



Biblical Counselling UK

# Talking Church

How personal conversations  
grow local congregations

Mon 21 – Wed 23 March 2022



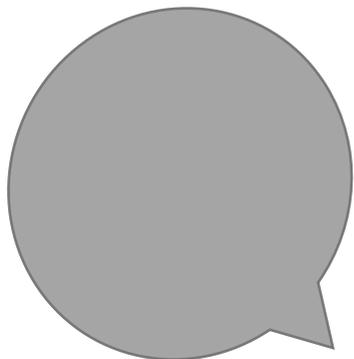
Seminar

# Menopause

Helen Thorne and  
Ruth Marshall

# Oh we don't talk about that

- “It’s just a normal process. No need to make a big deal of it”
- “Isn’t it just a physical thing? It’s for doctors not churches”
- “It’s not where most people in the church are at”
- “It’s embarrassing – we don’t want to talk about it”
- “There are bigger struggles to talk about”



## But it is a big thing ...

- Irregular menstrual cycles – including heavy bleeding
- Night sweat and hot flushes
- Vaginal dryness, itching and pain during sexual intercourse
- Frequent urinary tract infections and frequent urination
- Mood swings and irritability
- Fatigue and brain fog
- Weight gain

(All whilst returning to work / changing jobs / starting retirement / children growing up / empty nest syndrome / returning adult children / looking after elderly parents)



## So we need to talk ...

- It's suffering that impacts us, our marriages, our families
- It's suffering that impacts our growth and involvement in church
- It's spiritual – it reveals the idols of our heart
- We need Christ - we need each other



# And we shouldn't be surprised we need to talk

- Our bodies matter - our bodies are a gift from God
- What happens in our bodies, impacts our souls
- What happens in our bodies, is part of the context in which we are becoming like Christ
- We are designed to navigate all that in community

THIS SEMINAR: talking the medical – the spiritual – the practical



# Medical definitions

## Menopause

- ‘the permanent cessation of menstruation resulting from the loss of ovarian follicular activity.’
- Literally means ‘last period’
- Natural end of the potential reproductive phase of a woman’s life.
- Said to have happened when a woman has not had a period for 12 months.
- Average age 51.

## Perimenopause

- Transition time, usually lasting several years (2-10), ending with menopause.
- Periods often become irregular and women often experience ‘vasomotor symptoms’ such as hot flushes and sweats.



# What is happening in our bodies?



# What is happening in our bodies?

- Ovarian function declines, impacting hormone production and monthly egg release. The womb lining may not thicken and shed each month in the normal way, resulting in absent or irregular bleeding.
- Changes may be gradual or sudden, smooth or (more often) fluctuating.
- Menopause is associated with a profound fall in oestrogen levels, but during perimenopause, levels may fluctuate significantly in response to feedback systems in the body stimulating the ovaries to work harder.



# Common medical strategies

- Lifestyle changes
  - Exercise
  - Diet
  - Reducing alcohol and caffeine intake
- Hormone Replacement therapy
  - What is it?
  - Pros and cons
- Other treatments for symptom control
  - Non-hormonal medications (Eg Clonidine)
  - CBT
  - Isoflavones or Black Cohosh



# Biblical context

Not how it was supposed to be - a result of the fall

The approach of the later stages of life - a reminder of death

God is not surprised by the menopause - but grows us through the menopause

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day (2 Cor 4:16)*



# Biblical questions

What are some of the big themes / questions that the menopause raises?



# Biblical themes

- Identity (who am I?) ... a child of God (Eph 1)
- Value (what am I worth?) ... someone in whom God delights (Ps 147)
- Purpose (what should I do?) ... train up the next generation (Titus 2)
- Weakness (why can't I be strong?) ... it's ok to be weak (2 Cor 12)
- Femininity (what does it mean to be a woman?) ... noble character (Prov 31)
- Marriage (how will my marriage withstand this?) ... love and forgiveness (Matt 18)



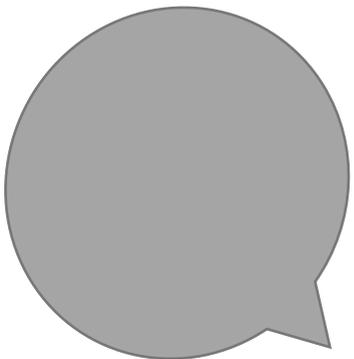
# Biblical responses

- Lament
- Thanksgiving
- Trust
- Petition
- Hope in eternity
- Confidence in God's character
- Commitment to Christlikeness
- Commitment to community (and the help – perspective – that brings)



