

## **How to run an evening on the menopause in your church**

Often churches are keen to help their members approach the menopause from a biblical and pastoral perspective but can struggle to know where to begin. The following outline will hopefully be manageable for most churches.

### **Introduction and biblical reflection (12 minutes)**

Church members can be welcomed to the menopause event and the time opened with prayer. A church leader can set the scene by offering a short pause for thought on a key Bible passage or verse. A short reflection on 2 Corinthians 4:16 might be apt – showing that our human bodies do struggle and decline but there is much hope for our spiritual lives in the middle of these hard things. Or a short reflection on the woman who was bleeding for 12 years (Mark 5:25-34) could be offered, showing how tenderly Jesus speaks to women struggling with gynaecological matters and how keen he is to ensure women are welcomed by their community.

### **What is the menopause? (10 minutes)**

Time can be taken to understand what is happening to a woman's body during the seasons of perimenopause and menopause. If there is a medical professional in the congregation, they may be able to run through the biology of this time of life and the way in which the medical profession can offer support. Clearly, a church event is not the place to offer medical advice, but general questions can be answered if time. If the congregation does not include such a person, then consideration can be given to watching one of the short videos produced by the British Menopause Society.

### **How does the menopause feel? (10 minutes)**

Two members of the congregation can be invited to share their experience of the menopause – between them they can cover some of the physical, emotional, relational and spiritual struggles. If time, others present can chip in with additional factors that they find hard. It is also interesting to hear from husbands / children who can sometimes face struggles living with those going through the menopause – it can be helpful to provide them with space to express how they feel (though care will need to be taken to ensure that family members do not accidentally run each other down in public).

### **How does the menopause impact faith? (10 minutes)**

Those present can be asked to generate a list of how the menopause can impact faith. Typical questions include: Why does God allow suffering? Does God still love me when I am getting this irritable? How does the menopause impact my identity? How can I have a flourishing marriage when sex is so painful? How do I read the Bible when I find it so hard to concentrate? What is God doing in this season of suffering? How does God view aging? How does God view weakness?

### **Practical support (12 minutes)**

A time of discussion can be held looking at the questions:

- What helps you cope with the pressure of the menopause?
- What would help you better walk alongside someone facing the menopause?

Practical tips can be shared. The discussion can include ideas of how church services / events and serving can be made more accessible to those struggling.

### **Biblical reflection (12 minutes)**

Those present can be encouraged to share Bible passages that speak scripturally into the experience of menopause. How wonderful it is to have a Shepherd who guides us through this season (Psalm 23) - and a God who knows us intimately (Psalm 139). How crucial it is to remember our identity in Christ (Ephesians 1) and God's promise to continue growing our holiness, even when life is hard (Philippians 1). Hopefully those present will be able to come up with a good range of biblical encouragements.

### **Q&A (15 minutes)**

Those who have spoken so far can form a panel to answer questions.

### **Next steps (4 minutes)**

The leader can outline next steps – discerned from the earlier conversation. Will those women struggling get together again? Will there be a book group reading a book about the menopause? Will there be opportunities for follow up chats on a 1-to-1 basis?

### **Time of prayer (5 minutes)**

People can be encouraged to pray for the people they have been chatting too during the event, that all will persevere with eyes on Christ in the middle of the menopause.

*BCUK has capacity to offer a speaker on this topic for a limited number of events each year. If you would be interested in a BCUK speaker, please contact [training@bcuk.org](mailto:training@bcuk.org)*