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Following Jesus where the need is greatest

# Poverty Matters

Rethinking Our Response



SIX SESSIONS HELPING YOUR CHURCH ASSESS  
ITS LOCAL AND GLOBAL RESPONSE TO POVERTY

# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response

### Intro

Each year, millions of dollars and numerous volunteering hours are given by churches to support those living in poverty, whether internationally or within Canada.

The biblical mandate to serve the poor is strikingly clear, but are the tireless efforts of the church having a positive and lasting impact on poverty? Is it possible that our 'helping' is actually hurting those very people we are trying to help?

This guide has been designed to help church leadership teams review the work your church supports that helps

those living in poverty and to ask some critical questions. It will not be an easy journey, with potential for deeprooted thinking about poverty challenged, but we hope you come away with a fresh understanding and new ideas about how to serve those in material poverty.

The resource is made up of 6 hour and a half-long sessions and six short films which can be used over a series of weekly meetings or during a weekend or away day. The content of the films are based around the highly acclaimed book *When Helping Hurts*, produced by the Chalmers Centre in America.

**‘We expected that we would have an impact on the global church, but the impact on our local community has also been quite remarkable.’**

Simon Benham  
Senior Leader, Kerith Church

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# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response



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# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response

### Leader's Guide

Leading a review of your church's support for certain organisations may be a difficult journey. Long-standing relationships, pet projects and sentiment may contribute to the work that you're currently supporting.

However, get the review right and the potential for long-term benefit is great. Supporting brilliant work in the most life-giving ways will not only mean that you benefit from knowing you are making the greatest impact possible, but should also help shape your church.

Before you begin the process of review with your leadership team, think through these objectives to help you prepare.

### OBJECTIVES

There are a total of six sessions that can be used to review your work with those living in poverty. By the end of the six sessions, you should be able to:

- Know what change you'd like to see achieved through your work both globally and locally - what's important to you as a church and leadership team
- Understand what sustainable, good quality work with those living in poverty looks like and how that can be achieved
- Understand how much of your work is helping without hurting, either your church or those you seek to serve, and what changes you might need to consider
- Think through the importance of work that is distinctly Christian and how important that is to you
- Develop a series of questions to ask current or potential organisations you support

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You may have other motivations for wanting to complete this course. If you have, why not write these in the box below. It will help you measure the success after you've finished the final session and also help you think of any additional questions decisions you might need to ask along the way.

The sessions are not designed to give you the answer to which organisations you should support globally or how specifically to engage locally with those living in poverty, but rather provide you with knowledge and tools to make those decisions.

For those churches who are undertaking your own work internationally, we hope it will help you ask critical questions about the work that you're involved in and help you think through sustainability and impact and also your role in the process.

# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response

### Session Overview

There are a total of six sessions that unpack poverty as more than a lack of material things and discuss how we can best help those we seek to serve. Here's a summary of each session:

#### ONE

##### Reconsidering the meaning of poverty

As with any strategic review, it's important to think through the issue you're trying to solve. In this first session, you'll consider together what poverty is and how your answer helps shape which projects you'll choose to support.

#### TWO

##### Seeing God at work

It's easy to see brokenness in the materially poor, but what about those of us who are materially rich? In this session you'll be thinking through how our brokenness might manifest in different ways. You'll start to think through the importance of walking humbly together with those living in poverty and, through that, the role of the church.

#### THREE

##### Why good intentions are not enough

When you hear of a struggling family or community, it's hard not to want to step in and solve the problem. In this session you'll begin to work through the approaches to those in need — not only from the perspective of sustainability, but also for purposes of dignity.

#### FOUR

##### Joining God's work

In this session you'll be thinking through the gifts and resources that God has given to those living in poverty. You'll be looking at how the best development focuses on releasing the potential of those we seek to serve and the resources already available within the community; ensuring that this is at the centre of the development process.

