

Bible Study 1

Theme/s: Women and agency

Key text: 2 Kings 5: 1 – 19a

Background

This Bible study was first used when the Ujamaa Centre was invited by a women's group to facilitate a Bible study on the theme of 'Women, Water and Healing'. It has since been used many times to address other themes dealing with the agency of women, youth, or other marginalised sectors.



Important Information for the Facilitator

This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group. Write the responses offered by participants on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see these. Allow time for this; it takes time for participants to realise that you really do want to hear what they have to say! Once participants realise that you are serious, as they watch you record their responses there will be an avalanche of responses.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Stick up the sheet of newsprint with Questions 2 and 3. Each group should be able to see it easily.

2. Who are the main characters in the story and what do we know about each of them?

3. *As a small group, prepare to re-tell this story by drawing a picture or doing a drama.*

For Question 2 each group should summarise their discussions on some newsprint for report back.

A Good Idea



This Bible Study uses a very creative approach, and the facilitator and group are invited to make the most of creative ways to tell stories during this study.

Step 5.

The small groups should then each report back to everyone on their discussions and present their creative retelling of the story.

Step 6.

After the reportback the participants should return to their small groups. Stick up the newsprint with Question 4 below. Each group should be able to see it easily. The small groups should then discuss together and do the task.

4. *What is the untold story of the young slave girl who is the key agent in this story?*

Try and be creative in 'telling' the untold story. For example, write a letter from the young slave girl to her family, compose a poem, sing a song, etc.

Step 7.

At the end of the story time, each small group should report back to the big group. Each small group should tell their version of the 'untold story' of the slave girl to the larger group.

What does this mean ?

AGENCY

The action, medium or means by which something gets done OR the ability and authority to take action and get things done.

Step 8.

After the stories the participants should return to their small groups. Stick up the newsprint with the Questions 5 and 6 below. Each group should be able to see it easily. The small groups should then discuss together and answer the questions. They should write their plan of action on a piece of newsprint.

5. *What untold stories in your context does the telling of this story bring to your memory? Tell your stories to each other in your small group.*

6. *What will you do in response to this Bible study? For example, how will you plan to bring these untold stories into the public life of the church?*

Step 9.

The small groups should then report to everyone on their discussion and answers. Stick up each group's plan of action for all to see. Some stories may be too personal to share in the whole workshop. Encourage the small groups to keep such stories within the small group.

Step 10.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to do this by leading all in a prayer, thanking God for bringing the untold stories to the attention of all present, and asking God to help all as they begin to tell the untold stories around them.

Bible Study 1

Summary of the Reading Process in a Typical Bible Study

In response to the first question (**a contextual question**) there were a wide range of responses that picked up on many important aspects of the text. This process opened up a number of themes that could be pursued.

The second question (**a textual question**) returned participants to the text in order to identify and describe the main characters. Namaan, Elisha, the little girl, and the servants of Namaan were identified as major characters, and the two kings, the God of Israel, the foreign god were identified as minor characters.

The third question enables the participants to re-present the text either through a drawing or a drama. In either case, the role of the little slave girl is central. The participants clearly show her centrality to the plot; she is **the primary agent** of the action. Without her there would be no story!

And yet she herself is without a story! The text implies her story but does not tell it; it is present by its absence! So the text itself seems to invite our attempts to hear her story. This can be done in a variety of creative ways. Here the Bible reader brings his/her experience to bear on the text, filling a 'gap' in the text, and providing a voice for minor characters whose stories are only partially told. Excluded by the dominant patriarchal tradition, our readings recover this implied story.

Bible Study 1

Hermeneutical and Pedagogical Principles

Two forms of **textual/critical consciousness** were used:

- **Literary modes** of reading, specifically questions concerning characterisation and plot.
- An **in front of the text** approach was used to allow the reader to engage in an active way with the text. The focus of this approach is on the possible worlds projected by the text, whether they were intended by the author or not. Texts always have multiple meanings. This mode of reading allows readers to bring their experiences, needs, and questions to the text and to interact with one or more of the possible trajectories or themes of the text.

In these first two Bible studies (including the example Bible study) we have introduced the full range of resources Biblical Studies has to offer to the ordinary reader:

- **Historical-critical resources ('behind the text')**. Modern biblical criticism begins with a shift away from an a historical approach to an emphasis on questions of origin: sources, authorship, *autographa*, historical reconstruction. From these historical interests developed the various historical-critical approaches: textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism and redaction criticism. The central concern of all these critical approaches is the relationship between the text and the author or source. The impact of reader response criticism (see below) contributed to the recognition of the importance of sociological resources, and so sociological criticism has recently become an important component of reading 'behind the text'. Sociological criticism focuses on the way in which society is structured, and includes analysis of class, race, gender, etc.
- **Literary resources ('on the text')**. A shift then occurred with the advent and subsequent influence of structuralism which was reflected in a move from an interest in the origins of a text to an interest in the text itself. The text itself became the focus. The predominant interest of this shift was the synchronic analysis of the text on its own terms without recourse to external factors. In other words, there was a move away from explanation in terms of origins, and explanation in terms of extratextual reality. From these interests in the text itself developed structuralist, literary, and canonical approaches.
- **Reader/reception resources ('in front of the text')**. A more recent development in biblical studies is an interest in the relationship between the text and the reader. The reader is no longer seen as merely a passive acceptor of the text but as an active, even creative, contributor in the interpretative process. Reader-response criticism, autobiographical criticism, and the way the Bible is read in contextual theologies are examples of a focus on the reader. The recognition that readers are located in a context led to the realization that authors too are located in a 'thick' context which includes sociological as well as historical dimensions (see above).

Bible Study 2

Theme/s: Using local resources; family and community; leadership

Key text: Genesis 37 – 50

Background

This Bible study demonstrates the importance of local resources for reading the Bible, and also uses creative resources to do a Bible study on a large section of biblical text. See the picture of the woodcut at the end of this study, used with the permission of the artist, Azariah Mbatha. We have used this Bible study to address a number of contextual themes, including African culture, the family, political power, leadership, etc.

Important Information for the Facilitator



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Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Hold up and point to the woodcut picture of the Joseph Story. Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is your first impression of the woodcut of the Joseph Story by Azariah Mbatha (a South African artist)?

Encourage the participants to discuss their impressions and share them with the whole group.

Step 3.

After the discussion, put up Question 2 on newsprint. Make sure everyone can see the question. Ask everyone to look at the woodcut, and answer Questions 2:

2. Can you identify each of the scenes in the Joseph story as it is retold by Mbatha? Try and locate each scene in the Bible and give chapter and verse references for each panel of the woodcut.

Ensure that participants all have access to a Bible, some sharing if necessary. Encourage feedback from the participants, providing the correct answers where necessary, so that participants are clear about which panel relates to which part of the story.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Question 3 and 4 on newsprint, and ask the groups to answer the questions:

3. *What is the focus of each panel in the woodcut? In other words, what are the major themes and concerns of Mbatha's retelling of the Joseph story?*
4. *In what ways does Mbatha's interpretation of the Joseph story support or differ from your own reading or memory of the Joseph story?*

A Good Idea



If time is short, divide up the panels in the woodcut amongst the groups, making sure there are nine groups – one for each panel. Ask each group to work on *one* particular panel in the woodcut, noting down their answers on a piece of paper. Then let each group share their panel discussions with everyone.

Step 5.

After the discussions, let each group share their findings with everyone. You should summarise their responses to questions on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see them.

Step 6.

Participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 5, 6 and 7 on newsprint so that all the groups can see it:

5. *What resources does Mbatha use to retell the Joseph story?*
6. *Do similar resources exist in your own context? Give examples.*
7. *How does this retelling of the Joseph story speak to your context, and what will you do in response to this interpretation?*

The groups should write down their answers on a piece of paper. After the discussions, let each group share their findings with everyone. Summarise their responses to questions on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see them.

**What does
this mean ?**

RESOURCE

Something that can be used as a source of help or information; an asset.

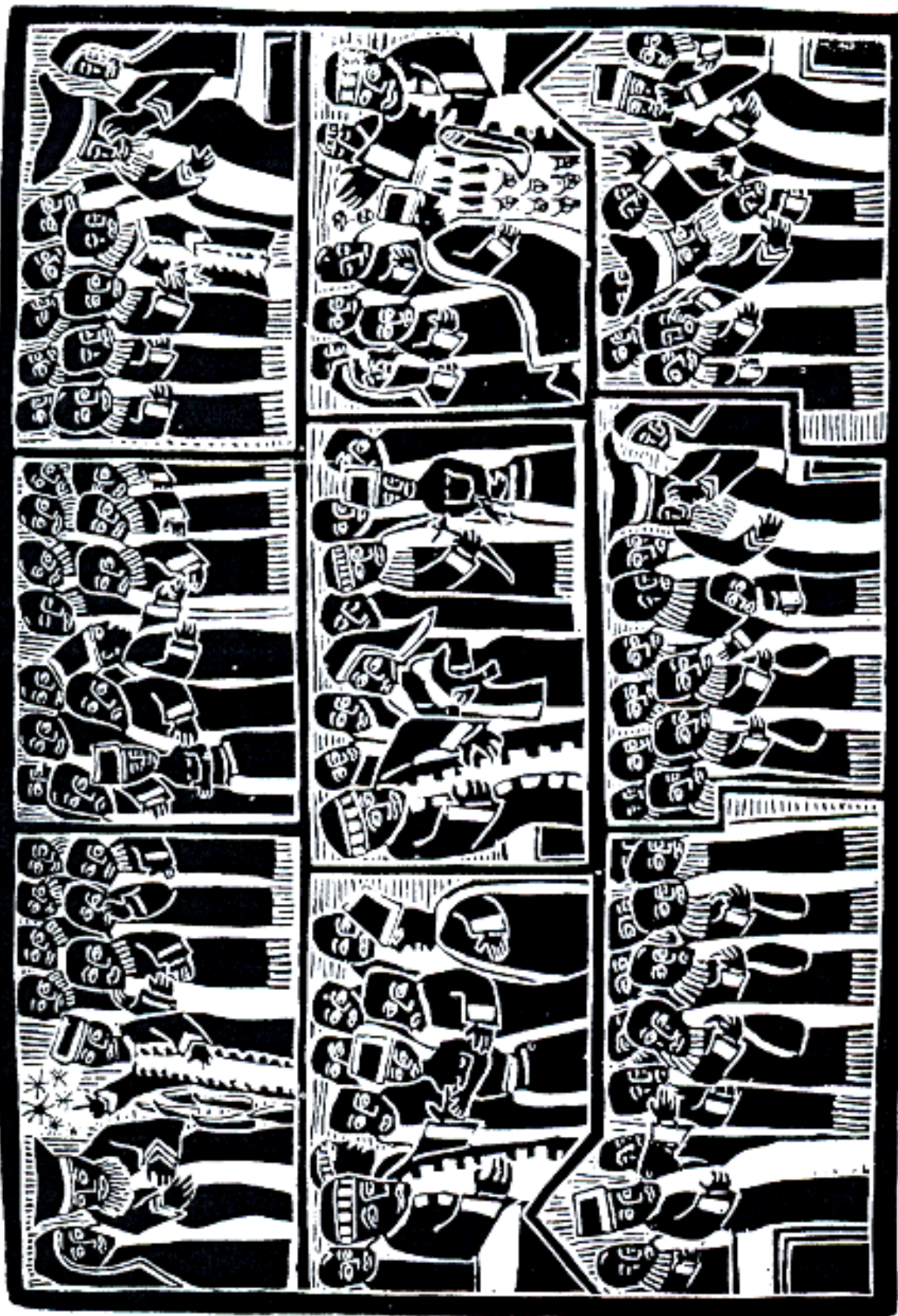
A Good Idea



The results of Step 6 – the newsprint summary – provide an excellent resource for Christian action. Encourage the groups to take home their findings as a reminder and a plan of action.

Step 7.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to do this by leading all in a prayer, thanking God for the resources available to help in reading the Bible, and asking God for assistance to act.



Bible Study 2
Hermeneutical and Pedagogical Principles

This study demonstrates that local **non-academic resources** can be used for reading the Bible. A local African resource provides the way into the biblical text. Significantly, questions 2 and 3 do exactly the same work as a textual question (focus on the text) usually does! By trying to ‘read’ Mbatha’s woodcut, participants are forced to return to the text again and again.

The **non-textual perspective** of Mbatha opens up new ways of seeing, and enables the rediscovery of neglected aspects of the text. For many Christians (who went to Sunday School) the Joseph Story is about an individual. Mbatha’s woodcut reminds us that the story is a story about a family and a community. Every panel is full of people.

Mbatha's reading offers **postcolonial** perspectives for reading the Bible in that it adopts a western form (top to bottom and left to right ‘reading’), which it then subverts by working in pictures rather than words. Mbatha’s woodcut is an African commentary on the Bible!

Experience with **non-literate** people indicates that they do not ‘read’ the woodcut in a top to bottom and left to right way; this may suggest that it is possible to read the woodcut in other ways.

Mbatha's woodcut offers a creative and critical way of **reading a long text** (Genesis 37-50) which would otherwise prove very difficult to read with ordinary readers. The woodcut draws us back to the biblical (textual) account as we soon discover how little we remember the Joseph story. So the woodcut is a resource for a more careful and close reading of the text.

This Bible study has generated many insights, some of which have been recorded in the books *Contextual Bible Study* and *The Academy of the Poor*.

Bible Study 3

Theme/s: Silence voices; contending theologies

Key text: 2 Samuel 21: 1 – 14

Introduction

This Bible study introduces us to the reality that there are often contending theologies within the biblical text and/or silenced voices, particularly those of women.

