees are taking refuge in foreign lands. The church must embrace lamentation as part of a spiritual ritual that can lead people to personal and spiritual healing. Especially in Burundi and Rwanda, prayer would be an effective tool for minister to discern the various issues their congregation will be facing. Since in both cultures sharing emotions and pain is a difficult practice, using prayer could be helpful to understand what the members are dealing with-spiritually and psychologically. Watching the participants in this study gradually becoming comfortable crying and lamenting in their prayers and

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<sup>32</sup> Dotterweich, Kass P. *Grieving as A Woman: Moving Through Life's Many Losses*. (St. Meinrad, IN: One Caring Place, Abbey Press, 1998),17.



with each other helped me remember the importance of authentic relationships especially for women.

### **b. Implications for Burundian refugee women at Maison Shalom**

There are various areas of growth that took place for the Burundian refugee women who participated in this study. As has been adequately and effectively demonstrated in the previous chapter, the participants learned significantly during this project. Looking at the surveys, participants answered differently on their pre-survey when asked what prayer was to them as compared to their post-survey at the end.

Participants were able to express more freely their emotions not only with the group but also with God. Their notion that God despised lamentation seemed to have changed. This project brought participants to embrace the theology that lamentation can be part of our prayers. All participants became comfortable expressing their anger towards UNHCR for failing to help them. Participants' body languages also demonstrated how the prayer sessions gave them space for both verbal and physical expressions.

Another area of growth (that I never anticipated) was the strong bond that took place among the group. After the third week, participants started walking to the bus together. They waited for each other and walked together. When one participant was late to a meeting, they would call to ask them how they were doing and if they were coming. This project created a sisterhood that allowed these women to share their experiences from womanhood. It also became therapeutic as they helped each other in the process of grieving, being widows and struggling with tuition for their children. When participant one was grieving for her husband, the other participants encouraged her and empowered her as they also have experienced similar experiences. Through the therapeutic dialogues,

many did open up about private information they never shared with anyone else. For example, the social worker at Maison Shalom gained some crucial information about a participant that she never knew about. The participants grew in expressing their deepest concerns both psychologically, spiritually and mostly, physically.

At the conclusion of my group experience, the social worker expressed her surprise at the therapeutic pastoral relationship that so quickly developed between me and the women. She was also amazed at the significant clinical information shared with me that she did not have. And finally she indicated that she might be more able to be helpful in her relationship with these women because they had been willing to relate to me (I was careful what information I shared with her due to confidentiality). I hope this is possible in order for her to help them with some of their needs for them and their families. However, I am unsure whether the same ethos (transference issues) would be as easily established between them as Christians and her as a clinical social worker (and not as a minister of the church).

### **c. Contributions to the Church**

Theologically, prayer is important and a great necessity for our spiritual growth. Equally important, prayer can be a tool to help us express our emotions. Therefore, prayer serves both a great spiritual and psychological necessity. Prayer plays a significant role in the church and in the life of a Christian. Ministers could effectively to use prayer as tool to assess the needs and concerns of their members. We are living in hard times and suffering is affecting both those outside and inside the church. If we want to build effective ministries that touches, impacts and influences the lives of those who come to

find refuge in the church, we must be able to discern the concerns that are affecting them.

No matter the denomination, style of worship or cultures, suffering is part of our lives.

This project can contribute to the church by encouraging Christians, especially women to see lament as an expression that is worshipful in liberating pain unto God.

APPENDIX A  
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

*This is a participation consent form. If you are willing to participate in Ornella Umubyeyi doctoral project and agree to the terms below, read and sign your name at the end of the page.*

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I am choosing to participate in Ornella Umubyeyi's doctoral project from my own will. Therefore, I acknowledge that I am aware of the following:

- All the information I give is and will stay confidential. My general age-range and gender may be associated with results in publication, but my name, as an identifier will never be used.
- Once all the data is collected and Ornella Umubyeyi completes this project, any survey associated with this project will be destroyed.
- While the author of this project (Ornella) promises confidentiality, and while confidentiality will be heavily stressed in this group session, I understand I share my responses with other group members. Group confidentiality can be stressed and clearly requested, but the author of the project cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality when a number of other people are involved.
- My participation in this group is completely voluntary, and refusing to contribute in this project will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. Choosing not to participate will not affect how I will be treated in Maison Shalom.
- If I choose, I may withdraw from this research at any time. I also understand if I choose to participate that I may decline to answer any question that I am not comfortable answering.