#### FIVE

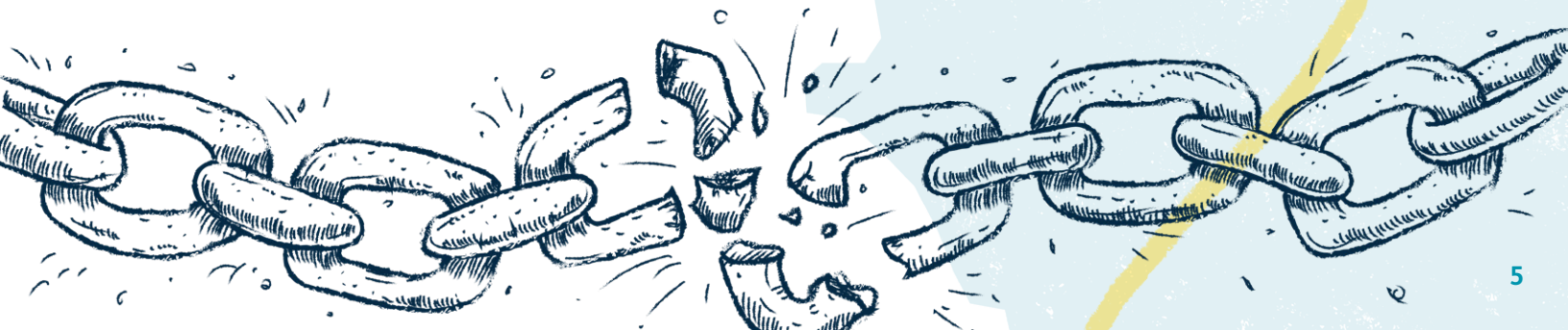
##### Fostering change

Poverty-alleviation is ultimately about change. In this session you'll be thinking through what triggers change and how we can be involved in helping to foster it. You'll consider what it looks like to draw out the gifts and talents of those we seek to serve, as they seek to transform their lives.

#### SIX

##### Moving forward

In this session you'll be thinking through the role of your church in supporting great development — how you can enable and be involved in the process of change. You'll be challenged to look back, as well as to the future.



# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response



### Session Structure

#### **INTRO** (8 minutes)

The sessions begin with a time of introduction and questions. This is designed to outline the session, to get people to start thinking and expressing their current views.

#### **FILM** (12 minutes)

You'll be able to watch the film that complements each session. The films and supporting material are online and available for download.

#### **DISCUSSION** (40 minutes)

You'll be invited to spend time discussing the film together and thinking through the implications of your church's engagement with those living in poverty.

#### **REFLECT** (30 minutes)

This will be a section when you really start to think about your own context – the work that you are doing locally and globally. You'll be asked to start considering how that might be developed in the future.

### Preparation

In preparation for undertaking the review, it may be useful to contact all those who will be part of the discussion and give them some insight into the process and an overview of the work you currently support as a church.

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# Session One



## Reconsidering The Meaning Of Poverty

### INTRO (8 minutes)

Welcome everyone to the review, pray and begin by explaining that in the first session you'll be discussing what we mean by poverty — so that you can begin to think through the problem or issues you're being asked to deal with as a church.

Start by asking people to write down two or three words or phrases in response to the question 'what is poverty?' Get each person to say what they've written down and why.

Before watching the film explain to the group that it is possible they may find some of the theories put forward quite challenging. In fact, they may find it hard to agree with them altogether. The hope is that by working through all 6 sessions, good discussion will be had and new thinking may come out of that.

### FILM (12 minutes)

Together, watch the first film in the series.

### DISCUSSION (40 minutes)

Discuss some of the following questions:

- Q. How has the film changed or challenged your view of poverty?
- Q. Do you agree with the use of the description word 'poor'?
- Q. What is the unique role of the church in helping to restore relationships?
- Q. Using the stories found on page 8, discuss how relationship breakdown (God, self, neighbour and creation) has affected them.

### REFLECT (30 minutes)

**'The way that we define poverty will determine the solutions that we use to alleviate poverty.'**

Brian Fikkert

Co-author, *When Helping Hurts*

Ask the group to start thinking about the local and global work that you're in some way engaged with as a church.

Locally, this might include projects that the church runs, say a food bank, or simply ones that a number of the congregation volunteer for. Or perhaps responding to an event in recent history such as a flood.

Globally you may have links to specific charities or projects, or perhaps individuals with a strong connection to the church. You can list this work on the sheet you'll find on page 9 and keep it for use in later sessions.

*'...if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.'*

Isaiah 58:10





# Session One

## CASE STUDIES

### BELLE

'I am 88 years old. I am a widow, my husband died about 20 years ago. I don't have a future. I don't have anything now.'

'I live alone. Twice a week I walk around 10 miles to collect firewood to sell. It means I just about survive. When I'm not collecting wood I sit or sleep alone. I get used to my loneliness. I don't have any extended family or friends locally.'