Important Information for the Facilitator



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Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group. Write the responses offered by participants on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see these.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2 - 4 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it clearly. Each group should discuss amongst themselves while noting the answers down:

2. *Who are the characters and what do we know about each of them?*
3. *What is the 'theology' of each of the main characters? Using the text as a basis, try and reconstruct elements of each characters' way of looking at God and life.*
4. *What is the theology of the narrator? A careful reading of the text gives us some clues to the narrator's point of view. For example, what does the phrase "after that" in the last verse refer to?*

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone. Summarise their responses to the questions on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see these. Ensure that participants are understanding the questions and answers and hold some discussion on these.

Step 6.

The participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 5, 6 and 7 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it clearly. Ask the groups the questions:

5. *Which character and theology do you identify with and why?*
6. *Who in your context is like David, the Gibeonites, Rizpah, etc?*
7. *How does this text speak into your live and what will you do in response?*

The small groups should then discuss each question separately, and write down some of their responses in summary form.

Step 7.

The small groups should then report to everyone on their discussion and answers. You should summarise their responses to the questions on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see them.

A Good Idea

The results of Step 7 are a useful reminder and resource for Christian action. Encourage the groups to each write up their own copy to take away with them.



Step 9.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to do this by leading all in a prayer.

**What does
this mean ?**

THEOLOGY

The study of the
Christian faith, or
a religious theory,
belief or system.

Bible Study 3
Summary of the Reading Process in a Typical Bible Study

Questions 1, 5, 6, and 7 focus on community consciousness, concentrating on forms of engagement with the text and each other. Questions 2, 3 and 4 focus on critical consciousness, concentrating on forms of critical distance generated by a close and careful reading of the text.

Most readers initially read with David, a godly character whom they know and trust from their readings of other texts. And this story seemed to confirm their confidence in David; his response to the famine is to “seek the face of God” (1a). But then some readers pointed out that the famine was already in its third year (1a). Why had it taken David so long to “seek the face of God”? Did this suggest that David was not as close to God as he should have been? Unease with David grew when he did not immediately choose the first of the options offered by the Gibeonites: restitution through “silver or gold” (4a). How could he agree to restitution through blood? Did this mean that David was not as close to his people as he should have been? Or did it indicate, as some argued, that David was being particularly sensitive to the power dynamics implicit in the situation; namely, that because the Gibeonites were a marginalised community their initial response was one of deference (4a). Being aware of relations of power, David gave them the space to articulate their real request by making it clear to them that he was giving them the right to decide: “What do you say that I should do for you? (4b).

Perhaps, some said, David was even using this opportunity to rid himself of potential opposition from Saul's house. David might have been using the Gibeonites, pushing them to execute his own political interests. This line of reasoning appeared to be supported, some readers argued, by the repeated presence of Saul and his “house” in the story. Participants pointed to the reference to Saul’s “house of blood” (1b), the Gibeonites’ reminder that Saul was “the chosen of God” (6a), and also drew on what they knew about the tensions between David and Saul from other texts. This would explain, they suggested, why David did not take up the opportunity provided by the first response of the Gibeonites to offer financial compensation (4a). Some went further and argued that David’s refusal to take this option and the repetition of the question allowed or even prompted the Gibeonites to make the decision they did. They understood the illocutionary force – the unspoken intent – of David’s repeated question: David wanted Saul’s family to be eliminated as a potential threat to his throne. Realising this, the Gibeonites obliged, either for reasons of their own or because they had little option given their position. In their initial request the option of “silver or gold” is grammatically linked to “Saul and his family” and the option of “putting to death” to “anyone in Israel” (4a), but when David asks the second time, the object of the killing is clear, though Saul is not mentioned by name (5-6a).

None of the readers much liked the idea of David using the Gibeonites for his own ends; in fact, those reading with David became more and more uncomfortable with the David of this story. But those reading with the Gibeonites, and this was often the majority, applauded David for doing the appropriate thing. Some form of restitution was clearly implied by God's statement (1b and 2b), and rather than imposing his form of restitution, David asked the Gibeonites for theirs. And when they behaved deferentially, David rightly recognised this as the behaviour of a vulnerable and marginalised group, and so persisted until they felt free to state their preference. David was being remarkably sensitive to the power dynamics in that situation.

These readers went further, arguing that the perspective of the Gibeonites was appropriate and right. Many of these black South African readers were adamant that the Gibeonites were right to demand blood restitution; they too knew what it was to be systematically slaughtered. Blood restitution was an appropriate response to a "house of blood" (1b) that "consumed" and "planned to destroy" (5), particularly when the house in question was the house of the dominant who had used their power to oppress and decimate the vulnerable and marginalised.

This reading led to a heated discussion of capital punishment, which was at that time being debated by the new Constitutional Court in South Africa. Those reading with the Gibeonites insisted that the death penalty must remain and must be reactivated (there being a moratorium at that time), so that those guilty of blood could be appropriately punished. So those reading with the Gibeonites, and those reading with David, sharing as they did a similar theology, felt that David was right when he gave seven relations of Saul into the hands of the Gibeonites (9a) and that the Gibeonites were justified in "exposing/impaling them" (9a). Further, they showed that their readings were substantiated by the final sentence of the story: "And God answered prayer for the land after that" (14b). The phrase "after that," the concluding phrase in Hebrew, clearly referred to the handing over and exposing/hanging/impaling of the family of Saul.

But it was not that clear to all that this phrase should be interpreted in this way. What about Rizpah, some asked? Does she not have a part in this story? All the small groups, in working through the questions outlined above, had agreed that Rizpah was one of the major characters, and yet she had played no role in the reading thus far. So the question was pertinent. This question, it proved, probed a deep disquiet in all readers. Rizpah, it slowly began to emerge, had also done the right thing; she had shown honour to the dead.

Reading from a largely African culture, most readers were very uncomfortable with the "hanging/exposing" (9) of the bodies. Even those who were deeply committed to the perspective of the Gibeonites found this practice difficult to understand. Relatives of the dead must be allowed to bury the dead properly. Disrespect towards the dead was wrong. And so cracks in the dominant reading began to appear.

Those who read with David found fresh resources for their reading. While Saul had broken the oath of Israel to the Amorites (2b), David had kept his oath to Jonathan by sparing Mephibosheth (7). This showed that David did honour his relationships, even with those who had a claim to the throne. Moreover, David did honour the dead by bringing the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and the bones of their relatives that had been hung/exposed/impaled, and gave them a proper burial (12-14a). In this respect, then, David did have a different theology to that of the Gibeonites. So, some suggested, the phrase “after that” probably included not only right restitution but also right burial.

But this reading in turn opened additional fissures and gaps in the text. Those who read with Rizpah, mainly women, located their readings in these places. In providing a proper burial for the dead of Israel, they argued, David had been responding to Rizpah’s actions. It was only “when David was told what Rizpah had done” (11) that he responded appropriately. She had shamed and challenged him by her solidarity with the dead. Verse 10, Rizpah’s story, now became foregrounded. How were Rizpah’s actions to be interpreted? What was Rizpah saying in her silence?

Among those who read with Rizpah were those who emphasised her silent solidarity with the dead. She was doing what women all over the world do, caring for the dead. And because she was in a marginalised position, being a woman and a concubine/secondary wife (11), she understood the need to be in solidarity with these victims. So she chose to care for and bury the dead, including her children; she stayed in solidarity with them, doing what she could to honour them. Others who read with Rizpah emphasised the “deafening silence” of her protest. Although silent, by publicly associating herself with the victims of the king’s policy, she was engaging in a political act of protest. She was caring for the dead while and because men with power do not care for the living. This was one of those rare moments when the hidden transcript of women’s resistance to dominant ideologies and theologies ruptured the public transcript of deference and disguise; what was usually acted and spoken offstage by women, behind the backs of the dominant, now found a public form at centre-stage.

The “after that” in the final sentence (14b), these readers argued, referred to Rizpah’s actions, not David’s! God’s answering/responding was associated with Rizpah’s resistance. This was clear from the narrative where the rains, which were God’s response, were directly related to Rizpah’s actions (10a). The narrator tells us that Rizpah stayed in solidarity with the dead “from the beginning of the harvest until the rains poured down on them from the heavens”. The silent cry of Rizpah and the dead were heard by God.

While the narrator seems to suggest, these readers continued, that David might have heard God speak when “he sought the face of God” (1a), and that he therefore probably had identified the problem as the need to provide some form of restitution for the Gibeonites, the narrator leaves David to find his own solution. God does not speak again. And Rizpah never speaks. But Rizpah’s act of solidarity with the victims of the theology of David and the Gibeonites demands a response, from David and from God. God responds first, and the rain falls on Rizpah and the dead (10a). David then also responds, recognising, we hope, another more accountable, responsible, and compassionate theology.

Finally, it was pointed out, Rizpah was not alone in her solidarity with the dead and her protest. While she was the only one to risk death by rupturing the public transcript of deference and devotion to male leadership, she could not have survived day and night, month after month (10), without the support of her sisters. Perhaps even Saul’s daughter, Michal (or Merab) was among those who sustained and strengthened Rizpah. But maybe not. Michal, like the leaders of the Gibeonites, may have actively embraced the dominant theology of retribution and death. Perhaps the “class” position that came with being a daughter of a king made it difficult to identify with her sisters. Certainly these African readers knew that the class position of white women in South Africa often had this consequence. Their experience too of black (male) leaders, both in civic and church structures, who had lost their community consciousness, who had abandoned *ubuntu* (“a person is a person because of other people”), made the theology of the Gibeonite leaders uncomfortably familiar. And this was the saddest aspect of this story for those who read with Rizpah, that marginalised communities of people could embrace a theology of domination and death.

It would be nice to report that this is where our readings rested. But this reading too was deconstructed. Those who read with David continued to claim textual clues for their reading, contending that the juxtaposition of the final two sentences (“And they did all that the king commanded.” “And God answered prayer for the land after that.” (14)) was clear textual attestation that it was David’s actions that elicited God’s response. Those reading with the Gibeonites responded to Rizpah by reminding those who read with her that theologies of compassion and life had been easily coopted by apartheid, and that such theologies were inadequate if apartheid and its architects were to be completely destroyed.

And so this text remains contested. Perhaps that is the narrator's primary point, that there are contending theologies and theologies of life and death coexist in our communities. The Bible, like the church, is a site of struggle. But those of us who came to know Rizpah cannot forget her. She is our sister and we are her people. We have been partially constituted by her story; by sharing in her story we have also been strengthened in our struggle for survival, liberation, and life.

Bible Study 3
Hermeneutical and Pedagogical Principles

This text is a very good example of a **neglected part of our tradition**. Fortunately, however, this fragment has been preserved, even if the various redactors of the story of the David could find no proper place for it. The text itself portrays the theological struggles that existed at a particular time. By reading texts like this we allow the neglected traditions in our Christian tradition to speak. The Bible does not speak with one voice; we must therefore be alert to the silences, absences, and partial presences.

Recovering and studying neglected aspects of the biblical tradition will open up additional **lines of connection** between the struggles of our people and the similar struggles of those who have gone before us in the tradition. This is both encouraging and empowering for those who often wonder whether they belong in the church.

Bible Study 4

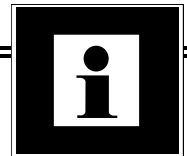
Theme/s: Rape; violence against women

Key text: 2 Samuel 13: 1 – 22

Background

This Bible study engages with a text that most people do not even know is in the Bible. This text has become the basic resource for the Ujamaa Centre's Tamar Campaign. Warning!!! This Bible study is tremendously powerful, creating safe and sacred space for women (and men) to talk about sexual abuse. **Do not do this Bible study unless you have counsellors available.**

Important Information for the Facilitator



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Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group. Write down the responses offered by participants on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see these.

A Good Idea



You may like to ask a group, possibly the youth or a group of women, beforehand to prepare a drama that re-enacts the story. This drama can then become a local resource for the Bible study.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. For a study with this theme, it is wise to divide the participants into groups of older women, older men, younger women and younger men, so that people may speak comfortably with each other. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3 and 4 on some newsprint. Each group should be able to see it clearly:

- 2. Who are the main characters in this story and what do we know about them?*
- 3. What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?*
- 4. What does Tamar say and do? Pay careful attention to each of the elements of what she says!*

The small groups should then discuss each question separately and write down some answers.

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should present a summary of their answers to everyone. This could be done in a variety of ways. If there is time, each group could be asked to report on each question, but if time is a constraint then each group should report on only one question. The full report, which the note-taker of the group puts up on newsprint, is then displayed for everyone to read at some other time.

A Good Idea



The report backs can also be presented more creatively, using a drama, a poem or a song.

Step 6.

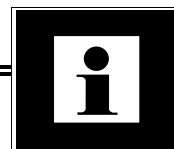
After the report backs, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 5, 6 and 7 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it easily:

- 5. Are there women like Tamar in your church and/or community? Tell their story.*
- 6. What is the theology of women who have been raped?*
- 7. What resources are there in your area for survivors of rape?*

The small groups should then discuss the questions and note down some answers.

Step 7.

Once again, the small groups present their report back to everyone. Gather together the creative responses and summarise the outcomes of the report backs, writing them up on newsprint for all to see.



Important Information for the Facilitator

For women participants this report back may be uncomfortable, difficult, or even too painful to do. Suggest creative ways in which responses could be articulated, such as a drawing or a drama. This may enable all groups to successfully report back, but no-one should be 'pushed' into this.

Step 8.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Question 8 on newsprint:

8. What will you now do in response to this Bible study?

Each group should now formulate an action plan. The action plan is either reported to everyone or presented on newsprint for other participants to look at after the Bible study is over.

Step 9.

Bring the Bible study to a close. Encourage participants to look again at the outcomes of the Bible study, and the action plan.

Close by leading all in a prayer that encourages the women participants in particular, and prays for the victims of rape.

Additional Uses of Bible Study 4

1. Working with Children

Given that Tamar was probably between 12-14 years old when she was raped, this Bible study may be adapted so that it can be used with children. Clearly care needs to be taken in doing this and those attempting this task should consult with those who have been trained in work with children.

