

Naomi's Dilemma



Pastor Jones meets with Health Director Miss Elsie at Holy Temple Church.

Pastor Jones, December 1ST is World AIDS Day. We believe this should be addressed with the congregation.



Well, do you think I need to be the one to address this?



Can't the health committee just put out flyers, Miss Elsie?

Pastor Jones, did you know in this part of the state, there are over 5,000 people living with HIV?

This virus is impacting our entire community.



I had no idea.

There are lots of myths about HIV. Our congregation should be informed that HIV **cannot** be transmitted by mosquito bites...



...sharing utensils or the toilet. Not even from kissing or hugging!

Later that day, Naomi goes to the Pastor's office...

Pastor, excuse me. I overheard you talking about HIV and...

...I'm glad that you are going to recognize World AIDS Day with the congregation.



I've been living with HIV for 15 years.

Sister, you've never said anything to me.



The stigma is so heavy Pastor, it's hard to disclose.

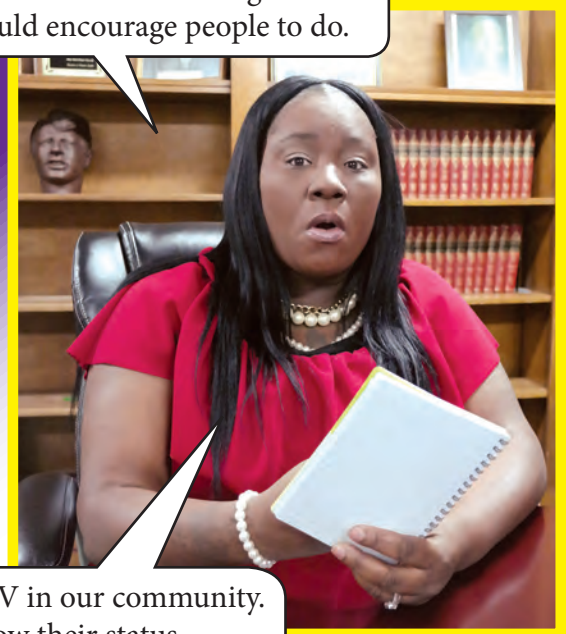
I think I am only beginning to understand that. Always know that I'm here for you.



Naomi, guide me on how I should present information about HIV to the congregation.



Well, there are some things that we should encourage people to do.



- Talk about HIV in our community.
- Get tested/know their status.
- Accept people living with HIV.



There are also some things that people living with HIV should **never** be asked.



1. How long have they been living with HIV?
2. How was their HIV contracted?
3. What is their sexual preference?

And, never disclose a person's status to others.



Sister, you have given me a lot to reflect on. You have inspired me to address HIV at Sunday service.

Pastor Jones at the pulpit on Sunday...

Today is World AIDS Day. And, as a congregation, there is so much that should be discussed surrounding the stigma of HIV.



We have so many brothers and sisters impacted by HIV...

...and, when we speak poorly of those living with HIV, it is very painful for them.



We need to be better informed about the depth of stigma that people living with HIV experience.

During Bible Study, the Health Ministry will be teaching about HIV and offering HIV testing.



I hope you all will participate.



A few days later...

I thank God for giving me the courage to speak up.



Stigma is not mine to carry. When others are educated, stigma is reduced.