'I have no hope. I have no money to save or anything I can offer. I usually think about what I will eat next, how I will feed myself. I go to church, but they don't really know me there. I just go to pray.'



**'We became friends as we learnt to love and trust one another.'**

### HANNA

'I was among the poorest of the poor when I joined a self help group. My four children were not going to school, we felt excluded. My husband had died and we were very lonely.'

'But then I joined a group of other women. We became friends as we learnt to love and trust one another.'

'I saved the equivalent of a penny every week, it was all I could afford. But after some time I was able to borrow from the group. I started a charcoal business and then saved more. That meant I was able to start a drinks business.'

'Today I am so different. I go to church, I have lots of friends and feel confident. If one of us is in need, the others will help.'

'Two of my children are still in education. The first two have graduated from university – one has become a banker the second a university lecturer.'

'Our neighbours see the difference in our lives and want to join the group.'

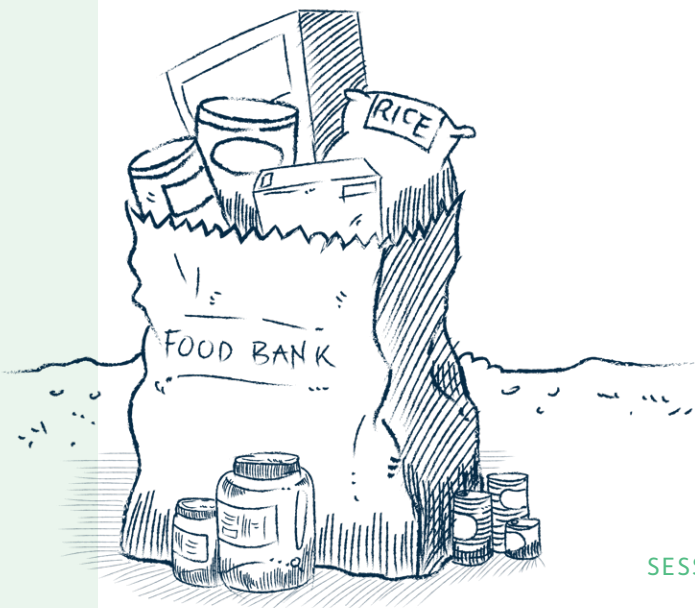


# Poverty Matters

Rethinking Our Response

Local Work

Global Work





## Session Two



### Seeing God At Work

#### INTRO (8 minutes)

You will need a pack of cards.

In front of the group, shuffle a pack of cards. Asking everyone not to look, put a card in front of everyone face down. At the same time, ask everyone — again not looking at their card — to pick it up and place it on their forehead so everyone else can see the number.

Now, ask the group to organise itself in order, without looking at the card number on their own forehead. Start with the highest cards first. Explain how poverty can order people like a deck of cards, with those with the most money at the top of the pecking order.

Encourage the group to talk through commonly held stereotypes of the materially poor, both in our own community and internationally.

#### FILM (12 minutes)

Together, watch the second film in the series.

#### DISCUSSION (40 minutes)

Having watched the film, discuss together some of the following:

- Q.** How do broken relationships manifest themselves in our lives — with God, self, others, and the rest of creation?
- Q.** Consider how our view of ourselves and our place in society may have influenced the work we support as a church and affected those we seek to serve.
- Q.** Ask what it might mean for your church to walk in humility with the materially poor.

- Q.** Are there ways that we need to make the church more accessible to the materially poor within our community?

#### REFLECT (30 minutes)

**‘Poverty reconciliation is about reconciling relationships. A process in which people — both materially poor and non-poor — move closer to living in right relationship with God, self, others and the rest of creation.’**