2. Working with Men

How would you adapt this Bible study, or design another Bible study, to explore with male participants the problem of rape? In a Bible study Ujamaa Centre has substituted the following questions for questions 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8:

- 4. Why does Amnon rape Tamar?*
- 5. Why do men rape?*
- 6. What does the church do about men who rape?*
- 7. How can we intervene to address the issue of rape, focussing on men who rape?*

Bible Study 4
Summary of the Reading Process in a Typical Bible Study

In our experience the effects of this Bible study are substantial. Women are amazed that such a text exists, are angry that they have never heard it read or preached, are relieved to discover that they are not alone, are empowered because the silence has been broken and their stories have been told. As one women said, “If such a text exists in the Bible, how can we be silent about these things in the church?” How indeed?

The initial, opening question generates a host of responses as ‘readers’ share their early impressions of this seldom read text. Ordinary ‘readers,’ whether literate or not, readily engage with questions 2, 3 and 4, returning to the text again and again to find out as much as they can about each of the characters, missing nothing. They note the way in which Jonadab, a relative of Amnon’s, attempts to draw himself nearer to the potential heir to the throne of David by identifying his restrained lust. Reminding Amnon that he is indeed “son of the king” (13:4) and thereby implying that he should have whatever he wants, Jonadab provides a plan for the rape of Tamar. The slow pace of the story, with the graphic description of the plan and then its execution, are also picked by ordinary ‘readers’ as they delve into 13:5-11. David, it seems to them, is somewhat irresponsible, unable to detect that Amnon’s request is a ruse (13:6), and so he sends Tamar to be raped (13:7). (Some readers remember the earlier stories in 2 Samuel and comment on how often damage is done when David “sends.”) Whatever restraint Amnon may have had now collapses as he premeditates the rape of his sister (13:9-14). Women ‘readers,’ in particular, applaud the clear and careful way in which Tamar responds. She trusts her brother and willingly serves him while he is sick; and even when she finds herself trapped, she argues articulately with him. First, she says a clear “No” (13:12), which should be enough. Second, she reminds him that he is her “brother” (13:12). Third, she makes it clear that she is not a willing participant and so names what he is doing, “forcing” her (13:12). Fourth, she reminds him of their cultural heritage and communal values, “for such a thing is not done in Israel” (13:12). Fifth, she declares his intentions to be vile and evil (13:12). Sixth, she appeals to what she hopes is some recognition of her situation, reminding him of the consequences of his actions for her (13:13). Seventh, she then turns the question on him, asking what the consequences of such an act on him will be (13:13). Eighth, she offers him a way out, at considerable cost to herself, suggesting that he speak to the king about marrying her (13:13). Alas, even this most articulate of all biblical women is not listened to, “and being stronger than she, he forced her and raped her” (13:14).

And even after the rape she does not remain silent, arguing with Amnon again, this time urging him not to abandon her to the consequences of rape on her own (13:16). But the male ego again refuses to hear, and she is forcefully (again) removed (13:16-17).

Tamar's public acknowledgement of the rape (13:19) is met with mixed reactions by women 'readers' as they both applaud her decision 'to go public' and worry at the cost of such a public statement in a patriarchal society. They find some comfort in Absalom's offer of sanctuary, but reject his silencing of her (13:20). Finally, they are appalled by David's empty anger, and his impulse to protect his son (13:21).

Clearly, each of the male characters, whether it be David, Amnon, Jonadab, the servants, or Absalom, plays a role in the rape of Tamar, though their roles are different. This is how many men it takes to rape a woman!

The point of view of the narrator is interesting, with most 'readers' commenting that this 'male character' (presuming the narrator to be a male) is surprisingly sympathetic to the concerns of women. They are grateful that he names rape for what it is: a violent assault on a woman (13:14). They are amazed by how articulate Tamar is and find many of her arguments convincing. They especially like the fact that she finds aspects of her cultural and religious heritage potentially liberating, even if they are often used to oppress and dominate. Most of all they are astounded that such a text exists in the Bible, for they find it a remarkable resource with which to raise and discuss rape in their own contexts.

Questions 5, 6, and 7 provide plenty of opportunity for precisely such discussions, with many women finding 'sacred space' to share the unshareable. They quickly discover that they are not alone, and soon the 'Davids,' 'Ammons,' 'Jonadabs,' 'servants,' and 'Absaloms' in their own experiences are named. As Bridgit Masaiti and Lilian Siwila learned from one of the participants when they did this Bible study as part of the Ujamaa Centre's Tamar Campaign, "the church is our Absalom, because they tell us to keep quiet right in our own houses".

In many cases professional counselling is required in such situations, and it is irresponsible to proceed without it.

Question 8 provides an opportunity 'to do something about it,' and groups come up with wonderfully creative actions plans, whether to compose a liturgy for their local church or to challenge the local police station to provide resources for the survivors of rape.

Bible Study 4 *Hermeneutical and Pedagogical Principles*

This text is hardly ever read publicly in church. Most participants, therefore, are unaware that such a text exists. And this is part of its power. By reading and studying a text like this we find **new lines of connection** between our lived faith and the biblical tradition. Women who have been abused often find, for the first time, a story that connects with their experience of abuse.

If the Bible study group is a safe place, and some thought needs to go into the composition of the small groups when doing a Bible study like this, then women may begin to articulate aspects of their lived/working theologies that they have never given expression to before. This can be a very traumatic experience, and so it is important to make sure that there are **counselling resources** available.

This Bible study recovers the voice of one of the most articulate women in the Bible. It is worth reflecting carefully on the verbal responses of Tamar as she confronts her half-brother, Amnon. She counters many of the **myths associated with rape**. She is raped because Amnon is stronger than she is – rape is about power, not intellectual and moral power, but physical power. Tamar is remarkably clear and coherent in her arguments against Amnon, but he will not hear.

Implicit in the Bible study as outlined above are all the elements of the contextual Bible study process. The Bible study begins and ends with what can be called ‘community consciousness’ questions. Questions 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8 draw on the readings and resources of the local community group. By using small groups and writing up all responses the contributions of all participants are affirmed. Habitually, responses to question 1 elicit the public transcript; participants offer interpretations they have received and which they feel are safe to proclaim publicly. They know what they are expected to believe about the Bible. However, there are usually some responses which are more ambiguous and which potentially provide space for more authentic interpretations – interpretations that articulate something of their experiential/ ‘working’ theologies. If the group becomes a safe place, if there are resources to articulate what is often incipient and inchoate, and if there are resonance's with others in the group, then gradually elements of ‘working’, ‘lived’ faith may be more overtly and vigorously voiced and owned.

Clustered in between the community consciousness questions are a series of what might be called ‘critical consciousness’ questions. These questions are the contribution of the socially engaged biblical scholar, and provide resources for repeated returns to the text and more careful and close ‘reading.’ In this example, the critical consciousness questions draw on literary modes of interpretation, posing questions about characters, plot, setting, etc. Such structured and systematic questions are not usually in the repertoire of ordinary ‘readers’, though once asked, the questions are readily grasped and appropriated. The advantage of using questions which draw on literary modes of interpretation is that they do not require any input from the socially engaged biblical scholar (‘the expert’). The questions are contribution enough, and ordinary ‘readers’ make of them what they will. However, in many instances ordinary ‘readers’ want access to resources that are only available to the ‘trained’ reader. So, for example, participants may want to know the

significance of Tamar tearing her clothing. In such cases, the socially engaged biblical scholar may offer socio-historical resources in response to this question, choosing to do this, preferably and where possible, by drawing on parallels in the participants' own socio-historical context.

In our experience literary-type questions almost always lead into socio-historical-type questions; this is important, because it indicates the need ordinary 'readers' have to locate faith in real concrete contexts. But by beginning with literary-type questions and by allowing socio-historical-type questions to emerge from the participants, the powerful presence of the biblical scholar is held in check. Equally importantly, by waiting for the questions to arise from the participants, we can be sure that we are answering questions of interest to them rather than questions of interest to us biblical scholars (on which the industry of biblical scholarship is based).

Critical consciousness questions facilitate a more careful and close reading of the text than is usually the case among ordinary 'readers'. They give the text a voice, and in so doing open up potential lines of connection with faith trajectories in the biblical tradition that have been neglected or suppressed. Women discover, to return to our example, that they are not alone, that their terror can be found in the Bible, and while this "text of terror" (Trible 1984) perhaps offers little comfort, it does at least acknowledge the reality of their experience.

The concluding community consciousness questions (5, 6, 7, and 8) ground the Bible study firmly in the life of the participants. In responding to these questions, community consciousness and critical consciousness fuse and fashion faith interpretations (Patte 1995) that make sense and which are an expression of the 'lived', 'working' theologies of ordinary believers. Whether or how these incipient and inchoate faith interpretations are articulated depends on how safe the contextual Bible study process is. In safe places women who have been touched by Tamar tell their stories, help and hold the pain of their sisters, and plan for the transformation of their churches and communities. Unfortunately, not all Bible study groups are safe, and so some women may remain silent, waiting still. But the potential is there, implicit within the contextual Bible study process and this text for the articulation, owning, and acting out of those interpretations and theologies that ordinary 'readers' of the Bible live by.

Bible Study 5

Theme/s: Economic exploitation; systemic sin

Key text: Mark 12: 41 – 44

Introduction

We have already discussed this Bible study in detail (see pages 18-24); here we offer the basic template of the Bible study. This study addresses the experience of ordinary Christians whom the church often oppresses through the demands it makes on their giving. It uses a lot of the 'in and out' approach where for each of the questions participants move from the big group into their small groups and back again into the big group.



Important Information for the Facilitator

This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group. Write down the responses offered by participants on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see these.



A Good Idea

When doing Step 3, it is a good idea to do it by inviting participants to 'buzz' with their neighbour concerning what they think the text is about. By discussing the opening question in 'buzz-groups', the ice is broken and each and every participant is able to share something. Though tentative at first, the participants may discover that it really is okay to say whatever they want, and this sets the right atmosphere for the rest of the study.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Question 2 on some newsprint. Each group should be able to see it clearly:

2. Read Mark 12: 38 – 40 (the text that immediately precedes verses 41-44). Are there connections between 12: 41 – 44 and 12: 38 – 40? If so, what are they?

The small groups should then discuss each question separately and write down some answers.

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should present a summary of their answers to everyone. You should write their report on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see it. If there is enough time, other participants can add to the report.

Step 6.

After the reports the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Question 3 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it easily. Ask the groups the questions:

3. Now read Mark 13: 1 – 2, the text that immediately follows Mark 12: 41 – 44. Are there connections between 13: 1 – 2 and 12: 38 – 44? If so, what are they?

The small groups should then discuss the questions and write down some answers.

Step 7.

The small groups should then each report to everyone on their discussion and answers. It is good to get the groups to report in a different order. Again write up their answers on newsprint, so that everyone can see and add to the reports.

Step 8.

After the reports the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Question 4 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it easily. Ask the question:

4. Jesus comes into the temple at 11: 27 and leaves the temple at 13: 2. In this section of the text:

- *Who are the main characters or groups of characters?*
- *What do we know about them?*
- *What are the relationships between them?*

Draw a picture of the relationships between the characters in the temple. What does your picture say about the literary unit as a whole?

The small groups should then discuss and answer the question.

Important Information for the Facilitator

This is a demanding question, so give plenty of time for it (about 30 – 45 minutes) and encourage the groups to actually draw a picture of their findings on a sheet of newsprint.

Step 9.

Again, at the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone. Each small group should present their 'relationship picture' to the larger group.

Step 10.

You need to then try to summarise the responses of all the groups in one communal picture of the characters and relationships in Mark 11: 27 – 13: 2. You will need one very big piece of newsprint for this. Encourage further group discussion amongst the participants whilst doing this.

Step 11.

After the reports the participants should return once again to their small groups. Put up Questions 5 and 6 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it easily.

5. How did the Jerusalem temple function in first century Palestine, in the time of Jesus?

6. If Mark were to send an SMS or telegram of this section, what would he say?

The small groups should then discuss the questions.

Step 12.

After the reports the participants should return once again to their small groups. Put up Questions 7 and 8 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it easily.

7. How does this text speak to our contexts?

8. What actions will we plan in response to this Bible study?

The small groups should then discuss the questions.

Step 13.

The small groups should then each report to everyone on their discussion and action plan. It is good to get the groups to report in a different order. Again write up their answers on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see and share in the responses of the other groups, learning from the action plans of others.

Step 14.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all a prayer, and asking God to help all present as they implement their plans of action.

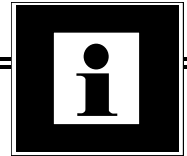
Bible Study 6

Theme/s: Women and culture

Key text: Mark 5: 21 – 6: 1

Introduction

This Bible study deals with the important issues of culture and gender.



Important Information for the Facilitator

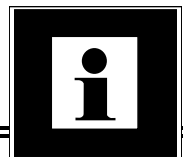
This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.



Important Information for the Facilitator

From this point on, there is a detailed commentary on the Bible Study, question by question. The commentary text is indented. This commentary may help you are you prepare the Bible study.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group. Write down the responses offered by participants on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see them.

Commentary: Responses to this question probably include some of the following: healing, compassion, faith, love, hope, despair, and many others. Readers could probably extend this

list. Some groups may include 'women' as a theme of this text, as did one of the groups of ordinary 'readers' with whom this exercise was done.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3 and 4 on newsprint so that each group can see them easily. Each group should summarise their discussions on each question on some newsprint for the report back.

