



Resources for Schools

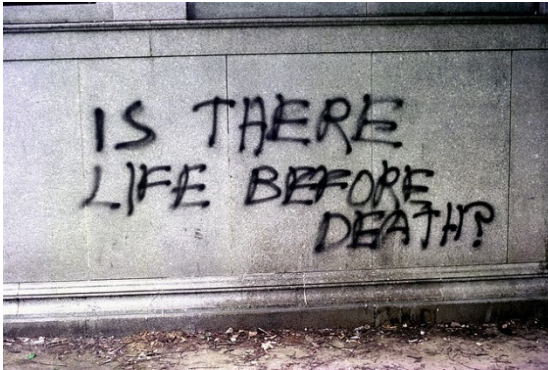
PHASE: SECONDARY

Poverty



KEY CONCEPT/MESSAGE:

We need a theology of poverty that is based upon the Bible in order to minister to the poor without perpetuating the dehumanizing by-products of poverty.” Dr Michael A. Milton.



Poverty can take many forms. It is a complex problem with many causes. It can look different in different places. An economic definition of poverty focuses on a standard of living with deprivation, malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to safe drinking water, education, health care and other social services, and no survival safety net.

The World Bank have gone further to describe poverty more holistically:

"Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom."

But is the situation so big and complex that we become numb or unable to relate? How can we understand poverty better? What can we do to make a difference? Where might we or those around us also be living with different forms or faces of poverty? It can show itself in people who are feeling alone or living with the consequences of injustice or oppression.

BIBLE PASSAGE OF THE WEEK:

The Bible has many passages that talk about justice and care for people in poverty. The term poor in the Bible primarily refers to economic poverty but there are wider challenges. Poverty is associated with oppression, isolation and injustice. There are more than 300 on responsibility to care for the poor and work for justice and at least 250 verses on the proper use of wealth.

The Bible passage below is part of a longer section of Matthew's gospel where Jesus is teaching the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats.

For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you invited me in.

Matthew 25:35

It is a challenging passage and after these words these questions are asked-

Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' Matthew 25:37-39

This reply is given in Jesus' summary

...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25:40

Gathering

Begin by displaying the question ‘What is poverty and what can be done to end it?’

Give a few moments to allow everyone to reflect on this first.

Then show the film clip ‘What is poverty? (2015) from Tearfund. You could suggest looking out for words that stand out as you watch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5qig9Hlj7k>

Now revisit our initial reflections having seen the film clip. What words stood out?

How does the statement ‘Together we all become more human’ challenge us? Does this broaden our thoughts on what poverty is and what can be done to end it?

Engagement

Compassion International focus on poverty being more than economics, using an analogy about a bicycle as more than a means of transportation. Students could be given an image of a bicycle wheel with 6 spokes or sections and use the following description to explore a bigger picture of poverty.

Types of Poverty — Studying the Spokes

Imagine that the hub of a bicycle wheel represents a young girl living in a poor household in a rural area in the majority world or a young man with a disability living in a community of urban poor where the poverty rate exceeds 95 percent. Regardless of the scene, the hub of the bicycle wheel represents inequality and a life in which survival is a daily accomplishment.



Reaching out from the hub are the wheel's spokes. They represent our basic human needs and the different characteristics of poverty.

The first spoke represents a type of poverty that is easily overlooked — social poverty.

Social poverty includes people groups that are undervalued and have few rights. Oftentimes, social poverty is easiest to spot when we look for people who have been silenced—they have no say, and their rights are minimized. They are often oppressed and

thought of as insignificant.

The second spoke and poverty type is educational poverty.

Hundreds of millions of children lack education and that creates lack of options. Education equals knowledge, skills, and training, so when education is not available, families get trapped in the cycle of poverty for generations. Steady employment and income can be difficult to find, and a person's basic needs can't be met. Lack of education also makes children more vulnerable to exploitation or abuse.

The third spoke symbolizes health poverty.

Health poverty may sound strange, but when a person is unhealthy it is difficult to hold down a job and develop positive relationships. Physical and emotional health is the basis for our ability to work, play and be in relationship with others.

Spiritual poverty is the next spoke in our bicycle wheel.

Spiritual poverty can be summed up by the word “hopelessness.” Oftentimes, people in poverty struggle with feelings of worthlessness and despair. Children are especially vulnerable to these emotions and the message of despair poverty sends.

The next spoke in the wheel of poverty is environmental poverty.

Physical surroundings play a large role in a person’s wellbeing. Environmental factors include climate, housing options, land availability, water supply, insects that carry disease, water-borne illnesses, weather, drought, and much more.

Finally, the last type of poverty is the more traditionally understood type of poverty — economic poverty.

