

**South Africa:
What it takes to be a man**

**March 17 – March 23, 2010
Lenten Study 5**

South Africa Fact Sheet

RAPE

- South Africa has the highest number of rapes per capita in the world.
- According to a 2009 study, one in four men in South Africa have admitted to rape; one in twenty say they have raped someone in the past year.
- One in ten men say they have been forced to have sex with another man.
- In May of 2006 Jacob Zuma, the current President of South Africa, and then Deputy President was acquitted of rape charges after a high profile public trial.
- It is estimated that every 26 seconds a woman is raped in South Africa. HIV/AIDS
- It is estimated that there are 5.7 million people living with HIV in South Africa. There are an addition 1,500 new infections every day.
- AIDS infections are down 17% over the past eight years.
- Any woman raped by a man 25 or older has a 1 in four chance of her attacker being HIV positive.
- Women who have experienced violence are at a higher risk of HIV infection: a survey among 1,366 South African women showed that women who were beaten by their partners were 48 percent more likely to be infected with HIV than those who were not.

LAWS

- In Africa, only South Africa has enacted all relevant laws to the UN Convention to Eliminate all Forms of Violence against women.
- Only 7% of reported rapes are estimated to lead to a conviction.
- South Africa has passed laws protecting women from violence including the Domestic Violence act of 1998 and the Children's Act of 2005.
- South Africa is the only country in Africa that has legalized same-sex marriages.

Sources: The Guardian, BBC, Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International, South African Government, feministing.com, The Washington Post

Bible Passage

Genesis 1:26-31 (NRSV)

Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

27So God created humankind in his image,

in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

28God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ 29God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so. 31God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Biblical reflections on Masculinity: In Whose image are we created?

“So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27)

“God saw all that he had made, and it was good”. (Genesis 1:31a)

The Bible begins with two poetic and descriptive accounts of the creation story. The creation of humanity takes a key place in these narratives, with significant importance being given to the relationship between:

- man and woman
- humanity and the environment
- humanity and the Creator God.
- God and the environment.

As the story progresses, the relationship departs from the idyllic situation, as humanity strays away from the will of God.

What follows through the rest of the bible is the :

- enduring love and faithfulness of God
- progressive revelation of God to humanity
- tireless, God initiated process of redeeming the relationship between the Creator God and the created

As the culmination of this process of redemption of humanity’s relationship with God, we are shown the ‘way’ of the Saviour, with the birth, death and resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ.

As men, along with women, do we aspire to reclaim the image of God, after whom we were created? Or do we reflect only the flawed image of ‘fallen man’. What are the characters that come to our mind when we think of a *typical* man? What are the characters that come to our mind when we think of a person God wanted us to be and the one who reflects the image of God?

In search of such a person, I studied the Bible and church traditions. I compiled twenty one characteristics from the ‘fruit of the spirit’ (*Galatians 5: 22, 23*), the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5*) and the 7 cardinal virtues. Read them aloud. Pause after each characteristic. As a human being, try to imagine yourself, reflecting these characteristics.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, righteousness, justice, mercy, humility, surrender (to the will of God), chastity, empathy, compassion, charity, diligence, perseverance and moderation.

These are characteristics we can aspire to embody as both men and women. Yet, I could not divide them into masculine or feminine characteristics.

I was sad to realize how far I had strayed as a man from the image of God. But what shocked me more is that this was not the image of a man I had been striving to become!

I had a very flawed and warped vision of a man. A man who is powerful, controlling and one who gets his own way was my ideal man. What I sadly realized was that men through history have extrapolated our own flawed image, to our vision of God. In other words, we have cut God down to our limited vision of ‘self’. So not only are we ‘fallen’, but we project a ‘fallen God’!

Now I have redeemed my vision of the man I want to become. The test of my own image of humanity, is the quality of my relationship with men, women, the environment and with my God. It is a journey. But since I have a clearer idea of where I would like to go, I am more hopeful as a man.

Our brother who shares his story in the video is making such a journey in discovering how to live positively as a man. To be caring, loving and nurturing makes us better men.

A 2010 Lenten Study compiled by the World Council of Churches, the World Student Christian Federation and the World YWCA <http://women.overcomingviolence.org>.

Breaking free from gender stereotypes in how we relate with others and how we share responsibilities and routines could enrich our lives and liberate us.

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Manoj Kurian currently coordinates the Global Health & Healing work of the World Council of Churches. He is a medical doctor from Malaysia who has specialized in Community Health. For the last 19 years he has been involved in primary health care, HIV and AID and 'healing and reconciliation'. His work also involves promoting networking and advocacy to carry forward the health related work of churches and related organizations. The Health & Healing work of WCC accompanies churches and communities to mobilize societal and spiritual resources, to contribute to the transformation of society by being healing communities and to respond to the public health challenges of the world today.

Prayers for South Africa: What it takes to be a man

Identify South Africa in the atlas or on the globe. Put out products from South Africa – maybe a fruit, some wine, gold or diamonds. You may also want to download one of the pictures of people from South Africa from the study site.

Gathering Prayer

God bringing light and banishing fear,

We light this candle as a sign of our willingness to be your light in the world.

We remember before you the peoples of South Africa, their abundant land, their struggles for peace and justice. We bring before you the people whose story we have witnessed.

In Jesus, you teach us that healing and a fresh start are always available to those who truly want to embrace your way. Give courage to all those whose lives are scarred by violence. Give healing and hope to those whose bodies have known terror and violation and to those who have terrorised and violated others. Send your spirit of compassion that those in torment will find your peace.

