

THE HUMAN  
JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

LEADER'S GUIDE







The Human Journey: Leader's Guide

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## LEADER'S GUIDE

### Contents

Introduction	05 (study guide p05)
<b>Humanity:</b> What does it mean to be human?	12 (study guide p06)
<b>Start of Life:</b> When does life begin?	18 (study guide p12)
<b>Marriage &amp; Sexuality:</b> What is marriage for?	24 (study guide p18)
<b>Physical Health:</b> How should I live?	32 (study guide p26)
<b>Mental Health:</b> Am I supposed to feel like this?	38 (study guide p32)
<b>End of Life:</b> How should life end?	44 (study guide p38)
<b>New Technologies:</b> Are we playing God?	50 (study guide p44)
<b>Global Health:</b> Who is my neighbour?	56 (study guide p50)





# THE HUMAN JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

## LEADER'S GUIDE

### Introduction

Thank you for deciding to use *The Human Journey* with your group. This material flows out of the firm belief that God's word contains timeless wisdom to help us think about our own health and the health of those around us. This guide will walk you through how to lead the course and make the best use of this resource.

*The Human Journey* has two main aims:

1. To establish a biblical framework that will help Christians and churches engage wisely and sensitively with current issues relating to health.
2. To encourage more effective incorporation of healthcare expertise into pastoral life and ministry.

We have chosen the following eight key topics because we think that, in one way or another, they encompass almost all the most important health-related issues.

- **Humanity:** What does it mean to be human?
- **Start of Life:** When does life begin?
- **Marriage & Sexuality:** What is marriage for?
- **Physical Health:** How should I live?
- **Mental Health:** Am I supposed to feel like this?
- **End of Life:** How should life end?
- **New Technologies:** Are we playing God?
- **Global Health:** Who is my neighbour?

We believe the Bible can address these areas because the same God who made us has revealed his will for our lives in his word. Scripture does not answer every question directly, but it leads us towards principles that help us to address the issues of our age.

As an additional resource, we have also produced a video version of *The Divine Drama*, a Bible overview that explores the grand narrative of Scripture and lays the foundations for many of the themes covered in the course. We recommend that you show this to the group, or ask them to watch it ahead of the first session. *The Divine Drama* is included on the DVD or can be viewed on the website.

## Who is the course for?

*The Human Journey* is for all Christians who want to see what the Bible says about health. It is not just for those working in healthcare, and it is important that you make this clear. Also, while not designed to exclude non-Christians, the content may be difficult for them to access as so much of it is biblically based and is aimed at applying the Bible's teaching to today.

## How does the course work?

We have listed aims for each session at the beginning of the Study Guide for each topic. These are to help you keep the session focused and help the participants to see where they are heading. Each session follows the same format and has two key components:

### 1. The video

Each video explores the key question for the session, looking at the issue in detail and presenting relevant facts and Bible passages. The aim is to inform the participants and give them plenty of food for thought to discuss in the rest of the session.

## 2. The Study Guide

The Study Guide takes participants through each session, outlining the format and giving them Bible readings, questions, prayer points and ideas for taking practical action.

The course is accompanied by several additional resources to help participants explore issues further and engage with others:

- **The Human Journey book**, expanding on the teaching contained in the videos.
- **Website**, containing further resources for each topic: [www.humanjourney.org.uk](http://www.humanjourney.org.uk)
- **Social Media:**
  - Facebook: [facebook.com/thehumanjourney](https://facebook.com/thehumanjourney)
  - Twitter: [@thehumanjourney](https://twitter.com/thehumanjourney) or [twitter.com/thehumanjourney](https://twitter.com/thehumanjourney)

### Preparing to lead

Pray for the group as you prepare, especially if the topic is a sensitive or difficult one. Ask that the group would graciously bear with one another and that honest, open and loving discussions would take place.

Take some time to familiarise yourself with the material for each session. We recommend that you read the corresponding chapter in *The Human Journey*, which fleshes out the content covered in the video in more detail. You may also like to read some of the suggested further reading, most of which can be found at [www.humanjourney.org.uk](http://www.humanjourney.org.uk)

You should also look over the Bible passages covered in the Study Guide and think about the questions for the discussion. You may wish to bring in other relevant Bible texts or add supplementary questions to further the discussion. Always keep the session aim in sight and keep the focus on the destination.

**If you are a doctor or other healthcare professional**, it is important to be aware that you will have a far more detailed knowledge of many of these issues than those who do not work in healthcare. Be careful not to overcomplicate the issues, but use your professional knowledge carefully to guide and stimulate discussion.

**If you are not a doctor or other healthcare professional**, don't worry about lacking detailed professional knowledge of these issues. The point of the course is not to explore all the details, it is to introduce the issues and draw out broad biblical principles. Please also remember that the course is not for diagnosing people, and you should direct them to a qualified medical professional such as their GP if they have concerns about their health.

## Timings

The timings given below are simply suggestions. Depending on your context and group size you may find you need a little less or more time. We suggest that you aim for a 90 minute session to allow plenty of time for discussion and to help things feel more relaxed. Here's a quick glance at the timings, before a more detailed overview below:

Session aim & opening prayer	5 minutes
Icebreaker	5 minutes
Watch	15 minutes
Explore	25–45 minutes
Go further (discussing your ideas)	5–10 minutes
Pray	5–10 minutes
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60–90 minutes</b>

## Running the session

You'll need a location where you won't be disturbed and will have access to a TV or video monitor (with sound). Make sure everyone will be able to see and hear the video. It is a good idea to test your audio and visual equipment before participants arrive.

Each participant needs a copy of the Study Guide and a Bible. It is a good idea to have some spare Bibles on hand just in case. Most of the quotes from *The Human Journey* use the New International Version (2011), but feel free to use the version you are most comfortable with.

## Pastoral considerations

The course raises some sensitive moral and ethical questions, and members of the group may have first-hand experience of the issues raised. Be aware that sensitivity is needed at all times. You may find some participants are in need of pastoral support. This could be through your church's leadership or pastoral team, but if necessary you may need to encourage them to seek professional medical guidance (eg from their GP).

## The first session

We suggest you begin the first session by explaining the aims of *The Human Journey* as outlined above, and make sure the participants know the topics that will be covered. This will help to keep discussions on topic, rather than bringing issues up before the relevant session. Give a quick overview of what the sessions will look like so people know what to expect.

