

# Act Justly update 5

## Love *positively*

### Introduction

- 39.4 million people worldwide are HIV-positive.
- There are now more children orphaned by HIV in the world than there are children living in the UK.
- 8,500 people died every day during 2004, as a result of HIV-related illnesses.
- There are approximately 49,500 people in the UK who are known to be HIV-positive.

In many countries, HIV is an issue of poverty and injustice. Fear, misunderstanding, stigma and prejudice are also high on the list of reasons why HIV continues its rapid spread. Many of the people living with HIV have contracted it because of a lack of choice. Even in wealthier countries, life choices which lead to infection may often have been more limited and difficult than we might think.

Ask group members to read aloud the stories opposite about people living with HIV and its effects on their lives.

Ask the group, if they feel able, to share their own stories of being ostracised or discriminated against, or of not being able to be fully honest about themselves. How did it make them feel?

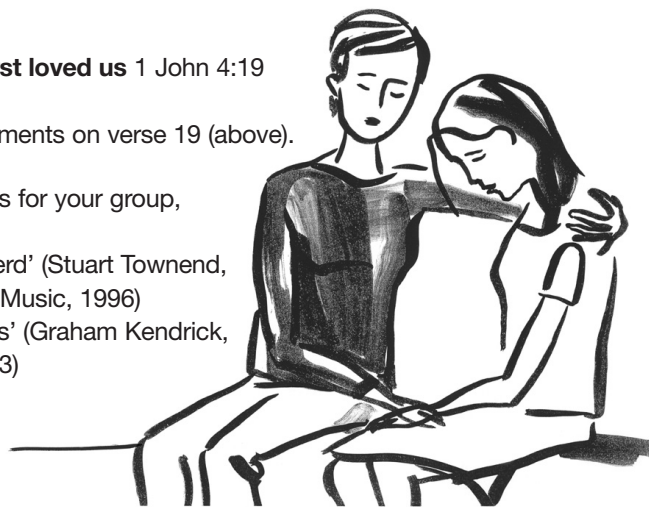
### Worship

**We love because he first loved us** 1 John 4:19

- Read 1 John 4:16-21

Meditate for a few moments on verse 19 (above).

- Sing appropriate songs for your group, which may include:
  - 'The Lord's my shepherd' (Stuart Townend, Kingsway's Thankyou Music, 1996)
  - 'Beauty for brokenness' (Graham Kendrick, Make Way Music, 1993)



- 1** Vitalis is 29 and lives in Tanzania. He tells his partner that they are not ready to have children and insists on wearing a condom when they have sex. He does not know how to tell her that he is HIV-positive. Vitalis is receiving counselling from the Diocese of South West Tanganyika to help him cope with his depression and feelings of isolation.
- 2** Joe and Christina lived in Edinburgh. Christina had been HIV-positive for 18 years when she died in the summer of 2003. They had been married for six years and were blissfully happy. Joe became infected after they were married. After his diagnosis, only his father and brothers stayed in touch with him. The couple were supported by Milestone House, a residential unit in Edinburgh offering respite care.
- 3** Malia grew up in the Christian Church in Haiti and when she was diagnosed as HIV-positive she threw herself into praying for her husband and herself. Her husband was so ashamed of having infected his wife that he lost the will to live, and died six years ago. Malia now spends a lot of time telling young people about HIV/AIDS and she says: 'I've learnt a lot about HIV and how to reach out to others. I feel I have a mission to help people with HIV regain confidence and dignity.'
- 4** Seraphine lives in Rwanda. Her husband and four of her children were killed in the genocide more than ten years ago. She was held captive and raped repeatedly by four men. Seraphine is HIV-positive and very angry. She says of her captors: 'They killed my whole family and then they let me live to die with this'. She adds: 'Now it is prayer that keeps me going.'

Vitalis, Malia and Seraphine are all supported by Christian Aid partner organisations in the countries where they live.

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## Word

Read John 8:1-10

- What attitudes a) to the woman; b) to Jesus lay behind the actions of the Jewish leaders in this story?
- How did Jesus' attitude differ? Why do you think this was so threatening to the religious authorities of the time?
- How do you think Jesus would respond if he met the woman five years later, and she was still committing adultery?
- What were your reactions to the stories of people living with HIV today? Try to be as open as you can about your range of emotions and the attitudes they reflect.
- How do you think Jesus would respond if he met the people in our stories?
- How does this challenge us? What can help us to better reflect Jesus to people living with HIV in this country and in the developing world?

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All the *Act Justly* resources for small groups are published on [www.surefish.co.uk/actjustly](http://www.surefish.co.uk/actjustly), where updates will continue to be added regularly. If you would like to be notified about new *Act Justly* updates and other key resources and events, please register for our *Act Justly* mailing online by visiting [www.surefish.co.uk/faith/actjustly/response](http://www.surefish.co.uk/faith/actjustly/response) or you can phone the Supporter Relations team on **020 7523 2225**. If you live in the Republic of Ireland, contact the Dublin office on **01 611 0801**.

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UK registered charity number 258003 Republic of Ireland charity number CHY 6998

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## Our response

### 1 Pray:

On a post-it note, write a message to one of the people in today's stories. Stick it inside your Bible, on your fridge or computer and commit to pray for that person, their family, their supporters and the country in which they live.

### 2 Act:

- Find out more about HIV, and talk about it. Help to break the fear, misunderstanding, stigma and prejudice. You could visit [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk) [www.pressureworks.org](http://www.pressureworks.org) [www.stopaidscampaign.org.uk](http://www.stopaidscampaign.org.uk) or [www.acet-international.com](http://www.acet-international.com)
- Organise an HIV-awareness event or a service at your church; don't wait for World AIDS Day. Resources are available from Christian Aid; visit [www.christianaid.org.uk/worship](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/worship) or phone **020 7523 2225**.
- Find out if there are any HIV support agencies where you live – they may have a befriending service that you could be a part of.

### 3 Give:

Organise an event at your church to raise money for people living with HIV.

Dolores Smith travelled with her daughter Beverley Knight to Brazil. She said: 'I realised, coming from the Caribbean, that it could have been me; it could have been my daughters, living with HIV and living in such terrible poverty'. Since her return to Wolverhampton, Dolores has worked hard to raise funds for Christian Aid partners involved in HIV-related projects, caring for those who are sick and educating the next generation to make informed and healthy choices in their lives.

Beverley Knight meets children affected by HIV, who are supported by Christian Aid partner GAPA-Bahia in Brazil



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