2. *Who are the main characters, and what do we know about them?*

Commentary: This question returns the 'readers' to the text as they try to glean as much as they can about the various characters. What begins to emerge is that this text seems to be about women. This suggestion is supported by a careful reading of the text. First, the story of the two women is a literary unit, delimited by the geographic shifts in verses 21 and 6:1. Second, although the central character appears initially to be a man, Jairus, the central characters in the story are in fact two women. Jairus does initiate the action, but is then ignored as first the woman with the flow of blood and then Jairus' daughter move to centre-stage. The actual absence of the first woman mentioned (Jairus' daughter), emphasises her narrative presence. The plot depends on her presence. Similarly, the woman with the flow of blood, the second woman, is foregrounded even though she seeks to be self-effacing. And while Jesus is still speaking to the second woman, the first woman is again represented by others (verse 35). It is almost as if the narrator himself (herself?) is interrupted - the narrative certainly is - by the unnamed woman with the flow of blood. (This woman is named *Berenice* by some in Latin America.) The careful narrative introduction of Jairus, a named male with power (verse 22) is first interrupted, and then deconstructed, by the unnamed woman with no power.

Third, that the plot and sub-plot are carefully connected is stressed by the repetition of "daughter", in verse 34 with reference to the second woman and in verse 35 with reference to the first woman. The ambiguity of "your daughter", referring to Jairus and possibly to Jesus, in verse 35 reinforces this connection. The women, and so their stories, are also linked by the repetition of "twelve years" (verse 25 and 42). It has also been suggested by some readers that "twelve years" may, in the case of the young woman, be an allusion to the onset of menstruation and so the beginning of fertility. The flow of blood for the younger woman meant life was possible, but the flow of blood for the older woman meant that life was no longer possible. The young woman of twelve years of age is a narrative reminder of the child(ren) that the older woman has not been able to bear. Here is another link between the two stories. There is also a parallel structure to each episode. In each case the woman is defined by her social location; in each case the woman is in need; in each case Jesus responds to her need; in each case the woman is unclean; in each case there is contact, touching, between Jesus and the woman; in each case Jesus speaks to the woman; in each case there is healing and restoration of the woman to the community.

While Jesus is always seen as a major character who is on the side of the women, the emerging presence of the women as central characters did sometimes cast him in another light. Some women participants wondered whether Jesus was not conscientized by the faith of the woman who touched him. Would Jesus have been as radical as he was without this

woman? For most women participants, however, the Jesus of the story is the Jesus who they know and experience as being with them in their daily struggle for survival, liberation, and life, and so their focus in the reading is firmly on the women. While the text may be about the things they initially mentioned, they now know it is about women – about them.

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

Commentary: Once again, this question returns participants to the text as they attempt to understand the message. Extensive discussion and digging into the text with a whole range of experiences and resources yield some fruit and some frustration. A partial picture begins to emerge of two women bound by social systems – similar to their own – from which they are liberated by Jesus. Adding to the textual and socio-historical resources of the ordinary "readers" the socially engaged biblical scholar in the group facilitates further exchange. The partial picture already constructed begins to take on a clearer shape as the responses of the ordinary "readers" are supported by some input on the sociological setting of these women.

Both women are initially identified in terms of patriarchal social systems, and not in their own right. They are not named, they are described in terms of their location within two interlocking social systems. The first woman is defined by the patriarchal system of first century Palestine. She is defined in terms of her relationship to a male, her father. The second woman is defined by the purity system of first century Palestine. She is defined in terms of her uncleanness, her flow of blood. Both women, in other words, are situated in social systems that determine how the world in which they live relates to them.

4. How does Jesus respond to these women?

Commentary: But Jesus responds differently. Having heard the story of the second woman, he embraces her uncleanness by affirming her faith and healing. Her twelve years of uncleanness and social alienation are ended when she is healed and restored to the community. The acceptance and affirmation of Jesus, together with her faith, bring freedom from her religious, economic (verse 26), sexual, and social suffering. The nameless, self-effacing woman has become a part of the Jesus movement, has become 'daughter'. Jesus has literally empowered her! (verse 30). There will still be times when this woman will not be able to worship in the temple, when she will not be able to be touched, when she will be unclean, when she will be marginalised by the patriarchal purity system. But that system has been challenged and changed by her story.

Similarly with the first woman. Not only does Jesus touch her unclean dead body (verse 41), he also refers to her in her own right rather than as the property of her father. Her father and 'some men' (used by certain English translations) refer to her in the patriarchal genitive (verses 23 and 35). Jesus relates to the young woman as a subject, not as an object (verse 39 and 41). Significantly, the narrator adopts Jesus' subject designation in verse 40 in his implicit refusal to describe the young woman as the property of her father, in contrast to the patriarchal positioning language of Jairus and his men. Instead of defining the young woman as possessed by her father, as an object (see verse 23 where Jairus refers to her as 'My little daughter'), the narrator now designates her as a subject, possessing her father and mother (verse 40). There will still be times when this young woman is defined in terms of

her social location within a patriarchal household, when she will be described with the possessive case, when she will be treated as an object by the patriarchal system. But that system has been challenged and changed by her story.

Step 4.

After each question has been discussed in the small groups, everyone should get together to report back their answers. Summarise the group responses on newsprint so that everyone can see them.

Step 5.

After reporting back to everyone, participants should now return to their small groups for the final series of questions. Put Questions 5, 6 and 7 up on newsprint so that everyone can see them. As before, each group should summarise their discussions on each question on some newsprint for the report back.

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

6. What does Jesus and this text say to women (and men) in your community?

7. What will your group do in response to this Bible study?

Commentary: Of course, each community will answer these questions differently.

However, what generally occurs is that groups begin to do a social analysis of their context in an attempt to identify structures that oppress and marginalize women in their communities. In India, for example, caste is identified as a structure that impacts directly on women.

Question 6 usually leads to a discussion of how women hear Jesus standing in solidarity with them against oppressive structures. Jesus affirms their identity and agency. In some groups, lists are drawn up of the different ways in which this text speaks to men and women!

Finally, groups plan actions that are possible within the constraints of their context. Some groups are able to plan actions that emerge into the public realm, but some are more tentative planning more ‘disguised’ or ‘hidden’ actions, often among women themselves.

Step 6.

The small groups should then each report to everyone on their discussion and their responses to the Bible Study. It is good to get the groups to report in a different order. You should summarise the important points made on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see and share in the responses of the other groups, learning from the action plans of others.

Step 7.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in a prayer for the justice of Jesus to come to the women in this church and community, and for courage for those present to implement their plans of action.

Bible Study 7

Theme/s: HIV and AIDS; disability

Key text: Mark 3: 1 – 8

Background

This Bible study has emerged from Bible studies that people who are living with HIV and AIDS have developed. This is the kind of text they choose to reflect on.



Important Information for the Facilitator

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Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles.

Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What do you think the text is about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group. Write down the responses offered by participants on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see them.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly:

- 2. From the text, what image do you think the Pharisees have of God?*
- 3. From the text, what view of synagogue tradition do the Pharisees hold?*
- 4. From the text, what image do you think Jesus has of God?*
- 5. From the text, what view of synagogue tradition does Jesus hold?*

What does this mean ?

SYNAGOGUE

The place of worship for a Jewish congregation; the communal centre of Jewish life.

The small groups should then discuss each question separately and summarise their answers to each on a separate piece of newsprint.

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone. The summaries on newsprint, should be used to report back and displayed for everyone to see.



A Good Idea

The report back could be done in a variety of ways. If there is time, each group could be asked to report on each question, but if time is a constraint then each group should report on only one question.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 6 and 7 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it easily. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before:

6. *What image of God do you think the disabled man has?*
7. *What view of synagogue tradition do you think the disabled man has?*

Step 7.

Once again, the small groups present their report back to everyone. Put up the group's newsprint so everyone can see them.

Step 8.

After the report back, the participants should return once again to their small groups. Put up Questions 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it easily. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before:

8. *What image of God do people living with HIV/AIDS have?*
9. *What view of church tradition do people living with HIV/AIDS have?*
10. *Why was Jesus angry?*
11. *How should the church respond to people living with HIV/AIDS?*
12. *What will you now do to assist your church to work more 'positively' with people living with HIV/Aids?*



A Good Idea

Given the number of questions, the report back on some of the questions could be more creatively presented to everyone, for example by way of a creative poster.

Step 9.

Once again, the small groups present their report back to everyone. Put up the group's newsprint or posters so everyone can see them.

Step 10.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading everyone in a prayer of blessing for people living with HIV and AIDS, and a pledge of support towards them.

Bible Study 7

Hermeneutical and Pedagogical Principles

This Bible study is an attempt to ‘read the **signs of the times**’. Our current context demands that we respond in a Godly way to people living with HIV/AIDS. Our churches and their theological traditions are struggling to respond in a life-affirming way. Most people who are living with HIV and AIDS feel alienated from their families and churches, particularly those who have become open about their status. Those who have not declared their status are reluctant to do so because they fear the stigma and discrimination of church and society.

This Bible study builds on the **actual experience** of Bible study groups facilitated by an Ujamaa Centre staff member, Bongi Zengele. She facilitates Bible studies with groups who have been tested and who are open about their status. These group members choose to work with texts in which Jesus stands overtly over and against the prevailing views of society. Clearly their experience is that society, whether it be their families, their church or society generally, rails against them. This is why the group is so important; for a moment they are with people that stand with them, not against them. That Jesus regularly appears to take a stand with those who are discriminated against by their families, their religious institutions, and society generally, has been recognised and embraced by the members. Zengele emphasises that the group members do not deny their reality, nor do they deny their responsibility for contracting the virus (given that most of the group members are young people who have probably contracted the virus through sexual intercourse of one kind or another). What they will not accept is the denigration of their dignity – being treated as less than human. The loss of immunity does not mean loss of humanity! Their deep desire is for an alternative theological perspective that grants them dignity, given that the predominant theology they encounter from the church is extremely damaging to people like them. This kind of Bible study provides resources for forging a new and more ‘positive’ theology.

Question 10 interrupts the community consciousness set of questions by returning the groups to the biblical text. While it is usually more productive to work with similar types of questions at a time, this sudden return to the text may help to remind the group of an appropriate role for anger in the midst of the church’s failure to be prophetic and compassionate in the context of HIV and AIDS.

What is useful about this text is that it opens up space to talk about at least two important aspects of living with HIV. First, the experience of those who know their status is that Jesus and God stand with them, even if the theology of those around them says otherwise. Second, their experience is similar to the man with the withered hand in this gospel story; people in the synagogue talk about him! Even Jesus does this! People who are HIV-positive have to live with everyone talking about them! Fortunately, Jesus also talks to the disabled man, just as he also speaks directly to those who are living positively.

Jesus calls the disabled man into the centre of the synagogue, away from the back rows, and into the very central space where the Torah/Word of God is located. Contextual Bible Study does something similar with those living with HIV and AIDS; it gives them a central place in interpreting the Bible!

Bible Study 8

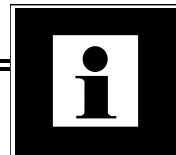
Theme/s: HIV/AIDS

Key text: Job 3

Introduction

This Bible study was developed to address the context of HIV/AIDS, and in particular the kind of theology that is prominent in many churches. The predominant view in most Christian communities is that HIV/AIDS is a punishment from God. That HIV is transmitted mainly by sexual intercourse (in our context) only confirms this opinion.

Important Information for the Facilitator



This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Put up on a piece of newsprint the following text so that everyone can see it. This is a text that is often read at funerals.

Job 1:21: "the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"

Then put up Questions 1 and 2 on some newsprint so that everyone can see it. Ask everyone to discuss the questions:

1. What does this text say to people about people who have died of AIDS-related illnesses?
2. What does it say to people living with HIV and AIDS?

Step 3.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully. Read the text again to ensure participants have a good grasp of it; it is poetry and so needs a re-reading to grasp its depths.

Step 4.

Ask everyone present to consider what has just been read by answering Questions 3 and 4 that you put up on newsprint:

3. *What is Job trying to say in this text?*
4. *What images or metaphors does Job use in his lament?*

These questions should be discussed by the participants as a whole group. Write down the key points offered by participants on a piece of newsprint, so that everyone can see them.

Step 5.

Now apply the key text to the context of people living with HIV and Aids. Put up Questions 5 and 6 on newsprint so that everyone can see them. Let participants discuss them while being aware of the need to facilitate discussion in an encouraging manner:

5. *What does this text say to people living with HIV and AIDS?*
6. *Which of Job's images or metaphors are particularly relevant?*

Note down the key points of the discussion on newsprint so that participants can see them.

**What does
this mean ?**

LAMENT

An expression of
sorrow or grief or
sadness.

Important Information for the Facilitator



This is likely to be an emotional experience for most HIV positive participants. You need to handle the groups in a sensitive and encouraging manner. Let participants share their individual stories with their small group, but no-one should be pressurised to do so.

Step 6.

The discussion now becomes personal. Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. For a study with this theme, it is wise to divide the participants into groups of older women, older men, younger women and younger men, so that people may speak comfortably with each other. Put up Questions 7, 8 and 9 on newsprint so that all the small groups can see them.

7. *What would be your own version of Job 3? Share it with your group. You may want to write it down to share with others.*
8. *What is God's view of how Job has spoken in chapter 3? Read Job 42:7.*
9. *How can you share your version of Job 3 with your local church or community? Think about creative and practical ways of doing this.*

Step 7.

Get all participants together and let them share some of their responses to Question 8 in particular, as they feel comfortable to do so. Where relevant, note these down on a piece of newsprint so that everyone can benefit.

Step 8.

Bring the Bible study to a close, perhaps by asking someone to lead in a reaffirming prayer.

Bible Study 8
Summary of the Reading Process in a Typical Bible Study

We took this Bible study to a local Pietermaritzburg Siyaphila group (an HIV/AIDS support group) on the 11th March 2004. Bongi Zengele, who runs our Solidarity with People Living with HIV and Aids Programme, invited me to co-facilitate a Bible study with this Siyaphila group. Before we read the text, we introduced the Bible study to Ntombenhle Ngcobo, Thembi Ndawo, Nonhlanhla Zuma, Mduduzi Mshengu, Hlengiwe Zulu, Nelly Nene, S’fiso Zuma, Fikile Ngcobo, Jabu Molefe, Xolani Khumalo, S’bongile Shezi and Phindile Ndlovu (The group agreed that they would like to be acknowledged for their contributions, but decided that we should not identify who said what.)

