

“Redemptive masculinity”



**A series of
Ujamaa Centre
Contextual Bible Studies
that proclaim life
for men and women**

Foreword

This series of Contextual Bible Studies comes from the work of the Ujamaa Centre over many years, as we have struggled together with local communities and churches to hear the Bible speak words of life in the context of dominant forms of masculinity which bring damage, destruction, and even death into our society.

These Contextual Bible Studies are designed to be done together in small groups; but if it is not possible to meet with others, these Bible studies can be done by individuals on their own.

These Contextual Bible Studies can be done in any order; each one has its own particular focus. The first two Bible studies are similar, but have a different focus.

We recommend that those using these Contextual Bible Studies also use the Ujamaa Centre's *Manual: Doing Contextual Bible Study*, available free of charge from the Ujamaa Centre's website: <http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/>

“Jesus the man”

Mark 5:21-6:1

The facilitator asks someone to open with a brief prayer.

The facilitator asks someone in the group to read Mark 5:21-6:1. Or, the reading of the text can be done corporately, with different members of the group taking turns to read sections.

Question 1: What is the text about? Share initially in twos your initial impression of this text, and then share with the group as a whole.

When the group has had sufficient time to respond, the facilitator moves on to the next question. This question should be discussed in small groups, with each group appointing someone to be their ‘scribe’ and ‘reporter’.

Question 2: Who are the characters in this story and what do we know about each of them?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next question, which is also discussed in the small groups.

3. What do the two women characters have in common?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator shares the following short input:

In the time of Jesus women were considered ritually unclean when they were menstruating/bleeding. Dead bodies were also considered unclean. The distinction between clean and unclean was an important theological matter, and the religious leaders spent a great deal of time formulating regulations about what was clean and unclean. Because women bled on a regularly basis, there were many religious regulations concerning when women were clean and unclean. Touching someone or something that was unclean made you unclean.

After sharing this information, the facilitator introduces the next question, which is also discussed in the small groups.

4. How does Jesus respond, in word and deed, to these women?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next two questions, which are also discussed in the small groups.

5. What are the similarities and differences between these two women and women in your communities?

6. What are the similarities and differences between Jesus and men in your communities?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the final two questions, which are also answered in the small groups.

7. What are the positive aspects of the masculinity of Jesus that can be appropriated by men in our communities?

8. What will you (individually and as a group) do in response to this Bible study?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report, inviting each group to share their responses to these questions.

Conclude the Bible study with prayer, inviting some to bring the fruits of the Bible study to God in prayer.

“Jesus the father”

Mark 5:21-6:1

The facilitator asks someone to open with a brief prayer.

The facilitator asks someone in the group to read Mark 5:21-6:1. Or, the reading of the text can be done corporately, with different members of the group taking turns to read sections.

Question 1: What is the text about? Share initially in twos your initial impression of this text, and then share with the group as a whole.

When the group has had sufficient time to respond, the facilitator moves on to the next question. This question should be discussed in small groups, with each group appointing someone to be their ‘scribe’ and ‘reporter’.

Question 2: Who are the characters in this story and what do we know about each of them?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next two questions, which are also discussed in the small groups.

3. What do the two main female characters have in common?

4. What do the two main male characters have in common?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next two questions, which are also discussed in the small groups.

5.. How do Jesus and Jairus relate to women?

6. What are the positive aspects of masculinity, particularly with respect to ‘fatherhood’, exhibited by Jesus and Jairus?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the final two questions, which are also answered in the small groups.

8. What are the dominant forms of masculinity in your church and community?

9. How will you work for a change in the dominant forms of masculinity in your church and community?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report, inviting each group to share their responses to these questions.

Conclude the Bible study with prayer, inviting some to bring the fruits of the Bible study to God in prayer.

“Men wanting power; men wanting healing”

Matthew 20:17-33

The facilitator asks someone to open with a brief prayer.

The facilitator asks someone in the group to read Matthew 20:17-33. Or, the reading of the text can be done corporately, with different members of the group taking turns to read sections.

Question 1: What is the text about? Share initially in twos your initial impression of this text, and then share with the group as a whole.

When the group has had sufficient time to respond, the facilitator moves on to the next question. This question should be discussed in small groups, with each group appointing someone to be their ‘scribe’ and ‘reporter’.

Question 2: Who are the characters in this story and what do we know about each of them?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next two questions, which are also discussed in the small groups.

