

# Session 4: "I believe in building people up" - how we respond to poverty

Life on the Breadline Lent course, #BreadlineResearch

## Opening prayer:

Creator God, teach us to foster our own gifts and support others in the development of their gifts. In Jesus' name, Amen

2min

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

What is different about the work of Hodge Hill Church on the Firs and Bromford estate compared to responses to poverty such as at a foodbank?

5min



## Introduction:

This week's session is inspired by our research with Hodge Hill Church on the Firs and Bromford estate in Birmingham.

Statistically the estate is in the top 10% of deprived areas in England. On the estate, Hodge Hill Church and partner organisations work together through an approach called asset-based community development (ABCD).

ABCD focusses on gifts and assets at the neighbourhood level rather than deficits to start from what is 'strong' to then address what is 'wrong'.

In this session we'll explore how giving attention to people's gifts can change how we as Christians respond to poverty.

3min

## Watch this video:

Visit the Life on the Breadline website at <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/churches/lent-course/> and watch the week 4 video:



10min

## Bible passage:

### Romans 12:1-13

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.



5min

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## Guided reflection:

### Read aloud then have quiet time to reflect

It is possible for people to contribute in a variety of different ways to the body of Christ. We have already explored in the previous sessions how experiencing poverty can limit the choices that people have, and how poverty is related to inequality. This cannot be ignored and inequalities must be addressed, but people's gifts are also important and as Christians we are called to foster our own gifts, and to support each other in developing gifts.

To focus on gifts, as shown in this session's video of Revd Dr Al Barrett speaking about the mission of Hodge Hill Church, is not to deny the existence of poverty and people's suffering within this. Rather, it is to change the starting point of responding to poverty to reaffirm that people are valued and gifted, and to address the stigma that is often associated with life on a low-income.

Local resident and Street Connector, Penny, reflected on her experience of sharing the fruits of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control - in Hodge Hill:

"I sometimes ask myself 'who do we share these good fruits with?'. It is very easy to share fruits with family, friends and kind neighbours, perhaps because it tends to be a two-way process; you do a kindness for a friend and when able, they will return with a kindness for you. But sometimes I wonder if we can be at risk of becoming a bit restricted in who we share our fruits with. We might hand out our fruits to special friends but not notice those on the edges. Perhaps those who do not appear so outgoing, friendly or generous themselves are not used to receiving good fruits from others.

As God's kingdom is for everyone, let's share those fruits with everyone.

Let's notice and rejoice in the sharing of the fruits in our neighbourhood and learn from those examples. But also, let's notice the newcomer, the stranger, the reserved person, the side-lined, and make sure they have the best of God's fruits as well."

10min

## Questions for discussion:

1. Al and Penny challenge us to give attention to people's gifts and to sharing the fruits of the Spirit with everyone. Where are there opportunities for this in your local neighbourhood?
2. How does this change how we respond to poverty?
3. How can we focus on gifts, but also address the inequalities that people experience in our local communities?

15min

## Take-away actions:

Think about how giving attention to gifts could change the response to poverty in your local area. To start, develop a Community Profile that summarises the key features of your neighbourhood - strengths, challenges, problems and possibilities.

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

5min

## Closing prayer:

Holy Spirit, in our daily lives help us to act towards our neighbours as people who are valued and gifted. 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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