

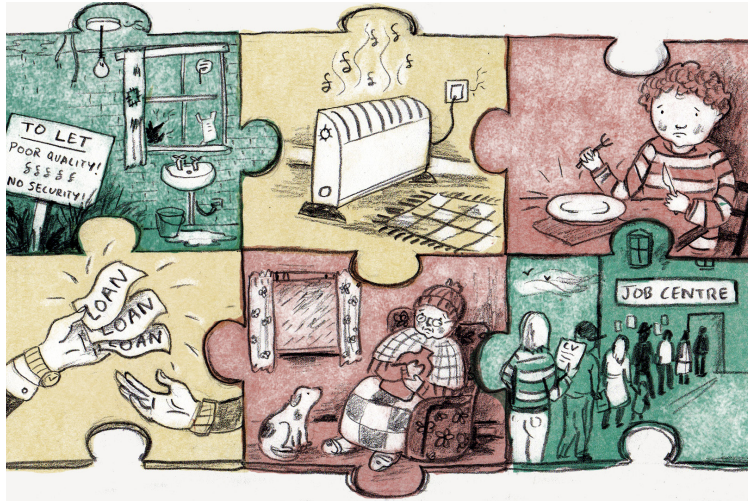
# Session 1: Christian responses to poverty in the UK

Life on the Breadline Lent course, #BreadlineResearch

## Opening prayer:

Creator God, as we begin our journey through Lent, help us to be among those who bring good news to the poor. In Jesus' name, Amen

2min



## Introduction:

Welcome to the Life on the Breadline Lent course.

The six sessions can be completed as a group or individually, with timings suggested in the boxes of each activity that add up to each session lasting an hour.

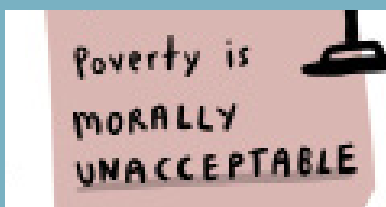
Each session has a different theme which is inspired by our three years of research on the Life on the Breadline project. Life on the Breadline has analysed Christian responses to poverty in the UK in the context of austerity.

This week we are looking at different Christian responses to poverty in the UK.

3min

## Watch this video:

Visit the Life on the Breadline website at <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/churches/lent-course/> and watch the week 1 video:



5min

## Now reflect on what you've just watched:

"If austerity kills, can the Church's response give life?"- What are your reflections on this question? How are Christians responding to poverty in your local neighbourhood?

5min

## Bible passages:

### Luke 4:16-20

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

### Luke 6:20

Then he looked up at his disciples and said: Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

### Mark 10:21

Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.

### Jeremiah 8:21-22

For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me.

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of my poor people not been restored?

5min

# Session 1: Christian responses to poverty in the UK

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## Guided reflection:

### Read aloud then have quiet time to reflect

The Bible passages show that God identifies with and favours the poorest in society, and that as Christians we should respond to poverty.

Poverty is not simply about how much money a person has: experiencing poverty means that a person does not have enough resources to meet basic needs and to take part in society. Poverty affects the choices that people have, or do not have. Poverty is like a jigsaw that cannot be broken into simple categories such as food poverty, housing poverty, or fuel poverty.

Poverty levels in the UK are directly related to austerity policies. Following the 2008 global financial crisis, in October 2009 the UK government began austerity policies. Austerity is an economic policy to reduce government debt by reducing government spending. Austerity is not just an economic policy: austerity affects people's daily lives. It is also seen by many as a political choice.

Christians, churches, and faith-based organisations have played a significant role in responding to poverty in the UK in the last decade. Responses have varied from running social action projects such as foodbanks, lunch schemes, and homelessness projects, through to campaigning and advocacy for welfare change (for example in relation to Universal Credit), and self-help or enterprise schemes (for example social enterprises have been a common response in Black majority churches). These different responses can often overlap - for example, one group or project can both respond to poverty through social action, and campaign for change on the causes of poverty.

The Jeremiah passage questions why care has not been given to people who need it. People are still experiencing poverty in the UK and beyond today. Why do we let this happen? If we are to truly address poverty in the UK, poverty needs to be seen as morally unacceptable: people should not have to live in poverty.

10min

## Questions for discussion:

1. What does it mean to you when Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God"?
2. Have you seen the effect of austerity and poverty in your local community? How?
3. What do you think it will take for us as Christians to treat poverty as morally unacceptable, and for people not to be living in poverty?

15min

## Take-away actions:

Take time to notice the different opportunities and choices that people have in your local community - can everyone access these or do some people have more choice than others? Find out how Christians and churches are responding to poverty in your local area.

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

10min

## Closing prayer:

Holy Spirit, come upon us and lead us to sing out "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the Kingdom of God". 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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