HAND IN HAND

Bible studies to transform our response to HIV
Acknowledgements

The vision for this collection of Bible studies came from the realisation that church leaders were being asked to inform their communities about HIV without being fully informed and equipped. It is very difficult for pastors and other church leaders to discuss issues around HIV in the church when many have little theological training and lack full knowledge about HIV and the issues surrounding it.

These Bible studies are designed to equip pastors and church leaders with the resources and knowledge to be able to help their congregation to have a deeper understanding of HIV and a true unbiased biblical perspective.

The Bible studies were largely compiled and written during a workshop in Lukenya, Kenya in 2009 with experts on theology and HIV from around the world.

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Hand in hand
Bible studies to transform our response to HIV

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Introduction to the Bible studies

This book has 23 different studies, chosen by experienced church leaders, aware of issues our churches will benefit from considering. Select those you feel are most relevant to your own situations. The Bible studies follow a clear layout. You may wish to photocopy the Bible study page to give to others in the group.

Time keeping
A recommended time for groups using these studies would be between one to two hours. Keep to time – and make sure that all the points and questions are covered. If there is a very lively discussion of interest to those taking part, you may want to agree to just do half of the study and meet again to cover the second part. Allow time to close in prayer.

Always begin with prayer – and also worship if appropriate
Either pray in your own words or use one of these opening prayers to ask for God’s blessing and guidance:
– We pray for the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds to new insights in the Word of God.
– Dear Lord we ask that you would open our eyes, ears, hearts and minds to learn more from your Word today.
– Lord, we are grateful for your love and care for us. We experience your mercy each day of our lives. We do pray that we shall learn how to express this love and compassion. As we study your Word we ask that you will reveal to us the responsibilities that we have in being the vessels of this love. We ask that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us very specific areas of action that you are inviting us into.

Bible studies
Each Bible study follows the same outline:

Introduction
This provides the background to the study. Sometimes it focuses on the issue we are discussing; sometimes it provides an introduction to the passage.

Bible passage
Read the Bible passage or passages together and refer to these throughout the discussion.

Discussion In biblical times...
First we look at the passage by considering who it was written for and the situation at that time. A series of questions help us to learn all we can about the passage and what God is saying through it.

Discussion In the time of HIV...
Then we move on to consider what the Bible passage is saying to us today – what is its relevance to us, what is its relevance to our lives, and in particular what is it saying about the issue of HIV?

Key learning points
Check that these points have come out through the discussion. These should provide a good summary of the learning gained through the study. These can also help with ideas for action.

Further passages for reading
Several other related passages are provided. These can be referred to during the study or used for further personal study.

Prayer
Always end with prayer – praying for our personal situations and that the learning and understanding we have gained will be put into action.

Bible readings
The full Bible readings for each study are available at the back of this book (pages 52 to 65) and are taken from the New International Version. You can photocopy them to use when you meet. It can also be helpful to have several Bible versions to compare if people have other versions. Encourage people to bring their own Bibles.
Notes for facilitators

This book takes a fresh and challenging look at many passages from the Bible in order to help Christians gain helpful insights into the impact of HIV in our societies and churches, and suggest ways we can respond.

**Using this book – the role of the facilitator**

These Bible studies can be used by individuals but more learning is likely to come through using the studies in small groups such as Bible study groups, Mothers Union or women’s groups or youth clubs.

The studies are designed for group discussion and learning. They do not require a ‘teacher’. Instead a facilitator is needed. A good facilitator can help to create a relaxed and open atmosphere where people feel safe and can share their personal thoughts and experiences. The facilitator should seek to build up relationships within the study group. This helps sensitive or difficult issues to be raised and discussed.

The facilitator is likely to be in some kind of leadership role within the church. However the pastor or minister may not be the best person to facilitate these studies. People might expect them to ‘teach’ and provide the ‘right’ answers.

**The structure of this book**

This book is set out with a clear layout. Every Bible study contains a first page of information, guidance and tips for whoever is leading the Bible study. This page is not to be read out to the group, but the facilitator should take time to read it and think about the study before the group meets. The facilitator’s pages are all set out according to the following format:

**How could this study change us?**

First we list the objectives of the study: what the participants should gain as a result of using and discussing this Bible study. There are three kinds of objectives.

**KNOWING** – these describe the practical knowledge and learning to be gained.

**BEING** – these describe changes to our thinking and understanding, changing our hearts and our responses.

**ACTING** – these are the practical responses we can make as a result of our learning.

These objectives provide a good introduction to the study. They could be described very simply before each study and can provide a helpful summary at the end.
Background information

This section helps provide useful background information before beginning the study. The facilitator needs to read and remember these points. In addition helpful reference material is also provided.

Tips for facilitator

These tips can help the facilitator draw out relevant discussion and experiences. Some of the studies are very sensitive and it may help to divide men and women or girls and boys for separate discussions (remember you will need an additional facilitator for this). Always come back into the large group to share learning, agreeing first on the key issues to share with the bigger group, and pray together before finishing. When dealing with sensitive issues, the group must agree together to respect each other’s confidences. They must not pass on stories and secrets. Agree words to use for sexual issues that people will feel comfortable using during discussion.

Encourage quieter people to share their views, and prevent talkative people from taking over the discussion. Ask everyone in the group in turn occasionally during discussion, in order to draw out points from everyone present.

Open discussion is valuable even if participants may not always agree about the points raised. However, the facilitator should not allow the discussion to become angry or aggressive. If this begins to happen, they should take control, summarise the differences, suggest further opportunities to discover more information and move the discussion on to another topic.

Avoid ‘teaching’. Ordinary people have all the knowledge and experience necessary in order to learn and be inspired by the Bible. Give people confidence to say what they think – even if it is not always quite accurate. Provide correct factual information where there is confusion, but the facilitator’s role is to help people to gently discover together what the passage is saying – and more importantly what it is saying to them.

Summarise a longer discussion if necessary before moving to another question.

Ideas for practical response

These studies may change our understanding and how we feel about certain issues. However, that may not be enough. Ideally they should lead to action too. As the discussion of the Bible passages draws to an end, help people to focus on what practical responses they could make. Use some of these ideas if they are relevant.
Adapting these Bible studies to use as sermons

These Bible studies are designed to equip pastors and church leaders with the resources and knowledge to be able to help their congregation to have a deeper understanding of HIV and a true unbiased biblical perspective of the issues around HIV.

Each of the topics considered for group Bible study would also provide excellent ideas for sermons. The church has a clear biblical mandate to work among the poor and those who are marginalised in our societies. Often today, this will include people who have been impacted by HIV in a variety of ways. The church has a key role in informing its members with teaching about HIV that is biblically inspired. Church leaders have respect and authority, not just within their church communities, but usually in outside society as well. They are well placed to challenge stigma, unhelpful attitudes, damaging myths, and to advocate more support for healthcare and for vulnerable children.

Often church leaders are reluctant to discuss and preach on sensitive issues about sexuality, family relationships, HIV prevention and abuse. This reluctance encourages ignorance, which damages so many lives, and particularly the lives of young people. We need courageous leaders who can speak out biblical truth in love and inspire their members to share the love of Christ within their communities.

This book takes a fresh look at many Bible passages and can easily be adapted as a source of sermon materials. Begin with using the background information and the introduction to refresh your own thinking and understanding. You may want to look more deeply into the facts by using the references provided.

When using the Bible studies as the basis for sermons, we recommend careful reading and reflection over the passages. The additional Bible passages may also prove a rich source of ideas. Consider the likely answers to the discussion questions relating to biblical passages and use these to provide an introduction to explain the Bible passage and the key learning.

Then consider the discussion questions that relate to today in the context of HIV. What key points would come out of these? Use the key findings as a checklist to ensure all the main points are covered in your sermon teaching.

When concluding, look both at the learning objectives and at the practical response. Revisit your sermon notes – what changes do you want to make:

– in people's understanding and knowledge
– in people's attitudes and hearts
– in people's practical response to your preaching?

What are the challenges you will leave with people? How do you hope they will respond?

Can you include some case studies, stories and personal experiences in the service that will bring your sermon to life and make it really relevant to the congregation?

I decided to break the silence and disclose my status for two reasons. One was actually personal in the sense that I felt that if I talked about my situation then people would be in a better position to support me with accurate information, with the services for self-protection and also self-care. But the other one was more of a religious leadership responsibility. I felt that if I lived a double identity, then I would not be giving a model example to the people I lead, knowing that I’m one thing in public and another in private.

Canon Gideon Byamugisha, Founder of INERELA+
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– that we are all one in Christ’s body, people living with HIV and people without HIV
– that God does not distinguish and neither should we.

We will BE...
– more understanding of how easily people living with HIV can feel excluded
– aware of specific needs, not necessarily practical, of those of us living with HIV
– more loving of others within our church family.

We will ACT...
– to ensure the church benefits from the gifts, skills and experience of those of us living with HIV
– to challenge unhelpful attitudes about HIV
– to encourage a positive church response to embrace the practical, emotional and spiritual needs of those of us with HIV.

Background information

Sometimes the church ignores, or even denies, the existence of HIV and AIDS among its members and leaders. The result is to cause pain and division and allow ignorance about HIV and our responses to its impacts, to damage the body of Christ.

Worse than ignoring HIV among our members is the incorrect and deeply unhelpful belief that HIV is a punishment from God on people for the way they lead their lives.

Around the world there are over 33 million people living with HIV and over 15 million children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS. People living with HIV are part of the body of Christ in almost every church worldwide.

Tips for facilitator

People living with HIV are valued and important members of our churches with much to contribute as part of the body of Christ.

Within this group may be people with HIV. Always be sensitive and inclusive in the language used in the group Bible studies. For example, ‘those of us living with HIV’ – never ‘people infected with HIV’. Quietly take people to one side and explain if they are using unhelpful language.

Help people critically assess their own church’s attitude towards HIV and towards those in the church family living with HIV. What is the ideal situation within a church? What changes need to be made to reach this place of welcome, warmth, support and inclusion?

Ideas for practical response

Help the group to imagine that they are all going to be tested for HIV – and to imagine that some will test positive with HIV. How would we like the church and community to respond if we were the ones living with HIV? How would Jesus welcome and support those of us with HIV? [Consider his attitudes towards the sick, sex workers, tax collectors, lepers or the woman with internal bleeding]. How does our church welcome, understand and support those of us living with HIV? Work out the differences and work towards changing and reducing them. If there are none (are you sure!) help other churches.

Consider the different needs of those of us either living with HIV or affected by it amongst our families and friends: adults, children, carers, parents and grandparents.

References

www.avert.org/statistics.htm Averting HIV and AIDS

The number of people living with HIV has risen from around 8 million in 1990 to 33 million today, and is still growing. Around 67% of people living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa.

AVERT 2007
The body of Christ living with HIV

The body of Christ has HIV. The body of Christ is starving. The body of Christ has no proper home. This is because when one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. There is no ‘us’ and ‘them’. We are all affected. Our lives are all connected and woven together and we must build on this sense of being connected.

This passage follows a wonderful description of the spiritual gifts God has given to his church; gifts given to individuals but for use to benefit the whole church.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. How does the church form one body from its many parts? Are verses 12 and 14 referring to one church or to the whole church family – or both?
2. In Jesus’ time, how radical was it to say that slaves were the same as free people in God’s eyes (verse 13)? Why did Jesus say this?
3. What are the most important parts of the human body? What happens to the rest of the body when one part of the body is damaged or in pain?

In the time of HIV...
4. Why do our churches sometimes not work together well as one body?
5. Jesus’ words in verse 13 challenged discrimination against slaves in his day. What would he challenge us about today in the way we discriminate between different groups of people?
6. Do we identify enough with those who suffer in our church body? (verse 26)
7. Read verse 13 aloud together, changing the word ‘Jews’ to ‘people living with HIV’ and ‘Greeks’ to ‘people living without HIV’. What does it mean to share in the one Spirit?
8. How does this picture of the church as one body challenge us about our relationships with those of us living with HIV in our church?
9. How can we understand better their reality and really share in their troubles and joys?
10. What would be the response if the wider church always responded as ‘one body’ to those in need?

Key learning points
- As God’s people we are all one body – sharing the gifts that God has given – not for our benefit but for the benefit of his whole church body.
- God sees only precious children when he looks at us – not poor and rich, not slave or free, not people living with HIV and people without HIV. We should see people with his eyes too and love each other equally.

Prayer points
- Pray that our church will be a place of welcome and hope for all who come.
- Pray for people who feel our churches do not understand their needs.
- Pray that churches around the world will become places of shared understanding and where the needs of all are met.

Further passages for reading
- GALATIANS 3:26-28 We are all one in Christ
- LUKE 10:27 Love your neighbour as yourself
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
- that disease is not God’s punishment for sin, including disease related to HIV
- that Jesus revealed new truths about the causes of illness which develop beyond Old Testament understanding
- how essential it is for us to show God’s love to others experiencing illness and suffering
- that fear itself can make people sick (linked to fear of curses).

We will BE...
- more compassionate towards others, and to those of us living with HIV
- more compassionate and understanding of ourselves (overcoming self-stigma)
- more aware and informed about the causes of disease
- non-judgemental to those of us living with HIV.

We will ACT...
- by responding with compassionate support rather than asking how a person got infected
- to challenge self-stigma (the feeling that we are unworthy and shameful and deserve what we are suffering)
- to identify modern and traditional ways for thinking about the causes and cures of disease.

Tips for facilitator

Focus on the startling and crucial teaching point that Jesus makes: that the man’s blindness is not the result of sin – whether his own or his parents. Ensure that this point comes over very clearly in everyone’s understanding, because this is such a huge stumbling block for so many people within the church.

Ideas for practical response

List traditional beliefs about disease and the causes of disease. Discuss how each belief can be reconsidered in the light of Jesus’ teaching in this passage. Consider ways to identify opportunities to join in conversations when people are talking about those in the community or church who are ill, and to challenge traditional beliefs about the causes of disease.

References

www.godswordforyou.com/bible-studies/suffering
Five Bible studies on suffering
www.Biblelight.org/suffer.htm

PILLARS: Responding more effectively to HIV and AIDS
by Tearfund – Bible studies 8 and 9

HIV is only passed on when blood or body fluids (breastmilk, semen or women’s sexual fluids) from someone with HIV are shared:
- during sex (the most common way – 80% is passed through sex)
- during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding
- in blood transfusions (with untested blood)
- sharing contaminated needles or using contaminated knives or blades.

HIV cannot be spread by touch – shaking hands, hugging, toilets, sharing plates and cups.

Young people (under 25 years old) now account for half of all new cases of HIV worldwide. Many of these are babies born with HIV.

