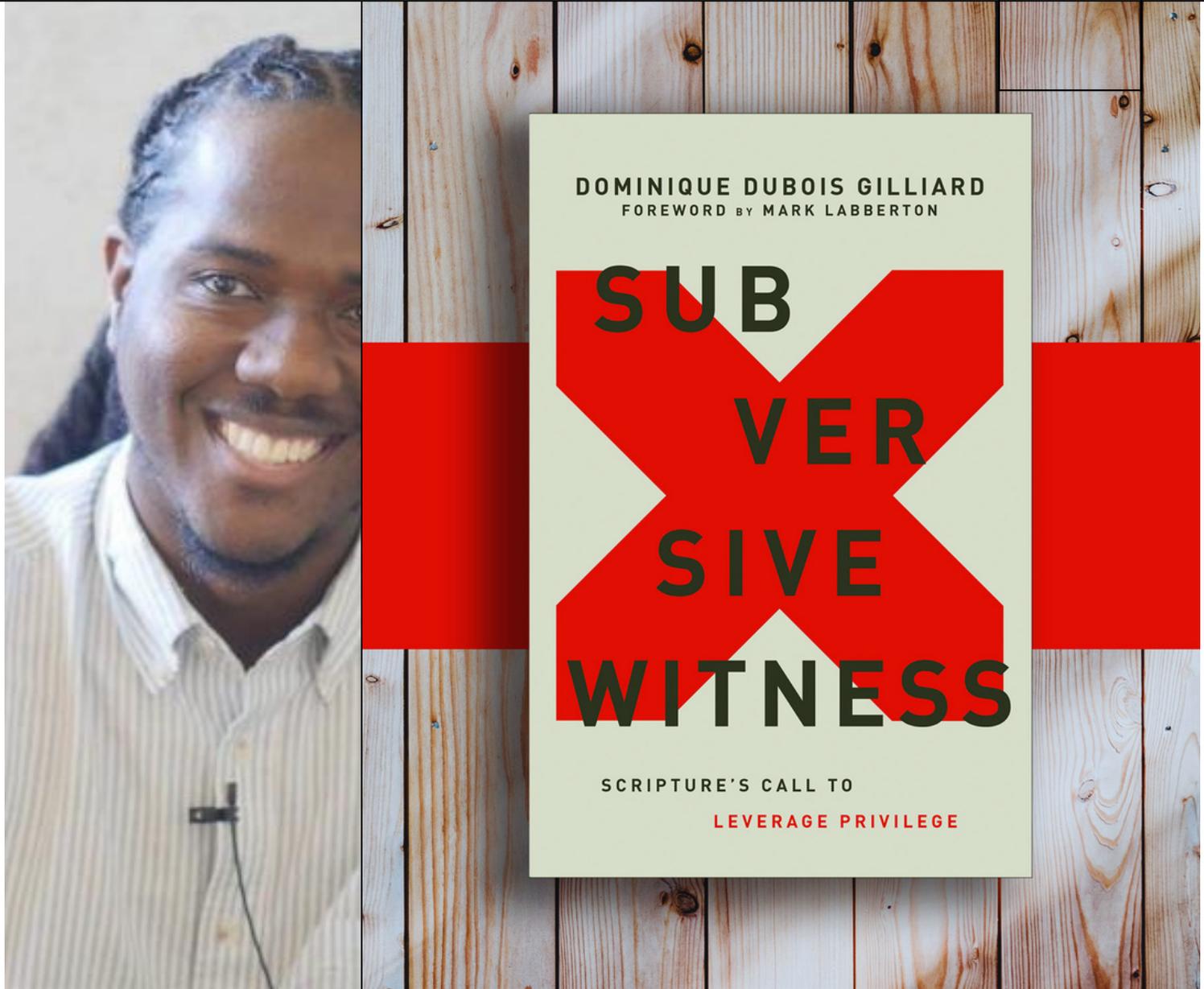


Subversive Witness

Scripture's Call to Leverage Privilege



a resource for your
May/June 2022 book club



How to use this resource

As you gather with your group to read *Subversive Witness | Scripture's Call to Leverage Privilege*, we hope you find this resource helpful to your group's discussion of the rich material that author Dominique Gilliard shares.

For each chapter, we've gathered:

- a seminal quote or passage that illustrates a key point
 - *these passages are worth spending some time reading and discussing*
- a paraphrased question or two from Gilliard's reflection questions
- observations and questions written by CBWOQ staff
 - *do have a look at these!*

We've also posted links to a review of the book and a video of Gilliard being interviewed by several pastors during the launch of this book. It's worth watching this video with your group should you have the time, OR appoint someone to view it and report back to the group on key moments in the video.