\*\*By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read the above statements and understand them.

If I am unclear, I have asked for more information for clarification. I consent to voluntarily participate in this research study, and for Ornella Umubyeyi to use my confidential answers in his research.\*\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

APPENDIX B  
PARTICIPANT CONVENANT

This covenant is made to highlight the significance of your commitment and participation to the success of this research project. This paper outlines expectations for you, as a participant and expected contribution to this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, commit to participate fully in this study group. I am aware of the nature of this Doctor of Ministry project and am aware of its design and its purpose. I have been informed of the procedure of the publication of this research and I give my consent as a participant to anonymously use all my contributions.

I understand that there is a time commitment and expectation to attend the weekly group sessions and one-on-one meetings.

I am also aware of the expectation that I will engage the experiment fully by completing surveys, evaluations and assignments to the best of my ability.

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
PRAYER SURVEY (WEEK 1)

What does prayer mean you?

Why do you pray?

Who taught you how to pray?

When do you pray?

What happens when you don't pray?

How do you feel after you pray?

Does God hear your prayers?

Why is prayer important to you? (if not why not?)

Do you approach God as a friend or as a ruling figure?

APPENDIX D  
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SURVEY (WEEK 1)

**AGE:**

**MARITAL STATUS:**

Separated

Widow

Divorced

Single mother

**DENOMINATION:**

Catholic

Protestant

Seventh-day Adventist

Anglican

Non-denomination

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**FAMILY STATUS:**

No children

Pregnant

1 child

2-4 children

4-6 children

6-8 children

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

## One-on-One interview (WEEK 1)

What is your name?

Where are you from? (Which part of Burundi are you from)

Can you share your life story with me and how you came to be here with Maison Shalom?

What did you know about Rwanda before you came?

How does Maison Shalom assist you?

Who did you come with?

Who did you leave behind in Burundi?



APPENDIX F  
PARTICIPANT PRE-SURVEY (WEEK 1)

Strongly agree= 10 disagree= 1	Agree=5	strongly
I pray because God wants me to:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
I tell God everything I want:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
God cares about me:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
God cares about my concerns:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
When I pray God listens:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
I pray because I want to:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
I easily find words to describe my emotions with God:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
I find answers to my problems when I pray:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
I don't feel anything when I pray:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
God cares about me only when I pray:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

## APPENDIX G

## THANKSGIVING PRAYER (GROUP WEEK 2)

**Psalm 9:1**

“I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all of your wonderful deeds.”

**Philippians 4:6**

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

**1 Chronicles 16:34**

“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”

**Psalm 100:4**

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.”

**Share and elaborate on my personal prayer of thanksgiving:**

**These scriptures above call us to give thanks to God. In your own words, write your personal thanksgiving prayer. You may write and/or draw it:**

**Share and elaborate on your personal prayer of thanksgiving:**

**Close with prayer:**

APPENDIX H

THANKSGIVING PRAYER ONE-ON-ONE (WEEK 2)

I. To me thanksgiving

is.....

II. Today I am thankful

for.....  
.....

III. This week I was thankful

for.....  
.

IV. This month I was thankful

for.....

V. The people I am thankful

for.....

VI. Share a story of when it was difficult to be thankful:

## APPENDIX I

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION (GROUP WEEK 3)

**Acts 12:5**

“So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.”

**1 Timothy 2:1-5**

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

**Acts 7:60**

“Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.”

**James 5:16**

“Pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

**Share and elaborate on my personal prayer of intercession:**

**These scriptures above calls us to intercede and pray fervently for others. In your own words, write your personal intercession prayer. You may write and/or draw it:**

**Share and elaborate on your personal prayer of intercession:****Close with prayer:**

APPENDIX J

INTERCESSION PRAYER ONE-ON-ONE (WEEK 3)

I. To me intercession

is.....  
.....

II. Today I am interceding

for.....  
.....

III. This week I was interceding

for.....  
.

IV. This month I interceded

for.....

V. The people I intercede

for.....

VI. Share a story of when it was difficult to intercede for someone or something:

## APPENDIX K

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION (GROUP WEEK 4)

**James 5:16**

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

**Proverbs 28:13**

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper,  
but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”

**Psalms 32:5**

“Then I acknowledged my sin to you  
and did not cover up my iniquity.  
I said, “I will confess  
my transgressions to the Lord.”  
And you forgave  
the guilt of my sin.’