We asked the group if they knew of the book of Job, and many said they did. We then asked if they had heard Job read in church and funerals, and most said that they knew Job 1:21: “the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” We followed this up by briefly sketching the literary context of this text, before asking Zengele to read Job chapter 3. Fortunately, as we had been a little late to arrive, the group had already had the opportunity to read the text for themselves.

After we had read Job 3, we asked the group to say what they thought about this text. The first response came from a young man who asked me what could have happened to Job to make him curse the day of his birth. We were impressed that he had grasped the thrust of the poetry so easily and were tempted not to answer him directly, but merely to acknowledge his response and then wait for others to share their thoughts. But we quickly saw that the others were waiting for our response. This had been a genuine, not a rhetorical, question. We responded by going over chapters one and two in more detail, cataloguing the calamities that had come upon Job’s homestead. He nodded at this, but did not say anything more at this point.

The next person to respond was a young woman who drew our attention to verse 18, commenting that she and those who had been diagnosed as HIV-positive felt just like prisoners. This was followed by another member of the group asking, with great yearning, why things like this happened/happen. Our response was: “This is precisely Job’s question!” At this point the young man who had set the discussion in motion re-entered, saying that the heading to this section in the Zulu Bible, “Job curses the day of his birth,” was most apt. This is exactly how he felt on the day he was diagnosed. He literally cursed the day he had been born.

Another member, someone who had not yet spoken, joined the discussion by saying that she thought this text showed that the more faith you had the more you would be tested. Our first impulse was to question this, and we did, by wondering aloud whether Job himself would have agreed with her. However, even as we said this it struck us that she was perhaps making a positive comment about herself, namely, that because of her great faith she was now being greatly tested.

The discussion then turned again to Job's cursing his birth, but this time it was followed up by a number of members agreeing that they too had seriously considered taking their own lives. Again they asked us quite directly what advice we had for them concerning this. Given their situation, what about the option of them taking their lives? As one person said, "We are like Job; we are good people who were not looking for this thing, and yet now we are infected." So close was their identification with Job and his deep depression. At this moment we realised the dangers of the Bible study and began to wonder if this was not just another misguided attempt to offer resources by a non-infected people. Bongi was reassuring, however, so we moved on, saying that we did not think that Job was contemplating taking his own life. For him, we suggested, it was God who was responsible for his life, and until God took it, he was not going to keep silent and accept the dominant theology of his day. He was going to take his considerable anger directly to God and call God to account.

We then quickly voiced our fear by asking the group directly whether this text was of any help to them or was it just a reminder of their desperation. The response was unanimous, but varied. They found the text immensely empowering. So we asked them in what ways they found it empowering. One of the group linked her experience directly to our comments, saying that she found the text comforting, because like Job, the day she received her HIV results she wondered why God had not taken her life earlier, when as a child she had almost drowned. Others said chapter 3 affirmed the enormous anger they had and that it was theologically permissible to express this anger. Bongi Zengele confirmed this, reminding the group of all they had been through together, specifically of how important it had been for them to learn that it was 'okay' to own all their feelings, even if this required cursing God in prayer. The group agreed, with someone adding that this kind of emotional freedom also contributed to them dealing with other matters unrelated to HIV and Aids. By expressing their anger, Zengele continued, they had begun to find healing, for both their psyches and their bodies.

The terrible thing, they agreed, was that the church silenced their anger. And so we were challenged directly, with one of the members asking whether we would be willing to lead this kind of Bible study with a wider grouping, including their families and churches. Others assented, making it clear that they felt that this kind of Bible study on this kind of text would make a huge difference to prevailing views. They acknowledged that many people they knew simply had no opportunity to share about these things.

A young man who had said very little in the discussion thus far interrupted this flow by asking us, "What about those who do deserve it?" By now we were used to this kind of direct request. Again, we drew them back to the text by saying that we thought that Job was having to thoroughly rethink the very notion that people 'deserved' suffering. We went on, and here we were drawing on Elsa Tamez's "A letter to Job", saying that Job's suffering had taken him out of his comfortable life-style and had shown him the suffering of others.

A young woman then brought the discussion back to where we had started, narrating how she had begun the process of killing herself, using alcohol, until she had realised that she still had responsibilities to her dependants. She understood this realisation as God calling her back to life, even though she had cursed God. This echoed what had been said earlier, that they were amazed to discover from Job that even though they cursed God, God still welcomed them. We had mentioned in our introductory comments that despite Job's unrelenting outbursts against his friends, the theology they represented and God, God had affirmed that Job "had spoken of me what is right" (Job 42:7). We reread this final God speech and wondered aloud whether, by engaging so fully with God, Job had come to see God more fully.

These comments of ours, and the explicit comparison of Job and his friends in these verses, prompted a number of the group to talk about their experiences of being judged by their families and friends and churches. One young woman said people in her church had judged her, unjustly, once they knew she was HIV-positive. This text, she said, was a "homecoming." A young man then shared how he had been talked about in his community when he had begun to lose weight. This had been very hard, he said, to be the object of other people's judgmental attitudes. However, he had learned to cope with this, he said, through the resources of the Siyaphila group, including this Bible study. What he had learned from the group and this Bible study was that even people close to God face difficulties. Finally, another young man, the same one who had asked about those who might "deserve it," commented on how he and other activists were judged when they did awareness work in their communities. People asked them, assuming they were HIV-positive, "Now where is your God?" He now knew how to respond, he shared with us, by saying, "Job shows that God stays with him."

At this point there was a pause in the discussion. The group seemed satisfied with what had been said. Bongzi Zengele allowed the quiet to persist, nodding encouragingly at each member, affirming their openness and their contributions. She then brought this part of our Bible study to an end by saying that though their bodies were HIV-positive, they were more than their bodies. They were spiritual beings as well. Siyaphila, she went on to say, deliberately worked for an integration of the spiritual and the bodily, believing that both needed attention and that both could take the other with along with it. Today, she said, we have uplifted our souls and so our bodies.

We then suggested that we conclude our Bible study, as is our practice in the Ujamaa Centre, by being quite practical. Given that they had stated that their experiences were not allowed any space in the church, what about them writing their own versions of Job 3? We would then collate them and make them available to churches who would use them in their liturgies. They liked this idea and set to work. We concluded our time together with each person reading or talking to their version of Job 3.

With their permission, we include their own individual laments here:

1. God you have allowed me to feel this painful experience. I don't know whether this is because I am a bad person in your eyes, or because of my sinfulness. You have taken away my husband, I am left alone with four young children to look after and I am unemployed. My prayer is: please help me to raise these children under your guidance, let them do good in your eyes like Job. I am begging you to

keep me alive for a longer time so that I can be there for my children. Give me strength to come closer to you, more than before God. I curse the family (my in-laws) I stay with, they are horrible to me!

2. My cry to God.

My God why did you give me such a heavy burden? I thought I was doing well, obeying your laws. I beg you to forgive me if I have sinned against you. Curse this incurable disease in my body. If this is the result of my sins, please guide me in your ways; show me the way I should go. I thank you loving father and Good Shepherd. Amen.

3. I curse God for allowing me to be HIV-positive. I have obeyed God all my life; I am crying deeply now as I see that God is so far away from me. I will hold onto the cross as things are so difficult for me.

4. My God I cry before you, I am like your servant Job. I am sick of an incurable disease -- AIDS. I know I will die and be buried underground because of AIDS. I am not blaming anybody. I put all in the hands of God if this is his will ...let it be. As Ecclesiastes says, "There is time for everything". God hear my prayer. Amen.

5. My cry is, "Why have you forsaken me my God!" Is it because I did not know you are there? I know now that you are with me. Getting infected with HIV brought me closer to you and I have taken a commitment to praise you as the Lord and my Saviour.

6. I cry like Job; I am very angry at the person who infected me with this virus. I thought I would never speak to him again, but listening to the story of Job is challenging me to change my perception. My own parents have rejected me and I had thought I would never speak to them either. But now I am challenged to go back home. I want to work for the community, helping those who are like me, infected with HIV. Give me strong faith

7. My God my God why did you allow me to have AIDS!!! Why did you give me this one child, when you know that my life-span is short? I will soon die and leave him with no parent! I wish I were not even born into this world! I am an orphan and unemployed. It would be better if I did not even exist in this world!

8. Dear God, pour your Holy Spirit into us who are living with HIV and AIDS; we are hoping in your strength to conquer AIDS!

9. God I do accept that I am a sinner, that is why I am HIV positive. I did not do your will; please give me life for longer now so that I can raise my only child you gave me. Help me to show others who are living with HIV that it is possible to live longer, doing your will. Help me to face challenges that come with my HIV status.

10. God the Father, you can see the trials and tribulations we are faced with in our daily lives. We are sick and tired; we ask you to diminish HIV/AIDS, let it not spread inside our bodies, so that your people are able to live longer, prosperous lives. Our Father God, you see our anger, pain and suffering; we have no power. We ask you Lord to suppress HIV so that it will not spread, and that more people

will live healthy lives.

11. Oh Lord, why me; why have you deserted me; what have I done to deserve such punishment?

12. My God, why is so difficult for me to accept that I am HIV positive? I do try, but it is so hard to accept; this is so difficult to deal with it my mind. I am the only one left in my family; they have all gone to you. Why is it Lord that this remains so difficult in my mind? I curse the day I first heard that I was HIV positive. If I knew how to care for myself I would have gained weight by now. I repeat again, God why don't you give me more freedom to live positively in my HIV status?

Their versions of Job 3 ranged from commitments to return to their families, having fled their rejection but having found resources which now enabled a return, to sustained interrogations of God, asking repeatedly "Why?" to prayers asking for help to accept the virus, to requests for enough life to support her sons, to probing questions about God's reputation as a healer and as a God who intervenes.

By the end of this Bible study we were exhausted, and Bongi Zenele made us all take deep breaths. There was an amazing sense of relief in the group to have spoken what had been spoken, and yet it had also been traumatic to relive those first moments of being informed that you are HIV-positive. Job chapter 3 had taken us back to this moment, but also beyond it. This 'positive' reading of Job 3 now occupies that vast space between diagnosis and death, providing resources to live 'positively.'

Bible Study 9

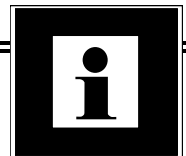
Theme/s: HIV/AIDS

Key text: Job 3:1-10, 40:15-24, and 41:1-34

Introduction

This Bible study has no biblical text. In fact, it is a Bible study that is in search of a biblical text! Using the art of the late local KwaZulu-Natal artist Trevor Makhoba (with the permission of his wife, Mrs G. Makhoba), this Bible study attempts to probe what biblical texts we use when we speak theologically about HIV and Aids. See the linocut on page 68.

Important Information for the Facilitator



This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, and a pen or pencil. Put up Trevor Makhoba's linocut so that everyone can see it, or preferably give each group their own photocopy of the linocut. Put up Questions 1 and 2 on newsprint for all the small groups to see:

1. *What is your interpretation of Makhoba's linocut? What does the linocut say to you?*
2. *Which biblical texts do you think Makhoba is drawing on in this linocut?*

Encourage the groups to discuss these questions and summarise their discussions on the paper provided.

Step 3.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary papers.

Step 4.

The participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 3 and 4 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before:

3. *What is Makhoba's theology of HIV and AIDS?*
4. *Do you think Makhoba may be drawing on Job 3, Job 40:15-24, and Job 41:1-34?*

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary papers.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 5, 6 and 7 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before:

5. *What is your theology of HIV and AIDS?*
6. *What biblical texts do you draw on to speak theologically about HIV and AIDS?*
7. *How can we make an impact on the church's theology about HIV and AIDS?*

Step 7.

Again the small groups should report back to everyone. Write the answers on newsprint to Questions 5 and 6 so that everyone is able to see these.