Half the world lives with a household income of less than £1.80 a day. This level of poverty is the equal of captivity. People need an income level which allows them to purchase what they cannot make or grow.

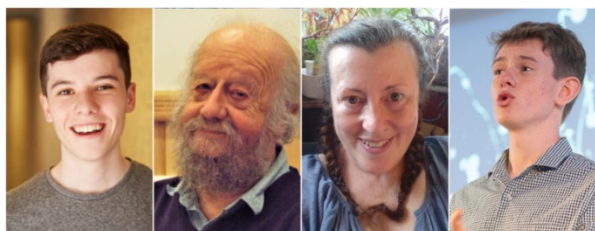
Some questions to consider or for further discussion:

- Which of the 6 spokes or types of poverty is the easiest or hardest to see? Why? What can we do to help us be more aware of the types of poverty that are harder to see?
- Which do we think are most common in the UK? Are there any parts of the world where certain types might be more common and why?
- Are there any ways churches, community groups or schools might be able to help with certain types?

Response

In Summer 2020 a book was compiled called ‘Same Boat’, which is a powerful collection of poems about poverty and the pandemic launched during the first challenge poverty week in England and Wales. This can be downloaded, and some poems selected. It has new perspectives around poverty:

<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sameboatpoems>



These are some of the ordinary people who contributed.

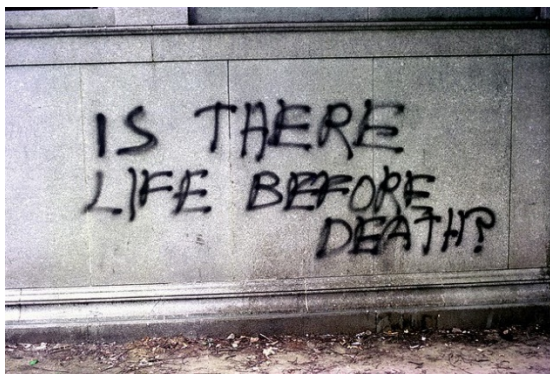
In their introduction, the editing panel write:

“While the term ‘poverty’ is often understood as a financial problem, these poems suggest that the word is more of a blanket term for numerous different ‘poverties.’ These include social poverty, poverty of choice, psychological poverty, poverty of autonomy, digital poverty, poverty of access and poverty of opportunity, among others. The book also takes a closer look at some of the people behind the statistics. Rejecting the myth that those in poverty are helpless, several poets choose to explore the power that their experiences have given them.”

See page 21 ‘Nobody saw it coming’, or p 13 ‘I have a voice’, or page 17 ‘Yellow sticker’

Can you write a poem that helps us understand more about poverty?

Sending



'We believe in Life before death' was once a popular strapline used by the charity Christian Aid.

Today are we willing to stand with the most vulnerable and excluded people of the world – both in times of crisis and for the longer term?

What can we do to support people to stand up for their rights and to build stable, secure lives they can enjoy living?

Read again Matthew 25 verses 37-40

Christian Aid are providing daily bible readings with a reflection and prayer for every day that could be used.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/daily-bible-readings>

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

(practical ways to help us explore faith and develop spiritually at home together)

EXPERIENCES that can help us ENCOUNTER:

Listen to the song 'You are love' recorded by Phillipa Hanna, to highlight the 20th anniversary of the work of Christians Against Poverty (CAP). They work to support people in the UK trapped by debt and poverty.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N76oaIVBikU>

The work is explained on their website <https://capuk.org/> and it might be helpful to show where they are working in your local area.

How did the film accompanying the song show ways to challenge poverty? We can feel overwhelmed and helpless but ordinary, everyday actions make a difference. Again, this shows 'Together we all become more human'.

Christian Aid provide a range of games and activities that explore issues raised by poverty.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/schools/secondary-teaching-resources>

This includes Safe Place Ludo and Disaster Zone.

The song 'Who you say I am' was recorded by Hillsong United working with by Compassion International, Food for the Hungry and World Vision. They joined together to unite the Christian community through a two-hour concert event to benefit children and families worldwide who are most vulnerable to the aftershocks of COVID-19 as well as other natural disasters.

This is one of a number of examples of people coming together virtually to raise and share important issues. What aspects of poverty do people need to be made more aware of? How could the message be shared?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2t8hSAdGOTO>

ACTIVITIES that can develop PRACTICES-HABITS:

In association with Prayer spaces in Schools, Christian Aid have downloadable materials for creating a prayer space to explore topics like this: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/schools/prayer-spaces-schools>

Gratitude Diary (also suggested in previous resource packs):

At the beginning of the day think of something to do that will show your gratitude: post a card, say something to someone, send a message. Try and vary the people you are sending them to.

