

# Leader's Guide

This study may look as daunting as its subject matter. Imagine it, however, as a smorgasbord rather than as a long complicated scientific formula. It provides a variety of options for group use and individual reflection. It encourages selection according to the interests, time constraints, and situation of an individual or particular group and setting.

This point bears repeating: use as much or as little as makes sense given your particular circumstances. The study is designed to be accessible from different entry points, and each session is self-contained, although some cross references are provided. However much of the study is used, the one task we ask every user to complete, whether as individual or group, is to complete and return the response form on page 111!

## Preparing to lead the study

Below are answers to commonly asked questions that you might want to consider as you plan for the study and prepare to lead the sessions:

- 1. Who can lead this?** You can. Leaders do not need to be a pastor or a scientist! Discussion leaders from within the congregation can be recruited and prepared. If you have multiple leaders, consider working together through each session before the study sessions begin.
- 2. Who should participate?** Invite people of all ages—from youth to older adults—to participate. Though the study is not specifically geared to youth, high school youth may well have experiences that will add to the discussions, and they will certainly benefit from exposure to these pressing issues.
- 3. Which session shall we use?** Use whichever ones you think will provide the best engagement with the issues relevant to your group. Every group should plan on using the A1 as the introductory session, as well as session A5, which explores ethical issues that the task force has identified. Some groups will want to work systematically through the more general biblical, theological, and ethical material in the core of the study—the 5 sessions of Part A. Other groups will be most engaged by picking and choosing among topics of interest in Part B. It is quite possible to choose back and forth between Parts A and B as the group's interests develop. Most groups will want to use 5 to 8 sessions as the way to assure good exposure to the issues.
- 4. How long should a session take?** Sessions can be adapted for use in a variety of time frames, but it is probably best to plan one hour sessions, with fifteen minutes given to gathering the group, the brief opening, and the closing, and forty-five minutes given to review of the content and discussion. There will be more time for discussion if participants can read the session content before gathering for discernment.
- 5. How much background science is needed?** Discussing matters related to genetics can be considered scary because individuals often believe they “are not smart enough.” However, each session assumes a minimal background and provides explanation of key ideas. Leaders can help facilitate the discussion by doing some preparation work of their own. *Cracking the Code of Life*, the recommended DVD, can both help leaders to prepare and help to familiarize participants with the science and issues to be discussed. As a leader, take a moment to think about resource people in your area who might be asked to talk about specific genetics issues to your group. The glossary and a primer (see “Genetics 101”) are included for reference purposes, as well. Leaders will need to do some minimal preparation, but this will pay off as participants realize that understanding the basics of the science should not just be left to the “experts.”
- 6. Where can I get the DVD?** Segments of *Cracking the Code* can be downloaded at [www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/genome/program.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/genome/program.html). The ELCA, however, is providing the DVD at no cost for those who would like a copy. It can be obtained either by calling the ELCA resources line at 800/638-3522 ext 2996 or by contacting Augsburg

Fortress, by phone or online. (800/328-4648 or [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org)) If time is available, it will certainly help participants to view key segments of the DVD before beginning the study sessions or as part of each session. (Suggested segments of the DVD for each session will be found under the section called “Real life stories.”)

7. **What do I need to do in advance?** Read and become familiar with the content of the session you are leading. Watch the suggested segment from *Cracking the Code of Life*. Then decide which parts of the session you want to highlight and use. Lastly, identify the questions you will have the group focus on—you will not have time to use them all. Remember think of the study as a smorgasbord.
8. **Do we have to discuss all the questions?** No. The point, again, has been to provide a variety of questions that will allow the leader or group to tailor their discussion. Feel free to use just one question or to have break-out groups discuss different questions and summarize for the whole group just before closing.
9. **Who should do the Bible reading at the beginning?** It is best if someone besides the leader does it. Select a strong reader or readers to read aloud the scripture passage listed for that session. Either the leader or the reader can note the meditative aids in the adjoining sidebar before reading. Ask participants to close their eyes and just listen to the reading. This will allow them to hear things they may not otherwise. Do allow a brief time for silence following the reading. Then use the two simple questions in order to encourage participants to share an insight from what they have heard. If some time has lapsed and no one seems ready to share out loud, simply remind the group that God works through stillness too (Psalm 46:10), and then move on.
10. **What about the opening and closing?** Each opening could include a hymn (this should be chosen in advance, see page 119) and a prayer. Each closing includes suggested intercessory prayer related to the content of the session as well as a prayer taken from the broad Christian tradition. If you choose to follow the gathering space suggestion for the sessions (see “Gathering Time” below), you will need to prepare some items beforehand.

