



KINGDOM AGAINST POVERTY

A SIX-WEEK COURSE ON DOING JUSTICE AND MERCY IN A BROKEN WORLD

The church is not the church if it's not showing special care for the most severely challenged. But today, something's just not working in our churches.

How do we cultivate hearts that feel responsible for the poor and the outcast?

How do we rethink ineffective approaches to fighting poverty, and help people overcome dependency to stand beside us with dignity on their own feet?

This lesson plan is ideal if people in your group...

- Need inspiration to take action on poverty
- Are frustrated with “help” that doesn't actually help people
- Want to come together around innovative solutions

Topics we will discuss include...

1. Rethinking Poverty
2. From Faithful to Fruitful
3. From Success to Stewardship
4. An Economy of Justice, Peace and Love
5. Expanding Opportunity
6. Empowered by Entrepreneurship



WEEK 1: RETHINKING POVERTY

Gather & Open with Prayer

Opening Discussion (5 minutes)

God tells us over and over again in the Bible that he is intensely concerned about the poor, and he wants us to be as well. Why might this be such an important issue to God?

Think about some of the things you know about that are being done to help the poor in your community, whether it's by the church or the government or anyone else. How effective are those efforts? What is the result they produce?

Introduce Video:

In this video, pastor Christopher Brooks talks about why God cares so much about poverty alleviation, and how we can make our efforts to fight poverty more effective.

Watch Video:

Christopher Brooks, *Rethinking Urban Poverty*, Oikonomia Network (18 minutes) tiu.edu/poverty1

Discussion (20 minutes)

Group leader selects questions to focus on.

If we assume that the poverty we see around us is permanent, and there's nothing anyone can do to change it, how does that shape the way we think about poor people? How does it change the way we think about them if we think poverty isn't permanent?

This next question is uncomfortable, but it has to be addressed. What are some examples of how “individual iniquity”—wrong behavior and bad habits—cause poverty? How about examples of “institutional injustice”—mistreatment of people who don't have the power to fight back, and failure to make the same opportunities available to them?

Why does following Jesus call all of us to take action to alleviate both the causes of poverty—iniquity and injustice—and help create opportunities for the poor to flourish?

Why might it be the case that “any program for poverty alleviation or economic flourishing that is not centered upon discipleship is a failed enterprise before it even begins”?

What does that have to do with the fact that “poverty alleviation starts and is built around relationships”?

What are examples of poverty alleviation efforts that are contextualized (local)? That are data driven (aimed at clear results)? That are collaborative (groups work together)?

Read Passage: Luke 4:16-21

Discussion (10 minutes)

Jesus says he has come to proclaim good news to the poor. How is the news that Jesus has come to bring us the kingdom of God good news for the poor? Do we think of it that way?

Jesus says he has come to free captives and oppressed people. How does the coming of Jesus result in liberation? How does this apply to individual iniquity? To institutional injustice?

Jesus says he is anointed with the Spirit to do these things. We are also transformed by the Holy Spirit. How does the power of the Spirit in our lives help us alleviate poverty?

Integration Point:

This week, think about people you already know who struggle with poverty. How can you do more to be a positive and helpful presence in their lives?

Close with Prayer