AVERT 2007
Understanding disease and suffering

Jesus came to fulfil the words of the Law and the Prophets in the Old Testament. The Old Testament often links sin with suffering, yet we also have the story of Job to show that godly people can suffer for no cause. When Jesus came, his life and words provide us with a more complete revelation of the mind of God. In this passage Jesus says clearly that when we are face to face with someone suffering from a disease, the correct response is not to think about what sin, if any, may have caused their disease. Rather he says that illness and suffering provide an opportunity for us to follow Christ’s example of loving care and service to others.

In this Bible study we reflect on the story of Jesus healing a blind man and listen to what Jesus says about the causes of suffering and disease.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. Please retell the story in your own words.
2. What did the disciples believe was the cause of the man’s blindness?
3. How did Jesus challenge the disciples’ understanding?
4. What did Jesus do to help the man?
5. How did the man help himself in his healing process?

In the time of HIV...
6. What are the different traditional beliefs in our community about the causes of disease, including HIV?
7. If Jesus were to come here, what do you think he would say about these ideas?
8. Do those of us living with HIV suffer blame and stigma, including self-stigma, because of these ideas?
9. When we meet someone living with HIV, which is the right question to ask: ‘How did you get HIV?’ or ‘How can we help each other in our community to cope with HIV?’
10. How can we follow Jesus’ example and use this new understanding about disease, to be more compassionate and less judgemental of each other. (Jesus showed compassion and told us not to judge others).

Key learning points
- Disease is often not a direct consequence of a particular sin.
- Jesus tells us never to judge others.

Prayer points
- Pray for a complete change of heart in our beliefs (spoken and unspoken) about the consequences of sin in people’s lives.
- Pray for those we know who suffer from the church’s response in blaming them for their HIV status, their suffering or their practical troubles.
- Pray that we can live out Jesus’ challenge to ‘do his work’ and show his light and love to others.

Further passages for reading

GENESIS 9:12-16 God makes a covenant never again to destroy all living creatures
HEBREWS 9:15 Jesus brings a new covenant, having died to redeem our sins
JOB 3 Job is a righteous man who cannot find a reason for his suffering
MATTHEW 9:35-38 Jesus had compassion for people with all kinds of troubles
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and understand exactly how HIV is spread
– the biblical emphasis on searching for God’s truth in all situations
– the dangers of ignoring unhelpful myths and traditions concerning HIV.

We will BE...
– more aware that ‘the truth will set you free’ (John 8:32)
– vigilant to discover and act on truth and knowledge rather than myth.

We will ACT...
– to raise awareness of harmful myths and traditional practices
– to ensure our lives do no harm to others
– to protect the lives of those who are at risk from unhelpful or dangerous myths and traditions.

Background information

There are many unhelpful myths and traditions concerning HIV. Some are simply unhelpful; others are dangerous and may put lives at risk. God has given scientists considerable knowledge about HIV and we have a duty to ensure we obtain and understand reliable and proven information about HIV. The table below shows some common myths. There are many others in different communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth or tradition</th>
<th>Truth</th>
<th>Impact of myth or tradition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping with a virgin cures HIV</td>
<td>There is no cure for HIV</td>
<td>Young girls and even babies suffer long-term physical and mental damage if they are raped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping with 100 women will cure HIV</td>
<td>There is no cure for HIV</td>
<td>Huge risk of spreading HIV and getting other sexually transmitted infections. Unfaithfulness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can show you are a ‘real man’ by having sex with many women</td>
<td>God has designed sex to be enjoyed within faithful marriage relationships</td>
<td>Men are more likely to have HIV when they marry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using condoms makes you weak</td>
<td>Condoms prevent pregnancy and protect against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases</td>
<td>More unwanted pregnancies, spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female genital cutting (or female genital mutilation FGM) is essential to keep women ‘pure’</td>
<td>The World Health Organisation has found that female genital cutting has no health benefits and harms girls and women in many ways</td>
<td>Female genital cutting causes physical damage, increasing the risk of HIV infection. It can cause complications and infections that may lead to infertility. It leads to an increased risk of childbirth complications and newborn deaths (WHO)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips for facilitator

■ Discuss what myths and traditions are common in our community. What are their consequences?
■ Where can we get more reliable information on HIV within our country? How can we share this effectively?
■ How can we reduce the risk of HIV being passed on during tattooing or facial decorations or during male circumcision?

Ideas for practical response

Focus on how to source and effectively share accurate information and how to challenge unhelpful or dangerous myths and traditions in our societies.

References

www.avert.org
www.unaids.org
www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets
Understanding Christian and typical worldviews

Moses had safely led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, crossing through the Red Sea and through the desert, with God providing manna and water and leading them with a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night (Exodus 13:21-22). They had therefore witnessed many miraculous signs of God’s presence guiding them. Then God called Moses to Mount Sinai to speak directly to him and give him the Ten Commandments, the law and regulations for worship.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1 Moses had given Aaron authority as High Priest. Why was he so ready to go along with what the Israelites wanted?
2 What kind of stress led them to return to their traditional beliefs and the worship of false gods?
3 What was the Israelites’ response to this new and accessible god?
4 What did the people lose from clinging to their old ways and what suffering and damage resulted to the community from their choices?
5 What were the consequences of God’s anger?
6 Why did Moses make the people drink the powder of the burnt idol (verse 20)?

In the time of HIV...
7 Do our leaders lead by example or by promising what they know the people want? Give some examples of both and their consequences.
8 What idols are worshipped today, in place or alongside God? (For example, money.) What are the consequences?
9 What power do traditional myths and beliefs hold over Christians today?
10 Are there helpful cultural traditions that reinforce the Christian values of love and charity?
11 Think of examples of harmful myths and traditions. How can we show the lack of truth in these?
12 How can God’s counsellor, the Holy Spirit, help us test whether something is true or false? Can we share any examples?

Key learning points

- Despite all the miraculous signs they had experienced (the plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, the provision of manna and water in the desert), and a strong, brave and just leader, Moses, the people of Israel were quick to return to traditional beliefs and the worship of false gods.
- Church leaders need to stand up and affirm truth and condemn harmful myths and traditions in order to give people the confidence to break free of their power.
- Those in leadership need to correct their brothers and sisters in Christ, if they are aware they are believing incorrect information, particularly about HIV.

Prayer points

- Pray that all of us will look afresh at the myths and traditions that we have grown up with and that may still have a hold on us, especially at times of stress.
- Pray for our political and church leaders to show integrity and courage in speaking out in truth and condemning any false teaching.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will be a continual guide for us in finding the right way forward.

Further passages for reading

GALATIANS 5:1 Freedom in Christ
JOHN 8:32 The truth will set you free

**Exodus 32:1-20**
**John 14:15-17**

13 How can we help people to see that the truth does indeed set us free (John 8:32)?

Between 100 to 140 million girls and women worldwide are living with the consequences of female genital cutting, the majority of them being in Africa.

WHO factsheets
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– the difference between healing and cure
– that God’s miracles occur in different ways at different times for different people
– that ART is God’s miraculous provision, following the prayers of many for God to help doctors find a way to treat HIV
– why it is important to persevere with ART, even when people feel better.

We will BE...
– given faith to believe that treatment and prayer will work
– open to the truth that the God who is behind scientific discoveries is the same God behind spiritual healing
– able to understand that all healing comes from God.

We will ACT...
– with courage to promote and seek voluntary HIV counselling and testing
– to continue with treatment alongside prayer
– to encourage others to go for testing and treatment and help them to continue with their treatment
– to promote healthy, positive living for body, mind and spirit.

Background information
Explain what ART involves. Explain how important it is to continue with ART, even when we feel better. If we stop taking ART, in time we will become sick again and next time the medicines will not work well.

All of us, not just people who suspect they may have HIV, should go for voluntary HIV counselling and testing. Only then can people receive medical advice to ensure they stay in good health – and if necessary receive ART.

ART involves taking powerful drugs that may cause side effects such as nausea. Encouraging people to drink plenty of clean water can help. Simple teas made by adding ginger, mint leaves or cinnamon bark to hot water may also help, but avoid herbal treatments that may interfere with ART.

Tips for facilitator
Ensure people understand that faith healing and medical healing are all interconnected – they are not opposites.

Explain the huge difference between praying for healing for people with HIV whilst encouraging them to benefit fully from medical services – and the falseness of telling people to have faith that God will cure them and that taking ART shows a lack of faith.

We can be healed – in physical, spiritual and emotional health – while the virus still remains in our body. Both treatment and prayer are essential to this holistic healing.

Ideas for practical response
Ask someone open about living with HIV and who is taking ART to bring their drugs and explain the drug combinations, the side effects and benefits.

Encourage full awareness of the local situation with regard to the provision and ongoing supply of ART. Different countries and regions have very different access to supplies of ART drugs. If ART is not freely available to all, consider how the church could lobby for this provision.

References
www.avert.org/treatment.htm
www.unaids.org/en/PolicyAndPractice/HIVTreatment

In developing countries, 10 million people are in immediate need of life-giving ART; of these, only 3 million (31%) are receiving these drugs.

AVERT
Healing and antiretroviral therapy (ART)

This story centres on some really important ‘big’ people – Naaman, a great army commander, the King of Aram and the King of Israel. However it is the humble people, the servants, who see and understand God at work and who are used to transform Naaman’s understanding. God’s prophet Elisha doesn’t provide the miraculous cure Naaman expects. Rather Naaman has to humble himself and accept a simple and practical healing in which he has to participate.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1 Who are the characters in this story and what do we learn from them?
2 How did the young Israelite captive girl help Naaman? Had anyone before then acknowledged Naaman’s illness?
3 What kind of healing was Naaman expecting from the prophet Elisha?
4 Why was Naaman at first unwilling to follow Elisha’s advice?
5 How did Naaman’s servants help him?

In the time of HIV...
6 Are there people among us like the people in the story? Who encourages people to go for testing and treatment? Who helps people to continue taking their ART?
7 What kinds of treatment and healing has God provided for those of us living with HIV?
8 Why is it important to continue with treatment and prayer even when we feel better?
9 What behaviours can help all of us, including those living with HIV, to live longer, more healthy lives and protect ourselves and others from new HIV infections?
10 What does God want us, as his church, to do to promote the health and healing for those of us living with HIV?

Key learning points

- Healing is different from a cure. There are no scientifically proven cases of someone moving from being HIV-positive to HIV-negative (i.e., being cured of HIV). God’s miracles occur in different ways for different people. We have prayed for God to help doctors find a way to treat HIV infection. ART is God’s miraculous provision, now available to many.
- Those of us knowing or suspecting that we have HIV must take full responsibility not to pass it on to others. Those of us who do not have HIV, must take full responsibility not to get it.

Prayer points

- Pray for those working with the medical services in our communities, that they may show professionalism, compassion, wisdom and fairness in meeting the needs of those who need their help. Pray in particular for Christians working in the medical services, and for sufficient resources.
- As a church we need to pray with people and also encourage those of us living with HIV to obtain and continue with ART.
- In the end, God heals all of us through death, ending suffering on earth and bringing us to eternal life with him.

Further passages for reading

EZEKIEL 37:1-14 Physical and spiritual healing combined
JOHN 5:1-8 A disabled man takes personal responsibility in the healing process
DEUTERONOMY 29:29 God reveals new things to bless us and future generations

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HAND IN HAND: BIBLE STUDIES TO TRANSFORM OUR RESPONSE TO HIV

FACILITATOR’S NOTES

How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and understand the effect stigma, discrimination and denial have on the spread of HIV.

We will BE...
– able to care and support for people living with HIV and their families by addressing issues of stigma, discrimination and denial.

We will ACT...
– to help foster unconditional love, care and compassion for people living with HIV and their families.

Background information

Three key factors – stigma, discrimination and denial – contribute to the spread of HIV throughout the world. STIGMA refers to a sense of disgrace or shame, it is revealed through the disapproval, condemnation and rejection of people living with HIV by their family and community. Discrimination means to treat someone unfairly because of prejudice or incorrect information, for example people of a different race or religion, or people living with HIV. DENIAL means refusing to accept something is true, (such as refusing to accept the existence of HIV in one’s family or community despite clear evidence). Stigma, discrimination and denial – which are more likely to be faced by HIV and AIDS patients in many faith communities – lead to widespread denial of the reality of HIV. Many people living with HIV suffer discrimination from their faith communities. This leads to widespread denial of the reality of HIV. If people are in denial about HIV they are less likely to be tested for HIV and to practice safer forms of behavior. Often women face greater discrimination and are unfairly blamed on their HIV-positive status (even though the husband may be the more likely source).

Tips for facilitator

Focus on the practical ways in which people living with HIV experience stigma and discrimination in our churches and communities. Examine what impact this has on us, our families and on others and on their families. Are we aware of evidence of denial about HIV in our churches and families? How can we challenge such denial and encourage openness?

Ideas for practical response

Help people to be clear about the consequences of stigma, discrimination and denial in their churches and communities – and to discuss ways of dealing with each of these.

References

Positive Voices: Religious leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS called to care series No.1, Strategies for Hope Trust, Oxford 2005

Stigma, discrimination and denial

How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and understand the effect stigma, discrimination and denial have on the spread of HIV.

We will BE...
– able to care and support for people living with HIV and their families by addressing issues of stigma, discrimination and denial.

We will ACT...
– to help foster unconditional love, care and compassion for people living with HIV and their families.

Background information

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Tips for facilitator

Focus on the practical ways in which people living with HIV experience stigma and discrimination in our churches and communities. Examine what impact this has on us, our families and on others and on their families. Are we aware of evidence of denial about HIV in our churches and families? How can we challenge such denial and encourage openness?

Ideas for practical response

Help people to be clear about the consequences of stigma, discrimination and denial in their churches and communities – and to discuss ways of dealing with each of these.

References

Positive Voices: Religious leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS called to care series No.1, Strategies for Hope Trust, Oxford 2005
John 8:1-11

Stigma, discrimination and denial

This story takes place in the temple after the Feast of Tabernacles. The Pharisees and teachers of the Law brought this woman to Jesus in order to trap and discredit him.

Discussion

In Bible times...
1. Who are the main people in the story?
2. What is this story really about?
3. Verse 4 of this passage states that the woman ‘was caught in the act of committing adultery.’ Why, therefore, was it only the woman, and not the man she was with, who was accused of adultery and brought before Jesus and a crowd of people?
4. Why did Jesus answer in the way he did?
5. Why did the Pharisees and teachers of the Law walk away?