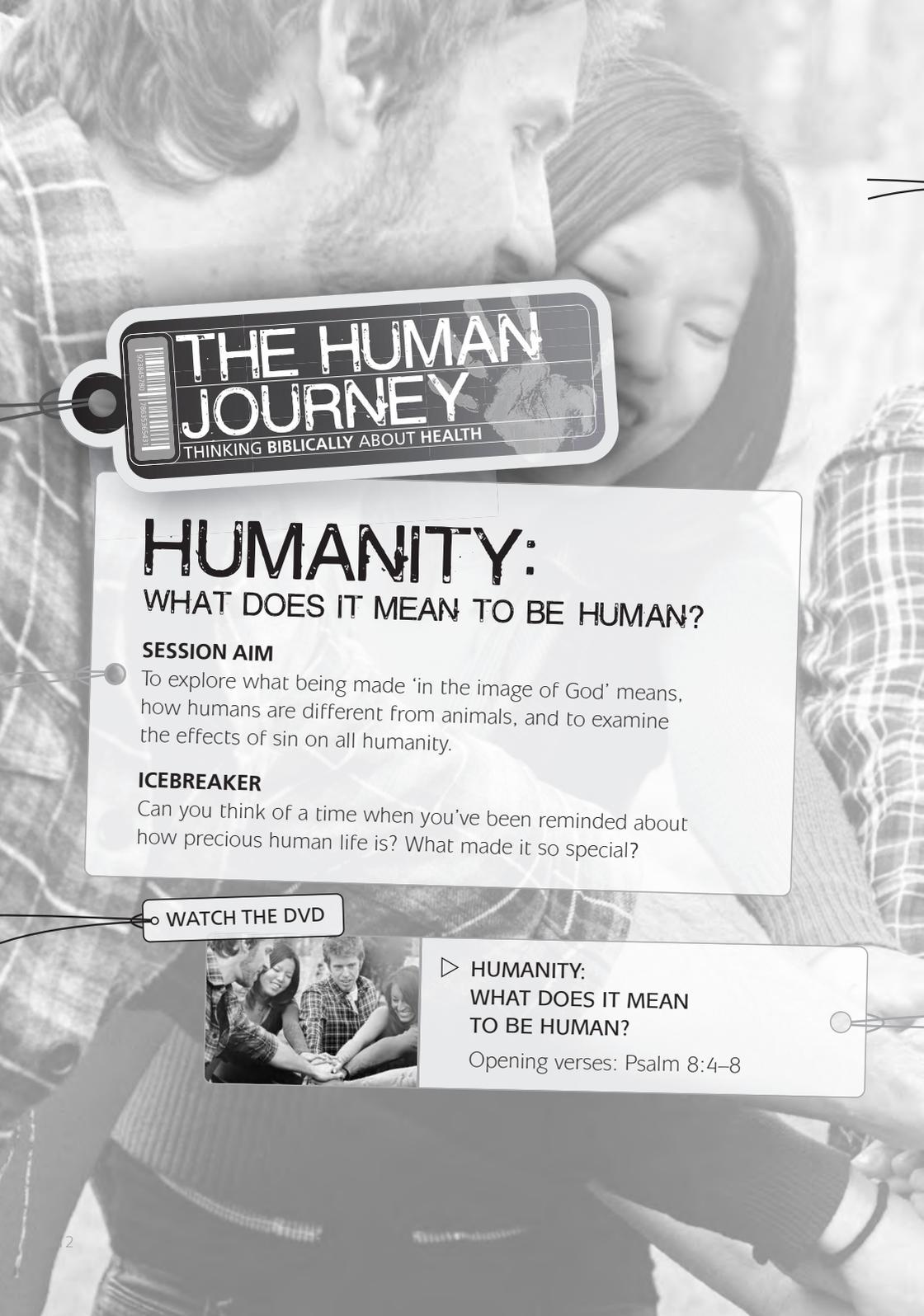
Here are the parts of each session in more detail:

- 1. Session aim and opening prayer (5 minutes):** We recommend you read the session aim to the group before you start. Once you have done this, pray (or ask a group member to pray) before you begin the session – we need God’s help as we discuss these things!
- 2. Icebreaker (5 minutes):** A question to get people thinking and help them to feel comfortable sharing. This section should take no longer than 5 minutes. There’ll be plenty of time for discussion later!
- 3. Watch (15 minutes):** Play the video, making sure everyone can hear and see it. Outlines of the key points of the videos are included in the Study Guide to help participants follow the content. It may be helpful to encourage people to annotate the outlines as they watch the video. There is a Glossary at the end of each session’s Study Guide that should help if people struggle to keep up with some of the more technical terms used. It may be helpful to check everyone has understood any difficult words before leading into the discussion.
- 4. Explore (25–45 minutes):** Time to dig deeper into the biblical principles of the topic, responding to the content of the video and discussing the key issues. Depending on your group size you may want participants to remain as one group or discuss in smaller groups, perhaps with feedback to the wider group later. The questions provided are there as a starting point, so feel free to ask other questions that have been raised by the video. You should also encourage participants to share any other relevant passages of Scripture.

The aim of this section is to understand and apply the timeless principles of God's word to our changing world. Leader's notes have been included after many of the questions to provide guidance and help you to lead the discussion towards key points. We have also indicated some issues that can potentially distract from the point of the discussion. Try to avoid these and use the session aim to bring people back to the main topic quickly if tangents arise.

Depending on the level of the group, you may have an in-depth discussion or a shorter one. You may cover all of the questions or focus on just some of them in more detail, but make sure you are always trying to draw out principles to be applied and discuss how they can work in practice. Try to include every member of the group in the discussion, and don't let one or two members with particularly strong views or good knowledge dominate or drive the discussion.

5. **Go further (5–10 minutes):** An opportunity to consider practical responses to the content of the session. The ideas included in the Study Guide are just suggestions; invite participants to share their own ideas as well as discussing the ones we have included. Point participants to *The Human Journey* book and website for further resources.
6. **Pray (5–10 minutes):** An opportunity to pray about some of the areas raised in the session. We've included some prayer points as a guide, but encourage participants to pray freely rather than just using the points we suggest. Remember to pray in the practical aspects discussed under 'Go further'. Don't neglect this time, it is important to pray through the issues that have been discussed, particularly those that are more sensitive.



# THE HUMAN JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

## HUMANITY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN?

### SESSION AIM

To explore what being made 'in the image of God' means, how humans are different from animals, and to examine the effects of sin on all humanity.

### ICEBREAKER

Can you think of a time when you've been reminded about how precious human life is? What made it so special?

### WATCH THE DVD



### ▷ HUMANITY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN?

Opening verses: Psalm 8:4–8

## DVD KEY POINTS

After centuries of debate, the question of what it means to be human is still hotly disputed today.

### Animal rights and 'Speciesism'

#### Made in God's image

The bearer of the image of God belongs to God (Matthew 22:15–22)

This special status has six dimensions:

- Representative (Genesis 1:28)
- Spiritual (Genesis 2:7)
- Moral (Genesis 2:16–17)
- Immortal (Genesis 2:17)
- Relational (Genesis 2:18)
- Creative (Genesis 2:19)

### Secular models of humanity

#### Spirit, soul and body

#### The Fall (Genesis 3)

Relationships are broken:

- With God
- With one another
- With creation

#### Summary

Humans are unique because we are made in the image of God. This conveys special responsibilities and marks humans off from animals. But due to the Fall, humans are fatally flawed and relationships at all levels are distorted. All that was lost in the Fall, however, will be restored through Christ.

EXPLORE

**Key passages: Genesis 1:26–31; Psalm 8.**

Use these, and any other relevant passages you can think of, to help you discuss the following questions together.

- 1** How does society generally view human nature? Why do you think this is?

LEADER'S NOTES

*This question is to stimulate discussion before moving on to the biblical content. Encourage people to share the different views they have come across in talking to friends or in the media.*

- 2** The video highlighted six aspects of what it means to be made 'in the image of God'. Can you think of any other ways that humans reflect God?

LEADER'S NOTES

*There may be many possible answers to this question. Invite the group to share their own ideas, asking them to point to relevant passages of Scripture if they can think of*

- 3** 'Humans are no different to animals.' What do you think of this statement? What does Scripture teach about this?

LEADER'S NOTES

*Only humans are made in God's image, and they are the ones God has given authority and responsibility over his creation. It is possible to argue that animals to a degree also bear some of the traits mentioned in the video (eg 'relational' and 'creative'). If these come up, don't let this distract from the clear way humans are set apart from the rest of God's creation. The 'Humanity' chapter of The Human Journey book will help to offer some qualifications and counterpoints to this debate.*

**4** How has the Fall (Genesis 3) affected humans? In what ways have you seen these effects in yourself and others? (See eg, Romans 1:28–32, 3:9–18)

## LEADER'S NOTES

*It may be necessary to remind the group that Bible-believing Christians take different views on the early chapters of Genesis. It is important to ensure the discussion does not become a debate about creation and evolution. This is not a debate that needs to be entered into for the purposes of this course. Whatever our views on this question, if we take the Bible to be God's word then he must be teaching us something deeply profound about humanity through this narrative. So whether taken as literal history or as a symbolic account, Genesis 1–3 teaches us that God created a world that was originally good and that sin has now corrupted humans and the world we live in.*

**5** If humans are made in the image of God, how might this shape our attitudes to those who are weak and vulnerable, or who are looked down on in our society?