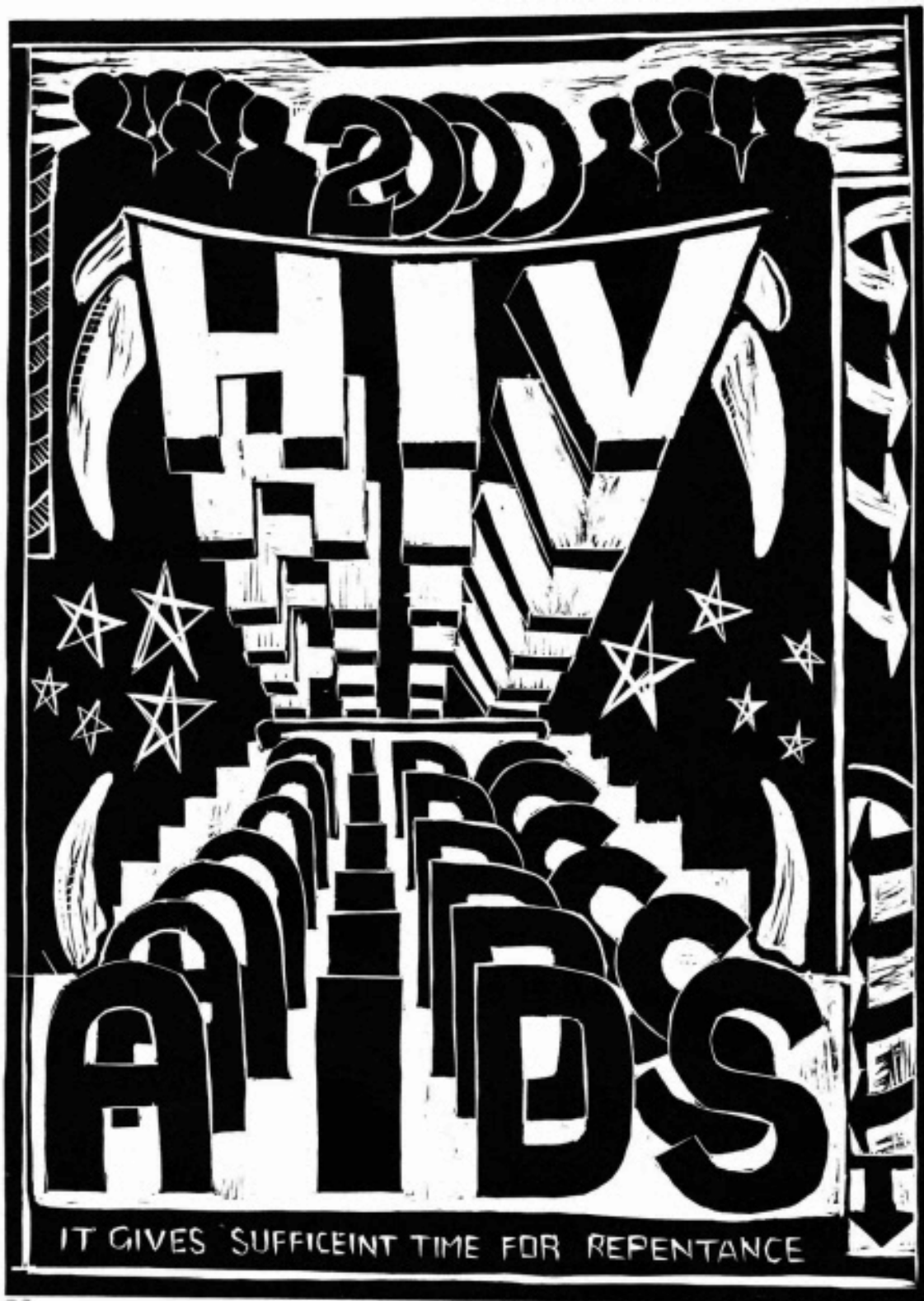
A Good Idea



Encourage the participants to turn the newsprint write-up to Questions 6 and 7 into a Plan of Action to use within their church and community.

Step 8.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer.



HP

God WANTS HIS PEOPLE

Dakho 2000

Bible Study 9
Reflection on Makhoba's linocut

The predominant view in most Christian communities is that HIV/AIDS is a punishment from God. That HIV is transmitted mainly by sexual intercourse (in our South African context) only confirms this opinion in the minds of many, including (perhaps) Makhoba. That HIV/AIDS is a punishment from or the discipline of God is corroborated, some argue, by aspects of African Religion.

Whatever the mix of African and Christian origins, there is no doubt that this is the dominant theology that people living with HIV/Aids encounter in our South African society, both in and outside the church. They bear in their bodies, they are led to believe, God's punishment for their 'sins', particularly their sexual 'sins'. Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane admits to the prevalence of this theology in the Christian church when he said, "Christianity has too often espoused a destructive theology that links sex and sin and guilt and punishment" (*The Witness* July 30, 2004: 3).

What we know of Makhoba's Christian and cultural commitments would predispose him to some form of theology of retribution, and this particular work of Makhoba's seems to support this view. The mouth of some great beast is waiting (or perhaps advancing) to devour those who do not repent with its twin gaping jaws: HIV (the upper jaw) and AIDS (the lower jaw). Tombstone and coffin-like teeth are posed to crush. Yet Makhoba's theology provides some hope: there is time, he proclaims, for repentance. The jaws have not yet closed, they remain open. "IT GIVES SUFFICIENT TIME". The "IT" he refers to is unclear, but probably refers to this beast, whose millennial nostrils provide an overt date. The darkness, he seems to be saying, of the new millennium and its heraldic disease are almost upon us, but there is still time to repent.

Here Makhoba aligns himself with a long line of biblical prophets who read 'the signs of the times' and speak accordingly to the people of God. "GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE" Makhoba proclaims, along with Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, John the Baptist and the many others Makhoba has encountered in his well-used Bible. The implication of this prophetic call is that God's people have gone astray, that they must repent and return to God, and that if they do not God will punish them.

While his predominant role is that of prophet, there are indications that at times he stands with the bewildered people, lamenting, waiting in hope to receive the prophetic oracle. Such, I think, is the case with respect to the linocut.

However, before I come to this, it must be emphasised that Makhoba locates himself, primarily, as social commentator and religious prophet. The linocut fits the prophetic pattern well. The horror of the punishment that awaits those who refuse God's call is vividly portrayed. But the prophet's voice/text is equally clear: God wants his people, and there is therefore sufficient time to repent. This work of Makhoba's also fits the disciplinary parameters of the deuteronomistic theology of retribution (which pervades the books of Deuteronomy, Judges, Samuel and Kings): the people of God have forsaken their God, so God has therefore given them over to the consequences of their sinfulness, but when they cry out to God and/or the ancestors (as Makhoba's pictures do), God hears, raises up a prophetic leader, and restores the people.

But is this all we can read in Makhoba's work? I think not. Makhoba's theology is more complex, and this is clearest in the work under discussion. HIV/Aids demands a more complex theology.

Fortunately, there are biblical theological trajectories that interrupt the dominant theology of retribution, and there are signs of these in this work of Makhoba's. The clearest clue to the presence of other theological voices is the identity of Makhoba's beast. It seems that this beast most closely resembles the hippopotamus, though it may also exhibit some of the features of the crocodile.

These beasts, the crocodile and the hippopotamus, share significant features. They are both beasts that lurk beneath the surface of life, seemingly still and disinterested in human activity, and yet they can be roused with ferocious force and devastating effects. While the real beasts reside in rural communities, they are present in other forms in urban township life, or so Makhoba seems to be saying.

Makhoba's beast is, I think, also found in the Bible, in the book of Job. For it is in this book that we encounter Behemoth, sometimes translated as 'hippopotamus', as it is in the both the old and new Zulu translations (*imvubu*) (Job 40:15-24) and Leviathan, sometimes translated as 'crocodile', as it is in the new Zulu translation (*ingwenya*) (Job 41:1-34). In these two concluding chapters of the book of Job we come to two strange and wonderful beasts, beasts over which human beings clearly have no control (which is God's point in these chapters), but beasts over which even God does not have complete control (which is perhaps the poet's point in these chapters) (Perdue 1991). Might part of Makhoba's theology be found here, with Behemoth (the hippopotamus) and Leviathan (the crocodile) in the book of Job? "Look at Behemoth", says God, "It is the first of the great acts of God – only its Maker can approach it with the sword" (Job 40:15 and 19, NRSV). As for Leviathan, says God,

were not even the gods overwhelmed at the sight of it?

No one is so fierce as to dare to stir it up.

Who can stand before it?

Who can confront it and be safe?

– under the whole heaven, who? (Job 41:9b-11)

The book of Job is an excellent example of an intense debate about the theology of retribution. In the prose prologue we enter a world in which the theology of retribution is taken seriously. Job, we are told, was not only himself "blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil" (1:1), but he would also "send and sanctify" his sons and daughters after they had feasted, rising "early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, 'It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts' (1:5). Job's health and wealth, and the health and wealth of his sons and daughters, it is implied, is directly related to Job's righteous life. The theology of retribution holds.

The story then becomes complicated, particularly for the reader, who is privy to the heavenly debate between God and his colleague, the Satan (1:6-12). Job, however, is unaware of the heavenly wager (though its victim), and so is forced to live in a world which, from his perspective, no longer conforms to the principle of retribution. Job has lived righteously – all agree – but is punished rather than rewarded. At first Job doggedly accepts his fate, refusing to question God’s control. So much so that he can say, having experienced the loss of his livestock and servants, the destruction of his property and the death of all of his children, and his own deteriorating health – after all this, he can say, “the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (1:21). Even the theologically astute call of his wife to put an end to his suffering by questioning God’s so-called, alleged, order – “Do you still persist in your integrity [i.e. your theology]? Curse God, and die” (2:9) – is met with an affirmation of God’s control from her husband: “Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?” (2:10)

Here is the beginnings of another theology; here is a cry of rage and pain; here is an incipient and inchoate theology. Here is an attempt to undo what God did in Genesis 1! God says, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3); Job counters with, “Let the day be darkness!” (for further discussion see Clines 1989: 67-105; and Gutierrez 1991:7-10). Here Job struggles with how to speak of God – how to do theology – in the context of immense suffering and loss.

And so does Makhoba; he too struggles, I would suggest, with how to speak of God in the context of HIV and Aids. His beast, like Behemoth and Leviathan, poses the profound theological question of whether God is fully in control.

I have cited Job chapter 3 because it seems to me that some of its images are to be found in this work of Makhoba’s. While his beast, I think, derives from or resonates with Behemoth and Leviathan in Job chapters 40-41, the darkened human forms and the night’s sky behind the beast’s gaping mouth and crushing teeth, I suggest, derive from or resonate with Job chapter 3. Like Job, I hear Makhoba in this work lamenting the day of his birth and calling for the day to become night. As prophet, Makhoba stands outside the picture, proclaiming the words of the frame to others. As fellow-sufferer, Makhoba stands inside the picture, with the darkened figures, with the devouring beast in the darkness of the night.

Job, it would appear, accepts “the bad” from God, remaining silent, refusing to “sin with his lips” (2:10) by questioning God or this theology. As he silently sits his friends come among him, to “console and comfort him” (2:11). And we know what they will say; they will each explain to him how he must have sinned, in some sense, for how else can he (or, more importantly, they) explain his suffering. By looking at the destroyed and diseased Job they can tell that God must be punishing him in some way for something he has done – this is how their theology works.

But before they can say anything, and to their credit they do not immediately ‘counsel’ Job, Job speaks. At last he takes his wife’s advice! Perhaps the death and destruction around him and within him had numbed him; one hopes so. Now, however, the radical challenge of his wife has registered in his numbed mind; the marvellous ambiguity of the Masoretic text’s “Bless/curse God, and die” have their theological effect. If being righteous and blessing God brings about such havoc, then what damage can cursing God do? Having earlier refused to “sin with his lips” he

now lets rip! Perhaps reluctant to follow his wife's theological proposition the whole way, Job curses God indirectly rather than directly, cursing "the day of his birth" (3:1). Prose is no longer adequate for what Job is about to say, and so the text shifts into poetry. This shift is more than a shift from prose to poetry however, it is also a shift in theology!

In this linocut Makhoba grapples theologically with the presence of HIV and Aids in his community. The beast is before us, but precisely what does God want from or for his people? "GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE" to do or be what? The incompleteness and ambiguity of these words portrays Makhoba's theological torment, and yet he does find hope in the Bible, both in the book of Job, as we have seen, though the message is a mixed one, and, I think in two other texts. Rather boldly, Makhoba amends and adapts, I think, the biblical text of 1 Peter 4:1-3 and 2 Corinthians 12:9 respectively.

For we read in 1 Peter 4:1-3, though I am not sure what translation Makhoba alludes to, the following:

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time already past is sufficient *for you* to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries (NASB).

If Makhoba is alluding to this text in his words within the linocut, "IT GIVES SUFFICIENT TIME FOR REPENTANCE", then he alters their import, granting still more time than the author of 1 Peter for repentance to those viewing. Here Makhoba extends God's grace into the future, appropriating the other text referred to above: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9, NASB). Makhoba boldly declares God's grace beyond the limits set by the Bible.

But what if "IT" is not God but HIV and AIDS? Will "IT" pay heed to Makhoba's declaration? Makhoba, like Job, yearns for God to be in control, but what if he is not (fully)? So the tension remains, but so does Makhoba's hope.

In this work more than any other of his that I have seen, Makhoba inhabits the creative, honest and tensive space between subject and object. His care for his culture, faith and community and his prophetic calling make him the subject, identifying the signs of the times, warning his people of coming calamity, and offering words of hope. His human integrity and his awareness of his own 'sinfulness' place him as the object, lamenting as he wonders and waits for a word of comfort and hope, and perhaps, a more relevant theology. Is the HIV/AIDS beast God's punisher, like the accuser (the Satan) in the book of Job (2:1-7), or is the HIV/AIDS beast more like Behemoth and Leviathan, creatures that even God himself struggles to control? The answers are not easy, as Job found, but he and Makhoba are commended by God (Job 42:7) for asking the hard questions in face of conventional theology and even of God.

Bible Study 10

Theme/s: Land and dispossession

Key text: 1 Kings 21: 1 – 16

Introduction

This Bible study deals with land issues, and may be seen as a 'companion' to studies 11, 12 and 13 in this manual. They are part of a series of Bible studies in the process of being developed by the Ujamaa Centre with a working group of the Church Land Programme, an NGO dealing with land owned by churches in the context of land redistribution in South Africa.

Important Information for the Facilitator



This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles.

Encourage participants to listen carefully.



A Good Idea

You may like to ask a group of young people to prepare a drama that re-enacts the story in this text before you read the key text. The drama would serve to break the ice and to generate local interpretations of this story.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

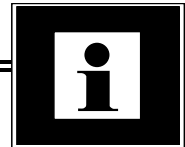
1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses of each person being recorded on newsprint. This question requires about 20 minutes.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 on newsprint so that each group can see them. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising discussions to each question on the paper provided.

2. *Who are the characters and what do we know about them?*
3. *Why does Ahab want Naboth's vineyard?*
4. *Why does Naboth want to keep his vineyard?*
5. *What strategies are used to take Naboth's vineyard from him?*
6. *What role do race and class and ethnicity play in this story?*



Important Information for the Facilitator

The final question in this series, Question 6, may require some input from the facilitator should the groups request it. So the facilitator needs to be prepared to say something about the structures of early Israelite society. The groups would need at least 30 minutes to do these questions.