In the time of HIV...
6. If a married woman in our community tests positive for HIV before her husband, how is she treated by her husband and the members of his family?
7. How do attitudes in our communities towards a pregnant woman living with HIV affect her chances of receiving good medical care during pregnancy and childbirth?
8. How do these attitudes affect the chances of a baby contracting HIV from its mother during childbirth?

Key learning points

- Do not rush to judge others, for all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23-24)
- Women are often blamed for the spread of HIV, because they are often the first to discover their HIV status, but they may well have contracted the virus from their husband.
- As Christians, we have a responsibility to lead efforts to challenge stigma, discrimination and denial.
- The effectiveness of health services, such as care during pregnancy and childbirth, depends largely on the absence of stigma against HIV-positive mothers.

Prayer points

- Give thanks that Jesus came into the world to save it, not to condemn it. We all need to be saved just like this woman in order to begin a new life.

Further passages for reading:

JOHN 4:1-26 Jesus and the Samaritan Woman
JOHN 5:1-15 Jesus heals a paralysed man
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and understand how to develop skills for coping mechanisms against self-stigma and how to encourage positive living.

We will BE...
– given understanding to stand alongside people with self-stigma and gently encourage them to gain in self-confidence
– able to promote the positive well-being of individuals with HIV infection.

We will ACT...
– to restore the dignity of people who suffer from self-stigma by showing them the compassionate love of Christ
– to foster a better understanding and bring equality among God’s people by fighting injustice in society.

Background information

Self-stigma is the feeling that people are avoiding you or pointing ‘accusing’ fingers due to a particular reason. It is as if we are to blame, that we are somehow ‘unworthy’. This causes low self-esteem, mental suffering and prevents us living life to the full, and becoming all that God intends for us. This is a common response in the context of living with HIV.

Tips for facilitator

The facilitator needs to explain the concept of ‘unclean’ in the Old Testament (see Leviticus chapter 15). To be ‘unclean’ or ‘impure’ is to threaten others’ ‘holiness’ through contact. ‘Unclean’ or ‘impure’ objects or people must be kept separate from holy places or people. Uncleaness or impurity can arise from sin or from natural conditions such as bodily discharges, childbirth, illness or touching something that is dead.

Examine Jesus’ response towards ‘unclean’ people (such as those with leprosy, female bleeding or who were dead).

Be very sensitive to people within the group likely to experience self-stigma for a variety of reasons, including HIV.

Ideas for practical response

How can we understand the feelings that people may go through when they receive a positive HIV test result? How can we help people to react with hope to this information?

Few of us are natural counsellors – we are too quick to give advice rather than really listening. How can we gain skills in counselling?

Focus on building up self-confidence through learning about Jesus’ response to people regarded by wider society as ‘unclean’.
Self-stigma

Jesus deliberately chose to travel through Samaria on his way to Galilee. Other Jews would not have used this route due to the difficult relationships between Jews and Samaritans. They would choose a longer route. The meeting with the Samaritan woman was not just by accident but because of God’s will. The woman comes to draw water at noon during the midday heat in order to avoid others, due to her past life. When Jesus confronts her about her past and her various husbands, she does not deny it. Her difficult past makes her spiritually thirsty and in need of salvation. All of us are sinners and need to stand before Christ and be truthful about our lives, and ask for forgiveness in order to receive the living water.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1 In your own words, describe the scene from the Bible passage that you have just read.
2 Who are the people in the story?
3 Why do you think the woman came alone to draw water from the well at noon when it was very hot?
4 Why was the Samaritan woman so surprised that Jesus asked her for water?
5 What does Jesus mean when he tells the woman he will give her ‘living water’?
6 What lesson do we learn from the passage about Jesus’ contact with the Samaritan woman who the Jews considered as ‘unclean’?

In the time of HIV...
7 The Samaritan woman has had several sexual partners. Discuss this statement in the context of HIV today.
8 How does self-stigma act as a barrier to effective HIV prevention and care and access to available services?
9 How can we help people to explore their way of life and cultural practices in the light of their own personal risk of HIV infection?
10 In what ways can the church make people who feel unworthy, feel personally welcomed?
11 What are some of the things that we do in the church that exclude others? How can we change these?

Key learning points
- Jesus clearly shows us that he considers all people equal and that no race or group of people is inferior to others.
- We need to promote fairness between men and women and between different groups of people in our communities.
- We need to review any of our cultural practices and beliefs that stigmatise others and by which we stigmatise ourselves in the light of HIV.
- The church has a prophetic role to play in bringing about a society in which people work together and everyone is treated fairly.

Prayer points
- All of us are sinful. All of us need to come to meet Jesus and ask for the living water only he can give. All of us can receive his forgiveness and new life, putting aside our feelings of self-stigma.
- Pray for those who suffer from self-stigma and feel they are shunned by society.
- Pray for forgiveness for our words, actions and inactions that could have harmed or stigmatised others.

Further passages for reading
JOHN 9:1-3 Jesus says that neither a blind man nor his parents sinned
JOB 3:1-26 Job expresses his feelings of despair and fear at his condition
1 JOHN 3:19-20 Even when our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts
ROMANS 8:1 There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
- the full meaning of God’s wonderful forgiveness
- that forgiveness is rarely a simple decision but usually requires continual effort
- that forgiveness is not the same as forgetting.

We will BE...
- overwhelmed by our understanding of the depths and cost of God's forgiveness towards us.

We will ACT...
- to truly forgive others and find peace of mind and heart
- to challenge continuing negative behaviour despite forgiving the person.

Background information

We all fall short of what God wants in our lives. We disappoint him by our lack of response to his commandment to love one another, and fail him when we give in to temptations.

Through the wonderful sacrifice on the cross of Jesus our Redeemer, we can find forgiveness from sins and from self-blame and begin again with a clear heart. But we must also share God’s amazing forgiveness with others, however much they hurt and offend us.

Tips for facilitator

It may be very hard to forgive someone for changing another person’s life through passing on HIV. Discuss how we can forgive our partners, not just superficially, but in our innermost being? Only by doing this, can we really find peace and hope for the future.

Discuss how we know when we have really forgiven someone. Do we no longer feel any resentment towards them? Have we found relief from our pain?

Ideas for practical response

Reconciliation is a means of bringing together offenders and victims of a crime. The bad things that happened are brought into the open and offenders are reminded, or made aware for the first time, of the hurt they have caused. Offenders can make amends and may receive forgiveness from their victims.
- Discuss opportunities for the church to bring about reconciliation in different situations – such as over land disputes and peace-building after conflict.
- Can the church equip people to act as counsellors to work through issues around forgiveness with people who have been deeply hurt?
- Can the church provide marriage enrichment courses to help couples living with HIV to work through their relationship and resolve any feelings of blame and bitterness?

Faithful married women may be able to forgive their husbands for unfaithfulness. However, this will put them at considerable risk of HIV, so they will need to practise safer sex. They should also speak out and challenge their husbands over their behaviour if they continue to be unfaithful.
Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a decision to let go of bitterness and thoughts of revenge. This frees us from the impact that such negative feelings can have in our lives. Forgiveness rarely means forgetting what has happened. But we are able to let go of the issue and no longer want to punish the offender. We can safely leave them in God’s hands and he will ultimately deal with them. When we forgive, God sets our hearts free from anger, hurt and bitterness.

In the passage from Luke, the offender shows repentance for their offence or sin and comes to ask us to forgive them. This usually, though not always, makes the process of forgiving easier. In the second passage from Mark, God is saying that we should forgive even when the offender hasn’t asked for forgiveness.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. The word ‘rebuke’ means to tell somebody off for their actions. In what circumstances would we rebuke someone? Who would we feel comfortable rebuking?
2. What does the word ‘repent’ mean? What have we repented of in our lives?
3. What did Jesus mean by forgiving someone 7 x 7 times?
4. Can you think of a time when you received forgiveness for something? How did it make you feel?
5. How ready are we to forgive others? Is it easier to do this when they ask our forgiveness?
6. What happens when people are unable to forgive?

In the time of HIV...
7. Are we struggling to forgive someone? Is there something we are still wanting from this person?
8. If our partner is unaware of their HIV status and infects us, and later seeks our forgiveness for what has happened, are there different stages of forgiveness that we experience?
9. If someone deliberately infects someone with HIV, (HIV often accompanies rape as a weapon of war, terror or power) the victim’s life is usually devastated. How can we ensure that justice is done? Can we also find forgiveness in this situation?

10. Women are often blamed for passing on HIV, though there are probably many more cases of the husband being unfaithful than the wife. How can we respond to this situation without blaming?

Key learning points

■ Forgiveness rarely comes easily. We must actively choose to forgive.
■ We may not be able to find forgiveness straightaway. We may often need to work at it over time and continue to forgive until our hearts are at peace.
■ God wants us to forgive so that our hearts will be clean.
■ Without finding forgiveness, our lives will continue to carry the burden of resentment, and we will not be able to move forwards.
■ While we can forgive, we should continue to challenge negative behaviour and get help when needed, including access to justice.

Prayer points

■ Are we having difficulty forgiving someone? Christ’s death has provided us with the Holy Spirit, which gives us the power to overcome our weaknesses. With God, nothing is impossible.

Further passages for reading

MATTHEW 6:14-15 If we will not forgive others, God will not forgive us
MATTHEW 18:21-35 The parable of the unmerciful servant
LUKE 15:11-24 Parable of the prodigal son and his father’s forgiveness
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and understand that we are all called to care and take responsibility for one another.

We will BE...
– given a deeper understanding of the practical care and support that others may need in the context of HIV
– aware of other people’s physical, emotional and spiritual needs
– mobilised to support others in need.

We will ACT...
– to provide support in meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of those in our community impacted by HIV
– to mobilise our churches to meet the needs of people living with HIV.

Background information

There is a need for increased knowledge among church leaders of the need for action to support people in need within their communities. Not just people living with HIV, but also their children, their families, and caregivers who take on responsibilities for AIDS orphans. All these people have different but often very considerable practical, emotional and spiritual needs – all of which need different resources and responses from within our churches.

Tips for facilitator

Encourage people to see that everyone has the capacity to help each other. Even if we are poor, or weak, or sick, we still have something to offer. For example, even if we lack money, we could still give our time and we can use our practical skills to fix a leak or teach an orphan how to cook. We could listen and talk to people who may not have anyone else to talk to. We could share our experiences, what we have learnt from life and give advice to help solve a problem.

Ideas for practical response

This study encourages us not just to discuss situations and needs, but to take action to directly meet those needs. Discuss who around us is hungry, thirsty, homeless, lacking adequate clothes or in prison – in both physical and spiritual terms. If no one is adequately meeting their needs, what can we do ourselves?

References

www.Biblelight.org  The judgement of God
www.avert.org/statistics.htm

Children orphaned by AIDS may be taken in by other family members, but brothers and sisters may be split up to lessen the burden. This is a huge emotional loss for these children who have also just lost their parents.
Care and support for people living with HIV

This powerful passage comes just before the last supper and before Jesus was arrested. It is almost his final teaching point to his disciples and one that applies just as much to us all today.

In this powerful and practical passage, Jesus talks about meeting the needs of people who are often forgotten or shunned by society, for example those in prison. His listeners were surprised by his words.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1 What is this passage saying?
2 Who are the different people involved and what are they doing?
3 What does this passage tell us about how we as Christians should care for those in need?

In the time of HIV...
4 In our culture, who do we expect to care for the sick, and why? In this passage, whose responsibility is it?
5 What are the needs that those of us who are living with HIV may have? Consider physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Do people need care only when they are sick?
6 How can we as Christians, both as individuals and as a church community, meet these needs and provide practical care and support for each other?
7 Do children have different needs from adults? Explain why. How can we provide care and support for vulnerable children in our community, for example those who are orphaned or who are caring for parents who are sick?
8 We may feel we have little to offer to help others, but in this passage, Jesus calls everyone to account for how they have cared for others. Explore the ways in which we could use what little we do have to help others?

Key learning points

- Are there people in our community who are excluded, or whose needs are ignored – for example because of their age, or gender, or HIV status?
- What does our society lose because of this?
- How can we transform this situation, and ensure that all people can participate fully in the life of our community?

Prayer points

- Pray that we can take this message to heart and be mobilised to meet the needs of others, however uncomfortable we may feel about their situation and backgrounds. God’s love is unconditional and ours should be likewise.

Further passages for reading

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-3 Our longing for heaven
2 CORINTHIANS 5:15 We should not live just for ourselves
God’s plan for married couples: the place of love and sex

How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– the biblical views on love and sex, including roles and expectations for men and women
– our cultural traditions regarding sex and how these may differ from biblical teaching
– the place of love and sex in God’s plan for human relationships.

We will BE...
– aware of how to address emotional and physical needs in marriage
– able to talk more openly about the ‘taboo’ subject of sex
– free of guilt in enjoying the gift of sex within marriage.

We will ACT...
– with more confidence to talk openly about sex and relationships within our marriages.

Background information

Sex is a gift from God, designed to help build an effective marriage relationship based on mutual enjoyment. It should be fulfilling and enjoyed by both husband and wife. This can only happen if there is mutual respect, affection and good communication between the couple.

Men and women usually have very different views about relationships and sex that are rarely voiced and discussed. Different cultural behaviour and views about sex are often expected from wives and husbands.

Tips for facilitator

Many people may find it hard to share their feelings openly about sexual matters. Create a relaxed and open atmosphere. People may find discussion easier to do by dividing into single gender groups and then sharing the results of the discussion. Find and agree on what words we will use for sexual issues.

Encourage the participants to consider different aspects of relationships, including: mutual respect, negotiating and agreement. Compare what our culture says about relationships with what this passage speaks about.

Help people to discuss our own cultural views about sex. Consider what we mean by sexual fulfilment within marriage and whether this is different for men and women? Discuss in what situations a husband and wife should abstain from sex.

‘Integrating HIV in the daily life of a parish church means that you ensure that you strive to give people accurate information about HIV, you strive to change their attitudes to both the disease and to people living with it. You strive to build their skills in self-protection and self-care; you try to ensure that they have the best services that can help them protect themselves and their loved ones like voluntary counselling and testing, like post-test clubs where they meet for sharing information and positive living. We also create a supportive environment that promotes gaining solidarity against HIV.’

Canon Gideon Byamugisha, Founder of INERELA+

Ideas for practical response

– How can married couples share their feelings more openly regarding their sexual relationship?
– How can we encourage cultural changes in our communities?
– Are there courses, workshops or opportunities available to help support couples in our region? Could the church provide such support?

Couples could agree to meet together on a regular basis to discuss these issues.

