How Will Technology Shape the Future of Humankind?
(Participant's Guide)

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A Participant’s Guide to

How Will Technology Shape the Future of Humankind?

A Study of Yuval Harari’s *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*
How to Use This Material?

This study of human evolution using Yuval Harari’s *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* consists of 5 modules. Each module contains two sections. The first section presents a set of Reading and Reflection questions that are to be completed before each meeting and are meant to help the participant wrestle with the concepts introduced in that week’s chapters. The second section consists of two (or more) Discussion questions, which will be written by the participants and the leader as they read. Both sets of questions are meant to foster discussion, but your group should by no means limit itself to the questions contained in these sections.

This study is intended for informal, small group discussion, such as that of a Bible study or small group. The themes presented in each submodule may be unpacked on its own, but it is the hope of the authors that the entire study may be useful to the interested reader (leader and participant alike). The study is also aimed toward high school students, college students, and post-college adults with an interest in how science and the Christian faith interact.

As you read, it is our hope that you will come across (and come up with) questions which challenge you, both in understanding your personal faith and in understanding science. In these questions, you will have the opportunity to grow through asking and answering these questions: Why has the church historically believed in *this* answer or *that* answer? How might you be challenged to defend your answer?
Who is the author of *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*?

Yuval Harari is a professor of history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is most known for his books about human evolution and history, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* and *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, which are international bestsellers. Harari was born in Israel, and he earned his Doctor of Philosophy degree from Jesus College, Oxford, in 2002. Harari has long been interested in how *Homo sapiens* has reached its current state, and he has spent much time considering the relationship between biology (or natural history) and history.

It is significant for readers to be aware that Harari is not a Christian. Indeed, one lecturer noted that Harari "presumes that Christianity is a failed myth which means it can be treated as an interesting artifact" (see "Stories for a Post-Christian Age: Yuval Noah Harari’s Sapiens" by David K. Weber, 2016, [http://thecresset.org/2015/Michaelmas/Weber_M15.html](http://thecresset.org/2015/Michaelmas/Weber_M15.html)). However, he asks many of the big questions that Christians should be prepared to answer, including the implications of bionic humanity and how neuroscience impacts our understanding of human identity.
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Module 1: Introduction to *Homo Deus*

Chapter covered: “The New Human Agenda”

Reading and Reflection

“The New Human Agenda”

1. Describe the tone of *Homo Deus* thus far. How do you think Harari views God and religion? Why might he hold that perspective?

2. Do you agree that not believing in God (or gods) has led to an increase in our sense of personal responsibility and thus a decrease in calamities (2)?

3. What do you think of Harari’s assertion that, in the face of prosperity, health, and harmony, humans will seek to become gods? Do you think it is accurate?

4. Do you think that seeking to avoid death is a bad thing? If not, at what point does aversion to death become objectionable?

5. Do you agree with the statement that “religions and ideologies do not sanctify life itself” (21)?
Discussion Questions

In addition to answering the Reading and Response questions, please write two questions you have about the content you’ve read for today.

1.

2.

Digging Deeper

For another look at the idea of designer babies, watch GATTACA, a 1997 film that explores life in a society whose caste system is based on genetic engineering. What do you think of IVF? Can IVF be a good thing? How do we determine good uses of IVF versus morally questionable uses?
Module 2: *Homo sapiens* Conquers the World
Chapters covered: “The Anthropocene” and “The Human Spark”

Reading and Reflection

“The Anthropocene”

1. Are humans morally culpable for the extinction of, say, mammoths if they were “unaware of the consequences of their actions” (75)?

2. What do you think of the statement, “The Bible, along with its belief in human distinctiveness, was one of the by-products of the Agricultural Revolution” (78)? How would you explain your response to Harari?

3. How do you think Harari views animals, particularly those who have been domesticated?

4. What do you think of Harari’s suggestion that Noah’s Flood has traditionally been interpreted to prove human supremacy and animal worthlessness (93)? Do you think that this is a fair assessment?
“The Human Spark”

1. Would you expect to find scientific proof that humans have souls? What do you believe souls are? What assumptions does Harari make when he says that “Darwin has deprived us of our souls” (104)?