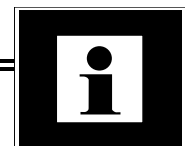
Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary papers. This should take about 20 minutes.



A Good Idea

To save time, the groups should take turns in reporting on particular questions.



Important Information for the Facilitator

While the previous set of questions (Questions 2 to 6) draw attention to the text, the current questions (Questions 7 to 10) draw on the experiences and realities of the community. The facilitator will need to be creative and flexible here because different questions may need to be asked in different contexts.

At this stage in the Bible Study a choice needs to be made as to which step is appropriate to do with the group. If the participants are part of a community that has lost their land, proceed to Step 6. If the participants are on land they consider to be theirs, but their tenure is being threatened, skip Step 6 and proceed directly to Step 7.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 7, 8, 9 and 10 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before:

- 7. Why and how have people in your community lost their land?*
- 8. Why is this land your land?*
- 9. What strategies are there to regain your land?*
- 10. What will be your plan of action?*

Step 7.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 7, 8, 9 and 10 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see it clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before:

- 7. Why is this land your land?*
- 8. What strategies are being used to take away your land?*
- 9. What resources are there for you to retain your land?*
- 10. What will be your plan of action?*

Step 8.

At the end of the discussion time (whether Step 6 or Step 7 has been followed), each small group should report back to everyone using their summary papers. Particular emphasis during the reportback should be placed on each small group presenting their plan of action to the larger group. For these questions to be done properly and for there to be adequate time for reportback and the sharing of action plans, at least 60 minutes should be allocated.

Step 9.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer for justice on the land, and encouraging the participants to implement their action plans.

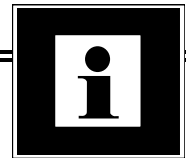
Bible Study 11

Theme/s: Women and land
Key text: Numbers 27: 1 – 11

Introduction

This Bible study deals with land issues, and may be seen as a 'companion' to studies 10, 12 and 13 in this manual. They are part of a series of Bible studies in the process of being developed by the Ujamaa Centre with a working group of the Church Land Programme, an NGO dealing with land owned by churches in the context of land redistribution in South Africa.

Important Information for the Facilitator



This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses of each person being recorded on newsprint. This question requires about 20 minutes.



A Good Idea

You may like to ask a group, preferably a group of women, to prepare a drama that re-enacts the story in this text before you read the key text. The drama would serve to break the ice and introduce the story.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3, 4, and 5 on newsprint so that each group can see them. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising discussions to each question on the paper provided.

2. *Who are the characters and what do we know about them?*
3. *What reasons do the daughters of Zelophehad give to inherit land?*
4. *What structures prevented women from owning land?*
5. *What role does Moses as leader and the law play in this story?*

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary papers. This should take about 20 minutes.



A Good Idea

To save time, the groups should take turns in reporting on particular questions.

Step 6.

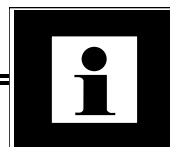
After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss together the questions and summarise their discussions as before:

6. *What does this story say about women's agency?*
7. *Do women in your community own land?*
8. *What reasons do women in your community give to own/inherit land?*
9. *What do traditional authorities in your area say about women owning land?*
10. *What does the church say about women owning land?*
11. *What does the constitution/law say about women owning land?*
12. *What will be your plan of action?*

What does this mean ?

AGENCY

The action, medium or means by which something gets done OR the ability and authority to take action and get things done.



Important Information for the Facilitator

While the previous set of questions (Questions 2 to 5) draw attention to the text, the current questions (Questions 6 to 12) draw on the personal experiences of women and land ownership. The facilitator will need to be creative and flexible here because different questions may need to be asked in different contexts.

Step 7.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary newsprints. Particular emphasis during the reportback should be placed on each small group presenting their plan of action to the larger group. For these questions to be done properly and for there to be adequate time for reportback and the sharing of action plans, at least 60 minutes should be allocated.

Step 8.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer for the strengthening of women, and encouraging the participants to implement their action plans.

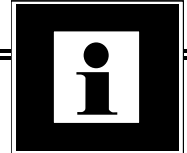
Bible Study 12

Theme/s: Land and food security

Key text: Matthew 6: 9 – 13

Introduction

This Bible study deals with land issues, and may be seen as a 'companion' to studies 10, 11 and 13 in this manual. They are part of a series of Bible studies in the process of being developed by the Ujamaa Centre with a working group of the Church Land Programme, an NGO dealing with land owned by churches in the context of land redistribution in South Africa.



Important Information for the Facilitator

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Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses of each person being recorded on newsprint.

***What does
this mean ?***

FOOD SECURITY

The reliable and daily availability of food necessary to appease hunger. A certainty that there will be enough food.



A Good Idea

Often we are so familiar with 'The Lord's Prayer', that we fail to see and understand what it is really saying. To help the participants think deeply about the text and how it applies to their lives, get everyone to sit quietly for a short while, and imagine that they have never heard this prayer before. They should pretend it is completely new to them, and try to see it with 'new eyes'.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 on newsprint so that each group can see them clearly. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising their responses to each question on the paper provided.

2. According to Matthew's version of the prayer, where will God's kingdom come?

3. How do verses 11 and 12 describe the kingdom of God?

4. Why is Jesus so concerned about "bread for today" (verse 11)? Do you remember any other passages in the Bible where Jesus is concerned about bread and food?

5. Why is Jesus so concerned about "debt" (verse 12)? Do you remember any other passages in the Bible where Jesus is concerned about debt and the consequences of debt?

Step 5.

The small groups should then each report back to everyone on their answers. To save time, the groups should take turns in reporting on different questions.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss and answer the questions. Their answers should be recorded on the paper provided.

5. Who in your context needs "bread for today"? Why?

6. Who in your context needs release from "debt"? Why?

7. What will the kingdom of God on earth mean for people who need food and freedom from debt? What will change for them?

8. What "temptations" and what "evil" (verse 13) will prevent us from establishing God's kingdom on earth?

9. What will you do to ensure that God's kingdom will come on earth? Write a list or plan of action of what you will do.

Step 7.

Again, at the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to the big group. Each small group should present their list or plan of action to the larger group.

Step 8.

Bring the Bible study to a close. Now that everyone has a new understanding of food security, you may wish to close by leading all in The Lord's Prayer, and asking God to help all present as they bring His kingdom on earth.

Bible Study 12
Hermeneutical and Pedagogical Principles

This is a very familiar text, and like other familiar texts, has become domesticated. We no longer pay attention to its details. We think we already know what it means. This Bible study is therefore designed to try to make the text a bit unfamiliar, allowing us to actually listen to it again!

A careful reading of this text makes us realise how concerned Jesus was for the daily needs of the poor and marginalised that were his first followers. Matthew's version of the prayer captures these concerns of Jesus and the Lord's Prayer before it became the prayer of a more 'middle class' church (see Luke's version).

The prayer may have to do with land issues, particularly when one remembers how vulnerable people become when they lose their land. Samuel's critique of the monarchy in 1 Samuel 8 provides a clear picture of what happens to people when the king takes control of their property. The end result is slavery! Many of those who followed Jesus would have lost their land through the temple-state system (described by Samuel and critiqued by Jesus in Mark 11 and 12 – see the example Bible study in this Manual, pages 18-24). Jesus understands that because they have lost their land, they need daily bread. Furthermore, having lost their land through indebtedness, the only way they can be restored to their land is through the release of their debts. However, Jesus knows that there are many temptations and much evil that prevents God's kingdom from being realised on earth, as it is in heaven.

We have lost the power of this prayer because we have failed to listen carefully to it; we recite it but we do not 'hear' it!

Bible Study 13

Theme/s: Land and leadership

Key texts: Genesis 41: 46 – 57; 47: 13 – 26

Introduction

This Bible study deals with land issues, and may be seen as a 'companion' to studies 10, 11 and 12 in this manual. They are part of a series of Bible studies in the process of being developed by the Ujamaa Centre with a working group of the Church Land Programme, an NGO dealing with land owned by churches in the context of land redistribution in South Africa.

Important Information for the Facilitator



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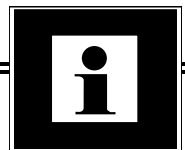
Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Show participants a picture Azariah Mbatha's woodcut to remind them of the Joseph story (see page 40). This picture of the woodcut is found at the end of this study. Discuss as a group what the story of Joseph was about in general.

Important Information for the Facilitator



Explain to participants that 'the Joseph story' does not end with the reuniting of Joseph's family. As Prime Minister of Egypt, Joseph implements plans to deal with the years of plenty and the years of famine.

Step 3.

Read the first key text (Genesis 41:46-57) in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 1 and 2 on newsprint so that each group can see them. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising their responses to each question on the paper provided.

- 1. How did Joseph get the grain which he stored?*
- 2. During the famine, what did Joseph do with the stored grain?*

Step 5.

Get all participants together again for the second key text reading. Read Genesis 47:13-26 in the same way as you did in Step 3.

Step 6.

Let participants return to their small groups. Put up Question 3 on newsprint so that each group can see it clearly. Each small group should then discuss the question, summarising the answer on paper for the reportback.

- 3. What must the people do in order to get grain from Joseph?*

Step 7.

At the end of the discussion time, get all participants back together. Each small group should then report back on to everyone on Questions 1, 2 and 3 using their summary papers.

Step 8.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 4, 5 and 6 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their answers as before.

- 4. Do you think Joseph was a good leader?*
- 5. What alternative forms of redistribution could Joseph have used?*
- 6. What should be the role of government in land allocation/reallocation?*

Step 9.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers for Questions 4, 5 and 6.

A Good Idea

It would be beneficial for all groups to have a chance to report back on all the questions. The facilitator should decide whether there is sufficient time available. To save time, the groups could take turns in reporting on particular questions.



Step 10.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer about leadership, justice and redistribution issues.

Bible Study 13
Hermeneutical and Pedagogical Principles

In most of our memories, the Joseph story has a happy ending, with the family being reunited. But, in fact, the end of the actual biblical story is more ambiguous. Joseph does not always know how to cope with the power he has. The way he torments his brothers before revealing himself to them is one example. Another example is the failure of Joseph to administer the famine in a way that serves rather than enslaves the people.

This Bible study explores Joseph's financial administration of the Egyptian empire and the effects of his leadership on the enslavement of the people.

Bible Study 14

Theme/s: The storm of HIV and AIDS

Key text: Matthew 14: 22 – 33

Introduction

This Bible study is inspired by one of the Siyaphila HIV/AIDS Support Groups, who chose this text in one of their Bible studies.



Important Information for the Facilitator

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Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.



A Good Idea

You may like to ask a group to prepare a drama that re-enacts the story in this text before you read the key text. The drama would serve to break the ice and introduce the story.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses being recorded on a piece of newsprint.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3 and 4 on newsprint so that each group can see them clearly. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising discussions to each question on a piece of paper.

2. *What makes Peter get out of the boat?*
3. *Why is Peter able to walk in the midst of the storm?*
4. *What makes Peter begin to sink into the waves?*

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

A Good Idea

To save time, the groups could take turns in reporting on particular questions.



Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

5. *What prevents church leaders from getting out of the boat with Jesus in the midst of the HIV and AIDS storm?*
6. *Why do we need to get out of the boat to walk with Jesus in the midst of the HIV and AIDS storm?*
7. *What makes us sink into the waves when we try to walk with Jesus in the midst of the HIV and AIDS storm?*
8. *What resources do we need to remain standing with Jesus in the midst of the HIV and AIDS storm?*

Step 7.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

A Good Idea

It would be beneficial for all groups to have a chance to report back on all the questions. The facilitator should decide whether there is sufficient time available. To save time, the groups could take turns in reporting on particular questions.



Step 8.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an encouraging prayer about faith in Jesus in the midst of the HIV and AIDS storm: we will remain standing!

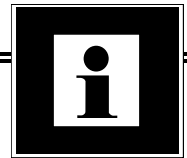
Bible Study 15

Theme/s: HIV/AIDS: Jesus must wake up!

Key text: Mark 4: 35 – 41

Introduction

This Bible study is inspired by one of the Siyaphila HIV/AIDS Support Groups, who chose this text in one of their Bible studies.



Important Information for the Facilitator

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Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.



A Good Idea

You may like to ask a group to prepare a drama that re-enacts the story in this text before you read the key text. The drama could portray their understanding of this text.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. *What is this text about?*

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses being recorded on a piece of newsprint.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2 and 3 on newsprint so that each group can see them clearly. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising discussions to each question on a piece of paper.

2. Why do the disciples wake Jesus?

3. What are they afraid of?

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

4. What are those who living with HIV and AIDS afraid of?

5. Why do they want Jesus to wake up?

6. What would it mean for Jesus to wake up?

7. What can we do to make Jesus wake up?

Step 7.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

A Good Idea

It would be beneficial for all groups to have a chance to report back on all the questions. The facilitator should decide whether there is sufficient time available. To save time, the groups could take turns in reporting on particular questions.



Step 8.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer, asking God to come to our rescue.

Bible Study 16

Theme/s: Abuse of power; violence against women

Key text: 2 Samuel 11: 1 – 27

Background

This Bible study is based on one developed by Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela.



Important Information for the Facilitator

This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.



A Good Idea

You may like to ask a group to prepare a drama that re-enacts the story in this text before you read the key text. The drama could portray their understanding of this text.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses being recorded on a piece of newsprint.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3 and 4 on newsprint so that each group can see them clearly. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising discussions to each question on a piece of paper.

- 2. Who are the main characters and what does this text tell us about them?*
- 3. What is the role of each of the characters in making Bathsheba David's wife?*
- 4. What are the power relations between each of these characters?*

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up the small group task on newsprint that appears below:

- 5. Retell the story from Bathsheba's perspective. Be as creative as you can – use a drama, a diary, a poem, or something else creative!*

Step 7.