References

www.christian-Bible.com  The Bible and sexuality
marriage.infomedia.com  Sex and marriage
www.Bibletruths.org  The Christian family
Sex is a taboo subject for many people. They are afraid to talk about it in case others think that they are ‘improper’ or ‘indecent. They accuse them of ‘causing people to stumble’. Yet sex was created by God as part of his original plan for humanity, as a good gift for a husband and wife to share and enjoy.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1 What does this passage in Genesis say about men and women, and about the relationships between them?
2 In 1 Corinthians 7, why did Paul say to men that it is better not to marry?
3 What marital duty do you think Paul was referring to?
4 What can we learn from 1 Corinthians 7 about the roles God intended for a man and a woman in regard to sex?

In the time of HIV...
5 In Genesis, it says that the man should ‘leave his parents and cleave to his wife’. Is this the common practice in our culture? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
6 How does the passage from 1 Corinthians challenge our cultural practices?
7 In your view, is sex a husband’s right, or a mutual expression of love that should be negotiated together?
8 What situations encourage married people to be unfaithful?
9 Some statements often heard are: ‘she has no interest in sex’, or ‘all he wants is sex’. How can a Christian couple have a fulfilling sexual relationship that honours God and avoids such problems?
10 What are the benefits of a fulfilling sexual relationship within marriage for a husband? For a wife? For preventing the spread of HIV?
11 Good communication is key in a marriage relationship. Frustrations occur when couples fail to communicate. List some ways in which men and women may differ in how they communicate their needs for affection, care and sexual intimacy?
12 How can we as Christians model a good and healthy marriage?

Key learning points
- Cultural taboos and traditional roles and expectations about sex for men and women can often be a barrier to fulfilling sexual relationships.
- Men and women often view sex and relationships differently. It’s important for couples to recognise this and understand what is important to each other.
- Changes within our marriages should benefit both husbands and wives and need to be agreed together.

Prayer points
- Pray for the many couples controlled by cultural practices and beliefs, sometimes leaving women particularly unfulfilled and unhappy.
- Pray for the many couples frustrated and disillusioned because they are unable to openly discuss their needs for mutual fulfilment. Give us the courage to begin open and honest communication, and build meaningful relationships.
- Pray that we can follow Christ’s example to truly love each other, and to break the bonds of oppression over women. Give Christian men the courage to live differently from others and to mirror the love of Christ to their wives.

Further passages for reading
SONG OF SONGS 4:9-16 The joy of two people enjoying their love for each other
EPHESIANS 5:25-29 How a husband should love his wife
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and understand what the Bible says about love, sex and relationships
– more about the sexual pressures and vulnerabilities faced by some people, particularly young women and girls in child-headed households, when they are forced to engage in sex for food and survival, for example.

We will BE...
– able to examine positive and negative cultural values, practices and pressures around sex
– able to discuss the taboo subject of sex more openly
– more sensitive to the different perceptions men and women have about relationships and sexual fulfilment
– more aware of the pressures placed on young people from society and the mass media.

We will ACT...
– with confidence to discuss sex and relationships before marriage
– to abstain from sex until we are able to enjoy it within marriage, avoiding unwanted pregnancies, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Background information

Young people often find it very difficult to learn about sex and relationships. Most information comes from their friends and the mass media. This often encourages a casual attitude towards sex outside marriage.

Powerful sexual urges are part of our nature but these are under our control. God’s ideal for sex is that we should abstain before marriage and remain faithful to our partner within marriage. Young people need good role models for Christian marriage. As long as they discuss things openly, they can enjoy waiting together for sex in obedience to God’s teaching.

Tips for facilitator

Many people may sometimes find it hard to share their feelings openly about sexual matters. Create a relaxed and open atmosphere. People may find discussion easier to do by dividing into single sex groups and then joining together to share the results of the discussion.

As a helpful beginning to this study, discuss the common perceptions and expectations held by girls in our culture about sex and relationships. What perceptions and expectations do boys have? List the key differences.

Ideas for practical response

Discuss the role that the church could play in shaping positive sexual views that go beyond just giving rules to young people. How can we encourage and develop in young people the skills they each need to make good choices, to respect each other, to protect themselves and enable them to meet the challenges and pressures they face?

How can we provide good role models in our marriages for young people?

Could the church help to change or lessen the impact of unhelpful influences?

References

www.christian-Bible.com The Bible and sexuality
marriage.infomedia.com Sex and marriage
www.Bibletruths.org The Christian family

ROLE PLAY

A young couple are very much in love. They know about the risks of HIV and the girl asks the young man to wait for sex. However, his friends tease him and say he is not a real man. Next time he meets his girlfriend he suggests a walk. When they reach a deserted area, he tells her he is tired of waiting.

At this point the role-play could stop and people could be asked what they think should happen next?

After discussion the role-play could continue.
God’s plan for single people and unmarried couples: the place of love and sex

Sex is a subject that causes a lot of discussion, confusion and problems among young people. This Bible study seeks to look at the subject in the current context of HIV, and the increasing social pressures young people often face.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. What did Paul mean in verse 12 when he says, ‘everything is permissible but not everything is beneficial’?
2. Discuss what Paul means when he says that:
   – ‘Your bodies are members of Christ himself’ (verse 15)?
   – ‘The two will become one flesh’ (verse 16)?
   – ‘Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit’ (verse 19)?

In the time of HIV...
3. What are the current attitudes and practices about sex outside marriage in your community? Are they different for boys and for girls?
4. What are the different views and expectations that boys and girls have about relationships? In the light of this passage, are there changes we can make in our attitudes and practices?
5. Are there reasons why young people may delay getting married in our culture?
6. What has most influence on young people in our society in forming their views about sex, love and marriage? Who or what should have more influence? Can we help to change this?
7. God made men and women in his image, and we are physically designed to enjoy sex. Some cultural practices, however, insist on body modifications such as female circumcision. What practices are common in our culture, which could be seen as harmful or which go against Christian values and ethics? Are they of equal benefit to both sexes? Are there ways that as Christians we can challenge any harmful practices?
8. Are there situations in our society where people do not have a choice over sex? What could our response be?

Key learning points

- Society’s views about love and sex are very different from God’s expectations of the role and place of sex. We need to help our young people to learn how to make wise choices for their lives and about their future partners. We need to give them confidence, support and courage to say no and go against social and economic pressures.
- Young men and women often lack opportunities to obtain clear and useful information about sex and sexual health.
- Young men and women may have very different views and expectations about relations and sex. These expectations need to be expressed and discussed before marriage to establish a sound basis for a good relationship.

Prayer points

- Dear Lord, we are surrounded by people who have different values from us. Many of us at times fear to be different and struggle with the pressure. Please give us the strength to be different, and to choose to follow you. Amen.

Further passages for reading

1 Corinthisans 7:8-9 Advice on when to marry
Genesis 2:18-25 God creates woman
Genesis 39:5-20 Joseph resists temptation and follows God’s teaching
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and recognise the physical and sexual abuse that many women suffer
– that the church has a responsibility to address inequalities between men and women.

We will BE...
– aware that we should all be respected and treated equally irrespective of our gender.

We will ACT...
– to provide opportunities to address the issue of sexual exploitation
– to provide support to survivors of abuse while holding the perpetrators responsible.

Background information

The sexual exploitation of women in our communities often goes on unchecked. As a church we need to re-examine how we respect and value both women and men in our community. Unfairness between men and women, and sexual violence, all contribute to the spread of HIV, making women particularly vulnerable. The church needs to address these issues, encouraging men to model a positive masculinity which shows strength through protecting the vulnerable, demonstrating servant leadership and respect for women.

Tips for facilitator

Be sensitive when discussing issues of sexual exploitation and violence, as people within the group may themselves have suffered abuse and this topic could be painful to discuss. Always respect people’s privacy. Do not talk about specific people or specific examples.

Be ready to provide counselling support, as this may be appropriate for some members in the Bible study.

Provide a time to pray for those who may have specific needs for healing or dealing with forgiveness.

Examine some of the reasons for sexual exploitation in this particular community, so you can lead people to a better understanding of the challenges.

Find out about the services available to the community that can help those who have been abused (such as police, counselling and rehabilitation).

Ideas for practical response

How can we as a community work to prevent abuse, particularly of vulnerable girls and women, and hold those responsible to account?

Pray for those that have been abused that God may bring healing.

Find out what services are available in the community for taking legal action against offenders and providing support to those that have been abused (therapy).

Educate people on how sexual abuse and exploitation may occur and its effects on society.

Engage the community in discussing the symptoms of sexual and abuse and exploitation and how it should be addressed.

References

www.warc.ch  Justice and partnership/Partnership between women and men

Women who have been raped should seek medical attention. In some areas they may be able to obtain post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). These are drugs given within 72 hours after rape that help to prevent HIV infection. Find out if these are available locally. If not, consider raising awareness of such drugs and advocating for their availability.
Sexual exploitation and violence against women

Sexual exploitation and violence against women in our communities often goes on unchecked. Too often no one is willing to speak up about this issue. There are several examples in the Bible where women are not treated with fairness. However, Jesus teaches that all people, both men and women, should be valued as created in the image of God and treated fairly. As a church we need to re-examine how Jesus would have us treat women. The church needs to address existing inequalities in gender and encourage men to develop a positive masculinity which shows strength through protecting the vulnerable, demonstrating servant leadership and respect for women.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. What did the men who pounded at the old man’s door want? How does the Bible refer to these men?
2. Why do you think the old man was willing to volunteer the women in the house? Was this not an equally ‘disgraceful thing’?
3. What do you feel are the attitudes of the Levite and the old man towards women?
4. How does Jesus’ attitude to women compare to that of the men in this passage? Can you think of examples? (John 8:1-11, John 4:7-9)
5. Could you retell this story from the concubine’s point of view? Consider how she might have felt and reacted.

In the time of HIV...
6. Are there ways in which women in our community are considered as expendable? Consider cultural practices, for example, early marriage or offering women’s sexual services as a sign of good hospitality. How does this contrast to Christ’s care and respect for women?
7. How do these practices, and the inequality between men and women, increase women’s vulnerability to HIV?
8. How should the church protect women in our community from being abused or treated unfairly?
9. What are our attitudes towards those who have been abused? Do we offer them our support or stigmatise and reject those who have been abused?

Key learning points
- The church has a responsibility to protect the vulnerable, to speak up against injustice and provide care and support for those who have been abused (Micah 6:8).
- A woman who has been raped may need different types of support and care, including HIV testing, counselling, prayer support, acceptance, emotional support, reassurance and time to talk confidentially with an understanding person.
- Women are not expendable objects and deserve equal respect and honour (Ephesians 5:25).
- We need to challenge stigma and rejection of women who have been abused, and instead offer them support in meeting their emotional, physical and spiritual needs.
- Discuss how we can work together as a community to prevent abuse and hold those responsible to account.

Prayer points
- Pray that God will reveal situations of abuse towards women in our communities and help us to end them.
- Pray that the church will take responsibility in addressing the issues of abuse of women and will love and support those who have suffered abuse.
- Pray that we let the Lord teach us to live in humility (Philippians 2: 1-12).

Further passages for reading
- 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20 Our body as a temple of the Holy Spirit
- MATTHEW:1:18-25 Joseph’s treatment and respect for Mary
- JOHN 8:1-11 Jesus and the woman caught in adultery
- GENESIS 19:1-11 Lot allows his daughter to be raped to protect his guests (who were angels)
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
- that rape is more common than we may realise and that boys also sometimes get raped
- that rape is more likely to take place within the wider family than with strangers.

We will BE...
- more aware of how vulnerable young people may be to sexual violence.

We will ACT...
- by teaching young people how to protect themselves
- to ensure abuse, particularly sexual abuse, is not hidden within families
- to provide support for the victims of abuse.

Background information

Young people may suffer from different kinds of abuse – physical, emotional or sexual.

This study looks at sexual abuse within the family. Many people assume that most sexual violence takes place outside the family but this is often not the case.

The act of rape, deeply troubling in itself, also makes HIV infection more likely because of the violence and damage to the delicate skin of the sexual parts.

Tips for facilitator

Widen the discussion by first considering the social and economic pressures that force young people, especially girls, to consent to sex against their wishes.

Divide people into single gender groups for the discussion. Some participants may have experienced abuse or rape themselves. Allow opportunity for people to share these experiences if they feel able to do this, but do not ask anyone directly about their own background. Help people by suggesting they talk about people they know, without giving names. This allows them to talk anonymously about themselves. Treat the subject with great sensitivity.

If possible find someone with counselling experience to provide support if anyone wants to talk afterwards.

Ideas for practical response

Discuss what resources there are in our community for victims of rape. Can we challenge the local police to do more?

Can our churches provide more support and offer counselling services?

What training opportunities are there for developing counselling skills?

How can we teach our young people to avoid situations that place them at risk?

Discuss whether any kind of protective network could be established to help protect vulnerable children in our communities.

References

www.abigails.org An organisation that provides advice, support, counselling and Bible studies about domestic abuse

The Tamar Campaign Search on the internet for this name.

Approximately one third of all women are raped at some time during their lives, often within the wider family. However accurate statistics can be very hard to find.

Human Rights Watch
Protecting young people – their vulnerability to HIV

This study is based on a deeply troubling passage that shows human weaknesses at their worst. King David, son of Solomon and writer of many of the Psalms, had many wives and children. This story concerns two of King David’s sons, Amnon and Absalom and his young daughter Tamar.

Discussion

In biblical times…

1. What do we learn about Tamar from this passage?
2. Why did Amnon keep his feelings about Tamar to himself? What was the result?
3. Amnon confided in his uncle Jonadab. Why was he so ready to take his advice?
4. What do you think about Amnon’s actions in verses 6 to 14? He was the one who committed rape, but who else was also at fault?
5. Why do you think Amnon’s feelings toward Tamar changed after he had raped her?
6. What were the different roles of all the men involved in this story?
7. What did Tamar do and say to defend herself both before and after the rape?
8. How could Tamar have been protected from what happened to her by the different men in this story?
9. Discuss how many opportunities there were during this story for sexual abuse to have been avoided.
10. Was Tamar in any way to blame for what happened to her?

In the time of HIV…

11. How often do people within families suspect abuse of some kind but look the other way? Why do they do this?
12. How can we protect our young people against sexual and other abuse?
13. Tamar spoke out against her abuse both before and after. What was the response to this? What is the response to women who speak out in our culture?
14. Are there young people like Tamar in our community? What is their experience – and what is our response? (Discuss this without giving names.)

Key learning points

- The silence of those involved in this shameful story is deafening. Christians should not stay silent within our society if they know that abuse is taking place, whatever the personal cost to them.
- Rape is about physical power.
- Rape will often result in HIV infection for the victim.
- Sexual abuse is common within families, not just from outsiders or soldiers.
- Young people, especially girls, are very vulnerable to sexual violence and we need to ensure they are educated about the risks from a young age and that effective protection is provided for them within our own families and communities.

