



## **TRANSFORMATIVE BIBLE STUDIES – *MISSIO DEI* INTERNATIONAL**



## **The Gerasene Demoniac (Luke 8:26-39) – Transformation and insanity**

### **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Steps:** 1) Spontaneous reading of the text 2) TBS in-depth questions 3) Connecting the biblical story and life story 4) Reflection and Action plan

**Materials:** TBS questions and facilitator's guide; white board with markers; chairs.

**Objectives:** After completing the Bible study students will be able to

1. Articulate the basic storyline of Luke 8:26-39 and describe the main characters in the story
2. Describe the “out-of-control” condition and transformation of the Gerasene Demoniac (GD) man.
3. Find points of contact in their own life-story and the biblical story of Luke 8:26-39
4. Reflect on the times when he/she was out of control and what stands in the way of personal transformation.
5. Articulate a personal action plan to obtain and grow in personal transformation

### **II. BIBLE STUDY – GD's Transformation and Insanity**

**Introduction:** Today we will read a text about a man who was totally out of control. He had been thrown out of the community and was not able to have contact with other people. However, his life completely transformed as he came into contact with Jesus.

1. Have you had a time in your life when you were totally out of control? Where were you, what happened, how did people react to you? [Let 3-4 people share their experiences]

#### **1.) SPONTANEOUS READING OF THE TEXT (Luke 8:26-39)**

##### **Step I:**

Each person reads the text first on their own from the Bible. Then the facilitator will ask a volunteer from the group to read the text out loud. After the reading is completed the facilitator poses the following question(s) one at the time.

2. What do think this story is about? Is there anything that jumps out of the page?
3. Summarize the story in your own words (ask 1-2 persons to summarize the story)

Facilitator may write some of the answers on the whiteboard to encourage sharing



## 2.) IN-DEPTH READING and QUESTIONS

### Step II:

Facilitator gives students the following questions to ponder (on the whiteboard; ppt; photocopy or other format). Students can work individually, in pairs or in groups to ponder the questions.

4. In what ways is the man who meets Jesus out of control or “insane”?
5. What were some ways that the people had tried to control him?
6. Why do you think that the man said to Jesus “do not torment me” but still identifies Jesus as the Son of the Most High? (v. 28) (see III. 2-3)
7. Where does Jesus meet the man? In there any significance to that? (see III. 1-2)
8. Describe the transformation that took place in the man’s life and how the people in the community responded?

**DIALOGUE:** Facilitator will ask each group/individual to share their findings and reflections about the questions.

## 3.) CONNECTING BIBLICAL STORY and PARTICIPANTS’ LIFE STORY

9. Who are the “out-of-control” people today and how can they obtain healing and restoration?
10. What are the main obstacles you face for obtaining Jesus’ transformative power?
11. If you claim that Jesus has truly changed you, how will people around respond?
12. What is Jesus asking you to do as a result of this Bible study?

**DIALOGUE:** Facilitator will ask each group/individual to share their findings and reflections about the questions.

## 4.) PERSONAL REFLECTION and ACTION PLAN (a homework assignment)

13. Students will write a 1-2 page reflection on what aspects of the story they have identified with, how the story has touched their lives, and what steps they need to take as a result of the Bible study.
  - a. SAMPLE: 1) What does this passage tell about Jesus and his transforming power? How is it relevant to your life and transformation? 2) List 2-3 of the most important obstacles that hinder your personal transformation into Christ’s likeness and progress in recovery 3) How do you know whether transformation has truly occurred in your life? How do you plan to demonstrate that to the people around you?

**5.) ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS (potential add-ons to the homework)**

14. Imagine what happened to the man in the story after Jesus touched him? What was his life like, in what areas did he still struggle, what were his strengths and weaknesses? How did God use him later on? What would have been the consequences if he returned back to his old life?

