



Spring 2004 *Go! Online* Bible Study

AIDS: What Can We Do?

Materials:

- *Go! Online* Download Video: “What Can We Do?”
- Computer, monitor, or video projector to display video
- Copies of *Go! Online* Group Activity for “What Can We Do?” (one per student)
- Copies of Spring 2004 *Go!* magazine for each student (unless they’ve already been distributed)
- These and other materials are available at www.go.studentz.com/leader.

Video Introduction:

The *Go! Online* download video for this study is called “What Can We Do?” It’s 4 minutes, 34 seconds, and it’s intended to help your group focus on the topic of reaching out to those suffering from HIV/AIDS in Africa. When you’re ready for the study, play this short video clip for your group.

Group Activity

[Hand out the copies you made of the *Go! Online* group activity for this study. You should have one for each student. Explain that you’d like each student to complete this quick quiz on his or her own. Most students won’t know the answers, but the quiz is a tool to get them asking the questions and to make them aware of the seriousness of the AIDS crisis in Africa.]

When all of your students have had an opportunity to complete the quiz, walk them through the answers below, along with the accompanying teaching points.

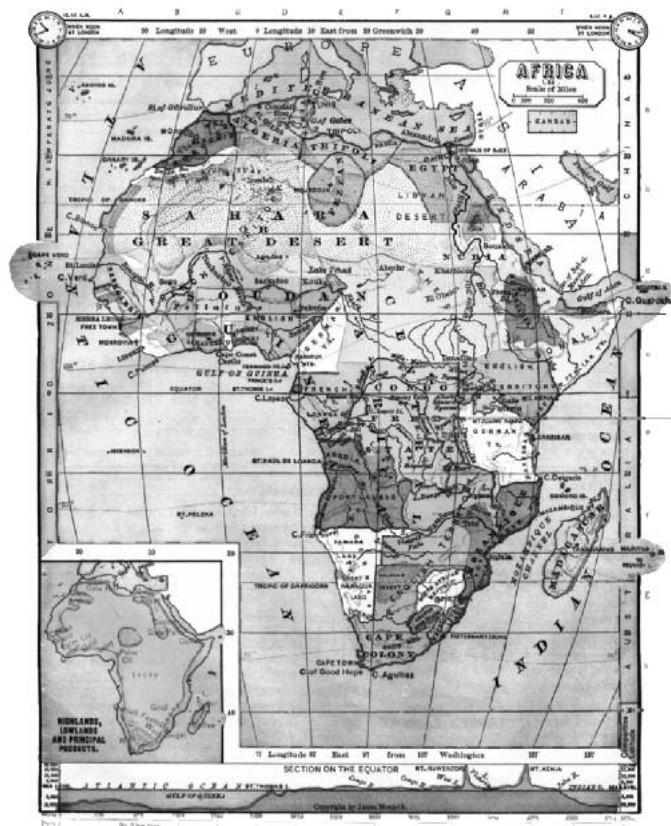
1) How many people in sub-Saharan Africa die from AIDS every day?

Answer: c) 6,000

And that number is on the rise. For Africa, HIV/AIDS has been classified as a *pandemic*. A pandemic is an epidemic disease that spreads over a wide geographic area.

2) Which of these claimed (or will claim) the most human lives?

Answer: d) HIV/AIDS



Right now, as many people have died from AIDS as died from the Bubonic Plague (or “black death”) of the 1300s. That’s far more than were killed in both World War I and the Vietnam War. HIV/AIDS may be the greatest human catastrophe the world has ever seen.

3) What is the current average life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa, due to the spread of AIDS?

Answer: b) 47

In some countries in Africa, the average life expectancy drops into the 30s. Without HIV/AIDS, the normal life expectancy in Africa would be in the 60s. AIDS is slowly wiping out a whole generation of Africans.

4) What percentage of the 40 million people worldwide who have HIV/AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa?

Answer: d) 70 percent

Africa is by far the hardest-hit region in the world for AIDS infection. It’s a fire burning almost out of control. But that fire is spreading. Current projections suggest that cases of AIDS infection will skyrocket in India and China in the coming decades.

5) Due to the AIDS crisis, about how many Zambian children are orphans?