Photos:

Baptist women at all ages and stages - taken by Renee James, Danielle Reesor, Josh del Rosario, Uptick Baptist Women alumni, live magazine contributors, members of CBWOQ's racial justice team

CBWOQ Conference leaders - provided by leaders

Introduction + Chapter 1

Understanding Privilege and its Power

Let's begin. What does it mean to be a subversive witness and to leverage privilege? What privileges do you have?

Some of my privileges include:

Canadian citizenship - home ownership in Toronto - cottage country property ownership - physical mobility - health - fluent English speaker - full-time paid vocation - maturity- strong spiritual friendships - university degrees - contribution to a healthy church community



1. Take 5 minutes to make a list of your privileges. Then share that with the group.

2. Take your list and review it. What does your privilege give you access to? What are you able to do because of your privileges? Make a list. Then share with the group.

For example, using my list above, my privileges mean I can:

find a job fairly easily almost anywhere in Canada - access higher education - communicate easily with the majority of people I encounter day-to-day - access money- plan for retirement with a high degree of certainty - count on access to a free and stable health care system when I need to use it - bring positive change to my church community, my neighbourhood and to my son's schools...

Introduction + Chapter 1 (cont'd)

Understanding Privilege and its Power

Read the quote from the book's introduction below.

Gilliard suggests that these three places are typically where churches could land when dealing with privilege.

Where do you place yourself, your women's group/ ministry, your church?

Gilliard then points us to a fourth way, a biblical way – to talk about and do something about our privilege . . .to become subversive witnesses.

He then discusses another way as evidenced in Acts 6:1-7.

Has anyone in your book club seen or experienced a real-life example of the Acts 6:1-7 passage? If no one has, consider why this is.

How can acknowledging and addressing privilege liberate you from its power? Think of how church leadership addressed privilege in Acts 6:1-7.

How are truth and reconciliation related?

Quote from p xviii

"Conversations about privilege in the church generally end in one of three places: churches and members deny that privilege exists, consider the topic too controversial to address, or lament feeling immobilized by its weight."





Chapter 2

we leverage privilege because we all belong

We leverage our privilege to resist systemic sin. Pharaoh's daughter shows us that we leverage our privilege because we all belong.

Assuming things about people and writing them off can be easy.

How does Pharaoh's daughter challenge us to resist these temptations

**What do you believe keeps good people silent and complicit when they know their neighbour is being dehumanized, oppressed, exploited and/or massacred?
Are they good people?
Can they be?**

“Pharaoh’s daughter transgressed ethnic and class boundaries of belonging. She intimately identified with “the other” in treasonous ways.

This prophetic act of faithfulness could have cost her everything. Nevertheless, she remained faithful to what she knew was right, even in the face of all that was a risk.

Within this perilous interaction, lines of belonging, purity, and family are all fundamentally reconstructed. A kingdom vision of belonging begins to emerge.” (p 32)

Chapter 3

we leverage our privilege because we are held accountable

“As Brenda Salter McNeil explains, ‘Vashti’s civil disobedience paved the way for Esther to enter into the story of God’s healing and deliverance for the Jews. It was the courageous sacrifice of Vashti that called Esther forth. Had there not been a Vashti there would not have been an Esther.’ Additionally, had there not been a Mordecai reminding Esther that her privilege had a redemptive purpose, her privilege would have actually been her demise, and God would have found another way to liberate the Jews. God’s restoration is never dependent on us, but part of the good news of the gospel is that God invites us to partner in the work of restoration.” (p 59)

We leverage our privileges to stand in solidarity - because there are Vashtis who’ve gone before us and Mordecais who hold us accountable.

How could discussing Queen Vashti’s experience open up spaces for healing and restoration in churches?

How did the Persian Empire normalize the suppression of women’s voices and autonomy? How does this happen today where you live?

Do you have a Mordecai in your life – a trusted voice who holds you accountable and reminds you to stay attuned to your neighbours’ pain?

How can privilege blind us to oppression? And even after we recognize it, how can fear keep us silent about it?



Chapter 4

we leverage our privilege because our privilege isn't about us

“What we have been entrusted with is not just for us. The resources we possess have not been bestowed unto us just to create geographic distance for our families from the world’s brokenness. We are blessed to be a blessing., to reinvest in our communities, and to contribute to communal flourishing. When we exploit our privilege to run away from the pain of our communities, we miss transformational opportunities to help induce freedom, liberation, and deliverance where captivity, disenfranchisement, and despair have reigned too long. We are not saviours, but the Spirit works through willing vessels who offer their lives to the Lord as living sacrifices, those who are intent on seeking the peace and prosperity of their communities...” (p 69)

To be able to truly leverage our privilege, we cannot run away from facing what needs to be faced and we can't live or lead as though our privileges are only for us.

In a world that influences us to do otherwise, how does the gospel empower us to choose collective over individual freedom?