**III. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS FOR THE FACILITATOR:**

Notes on the text of Luke 8:26-39

1. Jesus met the GD man in the land of gentiles (place of uncleanness), in the tombs of the wilderness (place of demons and death), and outside of religious centers and respectable places. It was a least likely place to encounter God and transformation.
2. The significance of the name of the demon “legion” in vv. 30-31. Legion is the name of a Roman military unit (4000-6000 soldiers). There is probably a connection between how the Roman power oppressed the Jewish people and how the demons tormented this man. The demonic torment and the oppressive situation caused by Roman oppressive rule in Palestine of the time could partially have contributed to the man’s insanity. Romans forced people into service (people could not decide about their own life). This caused desperation, poverty, taxes, debt, oppression, ruthlessness, and so on. Jesus’ exorcism of the Legion of demons is also a parable of casting out the conditions of oppressive Roman rule.
3. It seems that the GD man’s identity and those of the demons had been blurred. The man had lost his sense of control (naked, screaming, and living in the graveyard) and did not know what he wanted or who he was. He (or the demons) identified Jesus as the Son of the Most High God but thought that Jesus was going to torment him.
4. This scripture is one example of fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to “release the captives” and “let the oppressed go free” (4:18-19).

There is also a connection between the story of GD man’s transformation (8:26-39), the previous section of calming the storm (8:22-25), and the two healings (8:40-56). Each demonstrates the power of Jesus’ words and actions to bring transformation and peace into a situation of chaos and desperation. Calming of the storm demonstrates Jesus’ power over natural world (stormy waters were also symbols of primeval chaotic forces in the Old Testament); GD man’s story demonstrates Jesus’ power over evil spirits and oppressive systems; the healings highlight Jesus’ power over sickness and premature death as well as restoration of families and communities. Each story talks about Jesus’ power and the peace and calm that Jesus brings to those who were saved – as well as fear, wonder, and opposition on the part of those who saw what happened.



## **“Out of the depths” – Prolonged Suffering (Psalm 38:1-22)**

### **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Steps:** 1) Spontaneous reading of the text 2) TBS in-depth questions 3) Connecting the biblical story and life story 4) Reflection and Action plan

**Materials:** TBS questions and facilitator’s guide; white board with markers; chairs.

**Objectives:** After completing the Bible study students will be able to

1. Articulate the physical, emotional, spiritual, and social struggles of the psalmist in Psalm 38
2. Explore how praying this psalm might have helped the psalmist in his concrete situation and in his relationship with God.
3. Explore points of contact between one’s life-story and the situation and themes described in Ps 38.
4. Reflect on the relationship between God’s grace, suffering, addiction, and consequences of sin and folly.
5. [Create a psalm-like prayer that reflects a theme or an aspect of Ps 38 and student’s own life experience and relationship with God.]

### **II. BIBLE STUDY –**

**Introduction:** Today we will read a text about a person who was completely torn to pieces. He/she was overwhelmed with pain, suffering, and rejection of people. This pain was partly due to the consequences of his/her actions. Yet, s/he turned to God and was brutally honest, since s/he realized that God is his/her only hope.

1. Have you had a time in your life when you felt overwhelmed with pain or suffering – physically, emotionally or otherwise? Where were you, what happened, how did people react to you? [Let 3-4 people share their experiences]

#### **1.) SPONTANEOUS READING OF THE TEXT (Ps 38:1-22)**

##### **Step I:**

Each person reads the text first on their own from the Bible. Then the facilitator will ask a volunteer from the group to read the text out loud. After the reading is completed the facilitator poses the following question(s) one at the time.

2. What do think this Psalm is about? Is there anything that jumps out of the page?



Facilitator may write some of the answers on the whiteboard to encourage sharing

## 2.) IN-DEPTH READING and QUESTIONS

### Step II:

Facilitator gives students the following questions to ponder (on the whiteboard; ppt; photocopy or other format). Students can work individually, in pairs or in groups to ponder the questions.

3. Describe the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual struggles found in the psalm and imagine the situation that the psalmist is going through?
4. What emotions characterize this psalm? What images and phrases are used to describe those emotions?
5. Why do you think that the psalmist says that he is suffering because of his sin (v. 3) and foolishness (v. 5) but in v. 20 he says he “follows after good”?\* (see further comments on page 8 of this study).
6. What names for God does the psalm use when addressing God? (esp. vv. 15, 21-22) What does this indicate of the psalmist’s relationship with God?