Prayer points

- Pray for the victims of rape and sexual abuse who so often, like Tamar, find their lives are devastated through no fault of their own.
- Pray for our churches to provide counselling and support for victims of rape and sexual abuse, to help them rebuild their futures.
- Pray that Christians will have the courage to speak out whenever abuse and injustice take place.

Further passages for reading

GENESIS 19:1-11 Lot is prepared to allow his daughters to be raped in order to protect his guests (who were angels)
GENESIS 38:12-26 Judah and Tamar
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and understand God’s intentions for marriage and families
– and understand that building strong, godly families helps to build strong societies and nations
– that emphasising faithfulness, trust, mutual respect and the dignity of both partners, ensures families are stable and provides a positive atmosphere for raising children.

We will BE...
– encouraged in our understanding of the value and depth of the marriage relationship.

We will ACT...
– to mirror the love of God to society in modelling good relationships, repairing broken relationships and mentoring children and youth.

Background information

Marriage is God’s idea, not humankind’s. The Genesis account of the beginning of marriage (Genesis 2:24-25) ends with a statement that expresses four elements that should be part of every marriage:

**Cutting Off** ‘A man shall leave his father and mother’ – the new marriage partners must leave their parents.

**Bonding** ‘And be united to his wife’ – the idea here is that of gluing or permanent bonding.

**Unity** ‘And they will become one flesh’ – the two becoming one.

**Intimacy** ‘They were both naked ... and felt no shame’ – the absence of self-consciousness enabled the first couple to enjoy one another without any sense of embarrassment or rejection.

Tips for facilitator

Take time to discuss what makes marriages work. Here are some suggested building blocks for good marriages to encourage discussion: lifelong commitment, shared identity, faithfulness, clear roles, unreserved love, mutual submission, sexual fulfilment, open communication and respect.

Parents should learn to be relaxed when talking about their relationship and about sex in the early years of their marriage. This will make it much easier to be open and relaxed when talking with their children about sex, about how girls become pregnant and the risks of HIV.

Ideas for practical response

Divorce, extramarital affairs, alcohol and drugs are just some of the ways people try to deal with difficulties in their marriage. However, all of these can make a bad situation worse. There is another way – a better way. It takes three to make marriage succeed: husband, wife and God. As a husband and wife draw closer to God through prayer, Bible reading, fellowship and submission to Christ, they will also be drawing closer to one another.

References

www.rbc.org/index.aspx  Radio Bible Class Ministries – various useful questions and answers regarding marriage.
A healthy marriage leads to a healthy family

This Bible study helps us to learn from Paul about the importance of a strong and godly marriage and how this is the foundation for a healthy family.

Paul uses this passage to remind the Ephesians about what a godly marriage means (at a time when there was considerable sexual immorality). He then discusses the relationship between children and parents, highlighting the importance of family.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. Who is the creator of marriage? What is the purpose of marriage?
2. Why do you think Paul needed to talk about what a good marriage meant to the Ephesians?
3. What does it mean to submit to one another within a marriage relationship?
4. Why does Paul compare a good marriage with the church’s relationship with Christ?
5. What does Paul highlight as the important qualities of a good marriage?
6. What are the foundations of a strong family?

In the time of HIV...
7. What are the cultural and current practices in our community that can impact negatively or positively on marriage and family? Is it possible for a husband to remain faithful to his wife in all circumstances? Is it possible for a wife to remain faithful to her husband in all circumstances?
8. What will help men and women to remain faithful in their marriage?
9. What are the consequences of a broken marriage?
10. Do you think husbands and wives today should follow these biblical principles of a strong marriage? And if so why?
11. What is the impact of HIV on families?
12. What is the role of the family in society? How can the church help families to be strong and healthy?

Key learning points

- Paul teaches that a husband should love his wife as Christ loved the church. Both husband and wife need to submit to each other.
- Parents need a good biblical foundation in their marriage to build a strong and healthy Christian family.
- The purpose of marriage is for companionship and mutual support, and for raising children.
- Marriage requires mutual respect, the dignity of both partners, trust and faithfulness.
- HIV can have a detrimental effect on the family. So it is vital for a family to be strong and healthy with its foundations in Christ, in order to face the challenges.
- Forgiveness and reconciliation are vital in order to repair broken relationships.

Prayer points

- For partners to understand and model a biblical marriage.
- For families affected by HIV.
- For children being raised in unstable family settings.

Further passages for reading

- GENESIS 1:26-28 God created man and woman and blessed them
- COLOSSIANS 3:18-21 Rules for Christian households
- 1 PETER 3:1-7 Guidance for wives and husbands
- HEBREWS 13:4 Faithfulness in marriage
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and understand God’s perspective on raising children
– the importance of nurturing godliness in children and youth and mentoring the next generation, to help them develop into responsible citizens and adults
– and understand the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of children.

We will BE...
– aware of the needs of children growing up without parents because of HIV and AIDS.

We will ACT...
– to give support to caregivers by making time to support the children they care for
– by considering taking AIDS orphans into our own families.

Background information

2.5 million children are living with HIV world-wide. Because of the loss of parents to AIDS, there are an increasing number of child-headed households, particularly in Africa.

This situation is made more difficult by worsening levels of poverty. Traditional safety nets for children that used to exist among family and community members, are now being stretched to the limit.

The number of orphaned children continues to rise. Resources, which were limited to begin with, are now stretched to the limit. This is such a challenge to caregivers!

Tips for facilitator

Discuss each of these points or ‘P’s to remember:
– Parents and caregivers should plan for the welfare of their children.
– Be Positive when you talk about life in general; and about your children and family, in particular!
– Participate in important events, eg games, matches, graduations and visits.
– Presents! Remember to give cards or books for special occasions.
– Partner with God, and others, in the raising of your children.
– Play often – when you feel like it and when not!
– Ponder over God’s word; memorise scripture and encourage children to do likewise.
– Patience is a virtue and always pays! (Galatians 5:22-23)
– Pray for your children every day! (Ephesians 6:18)

Ideas for practical response

HIV affects every area of a child’s health – physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual. The growth and development of children should therefore be well rounded – covering the physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions.

Obedience to God involves more than following rules and regulations; it involves the attitudes of our hearts and minds (Deuteronomy 6:6).

The test of whether we love God is whether we keep his commandments (John 14:21). If we truly love him, we will also pass his commands to our children, from one generation to another.

Discuss what more our churches can do to support child-headed households.

References

Let Your Light Shine: Caring for Children Affected by HIV A video-based training course with workbooks and workshops www.arca-associates.org
Deuteronomy 6:4-9
Ephesians 6:1-4

Good Christian parenting

There is a rapidly increasing number of child-headed and youth-headed households worldwide due to HIV and AIDS. Many children are growing up without the support of one or both parents, particularly during their crucial teenage years.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. What do we learn from the passage from Deuteronomy about the raising of children?
2. What must parents or caregivers do to ensure that godly values are passed on to their children?
3. In Jewish tradition, scripture verses are written out and placed in small boxes (phylacteries) that are tied around the head and arm. How can we encourage the learning of Bible verses that will remain 'in our minds'?
4. From the Ephesians’ passage, what does it mean to ‘honour’ our parents?
5. What does it mean for fathers not to exasperate their children?

In the time of HIV...
6. Discuss whether good character is learnt by example rather than taught.
7. What shows that parents and caregivers are ignoring their God-given roles in the raising of children in today’s society?
8. Why are children and young people so vulnerable to HIV infection?
9. What can we do as parents and caregivers to inform and protect children and young people from HIV infection?
10. There is a saying that ‘It takes a community to raise a child’. What can we do as a church and community to look after our children and young people, especially those who are orphaned and vulnerable, or caring for sick relatives?
11. How does God care for us as his children? How can we follow God’s example in our care for children and young people in our community?

Key learning points

- Good Christian parenting is a huge responsibility. Parents and caregivers should take this responsibility seriously and ask God to help them to bring up their children well, through studying and applying the Word of God.
  - Be a good example to children, modelling godly character – not just in word but more importantly in deed.
  - Establish clear guidelines and use discipline when necessary to help children understand their responsibilities.
  - Be a mentor and friend to your children, accompanying them through difficulties.
  - Love your children, listen to them and spend quality time with them. Develop the talents that are within each individual child.
  - Give time and resources to support and love children who are growing up without parents.
  - Encourage and educate girls so they grow up with awareness and self-confidence. This will help them resist pressure for sex before marriage.

Prayer points

- For parents to have wisdom, compassion, knowledge and understanding in raising children.
- For children in difficult circumstances, particularly those who are orphaned or living in child-headed households.
- For governments to pass laws that protect children from abuse, oppression and exploitation.

Further passages for reading

LUKE 2:52 The holistic development of Jesus in body, mind and spirit
COLOSSIANS 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything
PROVERBS 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
- the importance of celebrating creation, love and good relationships with one another
- that to be like God is to become fully human and fully alive
- how to acknowledge and enhance each other’s leadership in dealing with HIV.

We will BE...
- able to work in partnership with each other in responding to HIV, rather than exploiting others
- able to celebrate God’s goodness in relationships
- able to restore broken relationships.

We will ACT...
- to acknowledge and deal with the fact that women’s experiences and skills are often ignored in planning HIV prevention and care programmes
- to reclaim the roles of women in leadership
- to challenge relationships of power that reduce human beings to mere objects of pleasure.

Background information
Over the centuries women and girls have been discriminated against throughout the world, in different ways. In most cultures this system is reflected in value systems where sons are valued more than daughters. We accept double standards of behaviour for males and females (such as in sexual activity). We justify male positions and power over the positions and power of women. However, this is not biblical.

Society today is characterised by divisions among people but especially between men and women. These divisions have led to poor relationships between men and women and the consequences include subordination, oppression, violence, and treating human beings, especially women and children, as things or commodities. In the era of HIV, while women have ended up bearing the brunt of the disease and in offering care to the affected, they have rarely been able to show leadership in prevention.

‘After attending a marriage training workshop run by Vigilance, many things have changed in my family. I sit together with my wife, and it has become easy to discuss things. This changes what we do. It creates agreement and harmony. Lots of things have changed with our intimate relationship. Before there was no discussion about sexual needs, it was the man who decided. Now, needs are expressed without shame as it concerns us both.’
Pastor Daniel, Burkina Faso

Tips for facilitator

Inequalities between men and women increase people’s vulnerability and are an underlying cause of the spread of the virus.

Who needs to take the initiative in breaking down stereotypes over gender – men or women, or both? Explain why our response to this question may reflect our own stereotypes. The term gender means both sexes should be equally involved – not just women!

Encourage discussion of how Jesus viewed issues of gender. How did he treat his followers, both men and women, given the cultural views of his day?

Share success stories where gender stereotypes have been overcome.

Ideas for practical response

How can we encourage our churches to challenge the accepted stereotypes of male dominance and female subordination, rather than often simply endorsing these values?

How do the structures and power relations in our churches need to change, for women and men to be equally valued in the people of God? List some practical steps that could be taken at all levels within the church.

References

www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/incl_gjbiblestudy_0608.doc  A Bible study to stimulate discussion of issues around gender, culture and Christian practice
Gender and restoring relationships

This passage from Genesis 1 shows an equal partnership of male and/or female, while Genesis 2 presents a God-given order of precedence of male over female with corresponding roles. Paul draws on this second version in 1 Corinthians 11:7–9. What can we learn from this?

In reading the creation story in Genesis we recognise our inter-connected links within the web of life. We can reflect on how to relate with each other in an interdependent and mutual way.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. In reading the story of the creation of male and female, which parts strike you as showing male and or female characteristics?
2. What does God empower human beings to do?
3. What does this passage from Genesis 1 reveal about the importance of men and women working alongside each other in relationships of equality?
4. What does this tell us about the relationship between men and women?

In the time of HIV...
5. Who is given the command to lead, own property and to continue with the work of raising children in the Genesis story? How is this reflected in our society today especially in the area of HIV?
6. How is the Genesis passage helpful in working out solutions in response to HIV in our society?
7. Name five things you will do to restore relationships within your family and church.

Key learning points

- God created human beings in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). God is beyond gender.
- The image of God can be reflected in inclusive human relationships showing God in communion, in partnership and in community, rather than simply focusing on male and female relationships.

‘It is impossible to realise our goals whilst discriminating against half the human race.’
Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General

Prayer points

- Gender justice is a critical issue for the church. Pray for the courage for both men and women to challenge unhelpful stereotypes and to encourage biblical reflection around gender.
- Pray that the gifts of women would be fully released to benefit our churches and to show wisdom and leadership in responding to issues around HIV.

Further passages for reading

LUKE 10:38-42 Jesus encourages Mary to sit at his feet and learn as men could
JOHN 4:4-26 Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman
MARK 5:25-34 The woman healed from internal bleeding
JOHN 8:2-11 The woman caught in adultery
How could this study change us?
We will KNOW...
– the benefits of testing for HIV before marriage so that couples enter into marriage fully aware of all the implications of living as a discordant couple (some may decide not to get married)
– and understand how those of us who are in discordant relationships (where one partner has HIV and the other does not) can protect each other from HIV infection or re-infection by practising safer sex, using condoms correctly and consistently
– that with medical help, it is possible for discordant couples to have healthy babies free of HIV.

We will BE...
– aware that many discordant couples have happy married lives
– aware that living in discordant couples does not have to result in HIV infection
– aware of the reality and implications of HIV discordance among couples/ sexual partners living with HIV.

We will ACT...
– and encourage people to go for HIV testing as couples together in order to know each other’s HIV status instead of guessing on their spouse’s results.

Background information
A discordant couple is the term used to refer to a married couple or to sexual partners living together, where one partner has HIV and the other does not. The use of condoms for discordant couples is always recommended in order to protect the partner who does not have HIV from infection.

Many discordant couples are able to have healthy babies without HIV, with medical advice and the provision of ART to the mother before birth, and to the baby just after birth.

Tips for facilitator
Be aware that some of the participants will be part of a discordant couple so make sure the discussion is inclusive and sensitive.

Training in counselling skills is highly recommended for many situations, including those of discordant couples. However, many people may be unable to obtain such training and find themselves wanting to help others through difficult times. This page has some useful tips.

Ideas for practical response
The ability to know and openly discuss one’s HIV status within a relationship is key to protecting one’s partner from infection.

Examine the church’s view and teaching on marrying and supporting discordant couples. Are there unnecessary barriers? Are people aware that with medical advice many discordant couples are able to have babies without HIV?

Discuss ways of educating leaders within the church.

