

BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE

HONEST TO GOD

REAL QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

SAMPLE



ROBERT JEFFRESS

Can we know the truth? Or is everything relative?

Living the Christian life as “strangers and aliens” in this world has been a challenge for believers in every century. Truth is seen by some as an outdated and irrelevant concept. Sources formerly unquestioned have now been dismissed as unreliable.

In fact, one of the most popular teachings of our day is that you can’t know the truth about anything because truth is a relative term. Can we know the truth? Do absolutes still exist? Christians believe that God Himself is true and is an unfailing source of truthfulness. He has given us His Word and in that Word we learn of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Christians in the 21st century need to know what they believe and why they believe it. The six sessions of *Honest to God* will enable you to grow in your own faith and equip you to be more effective in sharing that faith with others. These sessions address foundational issues in the life of every person:

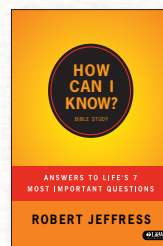
- ▶ The origin and significance of human life
- ▶ The existence and nature of God
- ▶ How God reveals Himself and relates to people

Studying chapters of Scripture like Genesis 1, Job 42, Psalms 19, 119, and 139, and Romans 1 will enrich your life and adjust your perspective. You will learn what the Bible really says on crucial matters in a way that is both refreshing and honest.



Robert Jeffress

Robert Jeffress is senior pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. Robert is known for a biblical and practical approach that has made him one of the country’s most respected evangelical leaders. Dr. Jeffress is the author of *How Can I Know?* (LifeWay, 2012), a study that examines in-depth seven tough questions people ask.



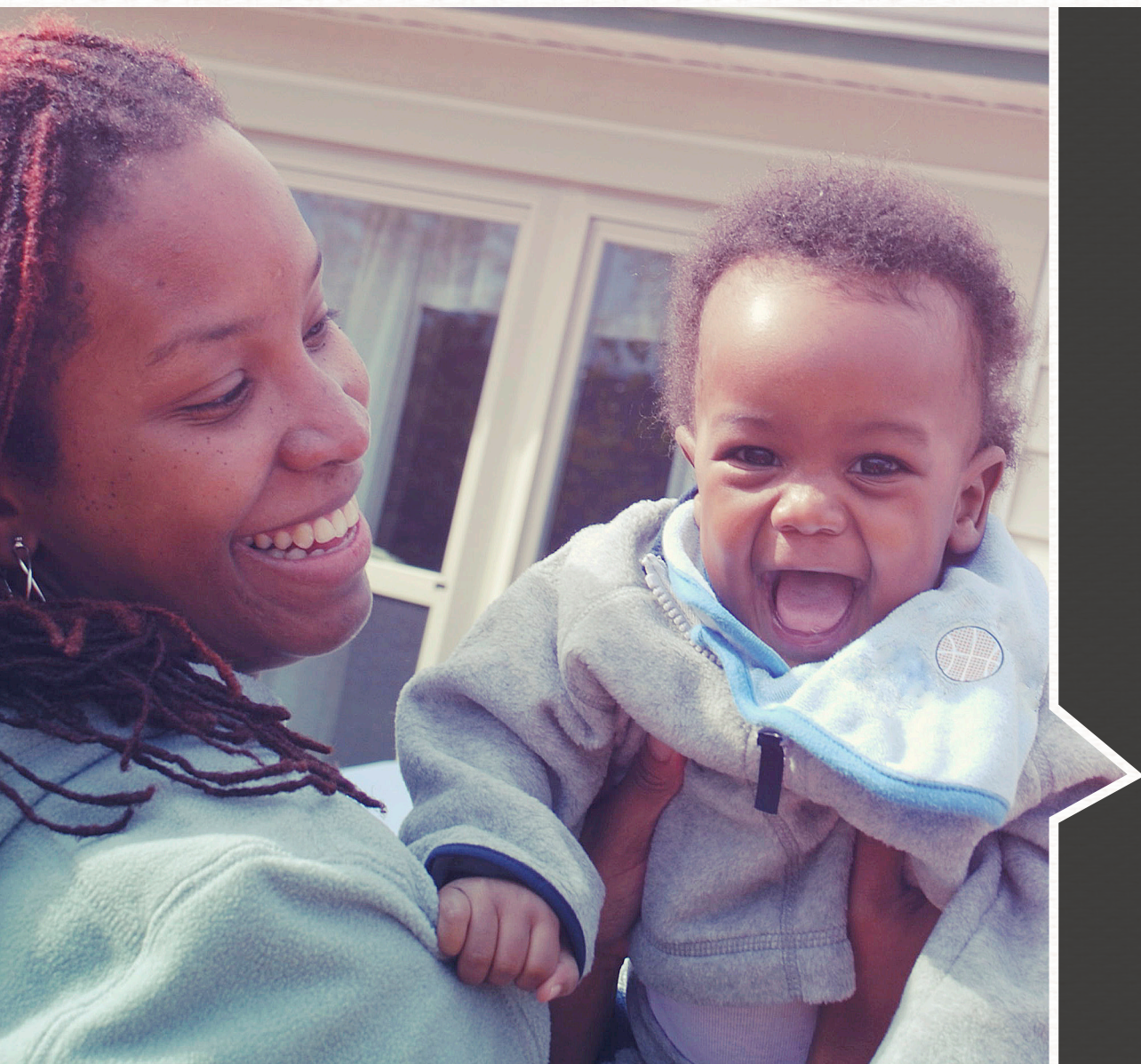
Dr. Jeffress graduated from Baylor University (B.A.), Dallas Theological Seminary (Th.M.), and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (D.Min.). He resides in Dallas with his wife, Amy. They are the parents of two daughters, Julia and Dorothy.