**DIALOGUE:** Facilitator will ask each group/individual to share their findings and reflections about the questions.

## 3.) CONNECTING BIBLICAL STORY and PARTICIPANTS’ LIFE STORY

7. How does an experience of “overwhelmed by suffering” affect a person’s life? How did it affect you? How did you respond?
8. What are some ways that you could respond to God in a similar situation? What clues might this psalm give you?
9. What does this psalm teach about God and our relationship with Him in the midst of life’s struggles?
10. Reflect on what is the relationship between sin, suffering, and God’s grace? Read also John 9:1-4; Luke 13:1-5; Job 42:7 to get a fuller picture.

**DIALOGUE:** Facilitator will ask each group/individual to share their findings and reflections about the questions.

## 4.) PERSONAL REFLECTION and ACTION PLAN (a homework assignment)

11. Students will write a 1-2 page reflection on what aspects of the story they have identified with, how the story has touched their lives, and what steps they need to take as a result of the Bible study.
  - a. SAMPLE: 1) Reflect on current or past experience of suffering or struggle. What was the situation like and what feelings were most prominent during that time? 2)

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How did you respond to God and people around you in the situation? 3) Was your suffering or struggle related to sin or foolishness in your life or in somebody else's life? 3) To what extent are you able to maintain emotional honesty with God and people around you?

- b. SAMPLE: Students will write a personal psalm-like prayer and use their experience of suffering and/or struggle as a guide. The important aspect of the prayer is the emotional honesty and transparency of the prayer.

### **5.) ADDITIONAL HOMEWORK**

- c. Write another psalm-life prayer expressing a different situation – you may highlight a certain set of emotions, such as anger, grief, suffocating anxiety, or alike. Remember – God knows our feelings even when we have not expressed them. Spiritual maturity can only be attained through open and transparent relationship with God. Authenticity and spiritual maturity go hand in hand.

## **III. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS FOR THE FACILITATOR:**

### Notes on the text of Ps 38:1-22

The condition of physical suffering may imply leprosy (see Lev 13-14) – decomposition of flesh (Psalm 38:3, 5, 7), bones twisted together (3b, 6a), weakened eyelids, eyebrows falling out, dimmed vision (10b) – or it is possible that figurative language is used here. In Jesus' time leprosy deprived person of humanity; broke family relationship and one's identity as part of God's people.

This psalm indicates four personal conditions: serious sickness (v. 5-8), severe emotional pain (vv. 6, 8-9) abandonment by others (11-14, 19-20), feelings of sin and guilt (v. 13-14, 18).

In v. 7 there are various translations: “my back...filled with pain” (NIV) or “my loins...filled with pain” (NSRV). NRSV and the original Hebrew text *may* suggest that a condition of sexually transmitted disease (STD) is causing the pain.

In v. 8 the phrase “I groan” uses the Hebrew word *sha'ag* which can also translated as “roaring” as a lion – see elsewhere “roaring of lion” (cf. Ps 22:1, 13; Am 1:2; Jer 25:30; Joel 3:16).

In v. 18 “I confess my sins” is more accurately translated “Indeed, I...publicly announce...my sins.” (Stuhlmuller 1983)

Divine names in vv. 21-22 are LORD (covenant-keeping God) – my God (personal relationship) – Lord (strong & powerful ruler)



vv. 21-22 indicates that the person's sin, folly, and suffering are not able to separate the psalmist from "my God" and from "my salvation".

### **NOTE ON SUFFERING AND SIN\***

Old Testament draws a close connection between sin and suffering – this is true here in Psalm 38 and especially in Deut 27-28 on the covenant blessings and curses. However, there are a number of sections in the Old Testament where the connection is not equakky straight forward or simple. Especially in the book of Job, Job holds onto his innocence and integrity while the three friends state that his suffering must be because of sin. However, in the end God appears to Job, and rebukes his friends and blesses Job (Job 42:4). Job's suffering had no connection to his sin.

