

**“Embodied Justice: A Faith-Law Approach to Domestic
and Family Violence for Christian Women”**

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Gospel Reverb Podcast Bonus Episode, March 2025

Background to thesis research

Givens:

- Prevalence of domestic and family violence (DFV) against Christians
- Centrality of faith leaders/faith responses
- Effectiveness of collaborations between faith and DFV sectors.

Aims:

- Conceptualise and normalise justice considerations within those collaborations
- Bridge conceptual divides to undergird holistic (ie faith-law) justice experiences

Thesis findings re justice and faith norms

- Faith teachings/norms are highly relevant in personal decision making about whether or not to engage with the criminal justice system.
- Legal concepts and theological concepts must be considered and held together, rather than seen as separate.
- Addressing relevant conceptual issues enables a faith-law response to be developed and normalised.
- Taking this kind of approach can assist in overcoming barriers to help seeking from the criminal justice system (and generally).

Conceptual barriers to help seeking

1

Characterising domestic and family violence as a spiritual matter requiring spiritual solutions.

2

Characterising family and religion as private - not public - matters.

3

Applying theological teachings in a disconnected, individualised way.

Reconceptualising DFV against Christians

- Using Scottish Presbyterian theologians T.F Torrance and J.B Torrance:
- Holism/bridging conceptual divides and polarisations (their theological method), ie, *a faith-law approach reflects a Christian worldview.*
- Illuminating the damage and reconceptualising relevant theological beliefs (teachings on the Trinity, theological covenant, justice, the Incarnation, personhood, mediation and Priesthood of Christ).
- These also provide an approach of integration to safeguard against disconnected application/weaponisation of doctrines/teachings

Congruence between theological and legal meanings of justice

- Denunciation of the violence and inherent vindication of victim-survivors
- Restoration, restitution, rehabilitation, forgiveness, relational considerations within mainstream CJS
- Therefore: meanings of justice which are consistent with their theological counterparts.
- Seen in features of CJS as well as restorative justice principles (even when not using its processes, which are controversial for use in DFV).
- *A faith-law approach IS a Christian approach to DFV.*