**Share and elaborate on my personal prayer of confession:**

**These scriptures above call us to bless one another. In your own words, write your personal prayer of confession. You may write and/or draw it:**

**Share and elaborate on your personal prayer of confession:**

**Close with prayer:**

APPENDIX L

CONFESSION PRAYER ONE-ON-ONE (WEEK 4)

I. To me confession

is.....  
.....

II. Today I will

confess.....  
.....

III. This week I made a confession prayer

about.....

IV. This month I

confessed.....  
.....

V. The people I share my confession

with.....

VI. Share a story of when it was difficult to make a confession prayer:

## APPENDIX M

## FORGIVENESS PRAYER (GROUP WEEK 5)

**Colossians 3:13**

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

**Daniel 9:9**

“The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him.”

**Matthew 6: 14-15**

“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

**Micah 7:18**

“Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.”

**Share and elaborate on my personal prayer of forgiveness:**

**These Scriptures above call us to forgive ourselves and each other as God forgives us. In your own words, write your personal forgiveness prayer. You may write and/or draw it:**

**Share and elaborate on your personal prayer of forgiveness:**

**Close with prayer:**



APPENDIX N

PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS ONE-ON-ONE (WEEK 5)

I. To me forgiveness

is.....  
.....

II. Today I want to

forgive.....  
.....

III. This week I tried to

forgive.....  
.....

IV. This month I tried to

forgive.....  
.....

V. The people I want to

forgive.....  
.....

VI. Share a story of when it was difficult to forgive (or to be forgiven):

## APPENDIX O

## PRAYER OF LAMENT (GROUP WEEK 6)

**Habbakkuk 1:3-4**

“Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails.”

**2 Chronicles 20:12**

“We are powerless before this vast multitude that comes against us. We are at a loss what to do, hence our eyes are turned toward you.”

**Psalms 22:3**

“O my God, I cry out by day, and you answer not; by night, and there is no relief for me.”

**Psalms 88:4**

“For my soul is surfeited with troubles and my life draws near to the nether world.”

**Share and elaborate on my personal prayer of lament:**

**These Scriptures above call us to lament and mourn to and with God. In your own words, write your personal lament prayer. You may write and/or draw it:**

**Share and elaborate on your personal prayer of lament:**

**Close with prayer:**

APPENDIX P

PRAYER OF LAMENT ONE-ON-ONE (WEEK 6)

I. To me lamentation

is.....  
.....

II. Today my lamentation is/are

about.....

III. This week I did lament

about.....  
.....

IV. This month I was lamenting

about.....

V. The people/situation that make me

lament.....

VI. Share a story of a person or situation that made you lament:

## APPENDIX Q

## SURVEY (ONE-ON-ONE WEEK 7)

- 1. I can easily express my emotions when I pray privately.**
  - All the time
  - Sometimes
  - Once In awhile
  - Never
- 2. I can easily express my emotions when I pray in a group.**
  - All the time
  - Sometimes
  - Once in a while
  - Never
- 3. Praying gives me a sense of hope.**
  - All the time
  - Sometimes
  - Once in awhile
  - Never
- 4. God hears my prayers.**
  - All the time
  - Sometimes
  - Once in awhile
  - Never
- 5. I feel God's presence when I pray.**
  - All the time
  - Sometimes
  - Once in awhile
  - Never
- 6. God cares about my concerns and trials of life.**
  - All the time
  - Sometimes
  - Once in awhile
  - Never

## APPENDIX R

## PARTICIPANT POST-SURVEY (WEEK 7)

	<b>Strongly disagree= 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Strongly agree= 10</b>
<b>I pray because God wants me to:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>I tell God everything I want:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>God cares about me:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>God cares about my concerns:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>When I pray God listens:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>I pray because I want to:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>I easily find words to describe my emotions with God:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>I find answers to my problems when I pray:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>I don't feel anything when I pray:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>God cares about me only when I pray:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

APPENDIX S

EVALUATION FOR PARTICIPANTS OF PRAYER SESSIONS (WEEK 7)

Ornella Umubyeyi, Instructor

Please rank according to your level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction using the following scale:

1= Poor    2= Fair    3= Average    4= Good    5= Excellent

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Instructor was well prepared for every group session | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Instructor spoke clearly and audibly                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Instructor used time effectively                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Instructor was respectful                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Instructor valued everyone's point of view           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Additional comments:

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## APPENDIX T

## PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING: PARTICIPANT ONE

-God I give thanks for life and for breathing. It's by your will God.

