

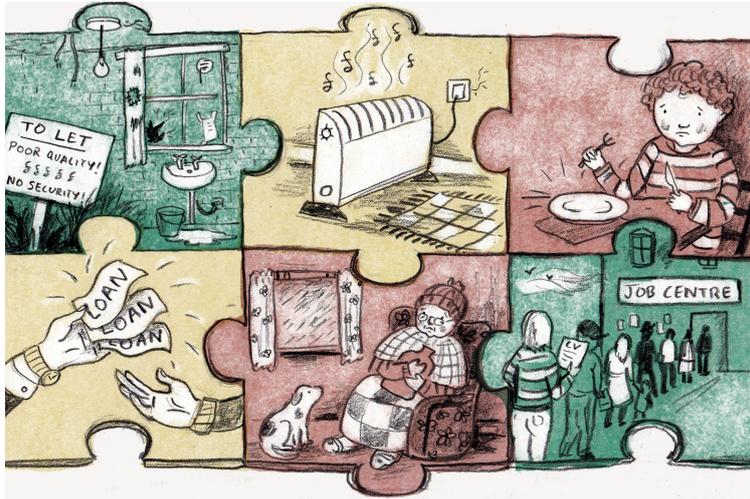
Session 6: Poverty and structural inequality - causes and symptoms

Life on the Breadline Lent course, #BreadlineResearch

Opening prayer:

Creator God, in response to your preferential option for the poor, enable us to respond as Christians to poverty in all its dimensions. In Jesus' name, Amen

2min



Introduction:

This session brings together the previous five sessions to focus on poverty and structural inequality.

Structural inequalities are inequalities which people experience that come from the structure of society - for example pay inequality based on gender.

The negative effects of structural inequalities are experienced by some people more than others, and this can seem beyond our control. It's therefore important in addressing poverty as Christians that we all respond to the fourth Mark of Mission: 'To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation'.

3min

Watch this video:

Visit the Life on the Breadline website at <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/churches/lent-course/> and watch the week 6 video:



5min

Now reflect on what you've just watched:

How can the Anti-Poverty Charter be used in your local area?

<https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/churches/anti-poverty-charter/>

5min

Bible passage:

Proverbs 31:9

Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy labourers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns.

You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

Amos 5:11

Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.

Isaiah 3:14-15

The LORD enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people:

It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord GOD of hosts.



5min

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Guided reflection:

Read aloud then have quiet time to reflect

Throughout this Lent course we have seen that it is our Christian duty to respond to poverty. This week's Bible passages show us that it is not enough to simply give food to people who are hungry, and to respond to poverty materially. Instead, this week's Bible passages call on us as Christians to defend people's rights (Proverbs), to address unjust structures such as unfair pay (Deuteronomy and Amos), and that God has a preferential option for the poor (Isaiah).

Jesus did not just accept the society that he lived in: he challenged people when he saw inequality, he turned over the tables in the Temple when it was being mis-used, and he spent time with people who others avoided. This challenge and inspiration from Jesus remains for us today in our society.

Language is also important here: whilst the phrase 'the poor' can result in a binary of 'the rich' and poor 'others' - and this should be avoided - we also cannot ignore the inequalities that exist in UK society and across the world. As we saw in session 4, how we respond to poverty is therefore important both in our actions and our language.

So how can we challenge unjust structures in our responses to poverty? The answer comes in addressing the causes of poverty as well as responding to the symptoms of poverty: to address the 'poverty premium' of the higher cost of living for those on a low-income such as fuel meters compared to direct debits, to address unsuitable housing, low wages and precarious work, and to end the five week wait for people's first Universal Credit payment to give just a few examples. The Life on the Breadline Anti-Poverty Charter provides ideas for practical actions to take to address both the causes and symptoms of poverty (see this week's 'Take-away actions').

As we discussed in session 1 at the start of the Lent course, the existence of poverty needs to be morally unacceptable in our society and to us as Christians. Action must therefore be taken to change the existence of poverty and inequalities.

10min

Questions for discussion:

1. What structural inequalities exist in your local area?
2. How could you work together to address these?
3. What has struck you the most during the Lent course? How could you take this forward after Easter?

15min

Take-away actions:

Visit the Life on the Breadline website to engage with the Anti-Poverty Charter - an action-oriented resource to tackle poverty in your neighbourhood. Sign up to the Charter and take action... <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/churches/anti-poverty-charter/>

We'd love to hear your feedback on this Lent course - visit <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/resourcefeedback/> or scan the QR code below.

Now add your reflections and actions to a time of prayer before the closing prayer.

10min

Closing prayer:

Holy Spirit, challenge us to oppose violence and inspire us to pursue paths of peace and reconciliation. In Jesus' name, Amen

5min



What did you think?

We'd love to hear your feedback on a short form - scan the QR code:



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