

**Diakonia Council of Churches  
Social Justice Season 2013  
Bible Studies**

**Theme:**



**Daily meditation:**

Sit comfortably in a quiet place and focus on the following:

- your regular breathing
- relaxing every part of your body
- focus on one aspect, which you celebrate in your church

Spend a few minutes in silence.

**A commitment:** I am willing to reflect on my own role in transforming our church into a life-affirming community.

I am willing to consider alternatives to any harmful practices that prevent this kind of transformation at various levels, e.g. in the economic, social, democratic and environmental spheres of community life.

**A prayer:** Gracious God, motivate us in our resolve to allow your Holy Spirit to empower and sustain us as we support our church to become a life-affirming community.

**WEEK ONE – SUB THEME: OUR LOCAL CHURCH – A PLACE TO BELONG.**

**Acts 2:43-47**

*Together in the big group ...*

1. What do you imagine this first church in Acts was like? Share your imaginings with one another.

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2. How would you respond if your church was like that? How would you like to be a person receiving from members of your church and how would you like to be the one who is giving to others?

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*Talk with the person sitting next to you ...*

3. How do you think a church like this would impact on its community?

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4. What are the characteristics that would make your own church close to being such a church?

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5. If your church is already very close, how do you celebrate that?

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6. If your church is not very close yet, what can you do to help it become so?

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*Together in the big group ...*

7. What does “life-affirming” mean to you?

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8. What else strikes you as important in this passage of scripture? Share why you think so.

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**“Action for the week”**

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## WEEK TWO – SUB THEME: CARING FOR CREATION

### Genesis 1:24-31

1. What picture comes to your mind as you listen to this text? Share this with your neighbour.

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*Discuss in small groups ...*

2. What words are used in verses 26 and 28 to describe the relationship between people and nature, and what kind of relationship do they seem to imply?

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*Compare the different translations of the Bible you have among you.*

3. How does the background information, which your facilitator shared with you, help you to understand the relationship between humans and the environment in Genesis 1:24-31?

.....

*After sharing with the big group, discuss the following two questions in your small groups ...*

4. What are the most common understandings of the relationship between humans and the environment in your local parish/congregation and community? In what ways are these common understandings helpful or harmful?

.....

5. When we think about God, how do we respond to the needs in our immediate neighbourhood/community whilst, at the same time, trying to honour our responsibilities towards creation?

.....

*After sharing with the big group, discuss the following question in your small groups ...*

6. Can you think of any other biblical stories that are important for our understanding of how God has sent us into creation? What practical things could we do to respond to this Bible Study in order that we might protect the earth God has given us?

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### **Creativity – how do we experience God and nature in “the Arts”?**

*Each person is invited to ...*

7. Write a prayer (on your own or with a partner) that expresses what this Bible Study has ‘said’ to you about how God calls us to look after our home, the earth. Share these prayers in a closing time of prayer together.

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### **“Action for the week”**



**WEEK THREE – SUB THEME: WHAT IS THE STORY OF TAMAR ALL ABOUT?**

**2 Samuel 13:1-22**

*In the large group ...*

1. Have you ever heard this story read in church ... on a Sunday? Share with one another if and when and where you have heard this passage read before. Also comment if you have never heard it read before.

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*In your small groups ...*

2. Who are the main characters in this story and what do we know about them?  
Draw a picture of the relationships between the characters.

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

.....

*After sharing your thoughts and feelings with the big group, discuss the following questions in your small groups ...*

4. How would you characterise Amnon’s manhood in this story?

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**Considering the following:**

What prevents Amnon initially from acting on his love/lust for Tamar (v2)?

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What is it that changes Amnon’s love (v1) to lust (v2), and then enables him to act on his desire/lust (v4-6)?

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What is it then that enables him to act on his love/desire/lust (v4-6)?

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How does he react to Tamar’s arguments (v14)?

.....

How does he behave after he has raped Tamar (v15-17)?

.....



5. What does Tamar’s response to Amnon’s behaviour tell us about her understanding of maleness?

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**Considering the following:**

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

.....

What does Tamar do (v19), and what does each of the things she does tell us about her understanding of what it means to be ‘a man’?

.....

*After sharing your thoughts and feelings with the big group, discuss the following questions in your small groups ...*

6. What do you think are the strong beliefs about manliness in your culture? Do you think there are any other ways of looking at manhood or masculinity? Are there strong, positive influences that you can draw on from your cultural and religious traditions?

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7. How can we raise the issue of “manhood” in our various cultural, gender and age groups?

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**“Action for the week”**

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Diakonia Council of Churches launched the *Thursdays in Black* Campaign during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign at the end of 2008. This is an ongoing drive to raise awareness and encourage people to work towards a world without rape and violence against women and children. Wear black on Thursdays to mourn with women who are still trapped in abusive relationships, in which they are oppressed and humiliated.

*“We encourage local churches to join hands with people around the world by wearing black on Thursdays to indicate that we are tired of putting up with rape and violence in our communities, and that we have a desire for a community where we can all walk safely without fear of being beaten up, verbally abused, raped, of being discriminated against due to one’s gender or sexual orientation.”*



**WEEK FOUR – SUB THEME: HOPE THROUGH GRACE**

**Isaiah 64:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 2:9-14**

*In the large group ...*

1. How do you think God reveals things to us today?

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.....

*In your small groups ...*

2. When you compare these two passages of scripture, which phrases affirm us, as the people of God?

.....  
.....

3. What are some of the life-affirming qualities, which we receive from God’s Spirit? How do these qualities contrast with those of the world’s spirit?

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*In plenary ...*

4. What reasons might Paul have had to quote Isaiah in this letter to the Corinthians?

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*Reflections on the four Bible Studies*

5. How have the discussions during these past four weeks made you more or less enthusiastic about social justice?

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6. What are the lasting impressions of this Social Justice Season for you and why?

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*VISION*  
*A transformed society actively working for social justice.*

