



caring

Female Genital Mutilation:

loving through the scars

Lorna Oliver looks at loving
people through the trauma
of FGM

How did it come to this? I sit in the pristine, living room of a beautiful Somali woman. She is reduced once more to a trembling little girl as I take

four small spots of blood from her son. How does something as simple as taking a day five blood spot sample become a traumatic experience for this young woman? The flashbacks of what happened to her, she explains, are unexpected and unforgiving.

Female genital mutilation¹ (FGM – also known as female circumcision) is a traditional cultural practice found in Africa, in parts of Asia and in the Middle East. Outside of those cultures that practice FGM, it is widely considered to be a horrific violation of young girls. Often completed by those nearest and dearest to them, it is frequently experienced as a betrayal of trust. It causes scarring that leaves women severely damaged with multiple health problems.

As I attempted to show love and compassion to this woman, I pondered how similar her situation is to the experience of our Lord. He was betrayed by those close to him, sprung upon at a vulnerable time, taken away and scarred. His scars remain, while ours, though present now, will be taken away.² From talking with women who have battled the trauma

following FGM, we can view the beauty and triumph of the cross in a new light. To those who struggle on, we can be the hands of Christ who offer love, healing and eternal life.

Trauma is a very real and potent thing that we must not take frivolously. Can we love these injured women all the way to our Saviour? Can we learn from the gentleness of Jesus as he approached the woman at the well in Samaria?³ We are all like that emotionally scarred, Samaritan woman at the well and Jesus speaks tenderly with all of us. Often it is through our pain that he reveals himself. As the words of an old hymn say: 'What can make us whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.'⁴ It is a bizarre yet beautiful picture, that though we identify blood with suffering, it is also through blood that we are spiritually made whole.

What a blessing that we can be the hands of the Lord on this earth, the hands that encompass scared and scarred women, the hands that help to love scars away. We can be the hands that bring hurting women to the Lord, where blood is not feared, but the foundation for a new life in Christ. 🌸

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1. Female Genital Mutilation. *World Health Organization* 31 January 2018. bit.ly/31cnjeF
2. Revelation 21:3-4
3. John 4
4. Lowry R. 'Nothing but the blood of Jesus.' 1876. bit.ly/2WteZIQ