

## Leader's Guide

As a leader, you play a critical role in this study even though the exact role will depend on the nature of the group and how this study is used. You are responsible to make sure resources are available for each session and to guide the discussion of the material. Groups also need a leader to encourage everyone's participation, summarize learning, and help coordinate any possible actions that may arise from your study. You do not need to be a scientist, or theologian, or a professional of any kind to lead this study—but careful preparation and extra study will pay dividends for the group you are leading.

In addition to reading this guide in advance, group leaders are encouraged to read a brief ELCA document entitled *Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues*. (Information for ordering this document may be found on page 67.). Attention to its guidance for faith-based discussion of controversial topics can help steer your group toward thoughtful discussions that generate more “light than heat.” Its insights in group discussion dynamics can be valuable, as well, for the many issues in genetics that are not controversial.

### Session Planning

#### Choose which Chapters to Study

A group's first step is to choose which chapters to use and how to use them. (The group may adjust their decisions later, of course.)

This guide is written to permit maximum flexibility and selectivity. The first two chapters are foundational, while the rest are topical and semi-independent of each other. This means that groups should plan to begin with the first two chapters, but may select among the others without disruption to the educational flow. This feature will hold for additional chapters made available online at the ELCA Website [see page 66 for further information]

#### Choose How to Use the Chapters

This guide is designed to permit different study groups to approach the material at a level they find appropriate.

Groups may use the study as an introductory survey in the educational setting common to many congregations: A forty-five minute, roughly, Sunday morning adult class in which participants have taken little time to prepare. This approach covers one chapter per session, but requires the leader to be thoroughly prepared to introduce and highlight key ideas and guide discussion accordingly.

Classes or study groups, alternatively, can engage the material at a deeper level by spending two sessions on each chapter. This goal may be accomplished in at least two ways:

- 1) Ask participants to read through the entire session's material ahead of class. (Most readers have found that the chapters require about twenty to thirty minutes to read.) Suggest that they mark or record those questions, insights, and ideas that they find most important. Encourage participants to share these as the class moves through each section.
- 2) Ask participants to come to class prepared to read through the material together and reflect upon it as they go. This will require the leader to prepare ahead of time for using the built-in discussion points (such as *Personal Experience and Values* and *Deliberation*) of each chapter.

#### Preparation

Be sure each participant has a copy of this guide or of the relevant chapter. Make these available before your first session and encourage all participants to read the short *User's Guide* which introduces the study and explains how it is designed.



## GENETICS!

Where Do We Stand as Christians?

If desired, a leader might spread responsibilities among class members by:

- 1) Assigning one person to lead opening and closing prayers or devotions.
- 2) Assigning leadership of one session to an individual or a small group. Encourage these participants to become as familiar as possible with their material. Suggest the preparation of questions or discoveries taken from their advance reading. Suggest how they might sharpen their preparation by using the resources mentioned at the end of *For Further Investigation* or by interviewing people in the congregation on the ethical issues raised in the session.
- 3) Inviting the pastor or other appropriate specialists who could enrich discussion of a specific topic.

## Goals

The goal of your work as a leader should be threefold:

- To help participants gain a working knowledge of the science, theology, and other information involved.
- To help participants gain their own understanding of the various benefits, questions, challenges, and burdens that come with genetic knowledge.
- To help participants to be able to apply a Christian perspective on the moral and social decisions that are, or must be made, regarding the use of genetic knowledge.

## Doing a Session

### Begin with Prayer

#### Engage

Highlight or read sections of the session one at a time. A leader might ask those who have read ahead of time to summarize the material and supply whatever background they have been able to discover. Encourage questions or comments from participants as you read. Do encourage participants to share appropriate personal stories raised by these reflections, especially when using the section entitled *Personal Experience and Values*.

#### Reflect

Reflection should occur as your group works through each section, especially the one entitled *Gathering Input*. You may want to encourage this reflection by developing brief questions for use along the way. Generally, participants will also raise questions as they seek clarification and gather input.

#### Deliberate

Use the suggested exercise, involving a specific case or set of recommendations, as a way to encourage participants to make choices, tentative and incomplete as they may be. Be sure that participants understand the tentative nature of this exercise, but encourage them to use his or her moral imagination to move beyond general discussion to the hard work of deciding.

#### Apply

Briefly encourage participants to do some of the suggested activities in the section entitled *Taking the Conversation With You* during the week. Do so by beginning each session with a time in which they can share their experience and insight from doing the activities. If the group has chosen a group project, each session could begin with reports about this activity.

#### Evaluate

After your discussion, near the end of each chapter's conclusion, be sure to think through together the implications of what you have learned for the life of your congregation.

### Close with Prayer or Devotions