In Psalm 38 the consequences of psalmist's sins have overwhelmed him (38:1-5) – but later on he states that "I follow after good" (v. 20). There are a number of ways that this could be understood: 1) v. 20 is simply a statement that the psalmist is now following "the good" because he has confessed his sins and repented; OR 2) psalmist is following "the good" because he has not tried to defend himself wrongly against his enemies (vv. 11-14); OR 3) another possibility is that the psalmist is overwhelmed by the feelings of guilt because a person in OT times would have almost automatically connected sickness and sin/guilt. Thus, the psalmist would be struggling to make sense of his situation. Thus, he cannot reject the connection between sin and sickness/suffering though he is generally following God's path. As an analogy it may be stated that many people feel that God is punishing them or that they have done something wrong when they go through difficult times.

In the end, the most important thing that Psalm 38 teaches is that despite the psalmist's condition, he cries out to God and hopes in God's mercy and goodness. Indeed, he ends with a note of confidence as he calls God as "my salvation" (v. 22).

From the perspective of the entire Bible it is important to note that Jesus had to correct the mistaken theology of the disciples in John 9:1-4 and the crowds in Luke 13:1-5. In both cases they thought that it is possible to detect a simple *cause* and *effect* relationship just by looking at a particular situation. That is, blindness is the result of the man's (or his parent's) sin and an accident or an act of violence is directly connected to people's sin. Jesus (like Job) indicated that sickness, suffering or experiences misfortune are not evidence of a person's sin or rebellion against God.

However, it is important to keep in mind that though sickness and suffering are not direct and mechanical punishments of God, sin, rebellion, and foolishness do carry inevitable consequences. Smoking often leads to lung cancer, drug use to legal, social, and relational consequences, lying to distrust in relationship, and so on.



## **The Rape of Tamar<sup>1</sup> – 2 Sam 13:1-23, 28**

### **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Steps:** 1) Spontaneous reading of the text 2) TBS in-depth questions 3) Connecting the biblical story and life story 4) Reflection and Action plan

**Materials:** TBS questions and facilitator's guide, including suggested community resource materials; white board with markers; room/place that is both secure and confidential.

**Objectives:** After completing the Bible study students will be able to

1. Articulate the basic storyline of 2 Sam 13:1-23 and describe the main characters and the relational dynamics of the story
2. Evaluate the behavior, feelings, and decisions of the main characters in the story
3. Find points of contact in their own life-story and the biblical story of 2 Sam 13:1-23
4. Identify with one or more of the characters in the story – feelings, thoughts, and/or behavior.
5. Articulate a personal (or communal) action plan to address issues in their own life or in the life of a loved one that arose as a result of the Bible study.
6. Be familiar with community resources that address the issues covered in the Bible study (especially domestic violence, abuse, and rape – help for the victim and/or perpetrator).

### **II. BIBLE STUDY – The Rape of Tamar**

**Introduction:** Today we will read a text about a young woman who experienced very painful things in her life and the way men in the community responded to the incident.

#### **1.) SPONTANEOUS READING OF THE TEXT (2 Sam 13:1-23, 28)**

##### **Step I:**

Each person reads the text first on their own from the Bible. Then the facilitator will ask a volunteer from the group to read the text out loud. After the reading is completed the facilitator poses the following question(s) one at the time.

1. What do think this text is about? Is there anything that jumps out of the page?
2. Summarize the story in your own words (ask 1-2 persons to summarize the story)

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<sup>1</sup> **NOTE:** The topic of Rape of Tamar may arouse strong feelings and uncomfortable group dynamics due to the nature of the topic. This Bible study should be facilitated separately in men's and women's group. The facilitator needs to know how to respond to strong feelings that may arise during the group discussions. Finally, the facilitator should refer any students for professional counseling should there be any suspicion or signs of depression, anxiety, aggression, anger or any other signs that might indicate harm to self or others. See resources below for referrals.



Facilitator may write some of the answers on the whiteboard to encourage sharing

## 2.) IN-DEPTH READING and QUESTIONS

### Step II:

Facilitator gives students the following questions to ponder (on the whiteboard; ppt; photocopy or other format). Students can work individually, in pairs or in groups to ponder the questions.

3. Make a list of the male characters in the story and how each acted before and after Tamar's rape? Describe feelings and behaviors of the main character.
4. What kind of person is Tamar and what do we know of her reactions before and after the rape? Describe her feelings and behavior before and after the rape?
5. Where did the rape of Tamar occur? Is that important? Why?