## LEADER'S NOTES

*Avoid getting into specific issues such as abortion or euthanasia here; these will be covered in later sessions. Try to focus on the great value the Bible ascribes to humans, emphasising the equal status of everyone before God.*

**6** All humans are fallen and affected by sin. How does Jesus offer us hope? (eg Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18)

## LEADER'S NOTES

*God's plan for Christians is that we will be restored to the image of God (which we see in Jesus). Try to get people to see this is an ongoing process, not something that is already complete. But one day we will be fully restored and transformed forever. People should leave this session struck by the blessing it is to be made in God's image, and by God's grace in saving sinful people.*

## THE HUMAN JOURNEY

### GO FURTHER

- Is there someone you know in your church or circle of friends who is vulnerable or in need? How could you encourage them, help them and remind them that they too are made in God's image?
- Before the next session, read Psalm 139 and use this to reflect on the value and preciousness of life in God's sight (this will also help you prepare for the next session).

### PRAY

Pray together or in smaller groups about what you've learned in this session. You may like to use these points as a guide:

- Thank God for the unique blessing of being made in his image.
- Pray for wisdom to carry out the responsibilities we have as his people.
- Pray that we would see the image of God in all people, and value them as we should.
- Thank God for sending his Son, Jesus Christ who was fully human and fully God, to rescue and restore the relationship broken by the Fall.
- Ask God to help us be committed to standing up for and serving those who are most vulnerable in society.

## GLOSSARY

- **Reductionism:** A philosophical position which holds that a complex system is nothing but the sum of its parts.
- **Speciesism:** A term used to argue that privileging one species over another (eg assigning greater value to humans than animals) is a prejudice similar to racism or sexism.
- **Taxonomy:** A field of science that involves the description, identification, naming and classification of living organisms.

To continue thinking about the topics raised in this session read chapter one of *The Human Journey* book: 'Humanity: What does it mean to be human?'

More resources on Humanity are available at [www.humanjourney.org.uk](http://www.humanjourney.org.uk)



# THE HUMAN JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

## START OF LIFE

### WHEN DOES LIFE BEGIN?

#### SESSION AIM

To explore secular and biblical perspectives on when human life begins and examine our responsibility as Christians to value life from its very beginning.

#### ICEBREAKER

Discuss what you have observed about human life and its value from close friends or family (or personally) going through a pregnancy.

#### WATCH THE DVD



#### ▷ START OF LIFE: WHEN DOES LIFE BEGIN?

Opening verses: Psalm 139:13–16

## DVD KEY POINTS

From what point does the value of human life exist?

The answer we come to will affect how we deal with many important medical decisions:

- Abortion
- Medical Research
- Contraception
- Embryonic cloning and some three-parent embryo techniques
- Fertility treatments

### Starting points

Different people choose to draw the line of humanity at different points:

- Fertilisation
- Implantation
- Organ development
- Nervous system
- Quickening
- Viability
- First breath

### Clues from the Bible

There are many references in Scripture to human life before the time of birth.

‘For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb’ (Psalm 139:13–14).

Psalm 139 expresses three important truths:

- Creation
- Communion
- Continuity

### Summary

The biblical testimony about life before birth leads us to the conclusion that from the time of conception a valuable human life exists. The developing human being in the womb is also our neighbour: made in the image of God and worthy of the utmost respect, wonder, empathy, and protection.

EXPLORE

**Key passages: Psalm 139:13–16; Luke 1:39–45.**

Use these, and any other relevant passages you can think of, to help you discuss the following questions.

- 1** The video outlined the main positions on when life begins. Did any of them surprise you? Why?

LEADER'S NOTES

*There will probably be differing views on this within the group, and there may be strong feelings involved. Remind the group before the discussion starts that we should respect one another and love one another even in disagreement. Encourage participants to listen carefully and give reasons for their views.*

*Encourage people to think about the implications different positions have on practical questions (eg someone who believes life only truly begins at the first breath might believe abortion is acceptable at any time until the moment of birth).*

- 2** What principles can we draw from the Bible about how we should view human life before birth?

LEADER'S NOTES

*The Bible clearly teaches that human life in the womb is immensely valuable, and that God 'knows' the preborn child.*

**3** What practical implications might these passages have for your view of:

- A. Abortion
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B. Screening embryos for Down's syndrome and other genetic conditions
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- C. Research that uses embryos

LEADER'S NOTES

*These issues can be very controversial, so try to help people have gracious and loving discussions.*

*Some issues that may arise are:*

- *The question of those who become pregnant from rape; this obviously needs to be dealt with sensitively and compassionately. But don't let this determine the outcome of the question.*
  
- *If you have couples with children in the group it is likely they will have been offered genetic screening during the pregnancy. It may be helpful to ask them about this sensitively, but be aware they may not wish to discuss it.*

## THE HUMAN JOURNEY

### GO FURTHER

- Think of something you could do to raise awareness of the value and sanctity of human life before birth. You could write a letter to your MP or elected representative or post something on social media, or just talk to people you know.

### PRAY

Pray together about what you've learned in this session. You may like to use these points as a guide:

- Pray for a greater sense of awe and reverence towards the God who created us all.
- Thank God for the gift of human life and pray that he will help us protect and preserve it to the best of our abilities.
- Pray for courage and strength to stand up and speak out when challenged about the status of human life before birth.

## GLOSSARY

- **Embryo:** The developing baby from the moment an egg and sperm fuse until eight weeks gestation in the womb.
- **Fertilisation:** The event that occurs when a sperm meets and fuses with a mature egg (also called conception).
- **Fetus:** The developing baby in the womb from eight weeks to birth.
- **Implantation:** After fertilisation, the egg travels down the Fallopian tube and attaches to the inner lining of the uterus.
- **Quickening:** When the baby can be felt kicking and moving by the mother.

To continue thinking about the topics raised in this session read chapter two of *The Human Journey* book: Start of Life – When does life begin?

More resources on Start of Life are available at [www.humanjourney.org.uk](http://www.humanjourney.org.uk)



# THE HUMAN JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

# MARRIAGE & SEXUALITY

## WHAT IS MARRIAGE FOR?

### SESSION AIM

To understand God's design for marriage, the blessings marriage brings and the risks of departing from this pattern.

### ICEBREAKER

Share together about couples you know of who have been married for a long time. What do you think keeps them together?

### WATCH THE DVD



### ▷ MARRIAGE & SEXUALITY: WHAT IS MARRIAGE FOR?

Opening verses: Ephesians 5:25–30

## DVD KEY POINTS

Healthy marriages are key to a healthy church and society.

### The purpose of marriage

The Bible teaches that marriage provides:

- Companionship
- A context for sexual intimacy
- A stable environment for reproduction
- A nourishing environment for child rearing
- Security for marriage partners and family members

The most profound purpose is that marriage points to Christ's relationship with his people, the church.

### The pattern of marriage

Genesis 2:24 teaches that marriage is to be:

- Unconditional
- Lifelong
- Exclusively monogamous
- Sexually intimate
- Heterosexual

### The practice of marriage

Husbands and wives get different but complementary exhortations (Ephesians 5:23, 25).