Find out about testing facilities and counselling services in our area. Are these readily available and reliable? Should the church advocate for improved facilities?

References
www.avert.org/condoms.htm The successful use of condoms by discordant couples

Counselling skills
– Help people to relax.
– Show respect for them at all times.
– Encourage them to share their situation.
– Listen with all your attention. Often we are already thinking of what we will say next.
– Be comfortable with silence or with tears.
– Do not react with surprise, shock or judgement – only understanding.
– Do not give advice. Simply let people consider all their options and reach their own decisions. However, do make sure they have the correct information and are aware of all available support.
– Never tell others about information you have been told in confidence.
– Support people in the decisions they reach (even if you don’t agree).
– Continue to meet with people until they can feel more positive about the future.
HIV discordant couples

Couples may find they are discordant (where one partner has HIV and the other does not) following HIV testing. Other couples may decide to marry or have a sexual relationship knowing they are discordant. It is possible for a discordant couple to have a very happy loving relationship together.

Discussion:

In biblical times…
1 In the Ephesians passage, how did Christ love the church? How did he show that love?
2 How can we follow his example in our day-to-day lives?
3 What was the result of his love for the church?
4 What is the result of our own love for the church?
5 How easy is it for men to follow this teaching?
6 How did wives respect their husbands at the time of Christ? How has that changed today?

In the time of HIV…
7 Looking at the Hosea passage, what is the importance of knowledge in general, and specifically concerning HIV, and what are the consequences of lacking it?
8 From the passage in Ephesians, what are the roles of wives and husbands and how important are these roles in relation to HIV prevention, care and support in families?
9 How can the role of the husband to love and protect the wife be enhanced in cases of HIV in the family, especially in cases of discordance?
10 Why is it important for Christians to uphold a loving and caring relationship in sickness and health in the family? (Marriage vows)
11 How can we be of help as a church or community with discordant couples living here?
12 How often do you discuss or talk about sex and HIV with your partner?

Prayer points

■ Pray for discordant couples who often experience stigma and discrimination from others, and for the positive partner who may experience self-stigma.
■ Pray for true love to flourish among Christian couples because true love drives out fear, including the fear often created by having HIV in the family.

Further passages for reading

ACTS 18:1-3, 18-26 Note Priscilla and Aquila often did things together
1 JOHN 3:16 Love which lays down our lives for each other

Key learning points

■ HIV discordance is quite common especially in family situations where couples have sex together regularly.
■ When couples go for HIV testing together they find out about each other’s HIV status. This brings the results into the open between them, removing the difficulty of sharing the news with their partner. In addition they get couple counselling which empowers them to face the challenge of having HIV in the family, especially HIV discordance.
■ The principle of love, shown by Christ’s love for the church, should encourage Christian couples to care for each other in spite of being discordant, so that the family does not break up at such a crucial time.
■ Stigma and discrimination in the church or community leads to denial and may make it appear as if there are no people living with HIV there, let alone couples who are discordant.
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and understand as a church the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment where people can trust each other and all people have the opportunity to serve each other
– and reflect on the concept of what full participation means to those of us living with HIV
– and explore the impact of full participation of people living with HIV in effective prevention, treatment, care and support, and in preventing avoidable deaths and new transmission
– and understand just how limiting is the church’s traditional focus on providing home-based care for people with HIV.

We will BE...
– able to understand how inclusive Christ is towards all of humanity
– able to humbly seek to understand God’s purposes for his church.

We will ACT...
– in obedience to our individual commitments in responding to HIV
– to encourage the full participation of people living with HIV
– to encourage people not to be satisfied with what we are already doing.

Tips for facilitator

Explore the different kinds of participation that we may experience, such as agreeing with decisions already made, shaping decisions and planning new directions that need agreement. Consider how much real participation is encouraged from those of us living with HIV.

Discuss how the church can change its judgmental attitudes and the belief that HIV is a curse or punishment for sin. This is a huge barrier which prevents the church benefiting from the full participation of people living with HIV, and prevents people from seeking the support they need.

Ideas for practical response

How can we help those of us living with HIV to trust the church, and to feel we can make a contribution and use our skills and experience to help others?

In this study we learn how easily incorrect attitudes can pull families apart. Incorrect attitudes about HIV can pull apart the family of the church in just the same way. We have to change our attitudes if we are to enjoy the full participation that God wants for all of us as his family.

Where can the experiences of people living with HIV have real impact in building up our church?

Background information

Our cultural and religious beliefs often shape our attitudes. This affects how we behave and how we treat other people.

During the years that we have been responding to HIV, the church has led in providing care for orphans and vulnerable children and home-based care for those of us sick with HIV-related illnesses. However, in many cases the church has also been responsible for encouraging judgmental attitudes and fuelling stigma. This has prevented the full participation of those of us living with HIV. Yet the church has great potential to transform attitudes and lead the way in addressing stigma. Many who have been involved tirelessly in the response to HIV are now tired, and wondering why despite so much effort, there has been so little progress in the church’s response.

References

Positive Voices: Religious leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS Called to Care series No 1, Strategies for Hope Trust, Oxford 2005
Making it Happen: A guide to help your congregation do HIV/AIDS work by Lucy Y Steinitz, Called to Care series No 2, Strategies for Hope Trust, Oxford 2005

‘The church is the key to give back hope and a sense of value to those who have had it taken away. The Bible says we are all made in the image of God, both men and women. HIV does not change that.’
Pastor Samuel Mayele, HEAL, Democratic Republic of Congo
Full participation of people living with HIV

This story from Luke reveals the heart of God the father. In many cultures a father is an authority figure, to be respected and feared by his children. In biblical times, a dignified elder man would not run. Yet the father in this passage breaks with his culture and tradition to demonstrate his love and forgiveness to his undeserving son, by running towards him, embracing him and honouring him. The elder son, who has behaved just the way a dutiful child should, is resentful. He who deserves such treatment does not get it, but the one who deserves punishment is celebrated.

The lost son decided to return home because he knew home was a better place than where he was. The other son resents the attention and forgiveness given to his younger brother. His father gently reassures him of his love for him and corrects his attitude.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. Who are the main people in this story?
2. Can you retell the story from the father’s point of view? Or from the perspective of one of the sons?
3. What brought the younger son to the point of repentance?
4. What was the father’s reaction when he saw the lost son? Why was this reaction so surprising?

In the time of HIV...
5. How do the father’s attitudes in this story reflect God’s attitudes towards us? Do they reflect our attitudes to others?
6. What was the reaction of the eldest son? Why do you think he felt this way?
7. Does his reaction reflect our attitudes and how we often relate to others, particularly in the context of HIV?
8. Does our church have an official HIV response? Does it involve prevention, care, support and advocacy? Who should take responsibility for responding to HIV?
9. Is our church community a place where all people are welcomed and each member can participate fully? How can we play the father’s role, in making our church a ‘home’, and creating a supportive environment where everyone can be involved?

Key learning points

■ Our individual attitudes may prevent our church from being the safe and welcoming community that God intended it to be.
■ Judgmental attitudes within the church can lead to a culture of silence and stigma, which prevents those of us living with HIV from participating fully. It can also hinder prevention of HIV and prevent people from accessing treatment, care and support, reducing the quality of life for those of us living with HIV and contributing to unnecessary deaths.
■ Sometimes those of us living with HIV may feel that we do not have anything to offer, because of self-stigma. Yet each one of us is called to contribute as part of the body of Christ.

Prayer points

■ Pray that we can really love everyone just as Christ did, following biblical principles, and being a good witness in representing God and sharing his unconditional love with all people.
■ Pray that judgmental attitudes in the church will change, so that people living with HIV can find love and support and share their gifts within the church.

Further passages for reading

PSALM 139:13-16 Each of us is precious and valued by God
I JOHN 4:7-12 God’s love and ours
**HOW COULD THIS STUDY CHANGE US?**

**We will KNOW...**
- more about how orphans, other vulnerable children and their caregivers are affected by HIV, grief and loss
- and recognise the specific needs of these groups for care and support.

**We will BE...**
- sensitive towards the practical, emotional and spiritual needs of orphans and other vulnerable children
- understanding of the pressures placed upon caregivers.

**We will ACT...**
- to identify how we as individuals, or as a church and a community, can provide some of this care and support for orphans, other vulnerable children and their caregivers.

**Background information**

Children and their caregivers usually suffer most from the economic and social effects of HIV. Children whose parents are seriously ill or who have died are likely to suffer from emotional pain, hunger, poverty and ill health. They may also face stigma. Children may be caregivers themselves, looking after sick relatives or caring for younger brothers or sisters. Some may be living with HIV. All these children are more likely to drop out of school and to suffer from emotional deprivation.

Adults often find it difficult to speak with children about the illness or death of a parent or guardian, and to help them cope with the process of grieving. Relatives or guardians who take on the care of orphaned children are often poor themselves, and receive insufficient government support. They are also untrained in how to connect with children who often bear the emotional scars of their parents’ illnesses and premature deaths. These children in our communities need continued practical, emotional and spiritual support.

**Tips for facilitator**

Discuss available training opportunities for adults to help children as they grieve and adjust to major changes in their lives.

If possible invite some caregivers and youngsters who lead child-headed households, to come and talk about their lives and the pressures they experience.

Examine how the needs of orphans, vulnerable children and caregivers may require advocacy support from others. What form might such advocacy take?

**Ideas for practical response**

Children are our future. Meeting their needs is really important to help them grow into balanced, caring and confident adults.

In Acts 6:1-6 specific people were identified to organise care for the widows. Use this story as an example of how the church organised itself to meet a specific need.

Discuss how the church can provide care and support to help meet the needs of children orphaned or affected by HIV, and their carers, particularly when resources are very limited.

Discuss what additional resources and support (such as training) may be needed to help church and community leaders begin to meet these needs. How can we access them?

**References**

*The Child Within: Connecting with children who have experienced grief and loss* by Judy Rankin, Called to Care series No 6, Strategies for Hope Trust, Oxford 2008
Jesus became angry when his disciples scolded people for bringing children to him. On only two other occasions in the Bible do we see Jesus showing anger, and here his anger is directed towards his own disciples.

The Old Testament prophets called upon the leaders and people of Israel to uphold the rights of orphans and widows. In the New Testament, James states the importance of practical actions to support the weak and vulnerable as an expression of our Christian faith.

Children are sometimes seen as less valuable than adults. They may be powerless, vulnerable and dependent on others. However, Jesus values them and shows particular concern for them.

Discussion

In biblical times
1 Why did the disciples scold the mothers who brought their children to Jesus?
2 How does Jesus respond to the children brought to him?
3 Why were children so important to Jesus?
4 Why are children so important within the church?

In the time of HIV...
5 What can we learn from Jesus’ attitude to children?
6 How are children affected when their parents are living with HIV?
7 What are the main needs of children orphaned or affected by HIV?
8 What are the challenges for caregivers, often elderly people, in taking responsibility for providing children with the care and support they need?
9 What are the main needs of the caregivers of children orphaned or affected by HIV?
10 Who within our church and community can take responsibility for coordinating care and support activities for orphans, vulnerable children and caregivers?
11 Is this something our church should develop into a ministry?

Key learning points
- Jesus shows how God values children. The support of vulnerable children is a cornerstone of our Christian discipleship.
- Children cannot wait for organisations and governments to discuss their needs. They are immediate. The church and community can mobilise to help provide education, healthcare, physical, spiritual and emotional support if external support is not available.
- Children need practical teaching, fun, friendship, support and guidance in addition to their physical needs. All of us can consider how we could help meet some of these needs.

Prayer points
- Pray more churches will develop the capacity to provide appropriate care and support to vulnerable children.
- Pray for churches to provide support, training and backup for carers, and to advocate on their behalf.
- Pray for organisations able to provide training and support for churches in these areas, that they will be well resourced and able to help churches realise their full potential.

Further passages for reading
MATTHEW 25:31-46 Jesus emphasises the importance of caring for others and meeting their physical, not just spiritual needs
JAMES 2:14-17 Faith and actions
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– the key importance of the church in demonstrating clear leadership in responding to HIV
– how necessary effective advocacy is in mobilising resources for those of us impacted by HIV
– how best to help people understand their potential for leadership and advocacy roles in responding to HIV.

We will BE...
– equipped to reflect on leadership attitudes and practices in this time of HIV
– mobilised to play a role in HIV advocacy at whatever level is appropriate personally.

We will ACT...
– to encourage individuals, families and those living with or affected by HIV to consider their potential in taking up leadership or advocacy roles
– to explore opportunities for HIV advocacy within and outside the communities and families.

Background information
Leadership helps to shape the way society, individuals, communities, families and institutions relate to each other and respond to the issues they face. Anyone can be called by God into a leadership position, to respond to different situations. In some cases, individuals are also appointed by the community to serve people in a leadership capacity.

Advocacy means speaking with and on behalf of others, to explain their needs and concerns to those who have the power to address these needs and create change. We have a biblical mandate to care for the marginalised and to challenge injustice.

Tips for facilitators
As a leader, Nehemiah was personally involved as part of the solution, joining in with the physical work. But he couldn’t do it alone – he needed all the community to help build the wall.

Discuss what approaches are needed for effective leadership and advocacy. Some suggestions would be: clear understanding, persistence, prayer, passion and effective communication.

Ideas for practical response
Discuss how can we best encourage people in our churches to act like Nehemiah in the context of HIV response.

What attributes do we need as Christians to engage in effective advocacy for people living with HIV?

The Israelites faced the problem of a broken wall, which left them vulnerable to attack. Consider what ‘broken walls’ are represented in our community. What are the problems that need to be addressed?

How can we as leaders stand up for justice, truth and the rights of our family and community members?

References
ROOTS 1 and 2: Advocacy toolkit by Tearfund

It is now proven that male circumcision (if done hygienically) can reduce the risk of getting HIV by 60% for men. However, unsterile or contaminated blades must never be used as there is the possibility that HIV can be passed on. Leaders can help to make people aware of this.
Leadership and advocacy

Walls are built to protect homes and communities. If a wall is weak or cracked, it can easily fall. If a wall is broken then the house may collapse. Likewise our communities have different kinds of ‘walls and structures’. Without them our communities become more vulnerable to attack. Nehemiah saw the need in his community, and he advocated on behalf of his people to those who were powerful and could help. First he went to God, in prayer. Then he spoke to the people in authority who had the power and resources that were needed, before he took action.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. What were the main needs and problems that the Israelites were facing?
2. What leadership qualities did Nehemiah show? Who did he ask to help him?
3. How did other people respond? Why do you think they acted this way?
4. How did Nehemiah respond to the threats faced in building the wall?
5. What plans did he make to ensure there was good communication along the wall?
6. What sort of qualities and practices make someone a good or a bad leader? Consider Jesus’ model of servant leadership.

