



Faith leaders deliver a petition to 10 Downing Street calling for climate justice ahead of COP26

# Speaking truth to power

## Challenging the status quo.

This resource is one of a series of four studies designed to help your small group think about some of the ways that we can put our faith into action. The focus of this session is on the way that scripture challenges us to speak up for justice and to challenge the status quo. It features a Faith in Action video of Helen Hughes who, with great grace and patience, engages with MPs and decision makers speaking truth to power.

We are all different, but we can all put our faith into action.

It includes:

- Brief notes on two Bible passages: Jeremiah 22:1-5 and Luke 4:14-20
- Prayers to open and close your session
- [A Faith in Action video](#) featuring Helen Hughes
- Questions to help your group put their faith into action
- Suggestions to help your group think about their next steps

NOTE: We advise downloading the suggested resources in advance to show the group



## Notes on the Readings

Jeremiah 22:1-5: Old Testament prophets were frequently called upon to speak God's word directly to kings and rulers. Their messages typically contained two elements – a call to be faithful to God and a call to do justice. The implication is that the two things belong together, worshipping God and doing justice, are two sides to the same coin. Jeremiah's ministry included conveying both of these messages, but the focus here is on justice for the oppressed.

Luke 4:14-20: This passage is sometimes called the Nazarene Manifesto. It is important because it is how Jesus defined his own mission as the one who would fulfil the ancient prophecies (he was quoting from Isaiah 61) and establish God's Kingdom. This vision of the Kingdom, is modelled on the Old Testament idea of a year of Jubilee, when slaves were freed, and debt cancelled. It is characterised by good news for the poor, release for the captives and an end to injustice. Although Jesus did not align himself with any of the political groupings of his day, his mission and willingness to speak truth to power saw him clashing with all of them.

## Opening Prayer

Gracious God,  
Please teach us by your word  
and empower us by your Spirit.  
Make us more like Jesus,  
That our mouths may speak your truth  
and our deeds accomplish your will.  
Make us agents of your kingdom,  
which is growing now amongst us  
and will one day come in glory,  
**Amen.**

## Introduction

The Bible teaches that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of all. There is no area of life beyond God's power or outside of his love and concern. This means that although the Bible does not tell us which political party to support or who to vote for it does often speak of issues which are inherently political; issues of justice and how we live together in community. Our readings for this session remind us of the prophetic duty to speak truth to power on behalf of the powerless and the announcement of God's Kingdom as good news for the poor.

## Readings

Read Jeremiah 22:1-5, pause for a few moments and then read Luke 4:14-20

- How do you think Jeremiah felt about being called to go and challenge the king?
- What might have given him the courage to speak out?
- Thinking about the issues raised in the two readings, what contemporary issues do they bring to mind?

## Making Connections

Watch Helen Hughes' Faith in Action video. When we think of prophets, we perhaps think of people who foretell the future or of wild-eyed eccentrics living in the wilderness like John the Baptist or Elijah. In fact, prophets came from all walks of life, priests, farmers and court officials amongst



others, and only a small part of their role was to foretell future events. Mostly the prophets were called to remind the people and especially their leaders of the need to honour God and do justice. They were called to speak truth to power. Helen Hughes is polite and softly spoken, a far cry from John the Baptist, but as a volunteer with Christian Aid Helen gently, graciously and effectively engages with MPs and decision makers to speak truth to power.

- What did you think of Helen's video, did it inspire, encourage, or surprise you? Why?
- How did it make you feel about the idea of speaking out for justice?
- If your MP or even the Prime Minister were in your meeting now, what issues would you want to raise with them?

## Next Steps

The climate crisis is the greatest injustice of our time. Rich nations and big corporations are responsible for the overwhelming majority of all greenhouse gas emissions. Those emissions are leading to rising sea levels, longer droughts and more storms and floods. And these impacts are being felt by the poorest communities around the world, who did the least to create the crisis.

Whilst we can all make changes in our own lives to be more green, the climate crisis urgently requires action at a political level. Can you follow Helen's lead and let your MP know this is something you care about – after all they do work for you!

Engaging with your MP may seem daunting at first, but we have some great resources to help you get started in our [campaigning with your local politician](#) guide. It's great to get others in your church involved too, it's much easier to make a difference if you support and pray for one another.

You can also find our latest 'lobby your MP action' at [caid.org.uk/riseuppayuppolitical](https://caid.org.uk/riseuppayuppolitical)

Take a few moments to pray for one another and for the actions that you have decided to take following this study, then have someone say the closing prayer.

## Closing Prayer

God of the poor, parent to the orphan and strength of the oppressed  
Thank you for putting a longing for justice in our hearts as in the prophets of long ago.

We thank you for Helen Hughes and her willingness to speak truth to power  
We pray that you would show us how we should speak and work for justice  
Please show us how to put our faith into action

Grant us the courage to stand for mercy, love and justice

That we might begin to glimpse what it means for your kingdom to come and your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

**Amen.**

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