The husband has a challenging role, because with headship comes accountability, responsibility and servanthood.

### What about sex outside of marriage?

The New Testament places sex outside of marriage in the category of 'sexual immorality' (*porneia*).

Sexual sin is called a sin against the body (1 Corinthians 6:18).  
Our bodies belong to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

### Summary

Christians – married or single – should celebrate, demonstrate, promote and protect the institution of marriage.

EXPLORE

**Key passages: Genesis 2:23–24; Matthew 19:3–6; Ephesians 5:31–33**

Use these, and any other relevant passages you can think of, to help you discuss the following questions.

**1** What attitudes have you noticed towards marriage in society (outside the church)? How does this compare to the Bible's teaching on marriage?

LEADER'S NOTES

*This question is to stimulate discussion before moving on to the biblical content. Encourage people to share the different views they have come across in talking to friends or in the media.*

**2** Look again at Ephesians 5:21–33. In what ways is a husband to be like Christ? In what ways is a wife to be like the church? What are the differences? What dangers are there if either spouse distorts their role?

LEADER'S NOTES

*Some possible examples:*

- *There is the danger of the husband ruling and dominating instead of being like Christ – which may lead to authoritarianism rather than a husband who acts like Christ in service and loving sacrifice.*
- *For wives, there is the danger of 'submitting' to the extent that they allow their husband to lead them into sin. Scripture never expects anyone to follow leaders or others into sin no matter their position (eg Daniel refused to worship idols despite the command of the king and the apostles refused to stop preaching the gospel even when told not to by the Sanhedrin).*

**3** The Bible's teaching about 'submission' can be controversial. How does Ephesians 5:21 and the role of the husband described in Ephesians 5:25–30 help us to understand this idea better?

## LEADER'S NOTES

*There will may well be differing views on this issue in the group and members should be allowed to voice their opinions so long as it is done with respect and love for the rest of the group.*

*'Submit to one another' (Ephesians 5:21) puts the wife's submission into a context where all believers are to put the needs of others before their own; the underlying Greek word could be defined as 'submission in the sense of voluntary yielding in love'. The role of the husband outlined in Ephesians 5:25–30 shows that it is not 'authoritarian', but it is servant-hearted, sacrificial and loving. This helps us to see the wife's submission in the context of a husband who should be willing to lay his life down for her.*

**4** How might you answer someone who thinks that reserving sex for within marriage or that having to commit to one person for life is restrictive?

LEADER'S NOTES

*The world can often see this teaching as a hindrance or something which 'spoils my fun' or 'stops me being free'. But the principle here is that we were made to live in God's way, so we will be most free when we follow his teaching. Illustrations that may be helpful to explain the freedom of living God's way are:*

- *A train is 'restricted' to running on the tracks, but it was designed for that purpose. If it goes off the rails it is disastrous, it won't be able to run and will likely harm those on board.*
- *A fish is 'restricted' to living in the water. Imagine a fish that wanted to be 'free' from the water – if it received that freedom it would die.*

*Both examples make the same point: we can desire 'freedom' from God's commands, but we were created to live within his good will. Living outside of this is detrimental to our wellbeing. So we might say marriage is 'restrictive' in the sense that two people commit to one another for life, 'forsaking all others'. But within that relationship the couple give up part of their 'freedom' and independence to attain greater security and intimacy.*

**5** 'Sex outside of marriage is disastrous and has disastrous consequences.' Do you think this is right? What consequences can follow from sex outside marriage?

## LEADER'S NOTES

*This issue needs to be handled sensitively as it may directly affect some who are in your group.*

*There are numerous examples of the damage caused by sex outside of marriage to be found in Scripture. It may be useful to discuss some of these briefly. For example, the grief and distress caused by Abram fathering a child with Hagar (Genesis 16, 21), or David's adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). Contrast this with examples of godly relationships, such as that seen between Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 3–4), or those who did not marry for the sake of God's kingdom (such as the apostle Paul).*

**6** As well as talking about marriage, Scripture addresses those who are single (eg 1 Corinthians 7:32–40). What are the challenges and benefits of being single?

## LEADER'S NOTES

*In some churches there can be a culture that looks down on singleness. Scripture is very clear that this should not be the case (Jesus himself was single). In fact, Paul says it can be harder for those who are married to focus on pleasing the Lord. This discussion needs to be handled sensitively, looking at the blessings singleness brings as well the challenges. It is also worthwhile to compare this to the challenges and blessings of marriage.*

**7** How should churches support those who are not married?

GO FURTHER

- If you are married, think of ways you and your spouse could:
  - Improve your own marriage
  - Pray for and support couples who are engaged or considering marriage.
- If you are single, chat to a married couple you know and ask how you could pray for them and how they could pray for you.

PRAY

Pray together or in smaller groups about what you've learned in this session. You may like to use these points as a guide:

- Pray for your own marriage, or the marriages of friends you have, that Jesus Christ would be central.
- Pray for wisdom and peace for anyone you know who is struggling in their marriage.
- Pray for the awareness to know that our ultimate identity and value lies in Christ, not in whether we are single or married.

GLOSSARY

- **Cohabitation:** The practice of two unmarried people (a man and woman) who live together and have a sexual relationship or live as though married.
- **Monogamy:** The practice of having one husband or wife.

To continue thinking about the topics raised in this session read chapter three of *The Human Journey* book: Marriage & Sexuality – What is marriage for?

More resources on Marriage & Sexuality are available at [www.humanjourney.org.uk](http://www.humanjourney.org.uk)



# THE HUMAN JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

### HOW SHOULD I LIVE?

#### SESSION AIM

To understand factors which affect physical health, and explore biblical principles about how we should view our bodies.

#### ICEBREAKER

Have you ever made an effort to get fit? What did you have to change about your lifestyle? Was it easy?

#### WATCH THE DVD



#### ▶ PHYSICAL HEALTH: HOW SHOULD I LIVE?

Opening verses: Philippians 3:17–21

## DVD KEY POINTS

Most people don't live longer than 70–90 years. Environment and availability of medical care can affect how long we live. We can't always control these, but we do have a lot of control over our lifestyle choices.

**The five big killers**

- Cancer
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Lung disease
- Liver disease

**Improving our health**

- Eat a healthy diet
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Stay physically active

**A biblical perspective**

- We are mortal (2 Corinthians 4:16–5:4)
- Illness is part of living in a fallen world (Genesis 3)
- We should treat our bodies with respect (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

**Alcohol in the Bible**

There are warnings about alcohol in the Old Testament (Noah and Lot, Genesis 9:20–23, 19:30–38) and the New Testament (Ephesians 5:18).

The Bible doesn't prohibit drinking alcohol, but does prohibit getting drunk.

**Obesity**

Obesity was not a major problem in the past, but Proverbs gives warnings about overeating (Proverbs 25:16, 28:7).

**Summary**

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We must keep health in an eternal perspective. This life is only a shadow of what is to come, and the life that follows is infinitely more important.

EXPLORE

**Key passages:** 1 Thessalonians 5:4–8;  
1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 8:1–13; Philippians 3:17–21

Use these, and any other relevant passages you can think of, to help you discuss the following questions.

**1** What views of the body and physical fitness are common in society? What is good and bad about these?

LEADER'S NOTES

*This question is to stimulate discussion before moving on to the biblical content. Encourage people to share the different views they have come across in talking to friends or in the media.*

**2** How much should Christians care about a body which is 'wasting away' (2 Corinthians 4:16). Why?

LEADER'S NOTES

*We live in a world that is fallen and we must all accept we will die one day. Christians have the hope of a better world and a glorious body, so it would be easy to think this life doesn't matter. But just as what we do in the body matters (2 Corinthians 5:8–10), so how we treat our body matters. But we must be careful not to become too focused on the present life.*

**3** 'We shouldn't be surprised when we or our loved ones eventually develop some serious illness.' What comfort does Scripture offer us in the face of this possibility? How could you encourage a loved one who became seriously ill?