At the end of the day – record 3 things you are grateful for. Try and make one of them a person that you are grateful to – someone who helped you, someone who smiled, someone who made your day.

Our own gratitude often spills over into our behaviour. Our behaviour then helps others feel included, encouraged and valued. If we challenge ourselves to be grateful for many different people across the world who we depend on for all we have and enjoy, and say thank you to more people than normal, then our own attitudes will grow to appreciate how together we are more human.

How can I help?

This Faith at Home session may have made young people angry and understandably to want to act. Christian Aid have quite a few resources to help those that want to campaign to change things... to be courageous advocates.

These resources will help think through how you and your school or your church can create effective, impactful campaigns to bring about justice with our global neighbours.

Use them to:

- learn more about running a campaign action
- get more people involved
- learn how to work with your local politician
- support one of [Christian Aid's campaigns](#), or even start your own

[Christian Aid's campaigns](#)

PRAYERS that can help us REFLECT:

5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Sit comfortably, quieten the space and wait for these words:

Look around the space you are in and try and spot 5 things you appreciate that help you live life. Think of those globally who might have worked to enable you to enjoy those things.

Listen out for 4 sounds that you can hear. The ones you recognise and the ones you don't.

Ask God to help you be aware of those in need, locally, nationally and globally, especially some of whose voices we never hear.

Reflect on 3 things that you can feel – the temperature of where you are, the chair you are sat on, the clothes against your skin. Pray for those in need – of clothes, warmth, comfort.

Remember 2 places that you have been – one that you enjoyed and one that you didn't enjoy. Pray or think about people in those places who may be experiencing forms of poverty.

Bring to mind one situation you know where people are experiencing poverty in some way – pray for their needs to be met and that they will know they are made in God's image, that God loves them.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him will not be lost but have eternal life'. Amen.

Use the **Examen prayer** to reflect on the challenges poverty brings us in the world today:

It has 5 steps, so you might like to count them on your fingers.

1. GIVE THANKS ...That the world is full of amazing resources so we can all enjoy life.
2. ASK FOR HELP ...For the times we are greedy and resources are not shared fairly.
3. REFLECT ...On how our actions might contribute to the poverty of others or ourselves.
4. SAY SORRY ...For the times we missed an opportunity that could have helped lessen poverty.
5. DECIDE ...How you might take action to stand with others or help reduce the impact of poverty in the world.

May God grant us fullness of life that will overflow and be a blessing to others. Amen.

CONVERSATIONS which CONNECT COMMUNITIES:

Resources and materials for groups:

BELONG is a Christian Aid resource that provides 11 sessions to work with young people exploring faith, social justice and putting faith into action:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/belong-older-youth-church>

Pick up your privilege is a Bible study provided by Tear Fund, challenging injustice based on the book of Esther:

<https://www.tearfund.org/-/media/tearfund/files/about-us/our-mission/anti-racism-statement/racial-injustice-bible-study.pdf>

Tear Fund also have a resource pack on '*Understanding poverty*'

<https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/tools-and-guides/understanding-poverty>

There is also an opportunity to engage further with spiritual poverty. This could include considering ways to inspire hope for the hopeless or supporting spiritual development. Some Bible passages that could be explored to discuss this more could include:

Peter stepping out of the boat and struggling with his faith - Matthew 14:26-30

The Beatitudes, including 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' - Matthew 5:3-12

Thomas in the upper room - John 20

Use these passages to explore:

- How do we become more faithful or stronger in our belief?
- If the opposite of spiritual poverty is spiritual strength then how do we support each other to be stronger and more resilient?

INVITATIONAL

Everyone is welcome to take part in collective worship, as much or as little as they or their parents and carers are comfortable with. This means we use invitational language and consider carefully our choice of words and songs. Children are invited to pray but are not compelled or expected to do so; they always have a choice. We invite them to pray or reflect in whatever way they would usually as a family, if that is part of their home experience.

INCLUSIVE

Acts of worship need to be inclusive of all. Therefore, we choose topics and ideas that are shared by different faiths and worldviews. When we present Christian teaching, we make it clear that this is 'what Christians believe', saying things like:

'I wonder why this story might be important to Christians?'

'The story today comes from the Bible (the holy book of Christians), which teaches that ...'

Our worship should be accessible for children and young people with a range of different backgrounds, and so we take care that activities do not require expensive resources. We also offer a variety of activities, so that children and young people with differing needs can all find something they can engage with.

INSPIRING

We aim for our acts of worship to inspire those engaging with them. How might it engage their emotions, enabling a sense of peace, comfort, hope or motivation? How might it inspire them into action, into thinking differently and considering their behaviour or actions? How might it inspire them to reflect on their faith or beliefs, and on the faith or beliefs of others?