

Aims of the session

To understand that poverty comes in many forms, of which we'll be looking at three: absolute poverty, relative poverty and intentional poverty. We'll explore our response to each and see how poverty, as well being a cause of suffering, can also be a source of blessing.

What you will need

- Bibles
- A set of course notes for each person
- A large sheet of paper
- Coloured felt tip pens
- The course DVD

Before the session

From the course DVD, play the introduction to the 2015 Lent course by Bishop James Langstaff and Bishop Brian Castle (about 5½ minutes). This could be done either at the start of Session 1 or earlier – for example, in church a week or two before the course begins.

As the session begins

- 1 If the group is meeting for the first time, ask the members to introduce themselves and share what they hope to get from the course. You might like to make a note of these hopes and refer to them at the end of the course.
- 2 Create a word tree. On a large piece of paper, write the word **POVERTY** in the centre with linking lines to the words **SUFFERING** and **BLESSING** on either side.

suffering — **poverty** — *blessing*

Now extend the 'tree' by asking people to add words associated with **poverty** and the **suffering** and **blessing** it can bring. Allow the links to develop naturally as the group contributes. (Hint: If you're stuck, think about words like **oppression, generosity, powerlessness, simplicity, exclusion, release, despair, freedom, injustice...**)

When you've finished, get each member of the group to tick the five words they feel are most important when thinking about poverty. Discuss why you've chosen certain words. Discuss whether your word tree has more words and ideas about suffering or more about blessing. From your findings, is poverty something to be embraced or challenged?

- 3 Continue with the sheet for this session.

The session follows a sequence, but don't feel you must follow it rigidly. Feel free to select, adapt and concentrate on those sections most useful to your group. The session is intended to last about 1½ hours, so consider how long you want to spend on each section. Allow time for prayer and other activities at the end.

☞ ☞ denotes topics for discussion and the ☺ and 📖 symbols indicate things to watch or read as a group. All video clips are on the course DVD. When the notes refer you to the background information, ask one of the group members to read the relevant section.

Enjoy the course!