## 4

What guidelines can we take from Scripture about:

- A. Recreational drugs
- B. Drinking alcohol
- C. Smoking
- D. Overeating

## LEADER'S NOTES

*You may need to direct the group to helpful passages, including those mentioned in the book and the video. Where Scripture does not directly address some of these topics, we must apply the broad principles that are clearly taught and tease out their implications. For example, what bearing does our bodies being a 'temple of the Holy Spirit' have on the way we live?*

## THE HUMAN JOURNEY

### GO FURTHER

- What changes could you make to your lifestyle and diet to help improve your physical health?
- Think of ways you can encourage others to take their physical health more seriously. Perhaps you could be starting an exercise class at church, or run a healthy eating event.

### PRAY

Pray together or in smaller groups about what you've learned in this session. You may like to use these points as a guide:

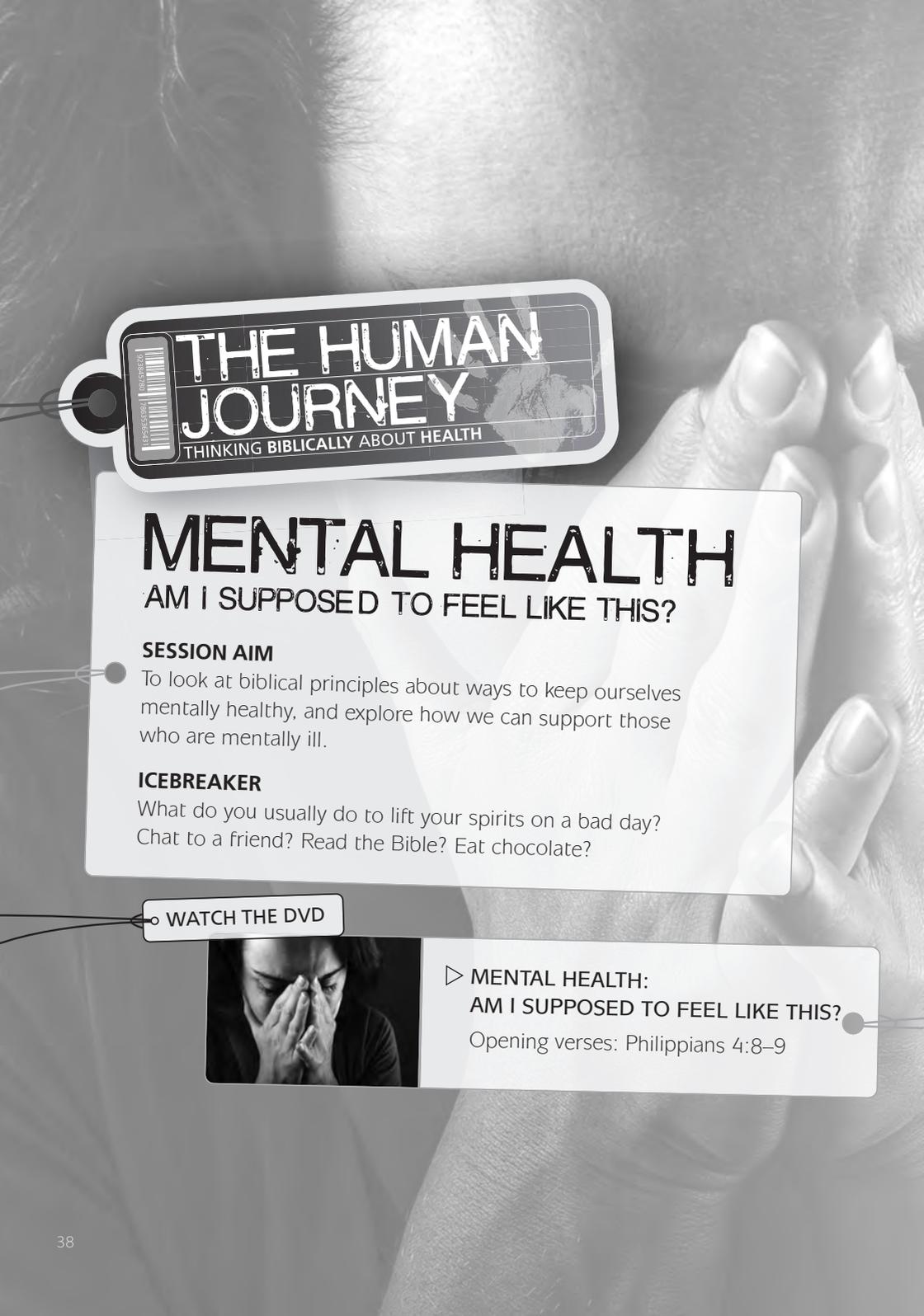
- Thank God that he has given each one of us a unique set of gifts and physical abilities.
- Pray for the strength and courage to be good stewards of our bodies so that we can use our gifts and abilities well.
- Pray for those who are stuck in physical addictions, that they would know the hope and healing of God in their lives.

## GLOSSARY

- **Body Mass Index:** A measure to determine if someone is a healthy weight for their height.
- **Obesity:** The condition of being very overweight, usually defined as having a Body Mass Index (BMI) in excess of 30.

To continue thinking about the topics raised in this session read chapter four of *The Human Journey* book: Physical Health – How should I live?

More resources on Physical Health are available at [www.humanjourney.org.uk](http://www.humanjourney.org.uk)



# THE HUMAN JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

## MENTAL HEALTH

### AM I SUPPOSED TO FEEL LIKE THIS?

#### SESSION AIM

To look at biblical principles about ways to keep ourselves mentally healthy, and explore how we can support those who are mentally ill.

#### ICEBREAKER

What do you usually do to lift your spirits on a bad day?  
Chat to a friend? Read the Bible? Eat chocolate?

WATCH THE DVD



▷ MENTAL HEALTH:  
AM I SUPPOSED TO FEEL LIKE THIS?

Opening verses: Philippians 4:8–9

## DVD KEY POINTS

Just as we will suffer from physical illnesses, many will also suffer from a mental illness at some time in their lives.

Being anxious or feeling low are not the same as having a psychiatric disorder or mental illness.

The church can help but real mental illness also needs the expertise of healthcare professionals.

### The effects of the Fall

The Fall profoundly influences our mental health through our:

- Genes
- Environment
- Relationships
- Personal choices

### What does the Bible say?

The clearest example of mental illness is Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4).

Jesus' death and resurrection changes us; nothing can separate us from God's love, we have a hope of future beyond the grave, and are in a loving community (the church).

### Elijah's mental meltdown (1 Kings 19:1–21)

God's provides Elijah with:

- Rest, food and drink
- Reassurance of his love
- A fresh filling of his Spirit
- Reinforcements
- A new job to do

### Summary

The Bible encourages us to think in constructive ways:

- Actively rejoicing in God's nature, truth and victory
- Being in continual conversation with him
- Choosing to give thanks in everything for all his blessings and promises.

But we should not turn our backs on proven, God-given, specialist care.

EXPLORE

**Key passages: Psalm 42 and 43; Philippians 4:6–9**

Use these, and any other relevant passages you can think of, to help you discuss the following questions.

