

CBS Questions

Christianity and 'family values' are sometimes seen as synonymous. It can be seen as problematic that Jesus was never married as far as know, and did not seem to fulfil the obligations to family embedded in 1st century culture. How are Christian views of family informed or challenged by our reading of the Bible.

1. What is this text about? Is there anything about the text that surprises/challenges you?
2. Who is involved in this text? Can you describe the relationships?
3. What about the original context of this passage? In what ways is this story cultural or counter-cultural?
4. Can we draw parallels with today? What might this passage say to our situation today?
5. Does reading this passage together challenge you to live differently?



Dignity and Worth

Jesus and family - a Bible study

Matthew 12:46-50

While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, 'Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.' But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' And pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'

CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY

We suggest you might want to use the Contextual Bible Study (CBS) method in organising your study of this text. This form of CBS emerged in South Africa in the 1990s and has been used in contexts of great diversity and inequality. It provides an opportunity to allow all to contribute and show how our own contexts inform and are informed by our reading of Scripture.

Here is a short introduction to CBS from the Anglican Communion website:

The first element is **CONTEXT**, and identifying the readers' context is commonly the starting-point for this method. This is because the text and its readers inhabit actual historical contexts which must be opened up for exploration in the act of reading the Bible. In this method, then, the text is not merely the object of study but rather the sacred resource for its readers' lives.... the way the text of the Word of God interacts with the lives of its readers will create new understandings of the text and new challenges to the lives of its readers.

The second element is **COMMUNITY**. CBS constitutes a recovery of the priesthood of all believers in its principle of lay participation. CBS is closer to the oral traditions which lie behind and shape the biblical texts; it therefore recovers the importance of testimony within the biblical text as well as within its readers' lives.

The third element is **CRITICAL STUDY**. This is where the historical contexts of text and reader are explored by the use of

recognized critical tools, and is where the trained reader's role becomes central. We can use scholarship to help the group and facilitate good exegesis of the biblical text.

The fourth element is **CHANGE**. This is the purpose of Bible study: not to know the text as an object which the reader possesses through study, but rather to be transformed by what has been learned in the engagement with the biblical text and with other participants. In other words, Bible study will open up paths for personal and social transformation on the part of the participants.

A SIMPLE FRAMEWORK FOR A CBS SESSION

1. Groups should be no more than 10-12 people.
2. Facilitators are there to ensure that all have opportunity to speak and are not necessarily 'experts'.
3. It is a good idea to have paper or flipchart to record all contributions and value them.
4. Helping participants to see the link between their reading of the text and the context from which they come is an invaluable part of this method.
5. The questions are intended to provoke discussion and not to be followed slavishly.
6. Try to set a timeframe (not more than 90 mins) and stick to it!