-I thank you God that you give me perseverance during my problems that I am facing in life.

-I thank you God that you gave my family perseverance in the struggles we went through.

-I thank you God that my child is still alive and well and thanking you for my sister-in-law who takes care of her.

-I thank you God for giving friends in the refuge that have been close when I am sad.

-I thank you God that you continue to make a way where there is no way.

-I thankful, God that I came safely with the bus and found the group arrived safely as well.

- I thank you God that my husband died after he repented. Thank you for giving him time to repent.

-I thank you God that you will help me understand what happened.

## APPENDIX T

## PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING: PARTICIPANT TWO

I thank you God for all your goodness in this year of 2017. I went through many trials but you were very close to me. I thank you that my children were able to go to school when I did not have the means. There are many that had ways (financially) but you touched M to take care of me in amazing ways.

I thank my God for the fact that I am alive with my children. I thank you for giving me a place to live, for giving me food for my children.

I thank you God for each day you give us to live, for safety in this foreign land.

I thank you for the people you keep using to bless me and help me when I least expect it.

God, I am thankful and I honor you to this hour. Amen!!



## APPENDIX T

## PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING: PARTICIPANT THREE

God, I thank you that you are a God of love, that gave me salvation for free.

God you loved me since I was in my mother's womb, you kept me safe since my birth until this hour, all the praises are yours Father!

I thank you for the children you gave me

I thank you that your mighty hand is upon me every day, every hour, every minute and every second

I thank you for my biological family

I thank you for the friends you gave me

I thank you deeply for the family of E and B that came to my path and became close friends here in Rwanda.

I thank you for the air to breath that you give me freely

I thank you that even my enemies you do not forsaken them

I thank you that my children pass successfully in school and thank you for every person that you use to help pay for their school fees and all other needs

I thank you that you love me eve when I am angry at you

I thank you that I am seated in your promises and that all your promises for me will ne fulfilled

You are a good God, all the glory is yours God!!!

Amen!!!

## APPENDIX T

## PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING: PARTICIPANT FOUR

My God, I thank you for how you have protected me on this day, how you blessed me and gave me something to eat when there are those who have no food. I am thankful also how you protected me from death, you took me from a very difficult place, all the glory be to you.

I thank you for all your goodness this year, may you be praised.

You protected my children in this year of 2017 and I am truly grateful.

I thank you also how when I am giving up, you are always there, may you be praised.

## APPENDIX T

## PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING: PARTICIPANT FIVE

I thank you God for life. You love me even when I do not understand why. You take care of me even when you should not.

I thank you for my family that is safe in Burundi. I thank you for my husband and children who give me hope to live.

Thank you God for Maison Shalom for the training class they give me. It helps me stop thinking about my situation.

I hope you are proud of me God

I say thank you for taking care of all of us (Burundians) in refuge.

May your name be praised always.

## APPENDIX T

## PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING: PARTICIPANT SIX

I thank you God for giving me life. I thank you that you make ways where no man can. I thank you that you took me from the worst valleys. I thank you for my husband and child that you continue to keep them alive and well. I thank you for people you use to help me financially. I thank you for your good plans even when I don't understand your ways. All praise and glory are to you.

## APPENDIX U

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: PARTICIPANT ONE

- God I am pleading on behalf of Burundi that will bring peace in the country.
  - I am asking that you take care of my child, and give her good health
  - I ask you God that your goodness will be upon Ornella, give her good health, knowledge in all that she does and many blessings.
  - I ask you God that you make a way for my family and I so that this year will be a year of solutions.
  - I ask you that your goodness be upon Burundians refugees, give us to go back home in a peaceful country.
  - God please take care of my older sister J. Give her what she desires and give her the strength and help to hospitalize her child.
  - Please God take care of my mother-protect her from illness and problems.
  - I beg you God, reveal yourself to Burundian refugees who are struggling
  - Please heal participant three from her sickness and protect her children.
  - Please God take care of my in-laws-give them peace and good health.
  - Take care of my friends (M, A, P, G, A, and J)
- God, I ask you this in faith.