Answer: c) 25 percent

Zambia is the nation where the missionaries in the video we just saw are working. It’s one of 5-10 nations in Africa where the AIDS crisis is worst. In these nations, the disease is creating vast numbers of orphans and widows—women and children left unprotected and with few places to turn for help.

6) How do people get HIV/AIDS?

Answer: f) All of the above

As Americans and Christians, it can be easy for us to dismiss AIDS as something that happens far away and to people who “deserve” it because of their behavior choices. That’s the wrong attitude.

For one, thousands in the U.S. and Canada are also living with HIV/AIDS. Two, it does happen to people who choose to violate God’s standards for sex—but it also happens to women and children who are never given that choice. As we’ll see in this study, God does not call us to help only those who have not sinned.

In Mark 2:17 (NIV), Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” We are all sinners in need of salvation.

7) In most cases, how are people infected with HIV/AIDS—and their immediate families—treated in Africa?

Answer: d) They are often snubbed because of the negative social stigma that comes with having HIV/AIDS. Even those orphaned or widowed by the disease who don’t have it are often neglected or treated harshly.

Just because AIDS is widespread in Africa, it doesn’t mean that those with the disease (or their families) are treated with compassion and respect in their communities. Often, the exact opposite is true.

Transition:

[Once you’ve walked through the quiz together and talked about the harsh reality of AIDS in Africa, say something like the following in your own words:]

Clearly, AIDS is both a health crisis and a spiritual crisis for Africa and the world. Millions of people are suffering and dying. It’s almost overwhelming to think about how big the problem is. Today, we’re going to spend a few minutes talking about exactly why we, as believers in Jesus, must think about it. We’re going to begin to answer the question, “What can we do?”

[Teach the following points in your own words and according to the needs of your students.]

1. Loving Like a Samaritan

Luke 10 tells the story of a religious guy who pushed Jesus for an answer about how to follow the law. Jesus agreed with the man’s statement about the heart of following the law:

“ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ “ (Luke 10:27, NIV) But being a legal-type, the man wanted specifics. So he asked, “Who is my neighbor?”

Jesus answered with a story. In the story, a man is robbed, beaten, and left for dead by the side of the road. After two religious leaders pass him by, an ordinary man from Samaria (and, thus, a foreigner in Israel) comes along and stops to help the crime victim.

When the story was over, Jesus asked the legal expert, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” (Luke 10:36, NIV). The questioner was forced to answer, “The one who had mercy on him” (Luke 10:37, NIV).

From next door to the nations of Africa, our neighbors are suffering and dying from HIV/AIDS. The Samaritan proved he was a neighbor by showing mercy. Jesus said, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37, NIV).

Loving others as we love ourselves isn't just a good idea. It's not just the Golden Rule. It's an Old Testament law that Jesus also endorsed in His teaching. Next to our love for God, it's the heart of what it means to be a Christian—to be like Jesus.

Feel For Them

Being that kind of neighbor starts with thinking about how we would want to be helped if we were suffering in the same way. If you were one of the 40 million victims of HIV/AIDS in the world, how would you want people to treat you? What would you do to help yourself if you could?

The first thing the “good Samaritan” did was to “take pity” on the dying man (Luke 10:33, NIV). He felt for the man's pain and suffering. Like him, Jesus calls us to identify with people in need and look for ways to help as we would like to be helped in their shoes.

Provide Medical Attention

Next, the Samaritan got his hands dirty: “He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him” (Luke 10:34, NIV).

The people around the world (and around North America) who are suffering and dying from HIV/AIDS need medical help. There is no cure for AIDS—no vaccine or antibiotic that will just make it go away. But it is possible to comfort the sick through medical help. It's also possible to provide medicine that will drastically slow down the disease—and medical education to help people understand how to keep the disease from spreading.

A good neighbor looks for ways to soothe and stop another person's pain.

Provide Money for Continued Care

Not everyone can go to Africa and do what the missionaries in that video are doing. Many more are needed, but most of us won't be able to go. We can still meet the needs of those dying of AIDS (and their families) by giving money.

Listen to what the Samaritan in Jesus' story did for the man he saved before leaving: “The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ ” (Luke 10:35, NIV).

He paid someone else to care for the man when he could not. He gave his own money to meet the need.