In the time of HIV...
7. What do we expect of a leader in our community, in our church or family or country?
8. How do we use our God-given leadership abilities to respond to the issues facing our community?
9. What opportunities are there for us to engage in leadership and advocacy activities in our communities and families?
10. How can we engage and support those of us living with HIV in leadership and advocacy roles?
11. Like Nehemiah, do we need others to support us in our HIV advocacy and leadership? What kind of support and protection do we need?
12. As individuals, what kind of leadership are we called to show in the context of HIV?

Key learning points

- We need God’s direction to provide both good leadership and rightful advocacy to address key issues.
- The church is well placed to challenge local government and organisations to take more action to support HIV work of all kinds.
- Each of us has responsibility in accompanying, supporting and standing in the gap for those who need us.
- We all need commitment, discernment and empowerment to provide effective HIV leadership and advocacy in our situations.

Prayer points

- Ask God to show us how we can rely on him for strength, understanding and grace to repair every situation where leadership is lacking or weak and where we face ‘damaged walls’.
- Pray for all those who are vulnerable to HIV because of poverty, gender-based violence and stigma.
- Pray for those who care for children who have lost parents, or whose parents are sick, and who are likely to be left without protectors and providers.
- As Christians we are all called to speak up for those in need. Pray for guidance on how we can all follow Nehemiah’s example and take the lead in resolving the needs in our communities.

Further passages for reading

ISAIAH 6:8  The prophet Isaiah responds to God’s calling
MICAH 6:8  God calls us to act justly and to show mercy
JAMES 2:14-17  Practical faith revealed in action
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– how to explore and reflect on the reality of death
– how to respond to prevent ‘avoidable’ deaths.

We will BE...
– able to talk more openly about death and dying and break the taboo and silence around this issue.

We will ACT...
– to help people plan for the future and to provide for their families in the face of death.

Background information

A common attitude is that sickness and death are ‘the will of God’, and that nothing can be done. Yet life is a precious gift from God, and with the right treatment, encouragement, care and support, many people who are sick with HIV-related illnesses can regain their health and continue to live life to the full. So it is important to help participants combat this fatalism, which can lead to people ‘giving up’ and dying unnecessarily soon.

Tips for facilitator

Be aware that talking about death and dying may raise strong emotions. Be sensitive to the needs and feelings in the group. People may be facing these issues themselves, or mourning loved ones, so allow people to participate as much or as little as they feel comfortable with.

Ideas for practical response

Encourage people who are sick not to ‘give up’ – but to seek medical help and treatment where this is available.

If there is no provision of ART locally, a group from the church could gather community support and speak to local leaders and government officials about providing better access to health services.

For parents who are ill with HIV or AIDS, preparing memory boxes for children will provide a source of comfort and ensure they can remember their parents in the years to come.

All parents should make plans, preferably legal plans, for their children to be cared for in the event of their death, for whatever reason.

References

Teaching Aids at Low Cost, www.talcuk.org
Footsteps 61 Memory boxes, pages 8–9
www.Biblelight.org The death of Jesus
www.spirithome.com.death.html Death and dying

MEMORY BOXES

Memory boxes can contain all kinds of things to help children remember their parents. These include photos, favourite recipes, special pictures, cards and letters and descriptions of events or dates that are special to the family or community. They should also include important information about both parents including full names, dates and places of birth, marriage and death, where any important documents or valuables are kept and details of their family tree.
Preparations in case of death

We often find it hard to talk about death, as it raises many fears and taboos. Yet it is an issue that affects us all. This Bible study will give us an opportunity to explore this difficult subject through scripture. It will help us look at our beliefs and practices and to consider any positive changes that we could make.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1 Why did the sisters send word to Jesus when Lazarus became sick?
2 Why did Jesus delay his visit?
3 Could Lazarus’ death have been prevented? Discuss this.

In the time of HIV...
4 What makes the subject of death difficult to talk about in our culture?
5 What emotions do people experience while taking care of someone who is terminally ill?
6 What are the usual ways that people prepare for death in our culture? Are these practices helpful or harmful?
7 How can we balance between preparing for death, providing hope and encouraging people to continue to live where possible?
8 Are there any practical ways we could help each other to face these issues?

Key learning points

■ Death is a reality for all of us, but that does not mean we should despair or give up when one of us is ill. Life is valuable and should be protected, so as Christians we should do what we can to prevent ‘avoidable’ deaths (particularly for the sake of any children involved). With access to medical treatment, and good care and support, many people can recover even from serious illnesses and those of us living with HIV can live full and healthy lives.

■ However, this does not mean we should remain in denial when death approaches. We can help each other to face and prepare for death. We need to talk about our fears and our hopes for our families in the future. As a church community we can provide care and support to people who are dying, help families who are caring for the terminally ill, pray for each other, and help people to plan for their family’s future in the event of their death.

Prayer points

■ Pray for those who are sick, particularly those who may be facing death or feeling afraid. Pray for healing from pain and that they may know the peace and presence of God.

■ Pray for those who are caring for family members who are sick, and those who have recently lost someone they love. Pray that they will have strength and be comforted.

■ Pray for wisdom to know how we can each help and support people in these situations.

Further passages for reading

ECCLESIASTES 9:10 Use your time on earth well
GENESIS 3:19 We will all return to dust
ISAIAH 57:1-2 Death brings peace and rest for the upright
The reality of death

How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
- how to explore and reflect on the reality of death
- what Bible passages to use with people who are facing death to bring them comfort and hope.

We will BE...
- able to talk more openly about death and dying and break the taboo and silence around this issue
- able to pray with people nearing the end of their lives and help them find acceptance and peace of heart and mind.

We will ACT...
- to help people plan for the future and provide for their families in the face of death.

Background information

Death is inevitable for us all one day. It is important that we meet it with understanding and with acceptance as part of God’s ultimate plans for us.

Faith in God brings considerable strength and courage when facing death. Our faith in God will lead us into his wonderful presence at death. We should all be prepared and able to share our hopes for the future with those who are dying, in a sensitive way, if they ask.

For parents with children, there are various important things they can do to prepare their children to face the future.

Tips for facilitator

This continues the story of the death of Lazarus, looked at in the last study. Focus not just on the miracle of Jesus in raising Lazarus from the dead, but on the responses of those around – particularly his sisters, Mary and Martha.

Help people to discuss if we are ready to face death ourselves. Are there particular issues we are fearful or concerned about?

Discuss what kind of comfort and support people may need when someone in their family is dying.

Ideas for practical response

Organise volunteers to visit those who are sick to offer encouragement, give practical care and help, or simply to talk and pray with them.

People could discuss with a friend what they would like to happen to their belongings after their death. For example how can we ensure that our children will be provided for and can remain in their home? With the help of a friend they could write a simple will, which is like a signed letter to be read out after their death, which clearly states what should happen to their possessions and home. Two people, who should not be family members, and who will not benefit from the will, should sign and date the will for it to have legal rights.

Discuss how we can plan and make practical arrangements while still alive and well, to ensure that our families (particularly our children) will be protected and provided for if we die.

References

www.Biblelight.org The death of Jesus
www.spirithome.com/death.html Death and dying
The Child Within: Connecting with children who have experienced grief and loss by Judy Rankin, Called to Care series No 6, Strategies for Hope Trust, Oxford 2008
The reality of death

Every culture has different ways of responding to death. There are rituals and practices that help us to honour our loved ones when they die, and allow us to express our grief as we mourn them. However some traditions and beliefs may be harmful rather than helpful. In this passage we are going to look at how Jesus responded to the death of his friend.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1. How did Jesus respond to Lazarus’ death?
2. What were the differences between Martha’s and Mary’s response to Jesus?
3. How did Jesus’ attitude compare to Martha’s and the other people around?
4. What daring things did Jesus do in this passage? (Crying, opening the grave, unwrapping the grave clothes.) How would people have reacted in our culture?

In the time of HIV...
5. What beliefs and practices do we have in our culture around death, burial and mourning? Which are helpful, which are harmful, and why?
6. Do any of these practices increase people’s vulnerability to HIV? How could we change this?

Key learning points

- This story is of a profound miracle of Christ – but God still works through miracles today. Our faith should not try to set limits on the power of God to heal and to raise people to life.
- Simply being with people and showing them love as they mourn, is more important than having the right words to say.
- Knowing death is near can help people to prepare themselves, both practically, but more importantly, spiritually.

Prayer points

- Pray for those facing death, that they will be comforted by our faith in the resurrection of the dead.
- In the end, God heals all of us through death, ending suffering on earth and bringing us to eternal life with him.

Further passages for reading

1. THESSALONIANS 4:13-14 Our hope in the resurrection
2. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-20 The resurrection of the dead
3. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-57 Death has been swallowed up in victory!
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
– and understand practical ways in which we can help each other through death and bereavement.

We will BE...
– able to grieve with those coping with the loss of friends and loved ones
– able to see death as healing and a release from suffering into life with God.

We will ACT...
– to help support and encourage those who have just lost loved ones
– to help children work through their emotions and responses after losing their parents.

Background information

In this Bible passage from 1 Corinthians, the ‘first man’ is referring to Adam in the book of Genesis, and the ‘last Adam’ is referring to Jesus Christ. It is Jesus’ resurrection from the dead that breaks the power of sin and death, and gives us hope that death is not the end.

Tips for facilitator

Remember that discussing issues of death and grief can raise strong emotions. Be sensitive and allow people to simply listen and only participate if they feel able.

Many people may be dealing with their own sense of loss and grief, even from deaths no longer recent. Encourage people to share their experiences and losses – if they are comfortable about doing this – so people can help each other through their experiences.

Ideas for practical response

If several people have recently lost a loved one, perhaps they could meet together as a group to talk about the issues they face and help support each other.

Can we facilitate opportunities for children who have been left orphaned, to meet together and help each other, with adult support, as they go through the grief process?

If children have not been left with a memory box by their parents, can we help them put one together?

References

Footsteps 61 Children and HIV
Teaching Aids at Low Cost, www.talck.org
www.Biblelight.org The death of Jesus
www.spirithome.com/death.html Death and dying
The Child Within: Connecting with children who have experienced grief and loss by Judy Rankin, Called to Care series No 6, Strategies for Hope Trust, Oxford 2008
 Adjusting to life after bereavement

Death is a reality that we must all face. In the end, every person dies. As Christians we can face death with courage and hope through faith in Jesus Christ. We can offer comfort and practical support to those who are mourning loved ones. In this passage we will look at what the Bible says about life after death.

Discussion

In biblical times...
1 What does this passage tell us about what happens when we die?
2 Who is the ‘last Adam’ (verse 45)?
3 What do you understand by the last trumpet sounding (verse 52)?
4 What does the phrase; ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory’ (verse 54) mean?
5 Do you find this passage comforting? Explain why.

In the time of HIV...
6 What are the beliefs and practices about death and the afterlife in our community? How do they compare with what Paul writes in this passage?
7 How does the perspective of eternal life help us to face the day-to-day challenges of life, particularly in the context of HIV? How can it help us to face our own death, or the death of someone we love?
8 When someone dies, how do we explain this to children? What sort of questions might a child ask who has just lost a parent to an AIDS-related illness? How would we answer?
9 What Bible verses, songs and liturgy do people use at funerals, or to comfort people who have recently been bereaved? Are they helpful? Are there more practical ways that we as individuals and as a community can care for and support people as they mourn?
10 In Philippians 1:21, Paul says that ‘to live is Christ, to die is gain’. Sometimes Christians feel they should not be sad about death, but instead rejoice that the person has ‘gone to be with the Lord’. How do we balance the natural and appropriate grief that people feel as they miss their loved ones, with the hope that we have through faith?

Key learning points

- Death does not need to cause despair, because we have hope in Christ that the dead are raised to eternal life with God.
- Despite the hope we can have spiritually, it is natural and healthy to feel sad and grieve for loved ones who die.

Prayer points

- Lord, thank you that you died for us and rose again, giving us hope for the future and a relationship with God. Thank you that you never leave or abandon us, but are always there for us in good times and bad times, in sickness and in health, as we live and as we face death. Help us to have courage and hope in difficult times. Help us to be your hands and feet here on earth, give us wisdom and grace so we can offer comfort and practical help to those who are sick and those who have lost people they love. Amen.

Further passages for reading

REVELATION 21:1-5 A vision of heaven, with no more death or grief
1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18 The coming of the Lord
ROMANS 8:37-39 Nothing can separate us from the love of God
How could this study change us?

We will KNOW...
- that we are all one in Christ’s body and that together we are building the kingdom of God
- why God needs us to share his love in action
- that God’s gifts of miracles are still available to us all today.

We will BE...
- more loving and supportive of others within our church family
- encouraged to build up our church family and to seek God’s gifts
- confident in asking for the restoring of health for those we know in need of God’s blessing.

We will ACT...
- to build up the kingdom of God here on earth through living lives in obedience to God’s guidance
- to ensure the church benefits from the gifts, skills and experience of those of us living with HIV.

Background information

The witness of the church should burn brightly, as a shining example of love in action. This love is often very practical: cooking, cleaning, washing, spending time with lonely children or adults, repairing houses or farming. Our churches can help transform communities – building up supportive relationships, bringing justice, sharing love and enjoying all the fullness of life that God’s kingdom will bring.

When the church is active in tackling poverty, and difficult issues such as gender discrimination and female genital cutting, it usually provides a very positive witness. In the past Christians have shown real leadership in tackling the issues of slavery, apartheid and third world debt.

Tips for facilitator

People living with HIV are part of the body of Christ. Their gifts, experience, faith, compassion and love are a key part of our witness to others. In God’s kingdom, our lives are measured by our love for Jesus and the people around us, not by what this world considers success. HIV may help us to totally reorder our thinking about what is really important and to focus on loving people – our neighbours – as ourselves, with all that may mean.

Discuss people’s experience of signs and wonders. Some in the church believe they only happened in the early church, but many other passages in the Bible reinforce the view that these are gifts for today’s church as well. Christians should not seek out signs and miracles for their own sake, but we should be ready to believe and rejoice in them when God is at work.

Ideas for practical response

When church leaders are committed to building up the kingdom of God here on earth, many blessings will follow. Church leaders can model the love of Christ in action. As Christians we should share God’s passion for justice and Jesus’ concern for the poor and the oppressed.