## APPENDIX U

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: PARTICIPANT TWO

God I lift up my children. Please take care of them, and give them good health.

Please touch the heart of J that he will continue to help with my children's school fees.

Please provide for their education, I beg you.

I do not what to do, so I cry to you to help me and take care of my children.

Are you not the father of the orphans and the widows? Remember me oh God, remember me.

Please bring peace in our country-I am tired and I want to go home. My children miss their home.

I ask believing in your powers, Amen.

## APPENDIX U

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: PARTICIPANT THREE

-Mighty God, I humble myself interceding for my children. I plead to you father in heaven that your goodness and mercy shall be on my children. Give them wisdom like Salomon, give them favor, give them to fear you and pray to you always.

-I pray for the family of E and B, may your goodness be upon them in everything and everywhere. Protect them from any trap from the devil in Jesus' name!

-I intercede on behalf of Rwanda that allows us to come here. Continue to give wisdom and knowledge to the leaders so that they continue to move it forward in abundance peace.

-I plead for each person that helped my children go to school, continue to bless them with more and let them keep that compassionate heart of helping those in need.

-I am interceding father, for all my close friends, acquaintances and even for my enemies that your goodness be upon them-as you are a God that loves the good and bad people.

-God our hope, I cry out for our country Burundi. Change the hearts of the leaders that are taking the lives of those they never gave life in the first place. Bring back the peace in that country and I believe that you can.

-King of Kings, I show you those who need you; the orphans, the widows, the sick and those imprisoned by injustice-Please have mercy on them God!

I pray for all of these believing that you will do it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Amen!

## APPENDIX U

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: PARTICIPANT FOUR

-I plead to you oh God, please take care of T so wherever he is, he does not grow weary. Give him hope that anytime you can make a way for him to walk again. We ask believing that you will do it. Amen.

-I beg you God that you will bring peace in our country so we can return home-I ask that you change our president, I do not ask that you punish him but to change his heart so he can change. We ask you for another president who will lead without discriminating but who will understand that the country belongs to all Burundians. We ask knowing that you are able. Amen.

-I also come pleading for Ornella that this project she is doing that it will be effect in whatever she wants to accomplish. We ask in your name. Amen.



## APPENDIX U

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: PARTICIPANT FIVE

Dear God I thank you that you continue to take care of me.

I ask you God to change me. Whatever problems I am having mentally, I know that you can heal me.

Please give my husband patience to deal with me. I know he gets angry when I forget but please give him strength to endure me.

I plead for my child, that she will not grow up to be like me but to be well mentally.

Please God help my husband with his work and bless it so we can continue to have food to eat.

Please God, bless Maison Shalom. They have done so much for me and gave me hope to keep living.

I plead for my country, why can you not bring peace? Please bring peace to our country!

I cry out for some of my family members that are still in Burundi, keep them safe and give them good health.

I pray all this believing that you are more than able. Amen.

## APPENDIX U

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: PARTICIPANT SIX

I thank you God that I am still alive. I shouldn't not be alive but I am thanks to you.

God please take care of my husband. Much is required to take care of him and I don't have any means financially. Please God, do not let my husband continue to live in pain, I cannot bare it.

I cry out for my daughter, please provide for her school fees, it breaks my heart to see her not doing anything with her life.

Please God, bring peace in my country, I implore your mercy to descend on our country so we can go back to our land than to suffer like animals.

Hear my prayers God and answer. Amen

## APPENDIX V

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION: PARTICIPANT ONE

My God, I have not always been exemplary in the ways I have lived. I confess that I have carried so much anger against you. You let my husband and you let them rape me. Why did you do nothing? Why should I pray to you if you do not care what happen to me?

I have been angry at you God for so long, I did not remember how to pray.

Forgive me for wishing the worst to my enemies.

Forgive me for the ways I am in hopelessness and I give up easily in problems.

I confess that I think negatively on my life. Please forgive me Lord.

Continue to show me your mercy and teach me to be a strong person, because I don't know how to be one.

Amen.

## APPENDIX V

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION: PARTICIPANT TWO

God I come before you, to ask for forgiveness for all the sins I have committed. I was very angry last Sunday because they gave false report to the social worker. I couldn't hold myself.

God, sometimes I look at my life and I forget to give thanks for your goodness on me.