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SESSION 1

IS EVERY LIFE SACRED?



*How can people tell what is
valuable to you?*

THE POINT

God values life and so should we.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

What is the value of a human life? For many in our American culture, a mother's womb has become a hazardous site. The plight of the aged is riddled with accounts of neglect and abuse.

More than 25 years ago, former Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop lamented the devaluation of human life, "When I graduated from medical school the idea was, 'How can I save this life?' but now for a great number of the medical students it is, 'Should I save this life?'" If we want to understand the true value of life, the best resource to consult is the book penned by the Author of life.

The God of creation, who created us in His image, provides us with several insights into His perspective about the incalculable worth of human life. One specific example of this perspective is found in Psalm 139. Addressed to the Choirmaster, this psalm of David celebrates God's intimate knowledge of us and His intricate fashioning of us as His unique handiwork. As the Author and Sustainer of human life, God values our existence. Because He values life, so should we.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Psalm 139:1-6,13-18 (HCSB)

- 1 LORD, You have searched me and known me.
- 2 You know when I sit down and when I stand up; You understand my thoughts from far away.
- 3 You observe my travels and my rest; You are aware of all my ways.
- 4 Before a word is on my tongue, You know all about it, LORD.
- 5 You have encircled me; You have placed Your hand on me.
- 6 This extraordinary knowledge is beyond me. It is lofty; I am unable to reach it.
-
- 13 For it was You who created my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother's womb.
- 14 I will praise You because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, and I know this very well.
- 15 My bones were not hidden from You when I was made in secret, when I was formed in the depths of the earth.
- 16 Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in Your book and planned before a single one of them began.
- 17 God, how difficult Your thoughts are for me to comprehend; how vast their sum is!
- 18 If I counted them, they would outnumber the grains of sand; when I wake up, I am still with You.

Key Words

known (v. 1)—Unique kind of intimate knowledge of a person resulting from a close, personal relationship; how the Lord knows us.

encircled (v. 5)—Being enfolded back and front by the Lord, who has the absolute power to control and protect completely.

knit me (v. 13)—Depicts a skilled artisan, carefully weaving a tapestry with exact precision. It pictures God's intimate involvement in creating each of us.



Psalm 139:1-6

David marveled at the Lord's comprehensive knowledge and awareness of him. The God who created us and who has a plan for us is also the God who is with us wherever we might be. God is always present with His people. God is mindful of our daily schedules, activities, and thoughts. He goes before us and behind us.

The Lord's presence is inescapable. We never go anywhere, engage in any activity, or entertain any thought outside of the knowledge and presence of God. God is neither unconcerned with humanity, nor distant.

Some people may picture God as a supreme being who takes no active interest in His creation. To them, God may seem detached and distant, unwilling to empathize with the experiences and emotions of His creatures.