Once the task has been done, each small group should present their creative retelling of Bathsheba's story to everyone.

Step 8.

After the groups have retold Bathsheba's story, they should remain in their small groups. Put up Questions 6, 7, 8 and 9 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

- 6. Are there other women in our churches and communities who have gone through this kind of experience? Briefly share their stories.*
- 7. How does the church usually deal with power issues, particularly as they affect women?*
- 8. Are there resources for women like these in your community?*
- 9. What are we going to do in response to this Bible study?*

Step 9.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

A Good Idea



It would be beneficial for all groups to have a chance to report back on all the questions. The facilitator should decide whether there is sufficient time available. To save time, the groups could take turns in reporting on particular questions.

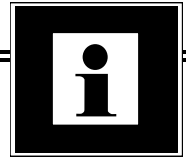
Step 10.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer of support for women.

Bible Study 17

Theme/s: The manifesto of Jesus

Key text: Luke 4: 14 – 21



Important Information for the Facilitator

This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

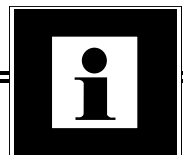
Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Now read the key text again in another translation.



Important Information for the Facilitator

The facilitator should ensure that there are at least two different translations available for use during the Bible study.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What do you think this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses being recorded on a piece of newsprint.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3, and 4 on newsprint so that each group can see them clearly. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising discussions to each question on a piece of paper.

2. *Jesus says that “the Spirit of the Lord” has anointed him to do five things. What are these five things?*
3. *Who are the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the bruised/broken/oppressed in the time of Jesus?*
4. *Can you find an example of each of these from the gospels?*

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summarised answers.

Step 6.

With everyone still together, put up Questions 5 and 6 on some newsprint. Discuss as a group while recording responses on a piece of newsprint so that everyone can see.

5. *What did it mean to proclaim “the year of the Lord’s favour/the acceptable year of the Lord”? [Read Leviticus 25]*
6. *In summary, What is Jesus saying God has anointed him to do?*



A Good Idea

Question 5 entails reading a long chapter. The facilitator should do the reading and encourage the participants to think about Question 5 as the reading is happening. This should save some time.

Step 7.

After the discussion, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 7, 8 and 9 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

7. *Who are the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the bruised/broken/oppressed in our context?*
8. *What does this text call us to do with each of these groups?*
9. *What plan will be made to do these things in our context?*

Step 8.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

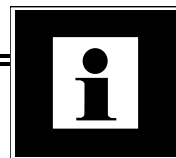
Step 9.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer and encouraging them in their action plans.

Bible Study 18

Theme/s: Repentance and restitution

Key text: Luke 19: 1 – 10



Important Information for the Facilitator

This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses being recorded on a piece of newsprint.

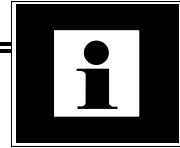
Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Question 2 on newsprint so that each group can see it clearly. Each small group should then discuss the question, summarising discussions to each question on a piece of paper.

2. What work does Zacchaeus do and how has he become rich?

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answer.



Important Information for the Facilitator

After the discussion time, there may be a need for the facilitator to give some input on the role of tax collectors in the city-state system.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 3, 4 and 5 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

3. How does Zacchaeus respond once he has seen Jesus?

4. What form does his 'repentance' take (see verse 8)?

5. When does salvation come to Zacchaeus, before or after he makes restitution (see verse 9)?

Step 7.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 8.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 6, 7 and 8 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

6. Who are the 'Zacchaeuses' in your context, and how do they become rich?

7. What must they do to be saved?

8. What can we do to bring salvation to them?

Step 9.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer of repentance and action.

Bible Study 19

Theme/s: Rape of men

Key text: Genesis 19: 1 – 14

Introduction:

The Bible study engages with the issue of homosexuality and male rape. Our hope is that it will help people to distinguish between homosexuality and male rape, and then to deal with male rape (and, indeed, the rape of women too). The text chosen is one commonly associated with homosexuality, but is actually a text about rape, as is Judges 19.

Important Information for the Facilitator



This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses being recorded on a piece of newsprint.

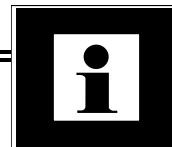
Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. For a study with this theme, it is wise to divide the participants into groups of older women, older men, younger women and younger men, so that people may speak comfortably with each other. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2 and 3 on newsprint so that each group can see them clearly. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising discussions to each question on a piece of paper.

2. *What does Lot do when he sees two strangers entering his city?*
3. *What do the other men of Sodom want to do to these strangers?*

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summarised answers.



Important Information for the Facilitator

After the discussion time, there may be a need for the facilitator to give some socio-historical input on the prevalence of male rape in the ancient world. Reference to Judges 19 may also be useful. The facilitator should also be sensitive to the discomfort that this topic may cause certain men participants who have been either the victims or perpetrators of male rape.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

4. *Why do the men of Sodom want to rape these strangers?*
5. *How does Lot intervene to stop the rape?*
6. *Why do the men of Sodom then want to rape Lot?*
7. *What do Lot and the strangers have in common?*

Step 7.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 8.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 8, 9 and 10 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

8. *In what contexts in our society do men rape men?*
9. *Why do men rape other men?*
10. *How can we address this issue?*

Step 9.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 10.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer, and also for strength to address this issue.

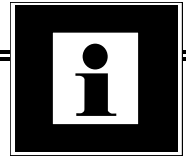
Bible Study 20

Theme/s: Jesus and gender; masculinities

Key text: Mark 5: 21 - 6:1

Introduction:

This text has been used earlier in the Manual to focus on women and gender. We now use it to focus on men and gender.



Important information for the facilitator

This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles. Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses being recorded on a piece of newsprint.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. For a study with this theme, it is wise to divide the participants into groups of older women, older men, younger women and younger men, so that people may speak comfortably with each other. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3 and 4 on newsprint so that each group can see them clearly. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising discussions to each question on a piece of paper.

2. Who are the characters in this story and what do we know about them?

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

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

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summarised answers.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 5, 6 and 7 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

5. How do Jesus and Jairus relate to women?

6. What are the positive aspects of masculinity exhibited by Jesus and Jairus?

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

Step 7.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 8.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 8 and 9 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

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?

Step 9.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 10.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer, and also for strength to address this issue.

Bible Study 21

Theme/s: Jesus and gender; masculinities

Key text: Matthew 20: 17 - 33

Introduction:

This Bible study is part of a series the Ujamaa Centre is developing to deal with issues of masculinity.



Important information for the facilitator

This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles.

Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses being recorded on a piece of newsprint.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. For a study with this theme, it is wise to divide the participants into groups of older women, older men, younger women and younger men, so that people may speak comfortably with each other. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 on newsprint so that each group can see them clearly. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising discussions to each question on a piece of paper.

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

3. How does Jesus respond to this request?

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

5. How does Jesus respond to this request?

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summarised answers.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 6 and 7 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

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

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

Step 7.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 8.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 8 and 9 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

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

9. What will you do to try and change the dominant masculinities in your church and community?

Step 9.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 10.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer, and also for strength to address this issue.

Bible Study 22

Theme/s: HIV and AIDS and lament

Key text: Job 3, Psalm 22, Psalm 31, Psalm 55, Psalm 13, Psalm 44, Psalm 88

Introduction:

We have used art to dialogue with the Bible about HIV and AIDS; we now use music to dialogue with the Bible in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Important Information for the Facilitator



This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Listen to Mzwakhe Mbuli's song, "Song of the spirit".

Listen again, this time following the words of the song (provided on a sheet of paper for each participant).

Mzwakhe Mbuli, "Song of the Spirit," in *Kwazulu-Natal* (MZ Music, 1996)

"Song of the Spirit"

Friday Mavuso, special tribute to the late President of the DPSA – the Disabled People of South Africa – died June 1995, car accident.

When he died I wished I could stage a sit-in in heaven./ Magundulela ngubani oyohaya inkondlo ngawe?/ Yini eyakungenza ngikuhloniphe ukufa na?/ Lord my God I do not understand./ Pardon me, I am ignorant./ Here I stand in search of thy wisdom./ Is death an idiom, or is death an idiot?/ Lord my God, I do not understand.

When are you on duty, and when are you on leave?/ Is there a holiday in heaven or not?/ Few years ago tragedy deprived us of two great talents./ In one week you took away Arthur – 'Fighting Prince' – Mayisela and Paul Ndlovu the singer./ Again, death deprived us of two great talents, legends, Friday Mavuso and Harry Gwala, both paralysed.

Lord my God, I do not understand./ Punish me not, for I am ignorant./ Is there a new commandment?/ "Thou shall suffer perpetually"/ "Thou shall die more than other races"?/ Now I understand why other nations weep when the child is born.

Lord my God, do you care about the poor?/ Why then remove the shepherd from the sheep?/ Is there a hidden prophecy about the plight of the black people?/ Is there a curse bestowed upon us?/ Senzeni thina sizwe esimnyama?/ Was the bullet that riddled Friday's spinal cord not enough?/ Why did you remove Friday Mavuso and leave Barend Strydom alone?/ I repeat, why did you remove Friday Mavuso and leave Barend Strydom alone?

Lord my God, I cannot fax nor telephone you, but to continue with my provocative poetry .../ Why are there so many more funerals than weddings?/ Do you know that our graves are overcrowded?/ Is death an idiom, or death an idiot?

Lord my God, why allow people with unfinished projects to enter your kingdom?/ When Friday Mavuso finally enters thy kingdom, honour him with a noble crown./ When he enters thy kingdom, ask him who should look after his sheep./ When he enters thy kingdom, ask him what should we do with his wheelchair./ When he enters thy kingdom, tell him I say his departure was too early and too soon for heaven, too soon for burial.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What do you think this song is about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses being recorded on a piece of newsprint.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. For a study with this theme, it is wise to divide the participants into groups of older women, older men, younger women and younger men, so that people may speak comfortably with each other. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Questions 2, 3 and 4 on newsprint so that each group can see them clearly. Each small group should then discuss the questions, summarising discussions to each question on a piece of paper.

2. What kind of theological discourse is Mbuli using in this song?

3. Are you familiar with this kind of theological discourse? What does it remind you of? Give examples to each other?

4. Where can you find similar kinds of questioning of God in the Bible? Share examples with each other.

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summarised answers.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Give each small group one of the following biblical texts: Job 3, Psalm 22, Psalm 31, Psalm 55, Psalm 13, Psalm 44, Psalm 88. Ask them to read the text in their small groups. Then put up Questions 5, 6 and 7 on newsprint.

Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

5. What does your text say about individual physical and social distress?

6. What does your text say about relationships?

7. What does your text say about and to God?

Step 7.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 8.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 8, 9 and 10 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

8. Do you identify with your text? In what ways do you and in what ways do you not?

9. Write your own song of lament?

10. How can you encourage the church to recognise lament as an important theological discourse in our time?

Step 9.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 10.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer, and also for strength to address this issue.

Bible Study 23

Theme/s: Justice and healing for the individual

Key text: John 1-41

Introduction:

This Bible study is part of a series of Bible studies on justice for the individual, for the community, the human society, the whole earth.



Important information for the facilitator

This Bible study is taken from a Manual which has been compiled by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. It is a Contextual Bible Study. Before doing this study, it is important to read the introductory chapters from the manual, and in particular those entitled "Understanding the Construction of a Contextual Bible Study" (Chapter 2) and "The Role of the Contextual Bible Study Facilitator" (Chapter 3).

Step 1.

You may wish to start the Bible study by welcoming everyone, and opening with prayer.

Step 2.

Read the key text in the Bible translations used by the workshop participants. Ask a participant to read the text, and it is best if this is done by someone who has a strong, loud voice. If participants have their own Bibles with them, they may choose to follow the reading in their own Bibles.

Encourage participants to listen carefully.

Step 3.

Ask everyone present the following question:

1. What is this text about?

This question should be discussed by the participants as a whole group, with the responses being recorded on a piece of newsprint.

Step 4.

Divide the participants into small groups. Ideally, there should be about four to six people in each group. For a study with this theme, it is wise to divide the participants into groups of older women, older men, younger women and younger men, so that people may speak comfortably with each other. Each group should have a piece of paper, a Bible and a pen or pencil. Put up Question 2 on newsprint so that each group can see it clearly. Each small group should then discuss the question, summarising their discussion on a piece of paper.

2. Jesus engages with a man born blind in a number of ways: Jesus saw him (v1); Jesus touched him (v6); Jesus spoke to him (v7); Jesus found him (v35); Jesus has a conversation with him (v35).

What characterises each of these encounters? What do these encounters say about Jesus and the man born blind?

Step 5.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summarised answers.

Step 6.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 3 and 4 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

***What does
this mean ?***

Judaioi

The Greek word translated as 'Jews' is better translated as 'leaders of the Jews'; this is not referring to Jews in general, but to their leadership, the elites.

3. Four other groups of people also interact with the man born blind: the disciples (v2); his neighbours and acquaintances (v8); the Pharisees (v13); the Jews/Joudaioi/leaders of the Jews (v18, 24); his parents (v20). What characterises each of these encounters? What do these encounters say about each of these groups and the man born blind?

4. What stages of transformation does the man born blind go through? Draw a diagram illustrating his transformation.

Step 7.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summarised answers.

Step 8.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 5 and 6 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

5. This person is nearly invisible in his own society. Who are the nearly invisible in your society?

6. What kinds of healing do these people in our society need?

Step 9.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 10.

After the report back, the participants should return to their small groups. Put up Questions 8 and 9 on newsprint. Each group should be able to see them clearly. The small groups should then discuss

the questions and summarise their discussions as before.

7. How can we respond to their needs in concrete ways?

Step 11.

At the end of the discussion time, each small group should report back to everyone using their summary answers.

Step 12.

Bring the Bible study to a close. You may wish to close by leading all present in an appropriate prayer, and also for strength to address this issue.