God, I ask for forgiveness for all that I have not done well. Whenever I see problems, I forget about my blessings-so forgive me Lord.

Amen.

## APPENDIX V

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION: PARTICIPANT THREE

God, I must confess that I supported A. in her wrong doings because if though she's my child, that loves dearly, coming home very late at night is not good. I should not be supporting that as a parent. God, I sinned in my thoughts in seeing myself as useless as I see that people have deserted me which makes me feel hopeless but yet you have not left me. God, I confess that I have poured my angry upon my children when they were just victims and innocent-they are not the reason of my problems.

## APPENDIX V

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION: PARTICIPANT FOUR

God, forgive me for wishing that my landlord be paralyzed as I am-truly forgive me.

Someone gave false reports about me in Maison Shalom, he truly did hurt me deeply. He needs to ask for forgiveness.

I tried to commit suicide but it did not work. God forgive me.

When I violently hit my child because I am going through my crisis-God forgive me.

I had bad thoughts against participant three and I hurt her.

I get aggressively angry, please save me from my pills.

God forgive me. I pray believing in the name of Jesus. Amen

## APPENDIX V

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION: PARTICIPANT FIVE

My God I love you and I come to ask that you forgive my sins.

I have mean thoughts about other people and I get very angry.

I lie a lot and I gossip about others and I get very judgmental.

I thank you God that you continue to be good to me and hold my hand.

Please help me have a good ending with my life.

## APPENDIX V

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION: PARTICIPANT SIX

God, please help me forgive the person who lied and gave false report about me. I confess that I have carried lots of anger toward them. I confess that I am angry with those who cut my husbands' leg. I used to wish death upon them-forgive me.

God forgive me for my negative thoughts about others.

I confess that sometimes I feel like I am useless because I am not doing anything to help my family.

I am very ashamed of myself-my dignity was taken from me. I do not know who I am and what I am.

I confess that I get angry with you, God. Where are you? Why do you resent me so much?



## APPENDIX W

## PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS: PARTICIPANT ONE

God, please forgive my sins. I know that I am not righteous but have mercy on me.

God I carry so much resentment. To tell you that I want to forgive those who raped me, would be a lie. Sometimes I want to but sometimes I do not. I do not want to forgive those who killed my husband. I do not want to forgive the president for his evil-doings.

Why should I God? Why? They took my life away, my hopes away...they do not deserve my forgiveness.

Please teach me how to forgive them, I am too angry to know where to start. Give me strength to have mercy on them.

Please forgive me for all my sins. Amen

## APPENDIX W

## PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS: PARTICIPANT TWO

My God, you are a God of mercy and grace. Pour your mercy on me and my children. I do not do anything to deserve it, but have mercy on me God.

Teach me how to forgive others. It is not easy but with you, everything is possible.

Teach me to forgive the leaders of my country that have brought killings and hate in the heart of many.

I forgive my in-laws for what they have done, maybe I have not forgiven them-but I want to.

They just make me sad-they are miserable, Lord I do not want to be like them.

Forgive them oh God, forgive me God, forgive all of us. Amen

## APPENDIX W

## PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS: PARTICIPANT THREE

1) My God, God of mercy I beg you as I humble myself to forgive my sins: those I remember and those that I do not remember.

I also forgive those who have wronged me-they hurt my heart so deeply that I hate and resent them. But today, Father who is in Heaven-I allow you to change me so I can forgive them and have a relationship with them again. I strongly believe that you are also forgiving me. It is in the name of Jesus Christ from Nazareth that I pray. Amen!

2) God, I humble myself to thank you for allowing me to see another day. I am still breathing till this hour. You protected me from the moment I left home till I reached here-may you be praised!

I thank you for allowing me to be part of this project from Ornella. Thank you for allowing me to connect with; participant four, participant two, participant one, and others.

I bring before you my thanksgiving for expending my friendship circle and family by connecting me with Ornella, she has been a blessing to me, and trustworthy.

God I pray for her that your goodness will be upon her, bless this work she is doing and take her back to the United States safely.

Thank you God that you continue to take care of me, as always. Please continue to be close to me-cover me and all that I love with the blood of Jesus. In the name of Jesus I ask. Amen.

## APPENDIX W

## PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS: PARTICIPANT FOUR

God,

Forgive me for the way I get angry. I should not get angry the way that I do, but I do.