**1** What common attitudes are there to mental health issues in society? Why do you think this is?

LEADER'S NOTES

*This question is to stimulate discussion before moving on to the biblical content. Encourage people to share the different views they have come across in talking to friends or in the media.*

*Ask people to reflect on their own experiences of people with mental health issues in the context of the local church – what was their own initial attitude?*

**2** How does the psalmist's language reveal his mental and emotional condition? (Psalm 42 and 43)

LEADER'S NOTES

*He feels far from God and forgotten by him (42:1–2, 9, 43:2), he has been crying a lot (42:3), he looks back to previous feelings of joy (42:4) and the words of those around him make him feel mocked and threatened (42:3, 10). There is not enough to diagnose depression but he is clearly in a state of high anxiety and distress.*

**3** If this was a family member or friend, how could you support them?

**4** How does the psalmist speak to himself (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5)? How could this help?

LEADER'S NOTES

*The Psalmist consciously speaks to himself, pointing back to a God who offers hope and salvation. This kind of 'preaching to yourself' can be very helpful, especially alongside appropriate professional care. In fact Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) uses a similar technique to help people cope with their problems by teaching them to break out of negative thought patterns. This can be very effective for many.*

**5** The apostle Paul instructs us to 'rejoice in the Lord always' (Philippians 4:4). What do you think this means? What would this look like in practice?

LEADER'S NOTES

*This is not talking about 'rejoicing' based on how we feel or on our circumstances; it is 'in the Lord'. Joy is not the same as feeling 'happy'; it is given by the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:22).*

**6** How can Philippians 4:6–9 be helpful to someone struggling with depression? How must we be careful with passages like these?

LEADER'S NOTES

*People with depression do not simply need to 'cheer up', and depressed Christians don't simply need an extra ten minutes quiet time. We must be clear that depression and similar conditions are real illnesses that need professional treatment and care. But Scripture can help to develop more constructive and helpful thought patterns, and the hope offered in Christ can be a great comfort.*

## THE HUMAN JOURNEY

### GO FURTHER

- Think of ways you can support and pray for people in your church and community who struggle with their mental health. How can you and your church care for them better?
- Reflect on your own mental health. What steps can you take to maintain or improve a helpful and positive thought life? This might involve reading the Bible or talking with trusted friends or your church leaders.

### PRAY

Pray together or in smaller groups about what you've learned in this session. You may like to use these points as a guide:

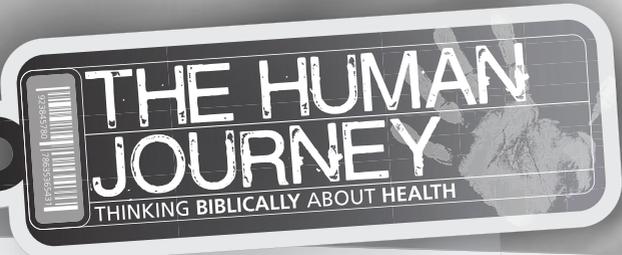
- Thank God for the eternal hope we have in him and the peace we can know which transcends all understanding.
- Pray for those you know of who are suffering a mental illness – pray for peace, healing and resilience.
- Pray for doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals who care for people suffering from mental illnesses that they would make wise, compassionate and life-affirming clinical decisions.

## GLOSSARY

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):** A talking therapy used to help people change thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are causing them problems. It doesn't remove people's problems, but better equips them to cope.
- **Depression:** A mental illness or mood disorder which makes people feel sad and pessimistic. Symptoms include low mood, feelings of hopelessness, low self-esteem, lethargy and sleep problems.
- **Psychiatry:** The medical specialty that deals specifically with the disorders of the mind.

To continue thinking about the topics raised in this session read chapter five of *The Human Journey* book: Mental Health – Am I supposed to feel like this?

More resources on Mental Health are available at [www.humanjourney.org.uk](http://www.humanjourney.org.uk)



# THE HUMAN JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

## END OF LIFE

### HOW SHOULD LIFE END?

#### SESSION AIM

To explore changing attitudes to the end of life, and apply biblical principles to the issues of euthanasia and assisted suicide.

#### ICEBREAKER

Death is often seen as a taboo subject. Why do you think this is?

#### WATCH THE DVD



▷ **END OF LIFE:  
HOW SHOULD LIFE END?**

Opening verses: Job 19:25–27

## DVD KEY POINTS

Death is seen as 'the ultimate taboo'. Today people seem to fear the dying process more than death itself.

### Approaches to death

- Fighting death
- Denial
- Despair
- Palliative treatment
- Control

Euthanasia is being killed by a doctor; assisted suicide is being helped to kill oneself. Both are currently illegal in Britain.

### Life after death?

A person's greatest need is not physical health but a restored relationship with God.

Heaven and Hell put any earthly suffering into an eternal perspective.

### Biblical principles

- Genesis 1–2 teaches us humans are unique, all belong to God, they must not be unjustly killed.
- 'You shall not murder'. God forbids intentional killing of the innocent.
- The Bible has no provision for 'compassionate killing'.
- The Bible does not recognise a 'right to die'.

### Three mistaken positions

- 'God's law doesn't apply any more'
- 'God's law bows to God's love'
- Striving to sustain life at all costs

Palliative care acknowledges the inevitability of death, and seeks to address the needs of the dying patient.

### Summary

We will not despair in the face of death because we have the hope of something far better, beyond the grave.

EXPLORE

**Key passages: Exodus 20:13; Job 19:20, 25–27**

Use these, and any other relevant passages you can think of, to help you discuss the following questions.

**1** Several countries have now legalised euthanasia in one form or another. What do you think has led to this?

LEADER'S NOTES

*Perhaps encourage participants to think back to the views discussed in earlier sessions, such as the differing views of what it means to be human and the idea that some lives have less value than others.*

**2** What does the Bible say about attitudes to intentional killing? Is there ever a reason to make an exception to this?

LEADER'S NOTES

*The Bible is clear that intentional killing of innocent people is wrong; and there are no exceptions. It may be worth raising the common argument that euthanasia is 'compassionate', and discussing whether this is a valid exception.*

**3** What hope does Christian faith offer in the face of death?

LEADER'S NOTES

*Faith in Christ offers a secure and certain knowledge of what will happen to us when we die – we will live eternally in perfect relationship with our creator, free from sin and death. This is a great comfort and can take away the fear of death.*

**4** How should the Bible's teaching on what happens after death affect our views on euthanasia and assisted suicide?

## LEADER'S NOTES

*The fact that there is judgment after death must give us cause to hesitate when we consider these issues. Heaven and Hell are realities which should not be taken lightly; helping someone to take their own life may be propelling them towards an awful eternal destiny.*

**5** If the situation arose, what would you say to a friend or relative who was considering ending their life through assisted suicide or euthanasia?

## THE HUMAN JOURNEY

### GO FURTHER

- Think of ways you can raise awareness about the risks and dangers of euthanasia. Perhaps you could write a letter to your MP or elected representative, post something on social media or just talk to your friends about it.
- How could you support and pray for those who are disabled, elderly or terminally ill in your church and community?

### PRAY

Pray together or in smaller groups about what you've learned in this session. You may like to use these points as a guide:

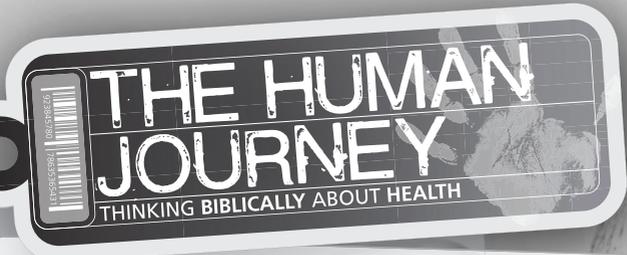
- Pray for those near the end of their life and for their families.
- Pray that our lawmakers and those working in healthcare would resist the pressure to endorse or practise euthanasia.

