



Ask Ahead: a question to consider before this session

Can you think of an occasion when you spoke about an issue that you felt strongly about? What happened? How did you feel?

Scripture Reading: Mark 4.30-32

Jesus also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

How to use this pack

If you’ve already used the other course packs from the Act on Poverty series, you may notice that this one looks a little different. **This pack focuses on supporting you and your church on taking action and speaking up about poverty in 2024.**

We’ll draw on some of the resources from other parts of the series. If you’re using this pack as the basis for a standalone session, don’t worry! We’ll link to where you can find our Act on Poverty audio and video materials, if you would like to explore them.

For all groups, we’d recommend consulting the Group Leaders pack for information before you dive in to this session.

Reflection: What difference can we make by speaking up together about poverty in 2024?

Poverty hurts. It hurts when a child goes to bed hungry; it hurts when our neighbour cannot afford a decent home; it hurts when the impact of poverty is felt unequally across the world.

But **poverty is not inevitable**. Choices that are made by those with power, and choices that we make, can force people into poverty. Our choices can also change the systems and structures that create poverty.

In 2024 the UK will be holding a General Election. This session isn’t about how you should cast your vote. But it is about recognising that our votes and our voices can shape the agenda in our communities and our country. **Together we can make acting on poverty a priority for those with political power, whatever party they come from.** We can ensure that action happens where we live and in our churches. We can even have a global impact. **In 2024, we can make a difference.**

This session is all about developing your own Act on Poverty plan. **We want you to plant seeds of change that together we can nurture - seeds that will grow God's kingdom of justice and love.**

Let's look at some of the Bible passages that you can find in our other Act on Poverty materials:

*But let justice roll down like water
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5.24)*

*Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"
He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10.36-37)*

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor. (Luke 4.18 and Isaiah 61.1)*

Justice. Righteousness. Mercy. Good News. What would it look like if we shaped our response to poverty as a society around these principles?

In the audio interviews and films explored in other Act on Poverty sessions, we have heard from people who are trying to respond according to these principles. Many of the voices we have heard speak from lived experience of poverty. What is striking about these testimonies is the persistence of hope, the belief in change.

"Ordinary people can bring about change. So don't think you can't do it because you can." ([Margaret Robinson, Christian Aid Campaigner, UK](#))

"We're encouraged by the scripture, the good Samaritan it's about the church, you know, being out there and being of support to somebody who is in need. ... **We can hold government accountable on the policies,** especially on the commitments that they make ... **Let's not give up.** Let's not give up." ([Bryar Mlowoka, Evangelical Association of Malawi](#))

"... **change has to come from the ground up** ... that's what the church should be doing. We are in communities, all over the country, all over the world, we are truly embedded in communities and so we can strengthen those communities, **we can show love to those communities, in the way that Jesus Christ did ...**" ([Rev. Chris Minchin, Benwell and Scotswood Team, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK](#))

"I know it's easier said than done but it's where the Spirit is calling our energies right now in terms of revolution. **There will be a change.** It might not be today, but it will be tomorrow." ([Winnie Baffoe, South London Mission, UK](#))

"... **poverty is something that if we all work collectively together, it can be erased.** ...if everybody was to have that mindset that no change can happen, there wouldn't be no changes making in the world." ([Ashleigh May, Mums on a Mission, UK](#))

"...you just have to keep persisting. You don't know what is the last little action that's going to create that transformation in society or in government in the way we do things, in the way we think about things, but we do know that it's possible."

([Stef Benstead, Disability Activist, UK](#))

"Step by step we can reduce the effects of poverty in our society.... [I have] the hope that everyone joined together will improve the community."

([Carlos Valle, Field Advisor, Comision de Accion Social Menonita, Honduras](#))

'That planting and growing of that tree may seem small. But it's such a huge thing.'

([Stephen Amusala, Anglican Development Service Western, Kenya](#))

As Stephen Amusala says, the planting and growing we undertake can seem small to start with but it we know it can lead to huge changes.

What could you do to add your voice to these calls for change?

Use the rest of this session to begin your Act on Poverty plan, following the steps below.

Act on Poverty: What could you and your church do?

From conversations with local government in Kenya, to petitions presented to a North Devon MP, speaking to those with political power is an important part of our action on poverty,

We know that levels of trust in political parties and those in power are low. Perhaps you feel sceptical about the idea that engaging with those in power can make a difference?

It might be helpful to look back at our session on [Hope](#). There we explored how practices of hope can include lament and anger. We don't need to leave our frustrations behind. Nonetheless, we are called into a different vision. One where our world more closely resembles God's Kingdom. Can we take a step together to hold our politicians to account and to press them to act? Can we live out our hope in action?

You could look too at our reflection on [generosity](#) and the importance and value of small actions. Every individual, every group, every church that takes an action is adding to the chorus of voices crying out for a more just world, a world where poverty is understood as an outrage that must end.

On our 'Seeds of Change' action cards you will find a range of different steps that you and your church can take to make a difference.

- 1. Look at the Seeds of Change action cards. ([Download here](#))**
- 2. Choose now at least three actions that you, your group, or your church could commit to.**
- 3. Use the [Sow, Water, Nurture, Grow sheet](#) to help you plan your action (where necessary).**
- 4. Revisit this exercise after the general election and think about how you can use these actions to engage your newly elected MP.**

As the UK prepares for a General Election this year, you'll see that a number of the actions involve engaging with your MP and/or those hoping to be elected (your prospective parliamentary candidates). Even if you didn't vote for your MP, they have an obligation to reply to you and can raise your concerns in the UK Parliament which can often help make the issue known to the public. They can do this by, for example:

- raising your issue with Government Ministers
- starting debates in parliament
- asking questions in debates
- proposing changes to laws under consideration

In 2024 we have a unique opportunity to influence our future MPs and the policies of the major parties. Many of our current MPs want to be re-elected and will be in "listening mode" more than ever before, as will the candidates for all major parties.

To tackle poverty for good, we need your help.

We need you to be talking to politicians.

We need you to tell others in your church and beyond what they can do to Act on Poverty.

We need you to plant the seeds of change.



The churches and organisations behind these Act on Poverty course packs will be with you every step of the way. You can find resources to support you at: caid.org.uk/actonpovertyresources

You can also find more information on UK poverty action at: letsendpoverty.co.uk and more information on how to act on global poverty at [What to ask your PPC - Christian Aid](#)

We would love to hear what you and your church are going to be doing. If you require any extra support, please contact: campaigns@christian-aid.org

You can share your actions on social media. Tag your posts #ActOnPoverty

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You promise us that from faith like a mustard seed your kingdom can grow.

You tell us that our hopes for change are enough, if together we nurture them.

You show us that our acts of love for our neighbour are part of the abundance of love that flows from you, in the power of the Spirit, and blesses all of creation.

Lord Jesus, this day and every day make us planters, growers, waterers, who believe and trust in the coming of your kingdom. Amen.