Yet, the Bible presents God as One who actively intervenes in the lives of people. For example, consider Moses' first encounter with God described in Exodus 3. When the Lord called him to be the deliverer of His people, Moses was overwhelmed. God revealed His presence to Moses at the burning bush, through the Red Sea, and on the top of Mount Sinai, demonstrating that He was always with His people.

In the nativity story, we see the focus on God's presence taken to an entirely new level. The Son born to a virgin is described as Immanuel, a name meaning "God with us." Jesus was the Word made flesh who came to earth to save His people. Later, when Jesus charged His disciples to go into the entire world with the good news of the gospel, He included this promise: "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). God will never leave us nor forsake us (see Heb. 13:5).

***From these verses,
how can you know
that God values you?***

QUESTION #1

EXPRESSING VALUE

Choose one

Ways I can show love to these people:

- ☐ Unborn children
- ☐ Children and students
- ☐ Elderly adults
- ☐ People with physical challenges
- ☐ People with mental challenges



Psalm 139:13-16

The fact that God has developed a detailed plan for every aspect of our existence is further proof of our worth to Him. David recognized that he had been fearfully and wonderfully made:

- ▶ God Himself is the Source and Designer of our existence.
- ▶ He formed our inward parts and knit us in the womb.

Since life begins at conception, how does this impact our attitudes toward the hardest questions about abortion?

QUESTION #2

What should characterize our treatment of others (the sick, poor, disabled, elderly) in light of the fact that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made?

QUESTION #3

If we take these verses seriously, we are left with no other option than the reality that human life begins at conception. We do not need a medical degree to understand that a life in embryonic form is a life and not a meaningless blob. These verses reveal the stunning contrast between God's view of human life and the view that fueled the landmark decision, *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion in 1973. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 50 million abortions have been performed in the United States since 1973.*

"But what about those children born with disabilities or deformities?" These realities are a part of humanity's fallen state. We live in a world marred by sin in which Satan, the prince of darkness, wields his wicked influence. All of creation has been affected by sin. Yet this truth in no way justifies the extermination of those deemed by a society to be unfit or unproductive. History is replete with the stories of those who bless others and make significant contributions even in the midst of their disabilities.

The human body, with all of its members and functions, is an astoundingly complex and amazingly orchestrated creation.

The Lord created us, and orchestrated and ordered all the days of our lives. Given these truths, it is no wonder that David erupted in praise and wonder, "Your works are wonderful" (v. 14).

* Based on the CDC's Annual Abortion Surveillance Reports (www.cdc.gov)

"How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these."

— GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

Psalm 139:17-18

We should live in light of the fact that God values us. He has assigned worth to those made in His image. Jesus confirmed the truth that God values human life: "Aren't five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. Indeed, the hairs of your head are all counted. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows!" (Luke 12:6-7).

Beyond that, God also knows us completely. Our past, present, and future actions and thoughts are seen by an all-powerful and all-knowing God. This knowledge blew David's mind. He couldn't wrap his finite mind around the reality that the Lord, so lofty and transcendent, has taken such an intense and intimate interest in him.

God's love and care for us is particularly amazing, given that He knows everything about us—the good, the bad, and the ugly. God knew the worst about David and He knows the worst about us. Yet, because of His love and grace, He values us and sets His love upon us anyway.

The ultimate demonstration of God's valuing of us is the cross of Jesus Christ. "But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

The sacredness of human life is grounded in the facts that God created us in His image, knows every detail of our existence, and has given His Son in order to save us from our sins.

Which attribute of God mentioned in these verses have you recently seen firsthand?

QUESTION #4

LIVE IT OUT

Psalms 139 shows that God values human life. So should we.

- ▶ **Write a letter that values life.** Perhaps you'll enclose money to help save babies and enhance lives. Your local school might need a piece of playground equipment that accommodates a child who happens to be in a wheelchair.
- ▶ **Show grace.** Many people suffer silently with guilt over involvement with a past abortion. If you know someone like this, extend God's love and grace to him or her.
- ▶ **Form a friendship with someone who's been labeled.** Think about the labels "homeless," "terminally ill," "mentally handicapped," and so on. Getting to know someone will change your attitude about that person.