2. Don't Stop Now!

Providing for the physical needs of AIDS victims and their families is just the first step of in reaching out to them with God's love. We can't leave it out, but we can't stop there either. No matter how much medical attention we provide and loving care we offer, we can't stop

AIDS tomorrow. Millions will still die from the disease in the coming decades. And what do dying people need more than anything? To know that they can live forever in the next life. In other words, they need Jesus.

Remember that quote from Jesus we already talked about: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17, NIV).

Some of us get hung up on the idea that lots of people (though not all) get AIDS from taking part in what we believe to be sinful activities. If Jesus had that same attitude, we’d all be in big trouble. His mission on earth wasn’t to save the “pretty good” people and send the rest of us packing. He also said this: “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17, NIV).

And this: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10, NIV).

And then He told His followers this: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV).

What more could we possibly offer to those dying from AIDS and those losing loved ones than Jesus’ clear message: God loves you in spite of the fact that you have AIDS. We’re all sinners. Jesus saved me and made it possible for me to live with Him in heaven forever. You can live there, too, if you trust in Him.

The dying people of Africa (and North America) need to hear that hopeful message more than anyone.

3. What We Can Do

[NOTE: If your church or group has focused on one specific way to help with the AIDS crisis, be sure to emphasize it in each of the steps below. If you haven’t identified a way to help, be sure to check out the excellent programs offered by Compassion International, African Leadership, and others. You can find links to all of them on www.go.studentz.com.]

So we come back to the question we started with: “What can we do?” Here are a few specific ideas for ways that we can be Samaritan-style neighbors:

Don’t Hide

In the middle of our busy lives, our first instinct might be to ignore the problem and hope it goes away. We can’t do that if we’re going to love those suffering with AIDS as we love ourselves.

We’ve just scratched the surface of what there is to know about AIDS in Africa and right here at home. Take a little time to check out the Web links in the Jars of Clay story in the Spring 2004 issue of *Go!* magazine. You can find all those links online and ready to click at www.go.studentz.com. The more you know about AIDS, the more ready you’ll be to help.

Pray

[Break your group up into smaller groups of three or four and ask them to pray together the following things.]

- 1) Ask God to help you know what He wants you to do to help people suffering with AIDS.
- 2) Ask God to slow the spread of AIDS and to help those who have it know that He loves them and that they can live with Him forever through Jesus.
- 3) Ask God to send people to Africa and other places where AIDS is spreading so that they can offer physical help and eternal salvation through Jesus.
- 4) Ask God to provide for the needs of the orphans and widows left in the AIDS path of destruction.
- 5) Ask God to help the world to see Christians as people who love and care for those with HIV/AIDS.

Give

[NOTE: If you're raising money for missionaries or programs directed at those suffering with AIDS or countries hard-hit by the crisis, emphasize that here.]

Fighting AIDS and loving those struck by it costs a ton of money. Missionaries need to travel and live. They need medical supplies and educational materials. Money is needed to support the orphans and widows. The needs are almost endless.

We've got lots of opportunities to give money to missionaries and organizations helping those with AIDS. You can find lists of them online in the Links section on the Home Page of www.go.studentz.com. What could we do together as a group to raise money to help people with AIDS?

In the Spring 2004 issue of *Go!*, there's a story about a Christian high school in Illinois that raised \$78,000 to fight AIDS and poverty in Zambia. A youth group in Pennsylvania raised another \$3,000 by taking pledges for a benefit walk. What could we do to help?

Go!

The young missionary featured in the video we saw was once a student sitting in a group just like you are. God worked in her heart to convince her to go to Africa and offer His love and salvation to those suffering from AIDS.

Are you ready to go if God calls you? Ask Him what He wants you to do with your life. Maybe He'll call you to show His love to people with AIDS right in our state. Or maybe you'll find that you feel passionate about taking His message of hope to the millions dying in Africa.

Conclusion

[Wind up this study by briefly reviewing the major points.]

- (1) AIDS might be the worst human catastrophe the world ever sees, and it's happening in your lifetime.
- (2) As followers of Jesus, we're commanded to love others—including AIDS victims—as we love ourselves. That includes meeting their physical needs.
- (3) The best thing we can give to someone who is dying or losing a loved one is the hope of heaven through Jesus Christ.
- (4) What can we do? We can learn more, pray specifically, give money, and even go to those who are hurting to help with our own hands.

Close by praying that you and your students will be ready to do whatever God leads you to in order to give love, help, and hope to those suffering with AIDS.

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