

5. Scripture Search in the Community: Using a Gender Lens

Objectives

- Prepare participants to use Scripture Search methodology
- Prepare participants to do their part to integrate scriptural principles into all of World Vision's work
- Develop the discipline of studying Scripture with a gender lens

(Estimated Session Time: 1 hour and 20 minutes)

Session Flow and Description

Introduction - 10 minutes

- Share session objectives.
- Ask participants to share an instance when a Bible study changed dynamics in a community or ADP.

Plenary Group Presentation - 15 minutes

Handout 2.5a, Using Scripture Search in the Community

- Include
- The origin of Scripture Search
- The two steps of Scripture Search

Small Groups: Using Scripture Search - 30 minutes

Give small groups copies of Handout 2.5a and Activity 2.5a

Instructions for Activity 2.5a: Present a role-play situation in which Scripture Search and Galatians 3:26-28 resolve a conflict.

Plenary Group Debriefing - 20 minutes

Discussion Questions

- What advantages developed from bringing the conflict into an opportunity for biblical reflection?
- What differences are there between a sermon on Galatians 3:26-28 and the Scripture Search methodology?
- Why is a reflective and open process effective in conflict scenarios?
- In this setting, you were given a prescribed amount of time to work this through. How long do you think the process might take in an actual conflict situation? Why?

Post-Session Assignment: Becoming a Gender Equity Witness - 5 minutes

- Begin to gather specific Scripture passages you may want to use in a Scripture Search process.
- Use Scripture Search in your office devotionals. Bring in the gender lens and assist participants to see Jesus' role in gender dynamics.

Materials

Handouts and Activities

- Handout 2.5a, Using Scripture Search in the Community
- Activity 2.5a, Resolving Conflicts with Scripture Search Methodology: A Role-Play

Facilitator Preparation

- Make copies of Handout 2.5a and Activity 2.5a.
- Reflect on discussion questions and the Scripture Search role-play.
- Create a presentation based on Handout 2.5a.
- Prepare copies of discussion questions and assignments for small group work.

Using Scripture Search in the Community

World Vision Philippines developed the Scripture Search methodology as a tool for assisting communities in integrating Scripture into the Transformational Development process.

The Scripture Search use of the Bible in Transformational Development assumes the Bible is more than a source of rules or a conceptual framework. This methodology recognises a creative encounter with God found in the Bible and the story God has chosen to tell us there.

The Scripture Search process extends the traditional use and scope of the Bible in the following ways:

Traditional use of the Bible	Scripture Search use of the Bible
Primarily addressed to individuals	Primarily addressed to the community
Primarily about spiritual things	Addresses all spheres of life, including the spiritual
Primarily about the world to come	Primarily about this world, and by extension, the world to come
Primarily written from the divine point of view	Primarily written from the divine point of view, but includes the view of the “least of these”

Assumptions of the Scripture Search methodology

- God is already at work in the community.
- Members of the community have accumulated a great deal of wisdom in all arenas of life, including spiritual perspectives.
- The community is responsible for its own spiritual pilgrimage.

- People in the community are capable of making their own application of spiritual truth to their local situation.
- Local churches of all denominations have the primary responsibility for contributing to the spiritual well-being of the community, and hence Scripture Search is non-proselytising.

Scripture Search is undertaken as part of an action- reflection-action process by which a community guides its own development. The same community group that is organising and carrying out other development activities can utilise Scripture Search.

Within this learning cycle, the Bible is used to illumine the past and guide the future. Scripture becomes a resource for the community's ongoing dialogue regarding commitments, values, beliefs and traditions of the community, all of which affect possibilities of the development programme in positive or negative ways. Scripture Search is not something isolated and relegated to the "religious" sphere of life, but part of a community's holistic and normal development process.

Scripture Search involves a simple two-step process

1. First, a facilitator comes to a community meeting prepared with a Scripture reading, usually a story or a parable, for use during a time of reflection and experience-sharing. Selection of the passage is based on issues the community is facing. The story or verses are handled like a case study, with open-ended questions. Preaching or teaching from the text is discouraged.
2. Second, it is up to participants themselves to determine the relevance of the text in their lives, in light of issues with which the group is struggling. Facilitators use a variety of non-directive methods to encourage wide participation and to draw out insights. Three questions tend to be used in most settings:
 - What are similarities between what is happening in this text and your experience now? (This encourages contextualisation.)
 - What light does this text and the experience of the people in it shed on your experience today? (This leads to prayerful reflection.)
 - What do you think you should do about these insights as a group and personally? (This leads to actualisation and results in a contribution to new plans that trigger the next action-reflection- action process.)

Resolving Conflicts with Scripture Search

Methodology

A Role-Play

Instructions

Within your group, assign the following roles:

- Community facilitator
- Head of the Water Committee (Man)
- Head of the Education Committee (Woman)
- Community members

Situation

- You are reaching the last part of an intensive evaluation process for a significant development project. Everyone is overworked and tired at this point.
- When scheduling the final meetings, a conflict erupted between the Head of the Water Committee (man) and the Head of the Education Committee (woman). When she states that it is impossible for her to attend meetings in the evening, he brings up all of the accommodations to the women's schedules throughout the project. Enough is enough. When are needs of the men considered?
- She states that the needs of men are automatically considered and that the particular emphasis on women's needs is simply a corrective.
- He quits.
- As they are both Christians, they finally agree to come together with community leaders for a study of Scripture and prayer.

The community facilitator chooses Galatians 3:26-28, and other members of the group are carefully chosen to help work this through.

Walk through the process of using Galatians 3:26-28 with Scripture Search methodology to help resolve this.

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