

Lesson #4 Iceland Video Worksheet (Answer Key)

Student Name:

Video 1: Iceland's Down Syndrome Dilemma

1. Is anyone in Iceland against abortion? If yes, who?

Yes. In an interview with the bishop of the Icelandic Church, Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir claims that there exists an almost invisible group that is against abortion.

Note: The use of the language “almost invisible group” is stronger than saying a minority group or small group and gives the sense of not only being a small group of people but also powerless and ineffective.

2. List two facts given during the video.

Down syndrome tests began in the early 2000s

100% of women in Iceland with a positive Down syndrome test result have an abortion

80-85% of women want the screening for Down syndrome

3. What does the video say about the unborn.

You never know what can become of your child. Children don't get to pick and choose the best genes from their parents.

Note: The narrators claim that Thordis doesn't discriminate between alcoholism and Down syndrome. Children are a mix of their parents DNA and not necessarily the best genes from each parent.

4. What does the video say about people with Down syndrome?

The woman with Down syndrome says that people see only her disability; they do not see her. She does not see herself as defined by her disability. Rather she is a complex person composed of so much more than just Down syndrome.

Those with Down syndrome are loved dearly by their parents.

Note: This last statement by the geneticist is in contradiction to the underlying assumptions from Hulda who works in the hospital and claims that mothers who have children with Down syndrome will come back and ask why they weren't offered the screening. See the Note for question 5 on Hulda's claims.

5. What does the video say about women who are not screened?

According to Hulda, if women have a child with Down syndrome and are not offered the screening test, they will come back and ask why they were not offered the screening.

Note: There is an underlying assumption in this statement that if 100% of women with a positive test result choose to have an abortion that these women would be upset they didn't have an abortion.

6. What does the video say about the media?

Helga, the counselor, says that the media tends to show only young happy children with Down syndrome but that the reality of the situation is very different. In actuality Down syndrome exists on a spectrum and many people with Down syndrome have other health complications. She goes so far as to say that those further along the spectrum with other medical complications, like the older boy with Down syndrome and autism, are not a good thing.

TEACHING HUMAN DIGNITY

***Note:** Helga is not saying that the disease and/or other medical complications are a problem. She is saying the very person, the existence of a person with medical complications is not a good thing. While she does not necessarily elaborate on other medical problems beyond that of Down syndrome, it is fair to at least ask what she thinks of those suffering from other medical issues.*

In addition, her comments imply that the media is trying to paint a picture that is not accurate such that people are focused on cute children instead of the reality of the disability. This may in itself stand as a fair critique to the media and its agenda to promote the lives of those with Down syndrome. But the overarching critique from Helga is against the positive view of those with Down syndrome. According to Helga, rather than thinking someone with Down syndrome is cute, we should view them as a problem.

Summary:

The medical field and the government in Iceland have played a strong role in leading women to be tested and choose to have an abortion when they get a positive test. How free is the mother to make a choice given the influence of the government and the medical field? As technology gets even better, how far will we go to eradicate disease? What do those with disabilities and disease bring for the world we live in?

Video 2: Iceland is on Track to Eliminate Down Syndrome

7. Is anyone in Iceland against abortion? If yes, who?

Yes. The video interviews a few pregnant women who have opted out of the screenings. One of the mothers claims that the statistics are horrible and people are afraid of what they don't know.

Note: This video not only gives a voice but also gives a face to those who are against abortion. This is in stark contrast to the first video that claims those who are against abortion are almost invisible.

8. List two facts given during the video.

100% of women with positive test results chose to end their pregnancies

350,000 people in the country of Iceland

In the United States of America, 67% of pregnancies with a positive test result for Down syndrome are ended

The Down syndrome screening in Iceland is only 85% accurate

80-85% of women want the screening for Down syndrome

9. What does the video say about the unborn?

Helga, the hospital counselor, says the the unborn are a possibility, and those with Down syndrome are a thing ended, a possible life that may have had huge complications.

Note: Helga says that life is grey, not black and white. She goes even further, though, because to her the unborn are a possible life. These statements create a picture where choosing to take the life of the unborn is not necessarily even grey. It is also important to note the use of the word "thing". For Helga, the unborn is not a person or even a he or she. The unborn is no more than a thing. Finally, this statement only recognizes the potential for complications due to disability for the unborn without seeing any positive potential or looking at any other factors

10. What does the video say about people with Down syndrome?

People with Down syndrome are extremely rare in Iceland. Many of those with Down syndrome can live long and healthy lives as witnessed to by the adult woman with Down syndrome. Those with Down syndrome are more than just the disease. They are people.

***Note:** This explanation of those with Down syndrome being more than just their disease stands in direct opposition to the statements made by Helga where the unborn are not people and defined purely by their disability.*

11. What does the video say about women who are not screened?

The video shows a group of pregnant women who have opted out of the screening. One mother claims that the screening would not have made a difference for her.

9. What does the video say about the media?

Helga says that the media tends to show only young happy children with Down syndrome but that the reality of the situation is very different. In actuality Down syndrome exists on a spectrum and many people with Down syndrome have other health complications. She goes so far as to say that those further along the spectrum with other medical complications, like the older boy with Down syndrome and autism, are not a good thing.

Note: See question 6 for further explanation. Also, take note again of Helga's use of the word "thing".

Summary:

This video is focused on connecting with the human person who has Down syndrome. It introduces the audience to different individuals who have Down syndrome including two young happy girls, a teenage boy that also has autism, and a woman in her thirties who is living an active life and has moved out of her mother's home. The video leaves the viewer with the question, "How far will we go to have healthy children, to pick and choose which children we have?"