We ask it in the name of Jesus, our brother and our friend,

Amen

Psalm 38

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, or discipline me in your wrath. ²For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me.

³There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin.

⁴For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me.

⁵My wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness;

⁶I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all day long I go around mourning.

⁷For my loins are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh.

⁸I am utterly spent and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart.

⁹O Lord, all my longing is known to you; my sighing is not hidden from you.

¹⁰My heart throbs, my strength fails me; as for the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me.

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¹¹My friends and companions stand aloof from my affliction, and my neighbors stand far off.

¹²Those who seek my life lay their snares; those who seek to hurt me speak of ruin, and meditate treachery all day long.

¹³But I am like the deaf, I do not hear; like the mute, who cannot speak. ¹⁴Truly, I am like one who does not hear, and in whose mouth is no retort.

¹⁵But it is for you, O Lord, that I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.

¹⁶For I pray, "Only do not let them rejoice over me, those who boast against me when my foot slips."

¹⁷For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me. ¹⁸I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin.

¹⁹Those who are my foes without cause are mighty, and many are those who hate me wrongfully.

²⁰Those who render me evil for good are my adversaries because I follow after good.

²¹Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me; ²²make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.

Reading:

Genesis 1:26-31

26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, [a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Prayers from South Africa

O Lord, Open my eyes that I may see the needs of others; Open my ears that I may hear
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their cries; Open my heart so that they need not be without succour. Let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong; nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich. Show me where love and hope and faith are needed and use me to bring them to those places. And so open my eyes and my ears that I may this coming day be able to do some work of peace for thee.

Amen.

By: Alan Paton

You asked for my hands that you might use them for your purpose. I gave them for a moment, then withdrew them for the work was hard.

You asked for my mouth to speak out against injustice. I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused.

You asked for my eyes to see the pain of poverty. I closed them for I did not want to see.

You asked for my life that you might work through me. I gave a small part that I might not get too involved.

Lord forgive my calculated efforts to serve you only when it is convenient for me to do so, only in those places where it is safe to do so, and only with those who make it easy to do so.

Lord, forgive me, renew me, send me out as a usable instrument that I might take seriously the meaning of your cross.

Amen.

By: Joe Seremane

A Prayer for Holistic Healing

Heal us from bodily pains of HIV/AIDS that depletes our immunity, and leaves us open to opportunistic infections.

Heal us Lord, Have mercy on us.

Heal us from our broken hearts and grief that continues to pain our spirits and minds and leave us empty about the meaning of life.

Heal us Lord, Have mercy on us.

Heal us from the psychological pains of HIV/AIDS that engulf us in fear and hopelessness and leads us to die before the virus kills.

Heal us Lord, Have mercy on us.

Heal us from HIV/AIDS social stigma and discrimination that leads us to uncompassionate acts of isolation, and failure to provide quality care and prevention.

Heal us Lord, Have mercy on us.

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Heal us from unhealthy gender relations that expose partners and spouses to HIV/AIDS infection and leaves women powerless to protect themselves.

Heal us Lord, Have mercy on us.

Heal us from poverty that exposes millions to HIV/AIDS. Heal us from exploitative social structures that condemn many to poverty and expose them to infection.

Heal us Lord, Have mercy on us.

Heal us from violence that spreads HIV/AIDS. Heal us from ethnic and civil wars. Heal us from domestic violence and the rape of children.

Heal us Lord, Have mercy on us, Amen.

*From the Church World Service web site, www.churchworldservice.org,
and adapted from Dube, M., Africa Praying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS*

Benediction

May the God of Eve teach you to dance.

May the God of Hagar bring you comfort in the desert.

May the God of Miriam bring companions to you when you struggle.

May the God of Deborah teach you courage for your battles.

May the Christ who knew Mary and Martha show you the way of balance.

May the Christ who healed the bent-over woman heal your pain.

May the Christ of Mary Magdala send you out to proclaim your story.

In the name of Christ who is the memory, hope and authority of the future.

Sources: World Council of Churches; London Diocesan Link with Anglican Churches in Angola and Mozambique; Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Film Discussion Questions

- Which speakers from the film made the most impression on you and why?
- Bongani – the man in the film – explains how growing up during the apartheid years shaped his vision of masculinity and violence. How are you shaped by the culture in which you were raised? What attitudes have you had to change, recognising that they were destructive both to others and to yourself?
- Social and cultural conditioning define what individuals and communities recognise as ‘abuse’. Can such conditioning ever excuse violence? Is there a clear Christian understanding of what ‘abuse’ and ‘violence’? Do these definitions work across all cultures?
- It is unclear whether Bongani is still in touch with his own children. How can families and communities recognise genuine transformation in those who have admitted abuse?
- What special responsibilities do men have when dealing with male violence in society?
- What do you think of the classroom where they attempt to teach “positive masculinity”?
- What role, if any, do you think local churches can play in addressing the serious issue of violence against women in South Africa?

Bible Study Questions

- What images of ‘ideal’ humanity (male and female) have you found helpful in the Bible? Which biblical images of masculinity and femininity have you found challenging?
- Do the ideal characteristics of a Christian ‘man’ and ‘woman’ differ? If so, how and why?
- Is there a way that we can begin to reclaim the image of God, in both women and men?
- Which of the 21 characteristics listed do you think you have the most of? Which one the least? Which ones do you struggle with the most? Do any come “easy” to you?
- Are there any “fallen” images of man that you apply to “God”? Which ones? How?
- How can you change your path so that you will be creating a redeemed image of yourself, those around you, and God?