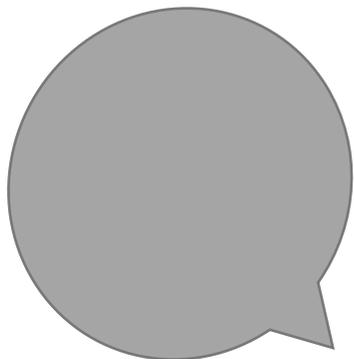
# Practical strategies: awareness raising

- Information provision
  - For women
  - For all
- Testimony
- Books
- Events – one offs or book groups



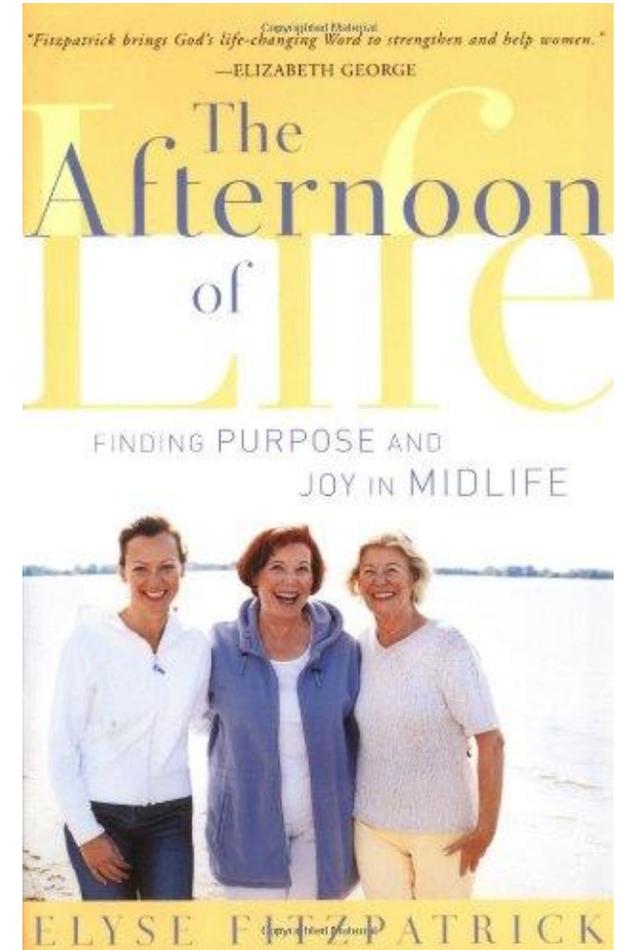
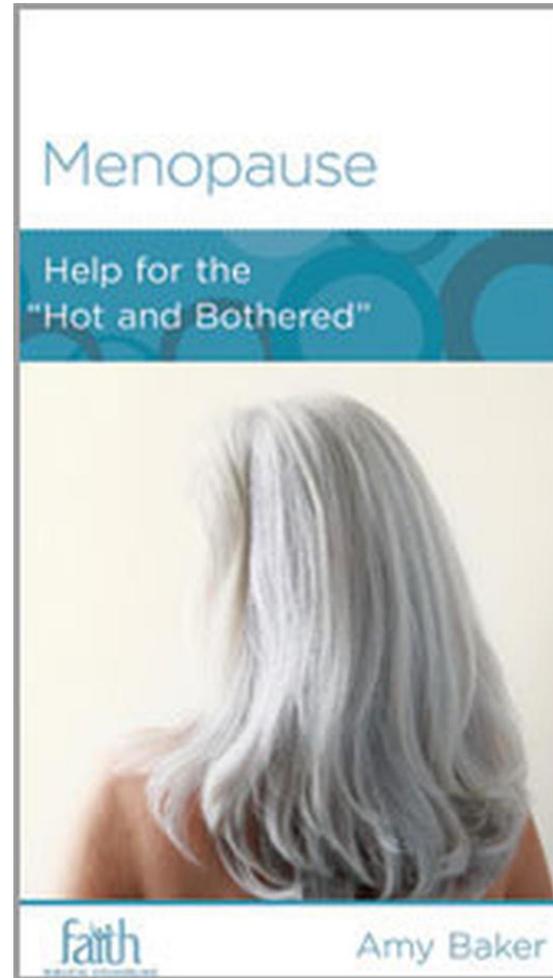
# Becoming a compassionate church

- Where can people sit?
- What changes can be made to rotas?
- What opportunities are there to be mentored and to mentor?
- What support can be given to women (and men)?
- What can be prayed for?



# Resources

- The afternoon of life by Elyse Fitzpatrick
- Menopause by Amy Baker



Q&A



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