God calls us to value, cherish, and guard human life. Show the sanctity of each life.

The Lost Voices



I can't do this! I can't be in a Bible study with all these godly women. I don't fit in here, Sandy thought, wiping mascara-stained tears from her face. I've had four abortions. How can God forgive that when I can't forgive myself? These women would be appalled if they knew my secret.

Can you picture the church, God's family of faith, as the scariest place in the world to share your deepest secret and greatest pain? Perhaps you can.



To continue reading "The Lost Voices" from *HomeLife* magazine, visit BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles.



LEADER GUIDE

HONEST TO GOD

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

In order to make the most of this study and to ensure a richer group experience, it's recommended that all group participants read through the teaching and discussion content in full before each group meeting. As a leader, it is also a good idea for you to be familiar with this content and prepared to summarize it for your group members as you move through the material each week.

Each session of the Bible study is made up of three sections:

1. THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE.

An introduction to the theme of the session and its connection to everyday life, along with a brief overview of the primary Scripture text. This section also includes an icebreaker question or activity.

2. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

This comprises the bulk of each session and includes the primary Scripture text along with explanations for key words and ideas within that text. This section also includes most of the content designed to produce and maintain discussion within the group.

3. LIVE IT OUT.

The final section focuses on application, using bulleted summary statements to answer the question, *So what?* As the leader, be prepared to challenge the group to apply what they learned during the discussion by transforming it into action throughout the week.

For group leaders, the *Honest to God* Leader Guide contains several features and tools designed to help you lead participants through the material provided.

ICEBREAKER

These opening questions and/or activities are designed to help participants transition into the study and begin engaging the primary themes to be discussed. Be sure everyone has a chance to speak, but maintain a low-pressure environment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Each "What Does the Bible Say?" section features at least three questions designed to spark discussion and interaction within your group. These questions encourage critical thinking, so be sure to allow a period of silence for participants to process the question and form an answer.

The *Honest to God* Leader Guide also contains follow-up questions and optional activities that may be helpful to your group, if time permits.

DVD CONTENT

Each video features teaching from Robert Jeffress on the primary themes found in the session. We recommend that you show this video in one of three places: (1) At the beginning of group time, (2) After the icebreaker, or (3) After a quick review and/or summary of "What Does the Bible Say?" A video summary is included as well. You may choose to use this summary as background preparation to help you guide the group.

The Leader Guide contains additional questions to help unpack the video and transition into the discussion.

Note: For more biblical depth on these topics, be sure to *review the commentary* provided in the "Leader Tools" folder on the DVD-ROM in your Leader Kit. A digital Leader Guide is also included.

SESSION ONE: IS EVERY LIFE SACRED?

The Point: God values life and so should we.

The Passage: Psalm 139:1-6,13-18

The Setting: Psalm 139 is a very personal Psalm. David wrote of God's incomparable attributes—His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence—but he wrote of those attributes in the context of how God knew him and was personally involved in the details of his life.

Icebreaker: How can people tell what is valuable to you?

Optional activity: Bring to the group meeting several pictures and/or descriptions of items for sale, ranging from inexpensive to expensive. Cover the prices of each item beforehand. During the group meeting, pass the item descriptions around one at a time and encourage participants to guess the retail price for each one. When everyone has made their guess for an item, reveal the actual cost.

Once all the items have been discussed, conclude with the following questions:

- How do stores and retail establishments calculate the value of their products?
- How does our society calculate the value of people?

Video Summary: In this video session, Robert talks about the sacred nature of life. He explains that *sacred* means to be set apart. God has set apart our lives for a special purpose. Psalm 139 illustrates how God knows us. God not only knows *about* us, He desires to have a relationship *with* us. Psalm 139:13 says, "It was You who created my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother's womb." Every part of us has been designed by God. He made us just the way we are. And He has a special purpose and relationship in mind for us.

WATCH THE DVD SEGMENT FOR SESSION 1, THEN USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS TO TRANSITION INTO THE STUDY.