Church leaders, including those living with HIV, can speak out with considerable authority. They can challenge unjust laws and promote and defend the rights of poor people. Through their example and leadership they can inspire, direct and encourage their churches to take action to promote justice. This may be through prayer, through giving, through practical caring and through speaking out on behalf of those who are suffering.
Celebrating life in all its fullness

In this passage we read about amazing healings and miracles taking place through the apostles. These miracles not only encouraged the spread of the gospel, but they also gave the apostles authority to lead Christ’s church. God still works miracles in our world today.

Celebrating and responding to bringing about God’s kingdom here on earth should be the vision of the global church. This vision should lead to more sharing and support for areas of the world where people suffer considerable hardship.

When people living with HIV come to a place of peace and acceptance, they allow the love of God to work in them and through them. Those of us living with HIV can then spend the rest of our lives supporting others with love, support and care.

Discussion

In biblical times…

1. How often were the apostles and early believers meeting? How did they spend their time?
2. Discuss why they were filled with awe.
3. Why were signs and wonders only happening through the apostles? Do we have apostles today?
4. The early church shared very close fellowship. Discuss what this meant at that time.
5. This is a challenging picture of the early church sharing their homes, possessions and money. What were the results? What can we learn from their example?
6. What did other people think about the early church?

In the time of HIV…

7. Are we too comfortable in our faith? Do we expect to see God powerfully at work? What difference does that make to our faith?
8. Are healings and miracles still happening today? Share examples if you know of any, where people have been healed spiritually, in finding God’s peace, or physically, in being restored to good health?
9. What does the word ‘fellowship’ mean to us? In a group, call out one or two words each to describe what we value most about fellowship.
10. Are we bringing our friends and neighbours, with all kinds of needs, to meet with the love and healing power of Jesus? Do we allow others to share Jesus’ love with us at our times of need?
11. Jesus showed great love and understanding towards everyone he met. How can we personally become examples of Christ’s love to those around us?
12. Read out loud together the adaptation of this passage by Lynn and Bill Hybels (page 68). What is our response? Close your eyes and dream about how your family, church and community will be transformed when Jesus returns and brings about his kingdom here on earth. How can we work together to bring about some of these dreams right now?

Key learning points

- God wants righteousness and love to flow from his church, just like the water in a fast-flowing river. The church should provide leadership and inspiration for a wide range of social actions that aim to bring justice into our hurting world.
- Church leaders who speak out on issues around HIV, challenging stigma and gender discrimination, are following the example of the early apostles. They may suffer condemnation from others but remain encouraged, knowing they are doing the Lord’s work.

Prayer points

- Pray that our church will be a place of welcome and hope for all who come.
- Pray the Holy spirit will inspire us with energy and passion to build God’s kingdom in our communities.
- Pray that we will see God powerfully and miraculously at work in our churches.
- Pray that people will be given discernment to see when God is at work (and also to check out false prophets).
- Jesus was not afraid to tackle difficult issues. We need to follow his example.

Further passages for reading

EPHESIANS 2:19-21 We are fellow citizens with Christ
LUKE 5:17-26 The value of friends in bringing people for healing
ACTS 5:12-16 The apostles heal many
Bible passages


STUDY 1  1 Corinthians 12:12-27

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

STUDY 2  John 9:1-7

As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” 3 “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no-one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” 6 Having said this, he spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. 7 “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.
**STUDY 3  Exodus 32:1-20 and John 14:15-17**

**Exodus 32:1-20**

1When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered round Aaron and said, “Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.”

2Aaron answered them, “Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.”  

3So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron.  

4He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”

5When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, “Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD.”  

6So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterwards they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

7Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt.  

8They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’

9“I have seen these people,” the LORD said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people.  

10Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”

11But Moses sought the favour of the LORD his God. “O LORD,” he said, “why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?  

12Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.  

13Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance for ever.’  

14Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

15Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back.  

16The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

17When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, “There is the sound of war in the camp.”

18Moses replied:  

“it is not the sound of victory,  

it is not the sound of defeat;  

it is the sound of singing that I hear.”

19When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.  

20And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.

**John 14:15-17**

15“If you love me, you will obey what I command.  

16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever –  

17the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”
STUDY 4 2 Kings 5:1-15

1Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

2Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. 3She said to her mistress, “If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”

4Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. 5“By all means, go,” the king of Aram replied. “I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. 6The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: “With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy.”

7As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, “Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!”

8When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: “Why have you torn your robes? Make the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.” 9So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. 10Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, “Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”

11But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. 12Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage.

13Naaman’s servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed’?” So he turned and went off in a rage.

14Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant.”

STUDY 5 John 8:1-11

1But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 3The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” 6They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” 8Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

11“No-one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”
STUDY 6  John 4:1-26

1The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, 2although in fact it was not Jesus who baptised, but his disciples. 3When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

4Now he had to go through Samaria. 5So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” 8(‘His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) 10Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

11“So,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”

13Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

15The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

16He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” 17“I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. 18The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

19“So,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

21Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. 24God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

25The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” 26Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”

STUDY 7  Luke 17:3-4 and Mark 11:25-26

Luke 17:3-4

“So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ’I repent,’ forgive him.”

Mark 11:25-26

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.”
STUDY 8 Matthew 25:31-46

31“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

37Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

40“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

41“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

44“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

45“He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

46“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”
STUDY 9  Genesis 2:18-25 and 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

Genesis 2:18-25
18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."
19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man."
24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.
25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

1 Corinthians 7:1-7
1 Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. 2 But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. 5 Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command. 7 I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

STUDY 10  1 Corinthians 6:12-20

12 "Everything is permissible for me" – but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me" – but I will not be mastered by anything. 13 "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food" – but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.
STUDY 11 Judges 19:16-29

16That evening an old man from the hill country of Ephraim, who was living in Gibeah (the men of the place were Benjamites), came in from his work in the fields. 17When he looked and saw the traveller in the city square, the old man asked, “Where are you going? Where did you come from?”

18He answered, “We are on our way from Bethlehem in Judah to a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim where I live. I have been to Bethlehem in Judah and now I am going to the house of the LORD. No one has taken me into his house. 19We have both straw and fodder for our donkeys and bread and wine for ourselves your servants – me, your maidservant, and the young man with us. We don’t need anything.”

20“You are welcome at my house,” the old man said. “Let me supply whatever you need. Only don’t spend the night in the square.” 21So he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink.

22While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, “Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him.”

23The owner of the house went outside and said to them, “No, my friends, don’t be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don’t do this disgraceful thing. 24Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But to this man, don’t do such a disgraceful thing.”

25But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go. 26At daybreak the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, fell down at the door and lay there until daylight.

27When her master got up in the morning and opened the door of the house and stepped out to continue on his way, there lay his concubine, fallen in the doorway of the house, with her hands on the threshold. 28He said to her, “Get up; let’s go.” But there was no answer. Then the man put her on his donkey and set out for home.

29When he reached home, he took a knife and cut up his concubine, limb by limb, into twelve parts and sent them into all the areas of Israel.
1In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David. Amnon became frustrated to the point of illness on account of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.

2Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David’s brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man. He asked Amnon, “Why do you, the king’s son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won’t you tell me?”

Amnon said to him, “I’m in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.”

5“Go to bed and pretend to be ill,” Jonadab said. “When your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand.’ ”

6So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, “I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand.”

7David sent word to Tamar at the palace: “Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him.”

8So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it.

9Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat.

10“Send everyone out of here,” Amnon said. So everyone left him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand.” And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom.

11But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, “Come to bed with me, my sister.”

12“Don’t, my brother!” she said to him. “Don’t force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don’t do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.”

13But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.

14Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, “Get up and get out!”

15“No!” she said to him. “Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.”

But he refused to listen to her. He called his personal servant and said, “Get this woman out of here and bolt the door after her.” So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing a richly ornamented robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore.

19Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornamented robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.

20Her brother Absalom said to her, “Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet now, my sister; he is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart.” And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house, a desolate woman.

21When King David heard all this, he was furious. Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar.
**STUDY 13  Ephesians 5:21-33**

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church. For we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

**STUDY 14  Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:1-4**

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Ephesians 6:1-4

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

**STUDY 15  Genesis 1:26-28**

26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; 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 of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”
**STUDY 16 Ephesians 5:25-33 and Hosea 4:6**

**Ephesians 5:25-33**

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—30 for we are members of his body. 31 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

**Hosea 4:6**

6 ...my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.
Because you have rejected knowledge,
I also reject you as my priests;
because you have ignored the law of your God,
I also will ignore your children.

**STUDY 17 Luke 15:11-32**

11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ 20 So he got up and went to his father.

21 “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

22 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

23 But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 24 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 25 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

26 Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.

27 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 28 ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

29 The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 30 But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 31 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

32 ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 33 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’
STUDY 18  **Mark 10:13-16, Isaiah 1:17 and James 1:27**

**Mark 10:13-16**

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.  
14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.  
15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”  
16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

**Isaiah 1:17**

“Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.”

**James 1:27**

Religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

STUDY 19  **Nehemiah 4:1-20 and Nehemiah 6:15-16**

**Nehemiah 4:1-20**

1 When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews,  
2 and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble – burned as they are?”

3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building – if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!”

4 Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity.  
5 Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.  
6 So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.  
7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry.  
8 They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.  
9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.  
10 Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, “The strength of the labourers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.”  
11 Also our enemies said, “Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.”

12 Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”  
13 Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows.  
14 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

15 When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work.

16 From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armour. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each
of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

20Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. 20Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!”

Nehemiah 6:15-16

15So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. 16When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realised that this work had been done with the help of our God.

STUDY 20 John 11:1-16

1Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.
2This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. 3So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

4When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” 5Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

7Then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.” 8But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?” 9Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world’s light. 10It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light.”

11After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” 12His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” 13Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

14So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, 15and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” 16Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”
STUDY 21  John 11:17-44

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 19 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

20 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 21 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

22 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

23 Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

24 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

25 “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

26 And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” 27 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 28 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 29 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

30 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

31 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 32 “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

33 “Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

34 Jesus wept. 35 Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” 36 But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

37 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 38 “Take away the stone,” he said.

39 “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.”

40 Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”

41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”
STUDY 22  1 Corinthians 15:35-58

35But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” 36How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. 39All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of the earthly bodies is another. 41The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour. 42So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. 46The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. 48As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

50I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – 52in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

55Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” 56The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

STUDY 23  Acts 2:42-47

42They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

An alternative version of Acts 2:42-47 adapted by Lynne and Bill Hybels

42And the believers, some HIV-positive and some not, devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to deep fellowship with one another, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43Everyone was filled with awe, and many signs and wonders were done by the apostles, as they united in battle against the virus spreading through the community.

44All the believers, infected or not, were together and had everything in common. 45Selling their possessions and goods, those who were healthy and financially stable gave generously – even sacrificially – to those who were not. 46Everyday, those who were strong enough met in the temple courts, and then they gathered in the homes of those who were too sick to leave, sharing a meal together with glad and sincere hearts, 47praising God and enjoying the favour of outsiders, who were amazed by the grace that was stronger than the stigma of HIV and AIDS. And the Lord added to their numbers daily those who were being saved, some to live long lives, others to be ushered with dignity through death and into the presence of God.
Glossary

This glossary explains the meaning of certain words according to the way they are used in this book.

- advocacy/to advocate: speaking out about an issue to those in power with and on behalf of others
- abstinence: not participating in something – such as drinking alcohol or having sex
- AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- antiretroviral therapy (ART): using special drugs that slow down the development of HIV into AIDS
- blood transfusion: the transfer of blood from a healthy person to somebody who has lost some of their own blood as a result of accident, illness or an operation
- circumcision: to cut away skin from the sexual organs of boys or girls
- concubine: a woman who is kept by a wealthy man as a kind of lesser wife, but not officially married to him
- condom: a fine rubber covering worn over the penis during sex to prevent pregnancy or infection. Female condoms, which fit inside the vagina, are becoming increasingly available
- discordant couple: a relationship between two people, one of whom is living with HIV, while the other is free of HIV
- discrimination: when one group of people is treated worse than others because of prejudice or incorrect information
- facilitator: a leader who encourages others to share their knowledge, experience and thinking so that people can learn through sharing together
- family tree: a chart which shows family relationships over several generations
- female genital cutting: the practice of circumcising young women involving the removal of the sex organ or the sewing up of the vaginal opening
- gender: the social differences between men and women, or boys and girls, that are learned (rather than the sexual differences which are biological)
- HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- mandate: an official command from someone with authority
- mentor: an older, more experienced person who supports, advises and encourages a younger person
- nausea: the unpleasant feeling of being about to vomit
- objectives: hoped for changes in understanding, learning and practice – often during a definite time period
- orphan: a child under 18 who has lost one or both parents
- participants: people taking part in any kind of activity
- penis: the male sex organ, also used to pass urine
- rape: forcing a person to have sex against their wishes
- ritual: a well established pattern of behaviour or religious practice
- self-stigma: the feeling that we are unworthy and shameful
semen  bodily fluid produced by a man during sex
sex  in this book, sex means penetrative sexual activity; the act of placing a man’s penis inside a woman’s vagina or person’s anus resulting in the exchange of bodily fluids
stereotype  ideas about something or someone that have become fixed through being widely used, but which do not necessarily apply in every case
stigma  a feeling of being socially unacceptable, resulting in isolation, rejection and shame
taboo  a subject that is rarely discussed for social or cultural reasons
virus  a microscopic parasite which can be spread among people
‘window period’  the three-month period immediately after infection with HIV when the virus has not yet multiplied sufficiently within the body to be detected by special HIV tests
Further reading and useful resource materials

_Africa Bible Commentary: A one volume commentary_, Tokunbo Adeyemo, General Editor, 2006.

_God, Our Loving Parent; Bible studies on AIDS_, Umtata Women’s Theology Bible Study Booklet No 5. Available from The Editor, Box 65, Umtata 5099, South Africa.

_HIV and AIDS: Taking Action_, ROOTS 8 by Rachel Blackman, Tearfund.

_Responding More Effectively to HIV and AIDS_, a PILLARS guide by Isabel Carter, Tearfund.


_Positive Voices: Religious leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS_, Called to Care series No 1, Strategies for Hope Trust, Oxford 2005.


_The Child Within: Connecting with children who have experienced grief and loss_ by Judy Rankin, Called to Care series No 6, Strategies for Hope Trust, Oxford 2008.

_Call to Me: How the Bible speaks in the age of AIDS_, edited by Glen Williams, Called to Care series No 7, Strategies for Hope Trust, Oxford 2010.

**Websites**

-www.godswordforyou.com** Bible study resources

-www.Biblelight.org** Bible study resources

-www.abigails.org** Support for women experiencing domestic abuse

-www.avert.org** HIV and AIDS information

-www.tilz.tearfund.org** Tearfund’s international publications

-www.aidsalliance.org** Reducing the spread of HIV

-www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData** United Nations AIDS site

-www.who.int/topics/hiv_aids** World Health Organisation
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