### Completing the Response Form

The task force is eager to receive responses to this study. Please record key insights and views as you participate in the study sessions or have someone do this informally for the group. The response form is found on page 119. Follow the directions for submitting it. It may be completed online at [www.elca.org/geneticsstudy](http://www.elca.org/geneticsstudy).

### Gathering time information

#### Preparation and space

Each gathering space is different, and you will want to be creative in how you arrange your space to accommodate your group’s needs. You are encouraged to incorporate the following elements to remind all of their baptism and to invite a focus on dwelling in the Word. Together they may provide a visual focus for the study sessions:

- A large bowl of water in a central location. If you are gathered around a table, it could be in the middle of the table; if using chairs in a room put it on a small table in the center or front of the room. You may want to find some blue cloth to cover the table; or “puddle” the cloth around the bottom of the bowl, allowing it to drape on to the table or cascade to the floor.
- A candle next to the bowl of water.
- A Bible, preferably large, open to the selected text of the day next to the candle.

As the study begins, you may wish to welcome the participants and orient them to the study, indicating that the study itself will be an experience of how we, as the baptized people of God, “dwell in the Scripture” as we engage in moral deliberation around issues

related to genetics. Invite them to note how the shape of the study itself begins with far more than a discussion of science and ethics. Rather, it invites us to open our minds and hearts to the hearing of the Word and to the discernment of what that Word means for our lives as baptized people of God in relation to these matters.

### ***Hymn suggestions***

#### ***Evangelical Lutheran Worship***

Hymn Numbers: 396, 513, 556, 574, 581, 597, 607, 610, 685, 708, 731, 732, 733, 736, 752, 787, 798, 879

#### ***Lutheran Book of Worship***

Hymn Numbers: 290, 294, 320, 343, 353, 360, 362, 364, 403, 406, 408, 423, 433, 463, 534, 558, 561

#### ***With One Voice***

Hymn Numbers: 684, 712, 752, 753, 765, 770, 771, 775, 779

#### ***This Far By Faith***

Hymn Numbers: 83, 130, 132, 192, 203, 222, 226, 230, 247, 283, 294

#### ***Worship & Praise***

Hymn Numbers: 14, 17, 22, 51, 69, 92, 98, 110, 114, 127, 137, 144, 147, 158

#### ***Libro de Liturgia y Cantico***

Borning Cry

Earth and All Stars

For the Beauty of the Earth

God, the Sculptor

Great is thy Faithfulness

Here I am Lord

Jesu, Jesu, Fill us With Your Love

Listen, God is Calling

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

Morning Has Broken

My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

On Eagle Wings

Santo es nuestro Dios (Holy is our God)

Sois la Semila (You are the Seed)

Spirit of Gentleness

Take My Life That I May Be

The Summons

You Are Mine (I Will Come to You)

## Miscellaneous tips for leading the sessions

In addition to the preparation suggestions listed above, you may wish to keep in mind the following as you lead each session:

1. Following the selected scripture reading at the opening of the session, give the group time in silence to let the Word touch each individual, and to help them reflect on what they have heard. The comfort level of silence will likely grow as you practice it each week. Following the silence, you may ask the question provided: “What did you hear in this reading? Is there a word of God for us here?”
2. During “Discerning the Word,” encourage participants to keep their comments to one main insight in order to let everyone have a chance to speak. The material in the adjoining box is provided as meditation aids or conversation starters, but should not be used to preclude anyone’s contribution. The exercise is expected to take about 5-7 minutes, but as a leader you will need to determine the right balance between time for discernment, time for sharing insights, and the interest of getting to the chapter’s material.
3. It is most helpful if participants read the material for each session in advance. Nonetheless, it is possible and helpful for the leader to highlight key ideas of each session before getting to the discussion questions. At least one “Real Life Story” should be read (or watched) by all since they offer common ground and connections to everyday life.
4. If questions are raised about the meaning of terms or concepts in the study booklet that cannot be satisfactorily answered, record them and seek help in answering them before the next session.
5. In every group, some members are more vocal than others. Encourage broad participation whenever possible. Encourage everyone to discuss these important but complex issues in a spirit of mutual respect. Engaging in discussion of sensitive issues requires trust, and trust is built when participants listen respectfully to one another.