3. What does the mother of Zebedee want from her sons?

4. How does Jesus respond to this request?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next two questions, which are also discussed in the small groups.

5. What do the two blind men want from Jesus?

6. How does Jesus respond to this request?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next two questions, which are also discussed in the small groups.

7. What kind of masculinities are reflected by these two sets of men, the two disciples and the two blind men?

8. Which of these kinds of masculinity are most common in your church/community?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the final two questions, which are also answered in the small groups.

9. What is the role of mothers in your church/community in shaping the masculinities of their sons?

10. What will you do to try and change the dominant masculinities in your church and

community?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report, inviting each group to share their responses to these questions.

Conclude the Bible study with prayer, inviting some to bring the fruits of the Bible study to God in prayer.

“Men women get, and men women want!”

2 Samuel 13:1-22

The facilitator asks someone to open with a brief prayer.

The facilitator asks someone in the group to read 2 Samuel 13:1-22. Or, the reading of the text can be done corporately, with different members of the group taking turns to read sections.

Question 1: What is the text about? Have you ever heard this text read aloud in church on a Sunday? Share initially in twos your initial impression of this text, and then share with the group as a whole.

When the group has had sufficient time to respond, the facilitator moves on to the next question. This question should be discussed in small groups, with each group appointing someone to be their ‘scribe’ and ‘reporter’.

Question 2: Who are the characters and what do we know about each of them?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next question, which is also discussed in the small groups.

Question 3: What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next question, which is also discussed in the small groups.

4. How would you characterize Amnon’s masculinity in this text? Consider:

- *What prevents Amnon initially from acting on his love/lust for Tamar (v2)?
- *What is it then that enables him to act on his love/desire/lust (v4-6)?
- *How does he react to Tamar’s arguments (v14)?
- *How does he behave after he has raped Tamar (v15-17)?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next question, which is also discussed in the small groups.

5. What does Tamar’s response to Amnon’s abuse tell us about her understanding of masculinity? Consider:

- *What does she say (v12-13,16), and what do each of the things she says tell us about her understanding of what it means to be ‘a man’?
- *What does she do (v19), and what do each of things she does tell us about her understanding of what it means to be ‘a man’?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the

reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the final two questions, which are also answered in the small groups.

6. What are the dominant forms of masculinity in our contexts (in various age groups), and what alternative forms of masculinity can we draw on from our cultural and religious traditions?

7. How can we raise the issue of masculinity in our various gender and age-groups?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report, inviting each group to share their responses to these questions.

Conclude the Bible study with prayer, inviting some to bring the fruits of the Bible study to God in prayer.

“Men raping men”
Genesis 19:1-13

The facilitator asks someone to open with a brief prayer.

The facilitator asks someone in the group to read Mark 5:21-6:1. Or, the reading of the text can be done corporately, with different members of the group taking turns to read sections.

Question 1: What is the text about? Share initially in twos your initial impression of this text, and then share with the group as a whole.

When the group has had sufficient time to respond, the facilitator moves on to the next question. This question should be discussed in small groups, with each group appointing someone to be their ‘scribe’ and ‘reporter’.

Question 2: Who are the characters in this story and what do we know about each of them?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next two questions, which are also discussed in the small groups.

2. This story is part of a larger story in which three men/angels visit Abraham. How does Abraham receive the men/angels in Genesis 18:1-8? Read this part of the story together in your small groups.

3. How does Lot receive the same men/angels who come to Sodom in the evening?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss these questions, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the next four related questions, which are also discussed in the small groups.

4. How do the men of Sodom ‘receive’ the men/angel strangers?

5. What is Lot’s status in the city of Sodom (see verse 9)?

6. Why are the men of Sodom so abusive to the strangers and to Lot?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator shares the following short input:

Research shows that men rape men in order to assert their authority over them. Rape is about domination and power over others, whether men or women. Most rapists are heterosexual. Homosexual relationships between men are different; they are not about domination and control, but about a man willingly entering into a sexual relationship with another man.

After sharing this information, the facilitator introduces the next question, which is also discussed in the small groups.

7. What does this story say to us about how we receive strangers and about why men rape?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report. After each group has reported the facilitator introduces the final question, which is also discussed in the small groups.

8. Is this text a useful biblical text in discussions within the church about homosexuality?

When the group has had sufficient time to discuss this question, the facilitator asks the reporter from each group to report, inviting each group to share their responses to these questions.

Conclude the Bible study with prayer, inviting some to bring the fruits of the Bible study to God in prayer.