## GLOSSARY

- **Assisted suicide:** The act of helping somebody to take their own life.
- **Euthanasia:** Intentionally ending the life of someone (usually when they are very ill or in pain) with the aim of relieving their suffering. They may or may not wish to die.
- **Palliative care:** Specialised medical care for people with serious illnesses, with the aim of making the end of their life as comfortable as possible.

To continue thinking about the topics raised in this session read chapter six of *The Human Journey* book: 'End of Life – How should life end?'

More resources on End of Life are available at [www.humanjourney.org.uk](http://www.humanjourney.org.uk)



**THE HUMAN  
JOURNEY**

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

# NEW TECHNOLOGIES

## ARE WE PLAYING GOD?

### SESSION AIM

To understand the risks and benefits of new technological developments, and use biblical principles to consider how we should assess them.

### ICEBREAKER

Imagine yourself as a 120-year-old. What would your life be like? How might the world have changed?

WATCH THE DVD



▷ **NEW TECHNOLOGIES:  
ARE WE PLAYING GOD?**

Opening verses: Genesis 11:3–8

## DVD KEY POINTS

New technology is dramatically impacting healthcare and lifestyles. We have embryo selection, pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, embryonic cloning, genetic engineering, animal-human hybrids, three-parent embryos.

These are often justified on the grounds that they will prevent human suffering.

### 'Remaking', 'faking' and 'taking' life

#### What does the Bible say?

- Genesis 1 – God makes human beings stewards over the whole of creation
- Genesis 4 – The development of scientific knowledge and technology

#### Christianity and science

- Many great scientists were Christians (eg Sir Francis Bacon, Kepler, Mendel)
- Many great doctors were Christians (eg Paré, Jenner, Simpson)

#### Good and bad uses of technology

- Noah builds the Ark (Genesis 6–8)
- Tower of Babel (Genesis 11)

#### Nine biblical principles:

- Be like the men of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32)
- Don't rely on the world's principles
- Hold onto truth and unity (John 17:17, 22)
- Embrace a biblical view of humanity (Genesis 1:27)
- Recognise the limits
- Keep an eternal perspective
- Embrace a wider love ('Who is my neighbour?' Luke 10:29)
- Don't let ends justify means (Romans 3:8, 6:1–2)
- Focus on the cross (Philippians 2:5–11)

#### Summary

Like Jesus we must be committed to fulfilling our role as God's stewards, to use our God-given gifts and abilities in God's way to help provide just and compassionate solutions for human suffering whatever it may cost.

EXPLORE

**Key passages: Genesis 1:26–28; Genesis 11:1–9**

Use these, and any other relevant passages you can think of, to help you discuss the following questions.

**1** How are new medical technological developments viewed in society and reported in the press? What view of science does this promote?

LEADER'S NOTES

*This question is to stimulate discussion before moving on to the biblical content. Encourage people to share the different views they have come across in talking to friends or in the media.*

**2** What kind of attitude did the people have in building the Tower of Babel? What's wrong with that? Have you seen this attitude in society today?

LEADER'S NOTES

*The builders wanted to 'make a name for [themselves]'; they wanted to build a monument to their own prowess. They had disobeyed God by not spreading out over the earth (Genesis 1:28, 9:7); they thought they knew better than God.*

**3** What do you think we can learn about the use of technology from the story of the Tower of Babel?

LEADER'S NOTES

*Humans, being in the image of God, have been given a great capacity to create and develop new technology. But we should not let it become an end in itself or something that glorifies us. We should not just develop something because 'it can be done'.*

**4** How should we decide when a development in medical technology is worthwhile and when it is not?

## LEADER'S NOTES

*Discuss what principles or key questions can help us to decide, eg Does it involve inherently unethical actions or processes? What are the risks to the patient?*

**5** *'Metal may be employed to make pruning hooks and ploughshares to feed a hungry world. But it can equally be fashioned into spears and swords to kill.'*

Should we ever put any technological developments 'out of bounds' or is it more a case of using all technology wisely?

## LEADER'S NOTES

*This question could helpfully be related back to the Humanity session: we are made in the image of God yet fallen and corrupted by sin. So is the problem simply how we use God's resources? Encourage the group to discuss and reflect on how our sinful nature twists the creativity we have as bearers of God's image. Ask people for examples similar to the one quoted here, where something can be used for both good and bad purposes.*

**6** Should Christians make use of technology that has been developed through unethical research (eg research carried out on embryos)?

## LEADER'S NOTES

*A supplementary question to this is: Should we use these technologies even if they can now be carried out ethically? For example, IVF treatment was developed through embryo research, but can now be carried out without producing surplus embryos that will never be implanted.*

## THE HUMAN JOURNEY

### GO FURTHER

- Talk to friends about the uses and abuses of new technologies.
- Ask someone to speak at your church on the ethical and moral challenges of a particular new technology.
- Decide on the principles you will personally employ about using new technologies in your own life.

### PRAY

Pray all together or in smaller groups about what you've learned in this session. You may like to use these points as a guide:

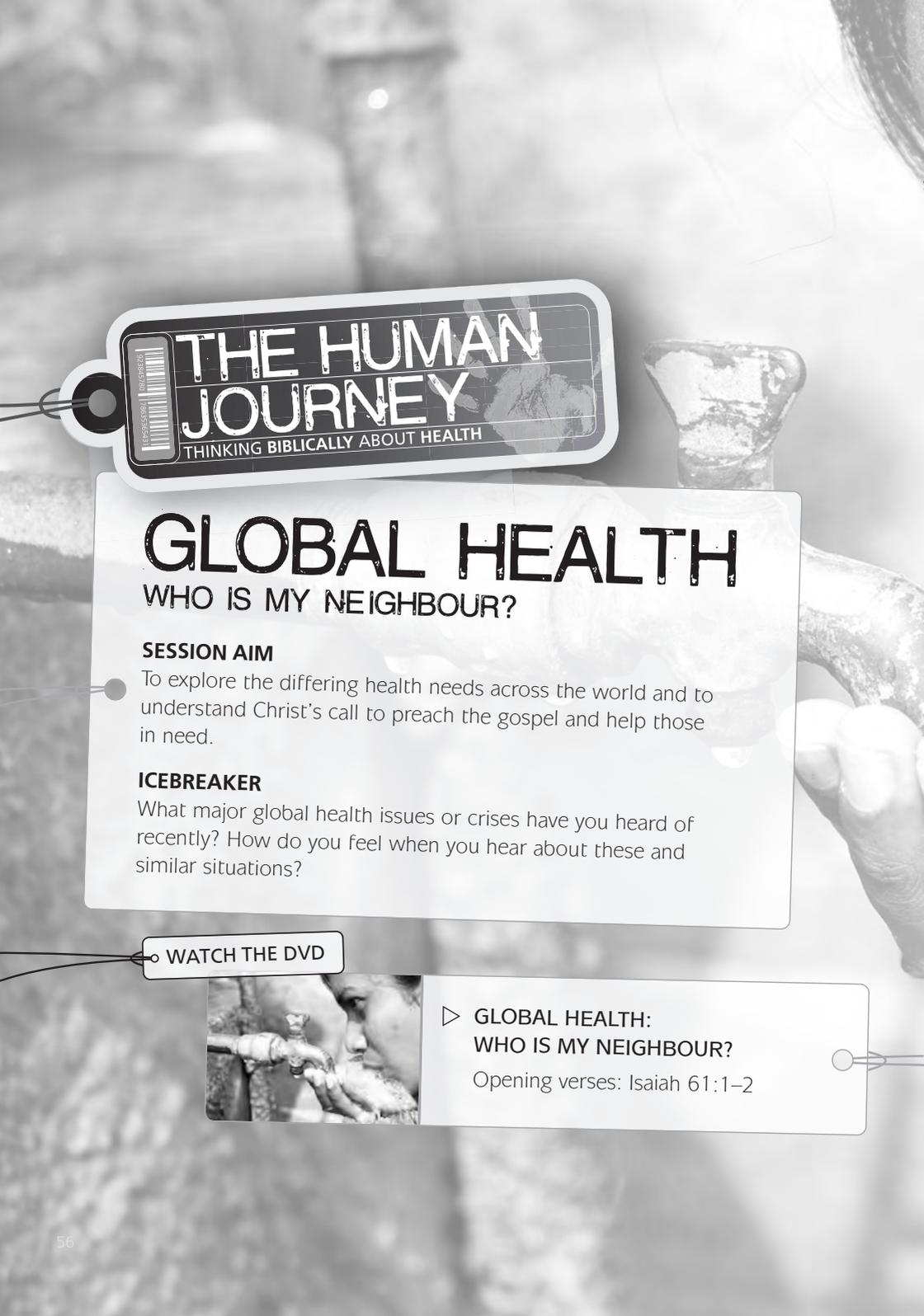
- Give thanks that technological advances make it possible to treat previously fatal conditions.
- Ask for God to restrain human arrogance in developing technologies just because they are possible.
- Pray for Christians to be a voice of wisdom and restraint in the use of technology.