- In Exodus 4:10, Moses tells God, "I am slow and hesitant in speech." But this didn't change God's plan for Moses. Instead, it was part of His plan to glorify Himself through Moses. What obstacle in your life have you seen God use for His glory?
- Robert also talks about Christians living out the message that all life—inside and outside the womb—is sacred. That seems like an enormous undertaking. It's hard to know where to even start. What are some things you could do to make an impact?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

ASK FOR A VOLUNTEER TO READ ALOUD PSALM 139:1-6,13-18.

Response: What's your initial reaction to these verses?

- What do you like about the text?
- What questions do you have about these verses?

TURN THE GROUP'S ATTENTION TO PSALM 139:1-6.

QUESTION 1: From these verses, how can you know that God values you?

This is an observation question that requires the group to consider how intimately God knows them. Encourage group members to examine closely Psalm 139:1-6.

Optional follow-up: What emotions do you experience when you read these verses? Why?

Optional activity: Direct group members to the activity labeled "Expressing Value" on p. 9. Ask for volunteers to share their responses.

MOVE TO PSALM 139:13-16.

QUESTION 2: Since life begins at conception, how does this impact our attitudes toward the hardest questions about abortion?

The focus here is that God knows us at the moment of conception. You may steer the discussion more toward how this impacts the abortion issue as it relates to conception and how the Bible defines where life begins.

QUESTION 3: What should characterize our treatment of others (the sick, poor, disabled, elderly) in light of the fact that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made?

This question is ultimately about application. Specifically, how does the group "apply" the fact that we are fearfully and wonderfully made? You may establish context by first asking the group what it means to be fearfully and wonderfully made.

Optional follow-up: Why is God worthy of our praise because we are fearfully and wonderfully made?

Optional follow-up: In what ways do you intentionally express praise to God, as the psalmist did?

CONTINUE WITH PSALM 139:17-18.

QUESTION 4: Which attribute of God mentioned in these verses have you recently seen firsthand?

The attribute being described here is how God, with thoughts as numerous as there are grains of sand, still keeps us in mind constantly. Challenge the group to answer with ways they have experienced this aspect of God.

Note: The following question does not appear in the group member book. Use it in your group discussion as time allows.

QUESTION 5: How can we actively and intentionally choose to value life in our everyday routines?

This is an application question included to move members toward definitive action.

Optional follow-up: Based on the actions mentioned in response to question 5, what specific steps can you take this week to bring these things about? Refer to the Live It Out section for ideas if needed.

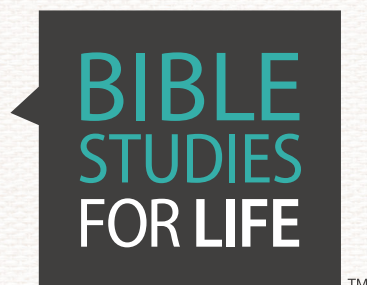
LIVE IT OUT

Psalm 139 shows that God values human life. Direct group members to three ways they can do the same.

- **Write a letter that values life.** Perhaps you'll enclose money to help save babies and enhance lives. Your local school might need a piece of playground equipment that accommodates a child who happens to be in a wheelchair.
- **Show grace.** Many people suffer silently with guilt over involvement with a past abortion. If you know someone like this, extend God's love and grace to him or her.
- **Form a friendship with someone who's been labeled.** Think about the descriptors "homeless," "terminally ill," "mentally handicapped," and so on. Getting to know someone will change your attitude about that person.

Challenge: Whom do you know who has been abused, hurt, neglected, disrespected, or otherwise marginalized? Seek out one of those people this week and invest in him or her. If you have personally experienced any of these things, consider using your story to help strengthen the life and faith of one who is still in the midst of the struggle.

Pray: Ask for prayer requests and ask group members to pray for the different requests as intercessors. As the leader, close this time by committing the members of your group to the Lord and asking Him to help each of you value life as He does.



WHERE THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Bible Studies for Life™ will help you know Christ, live in community, and impact the world around you. If you enjoyed this session, be sure and check out these forthcoming releases.* Six sessions each.

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A MOMENT OF TRUTH

Christians need to know what they believe and why they believe it. There are some hard questions out there—questions that may seem to dispute even the foundational truths of Christianity—but we need not fear them. We can approach these questions honestly and rationally. In this study, Robert Jeffress will address foundational issues in the life of every person: the origin and significance of human life, the existence and nature of God, and how God reveals Himself and relates to people.



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