**DIALOGUE:** Facilitator will ask each group/individual to share their findings and reflections about the questions.

## 3.) CONNECTING BIBLICAL STORY and PARTICIPANTS' LIFE STORY

6. Who are the Tamars and Amnons in your experience/community/family?
7. Which of the character in the story can you identify with? Why? Feelings – thoughts – actions?
8. **MEN ONLY:** Why did Amnon sexually and physically abuse Tamar? Why do men abuse women?
9. What would be some steps that men who abuse or have abused women should take toward healing and recovery? What resources are available in the community and the church for men who abuse women?
10. **WOMEN ONLY:** Why do some women stay in abusive relationships or remain silent about abuse/rape?
11. What steps could a victim of abuse take toward healing? What resources are available in the community and the church?

**DIALOGUE:** Facilitator will ask each group/individual to share their findings and reflections about the questions.

## 4.) PERSONAL REFLECTION and ACTION PLAN (a homework assignment)

12. Write a one-page reflection on what characters you have identified with in the story, how the story has touched your life and what steps you need to take as a result of the Bible study.

## 5.) ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS (potential add-ons to the homework)

13. Where is God in this story?



14. Read 2 Sam 11-12. How is David's sin with Bathsheba and Uriah carried over to his children? Is there a connection between David's sin and the way Amnon treated Tamar?

### **III. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS FOR THE FACILITATOR:**

#### Notes on the text of 2 Sam 13

- a. The context of the story is King David's court – previous chapters (2Sam 11-12) tell the stories of David's sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah the Hittite.
- b. Immediate context is home – a place that is supposed to be a place of safety, security, joy, and mutual support.
- c. v. 14 use three strong Hebrew words to indicate that Amnon was stronger than Tamar, that he physically overpowered her, and sexually assaulted her.
- d. v. 13 Tamar says to Amnon that King David would allow them to marry. This could be because Tamar wanted to buy time. Marriage would also have been a culturally acceptable custom to avoid complete dishonor and devastation of Tamar's life (Ex 22:16-17; Deut 22:28).
- e. v. 20 Tamar is described as a desolate woman as the rape. The Hebrew word is also used of land that has been devastated and laid waste.

**Sermons/teachings on-line:** <http://anchurch.us/sermons-2/> (click 2 Sam 13 [Apr 6, 2014])

#### **On-line resources:**

<http://faithtrustinstitute.org/>

<http://www.fcadv.org/centers>

Help for perpetrator of domestic violence:

[http://www.dvcouncilofpb.org/resource\\_guide.pdf](http://www.dvcouncilofpb.org/resource_guide.pdf) (see pp. 6-7)

<http://www.cslkw.org/services.htm>

<http://knowledgeispowerpb.org/learning-center/batterers-intervention-program/>

Help for a victim:

<http://www.focusministries1.org/>

[http://ccada.org/signs\\_of\\_a\\_healthy\\_family.aspx](http://ccada.org/signs_of_a_healthy_family.aspx)

<http://www.theraveproject.com/index.php/resources/>

<http://www.recoveryfromabuse.com/> (For Pastors and Religious Leaders)



Free Online Training & Webinars on Domestic violence:

<http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/training/on-demand-webinars-1>

<http://www.theraveproject.com/index.php/training/>

**Counseling centers for victims:**

**Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse, Inc.**

Hotline numbers: 1-800-355-8547

PO Box 6161

Delray Beach, FL 33482

Administration: (561)265-3797

FAX: (561)265-2102

[www.avdaonline.org](http://www.avdaonline.org)

**YWCA Harmony House**

Hotline numbers: 1-800-973-9922 or (561)640-9844

2200 N Florida Mango Road

Suite 102

West Palm Beach, FL 33409

Administration: (561)640-0050

FAX: (561)640-9155

[http://cdn.trustedpartner.com/docs/library/GoRun\\_AVDARaceForHope2012/07006%20-%20AVDA%20Corporate%20Brochure%20final.pdf](http://cdn.trustedpartner.com/docs/library/GoRun_AVDARaceForHope2012/07006%20-%20AVDA%20Corporate%20Brochure%20final.pdf)

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