## GLOSSARY

- **Biotechnology:** The use of living systems and organisms to develop or make products deemed to be useful.
- **In vitro fertilisation (IVF):** a process by which an egg is fertilised by sperm outside the body (in a laboratory). Usually a number of embryos are created, and a maximum of two are implanted while the rest are frozen or destroyed.
- **Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD):** Genetic profiling of embryos produced using IVF before they are implanted in the womb. This is used to identify embryos with hereditary conditions such as Down's syndrome, Huntington's disease or cystic fibrosis.
- **Stem cells:** Simple, unspecialised cells with the potential to become any other cell in the human body.
- **Surrogacy:** An arrangement where a woman carries and gives birth to a baby for a couple who are unable to conceive or carry a child themselves.

To continue thinking about the topics raised in this session read chapter seven of *The Human Journey* book: New Technologies – Are we playing God?

More resources on New Technologies are available at [www.humanjourney.org.uk](http://www.humanjourney.org.uk)



# THE HUMAN JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

## GLOBAL HEALTH

### WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

#### SESSION AIM

To explore the differing health needs across the world and to understand Christ's call to preach the gospel and help those in need.

#### ICEBREAKER

What major global health issues or crises have you heard of recently? How do you feel when you hear about these and similar situations?

#### WATCH THE DVD



#### ▷ GLOBAL HEALTH: WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

Opening verses: Isaiah 61:1–2

## DVD KEY POINTS

In high income countries most people die of chronic diseases; in low income countries most people die of infectious diseases.

Jesus sent out his followers 'to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick' (Luke 9:1–2).

Jesus' describes his mission in his 'Nazareth Manifesto' (Luke 4:14–21).

**Preaching**

*'To preach good news to the poor'*

Unreached peoples are mainly in the 10:40 window – much of Africa and Asia.

**Healing**

*'Recovery of sight for the blind'*

Jesus' restoration of the whole body was a sign of the gospel's authenticity and an act of compassion.

**Deliverance**

*'He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners'*

Jesus set people free from enslaving lifestyles and circumstances.

**Justice**

*'To release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'*

Radical discipleship involves God's people bringing justice, speaking out, being advocates for and empowering vulnerable people.

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) answers the question: 'who is my neighbour?'

**Summary**

Christian health professionals have huge opportunities to 'preach and heal' in the needy half of the world. But whole churches and whole Christians communities can help by praying, giving and serving in a multitude of ways.

EXPLORE

**Key passages: Luke 4:16–21, 10:25–37; Isaiah 58:6–12**

Use these, and any other relevant passages you can think of, to help you discuss the following questions.

**1** Why is the gospel ‘good news for the poor?’ Is God biased towards the poor? Why or why not?

LEADER'S NOTES

*God is on the side of the poor. He doesn't love them more than the rich, but he loves to care for and defend those in need because they are so often neglected.*

**2** The ‘Nazareth manifesto’ describes a multi-dimensional mission. Why do you think this is?

LEADER'S NOTES

*It may be helpful to recap the different aspects mentioned in the video: Preaching, Healing, Deliverance and Justice and discuss how each of these complement each other. These different aspects show how Jesus's mission was to bring salvation, restoration and hope to the whole person, beginning the reversal of the Fall that will be completed in the new creation. Now Christ calls the church to carry out this mission, bringing this restoration and salvation to the whole world through the gospel. This will not just affect individuals, but whole communities too.*

**3** In what ways is the church carrying out this mission? Does anything need to change?

**4** What role do you think healthcare should play in world mission today?

**LEADER'S NOTES**

*Discuss the opportunities healthcare can create in developing countries: eg countries that are closed to missionaries will often accept healthcare professionals, allowing Christians access to people who might otherwise never hear the gospel. Perhaps also discuss the risks of overemphasising the physical and temporal relief healthcare provides, instead of balancing this with sharing the gospel, which will have eternal consequences.*

**5** In what ways can Christians be involved in Global Health – both those who are healthcare professionals and those who are not?

**6** Who is your neighbour in today's global village? How can you be a good neighbour to those in your local community and those in other countries? Can you do both?

## THE HUMAN JOURNEY

### GO FURTHER

- Watch or read today's news. Use this to help you pray for the world. You may find resources provided by organisations such as Operation World and Tearfund helpful in guiding your prayers.
- What has challenged you as you worked through this session? Is there something you plan to do as a result? Tell someone in the group and ask them to hold you accountable to your plan.

### PRAY

Pray all together or in smaller groups about what you've learned in this session. You may like to use these points as a guide:

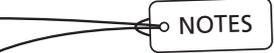
- Pray for a renewed desire to love your neighbour as yourself.
- Pray for Christian churches, missions and charities serving the poor at home and abroad.
- Pray for governments that they would consider those in poverty when forming new laws and policies.

## GLOSSARY

- **10:40 Window:** The rectangular area between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator (encompassing Saharan and Northern Africa, and almost all of Asia). The window is home to the majority of the world's unevangelised countries.
- **Low income countries:** Countries with a gross national income (GNI) of \$1,035 or less per person (eg Afghanistan, Uganda, Cambodia, Zimbabwe).
- **High income countries:** Countries with a gross national income (GNI) of \$12,616 or more per person (eg Germany, France, United States of America, United Kingdom).

To continue thinking about the topics raised in this session read chapter eight of *The Human Journey* book: Global Health – Who is my neighbour?

More resources on Global Health are available at [www.humanjourney.org.uk](http://www.humanjourney.org.uk)



NOTES









# THE HUMAN JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

LEADER'S GUIDE

We all have questions about health: Will my child be healthy? What if I get cancer? Why do I sometimes feel so down? What about dementia in my later years?

Today we see the health needs of different countries in more detail than ever before. How are we to be good neighbours in the global community? Almost every day brings reports of new advances in medical technology. But how can we decide whether it's right to use them?

*The Human Journey* sets out a framework for thinking about these issues biblically. This Leader's Guide contains clear instructions on how to run the course, with guidance for leading discussions on difficult topics to help participants get the most from the course.



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