2. What do you think of Harari’s discussion of how “using God to explain numerous natural phenomena” has now been put in “the dustbin of science” (116)? What assumptions did the people who attributed natural phenomena to God make? What assumptions has Harari made?

Discussion Questions

In addition to answering the Reading and Response questions, please write two questions you have about the content you’ve read for today.

1.

2.
Module 3: *Homo sapiens* Give Meaning to the World—Storytelling
Chapters covered: “The Storytellers” and “The Odd Couple”

Reading and Reflection

**“The Storytellers”**

1. What role have stories and storytelling played in your life?

2. Do you think that the parallel Harari draws between gods and corporation is a fair comparison (156 ff)?

**“The Odd Couple”**

1. What do you think of Harari’s rebuttal to the view that scientific theories are a “new kind of myth” (179)? Is it convincing?

2. How do you view the relationship between science and religion?

3. What do you think of Harari’s discussion of the authority and history of Scripture (195)?
Discussion Questions

In addition to answering the Reading and Response questions, please write two questions you have about the content you've read for today.

1.

2.
Module 4: *Homo sapiens* Give Meaning to the World—Science and Humanism

Chapters covered: “The Modern Covenant” and “The Humanist Revolution”

Reading and Reflection

“The Modern Covenant”

1. What do you think of the statement “humans agree to give up meaning in exchange for power” (200)? Do you think this is accurate? If so, how? If not, why?

2. What do you think of viewing economic systems (such as communism and capitalism) as religions?

“The Humanist Revolution”

1. What do you think of the statement “those people who pose the greatest threat to global law and order are precisely those people who continue to believe in God and His all-encompassing plans” (222)?

2. What do you think of Harari’s assessment that humanism teaches us that things are bad if they cause someone to “feel bad” (227)? Is there an association between immorality and hurt feelings? What are some benefits or deterrents of using feelings as standards for morality?
3. What do you think of Harari’s suggestion that the Bible is no longer a source of inspiration, even if it is still used as a source of authority (278)? Is this accurate? If so, what are the implications?

Discussion Questions

In addition to answering the Reading and Response questions, please write two questions you have about the content you’ve read for today.

1.

2.
Module 5: *Homo sapiens* Loses Control—Artificial Intelligence and Determinism

Chapters covered: “The Time Bomb in the Laboratory” and “The Great Decoupling”

Reading and Reflection

“The Time Bomb in the Laboratory”

1. Does the biological and chemical determinism Harari describes remove personal responsibility for actions? Is determinism compatible with the theology of humanity’s free will?

2. What is reductionism? How does this concept relate to the ideas Harari presents in this chapter?

“The Great Decoupling”

1. How would you feel about being treated by an AI physician?

2. Do you agree that organisms are (organic) algorithms? What are the implications of this statement?

3. Do you think that human occupations are truly endangered by artificial intelligence?
4. What does it mean to be human?

5. What is the “great decoupling” to which the chapter title refers?

Discussion Questions

In addition to answering the Reading and Response questions, please write two questions you have about the content you’ve read for today.

1.

2.

Chapters covered: “The Ocean of Consciousness” and “The Data Religion”

Reading and Reflection

**“The Ocean of Consciousness”**

1. What do you think of the idea that humans will never know what it is like to be (or to view the world like) a bat (or any other creature)?

2. Do you see evidence of techno-religion in the world? In what ways? Is your own worldview impacted by techno-religion?

**“The Data Religion”**

1. What do you think of Dataism? Do you believe that it will rise to popularity as Harari predicts?

2. Do you agree that “information wants to be free” (386)? Why or why not?

3. Respond to Harari’s interpretation of Scripture’s strictures on Babylonian astrology (396).
4. What does it look like to be a Christian in a world tending towards Dataism (assuming the world is indeed tending that direction)?

Discussion Questions

In addition to answering the Reading and Response questions, please write two questions you have about the content you’ve read for today.

1.

2.