Chapter 5

we leverage our privilege because we can press for change

“Disciples of Jesus should be desperate citizens. The desperate citizen will press their citizenship as far as possible for the sake of thwarting death and its agents. Paul, as he moves through the political ecology of Rome, illuminates this kind of citizenship. It is a citizenship that takes seriously the position of those most disadvantaged by empire, those trapped in the prisons, found begging on the streets, those receiving the brunt of its unleaded violence, and those made slaves to its economic machinations. . . . However, rather than embracing this understanding, we too often view citizenship merely as something that guarantees us individual rights, freedoms, and liberties.” (p 90)

We leverage our privilege because we are residents and citizens of Canada and we can use this status to press for change – like Paul and Silas did in their day

Question 1

What privileges are connected to citizenship?

Question 2

How could you leverage your privilege to create systemic accountability and change?

Chapter 6

we leverage our privilege because Jesus did

“Jesus could have come into the world as anyone from anywhere, but he chose to come as a helpless babe, born to impoverished parents in the ghetto of Galilee, Nazareth. Jesus has a death sentence placed on him by the most powerful man in the land at birth. He was forced to flee political persecution, migrating to a foreign land with his family for what would equate to asylum today and was later falsely arrested, tried and crucified. Jesus knows what it is like to endure injustice, oppression, and systemic sin. . . . Jesus also concurrently epitomized privilege. Being fully God and fully man, Jesus had the opportunity and power to opt out of any suffering or persecution he desired.” (p 114)

The Holy Spirit may call us to abandon or leverage our privilege to proclaim the Good News. We can do this because Jesus did. Jesus trusted God during trying times, believed that God’s plan was sufficient, and remained patient and steadfast in the face of Satan’s assaults on His identity.

Read pages 108 - 110 again.

How are the temptations Jesus faced preventing you/your church from becoming a subversive witness in your community?

What is the Samaria God is calling your church to go through, not around, today?



The Church typically talks about reconciliation without reparations, but reparations are a vital part of Zacchaeus' reconciliation story.

Chapter 7

we begin by taking responsibility

"Might the Lord also be calling you to repentance, to walk away from your job because, as a beloved child of God, you cannot do it with integrity? Might God be calling you to abandon your esteemed position because it asks you to make concessions to your faith in order to move up the systemic food chain? Are there things your job requires of you that you need to confess and repent for, that make you complicit in systemic sin and oppression? May God be calling you to explore the roots of your familial inheritance? If you find that your inheritance or estate are rooted in sin and exploitation, what does it look like for you to heed John the Baptist's call to bear fruit in keeping with repentance? May the Lord be using Zacchaeus to show you that reparations are a part of what repentance and reconciliation entail for you?" (p 147 - 148)



It is significant that Jesus did not declare, "Today salvation has come to this house," until after Zacchaeus committed to bearing fruit in keeping with repentance.

How could this passage inform our reconciliation conversation?

Institutional reparations are possible. Consider Canada's reality: Indigenous People; systemic racism; sexual violence including pornography + human trafficking; poverty; oppression.

What will it entail for your church to offer reparations in your community?



Chapter 8

we learn to repent and to remember

"The divisions that continue to disjoint the body of Christ and destabilize our "old house" are a consequence of unrepentant sin and hard-heartedness. We are too unwilling to confess the church's culpability in corporate sin and to acknowledge how our ancestors' sins continue to plague our land. Yet Christ calls us to do the hard work of curating a common memory that soberly articulates how systemic injustice and unrepentant sin have distorted Christian ethics and discipleship in ways that obstruct justice." (p 162)

**Remembering is a key part of repentance.
It keeps us accountable.**

Question 1

What in this chapter has helped you to begin crafting a biblical and Scriptural response to those who will say that you don't have a responsibility to repent on behalf of historical systemic sin?

Question 2

How can remembrance become a spiritual act of accountability?

Question 3

What does remembrance look like for you?
What could it look like for your church?

Chapter 9

we bear fruit

“Repentance is about freedom from sin. It liberates us to freely and fully follow Jesus, to make God’s love known and sown, fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Like Jesus, we will have to overturn some oppressive tables. A few of the anti-gospel tables we will have to overturn as subversive witnesses include rugged individualism, white supremacy and patriarchy. A freer life, an abundant life in Christ is awaiting.” (p 180 and 181)



On page 176, Gilliard lists ways in which the Spirit of God may be inspiring you and your congregation to love people you would never choose to love on your own and to seek the kingdom in revolutionary ways.

Which of these ways have you already pursued or are currently pursuing?

Which of these ways did the Holy Spirit prompt you to consider or highlight for further prayer and action?

The rhetoric of love cannot shroud hard truths. So how do we soberly yet humbly address patriarchy and sexual violence, racism and white supremacy and systemic and corporate sin in our congregations and Canada?

Are there ways in which God's Spirit may be inspiring you and your congregation to seek the kingdom in revolutionary ways; to love people you would never choose to love on your own?