Forgive me please.

Forgive those what have wronged me.

Teach me how to forgive the current president.

Teach me how to forgive every person that involved in how I became paralyzed.

It's very hard to forgive.

I need to tell my brother that I forgave him-thank you for helping me forgive him.

Forgive all my sins, I am not perfect but please, have mercy on me God.

## APPENDIX W

## PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS: PARTICIPANT FIVE

Dear God, forgive my sins. I beg you-forgive me all my sins. I do want to go to heaven. I do not want to go to Hell. So please God-forgive me for lying, for hurting others when I know I should not.

Forgive me God when I think that I do not deserve to live.

Forgive me God. I want to be in heaven with you when death comes to find me.

Oh hear my prayer oh God!

## APPENDIX W

## PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS: PARTICIPANT SIX

Mighty God in Heaven, I kneel down before you asking for forgiveness for all my sins that I have committed. Help me forgive those who have hurt me. Merciful God, I know that forgiving is a very difficult act. But I choose to forgive them all so my heart can find rest and peace. You are a merciful God-I beg you, I ask you. Amen

I thank you God that you are always taking care of me and all my needs. Whenever the devil tries to take me, you come to my rescue. Thank you for blessings my family, my friends and family IM. for their immeasurable kindness. Please take care of my parents who are still in Burundi

## APPENDIX X

## PRAYER LAMENT: PARTICIPANT ONE

God, all I want is for you to help me understand what happened to me. Why you allowed me to suffer? Should I even pray if you won't care about my prayers?

I am tired of life, I am tired of living. It is too painful.

Get me out of this situation. Why did you let my husband die? Did you find it right for me to be a widow? That my child to grow without her father? Why? Why did you cause me pain?

I do not want to tell you. I do not want to talk to you. The pain I am carrying is heavier than the weight of the world.

I am too broken. Please fix me God. Amen.

## APPENDIX X

## PRAYER OF LAMENT: PARTICIPANT TWO

My God-I am crying out to you that you help me and give me money for my children to go to school. Make a way for me to be able to raise them well. I have been asking you that my deepest desire is to leave Africa. Please help me get a visa because my life is very miserable. Please protect me from all the men so the devil does not tempt me to stop focusing on my children. I show you where my husband is, please give him peace and rest.

Amen.



## APPENDIX X

## PRAYER OF LAMENT: PARTICIPANT THREE

God, I come crying again to you that you make a way where there is no way.

Knock on every door of opportunities for me, God. Please show your goodness again on me. Give me strength. Heal me all these sickness and curses because you are the doctor above all other doctors. Jesus, nothing is impossible to you, help me be content.

I ask you for few things because many is given to me by your grace.

In the name of Jesus! Amen!

## APPENDIX X

## PRAYER OF LAMENT: PARTICIPANT FOUR

God,

Please take this shame away from me. It's you I look up to and no one else.

It is you who is able. Men do whatever they want to do and put shame on me but you do not shame me.

There are many things to lament to you, oh God, but just help me.

I give up very easily. I am hopeless. Help me.

Please me God to see a doctor to help me and heal so I can work and provide for my family. I am tired of people looking at me with pity. I want to heal and work.

Take away this shame.

## APPENDIX X

## PRAYER OF LAMENT: PARTICIPANT FIVE

God. My God, my only true God. I am always afraid. I feel fear even in events that bring joy. Why do you let me be afraid all the time? I have asked you to take away this fear, but you have not.

I do not like myself. I do not know why you created me. I feel like the world would still be fine without me in it. So what is my purpose of God? Why did you create me?

Why does my husband say hurtful things to me? I know that my head is not right and I deserve his insults sometimes.

Save me from this fear. Take it away. Give me peace. I need peace.

Help me love myself. I do not know how to love who I am.

Hear my prayers, because I know that you care. Amen.

## APPENDIX X

## PRAYER OF LAMENT: PARTICIPANT SIX

I know that you hear prayers. I am here because of your power and grace, oh God. But where were you when all these happened? Why did you not stop it?

You saved me and let me live- why? So I can continue to suffer?

Sometimes I feel like you have forsaken me. You have left me. You have forgotten about me.

Help me with my child's school tuition and money to pay for the house. I beg you God.

Change my life and give me a good life.

Make me forget about what I went through, give me happiness.

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