Brian Fikkert

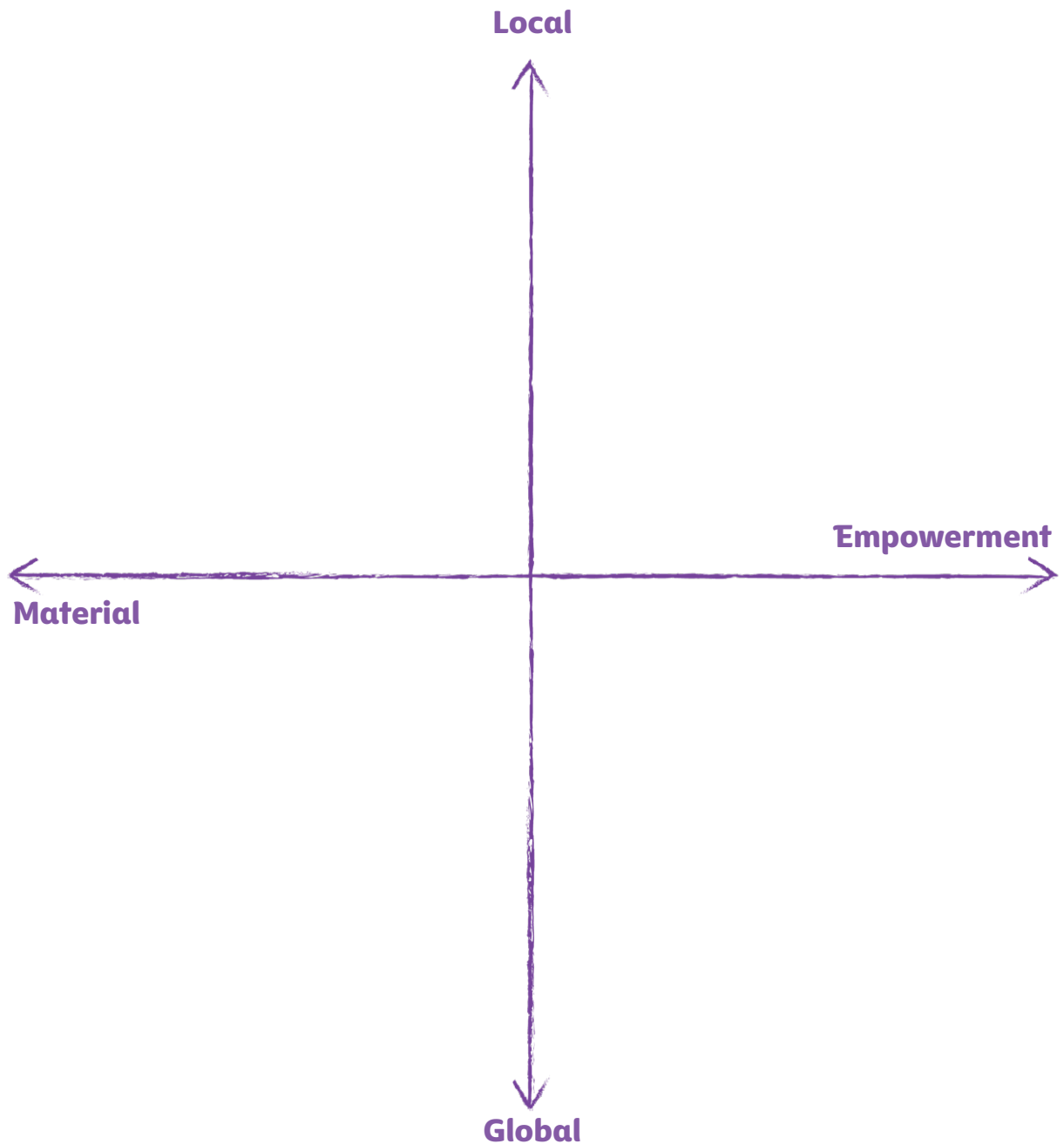
*Co-author, When Helping Hurts*

Last week you should have captured some of the work you’re involved in locally and globally. On the following quadrant charts, get the group to think through and agree together where that work might sit on a scale between local and global, and material (giving items or aid) and empowerment (releasing people’s potential so they can solve their own problems).

So, for example, helping your local community recover after a flood might be high in the top left quadrant.

# Poverty Matters

Rethinking Our Response





## Session Three



### Why Good Intentions Are Not Enough

#### INTRO (8 minutes)

Poverty-alleviation approaches have changed over the years from a paternalistic approach to focusing on the root causes and the journey to solutions rather than just the outcome itself. Its found solutions that are owned locally and use local resources to deal with local problems tend to lead to sustainable outcomes.

To get the group thinking about what good development practices may look like, share the proverbial saying: give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. Now debate this saying using the following questions:

Why is it better to teach than give? Are there ever circumstances when we should just give?

#### FILM (12 minutes)

Together, watch the third film in the series.

#### DISCUSSION (40 minutes)

Having watched the film, discuss together some of the following:

- Q. Where on the scale from relief to development does your church's current work with those in poverty sit, both locally and globally?
- Q. How much of your church's work with those in poverty is about empowering people to change their own lives?
- Q. What are the primary goals of your church's work?

#### REFLECT (30 minutes)

#### Relief, Rehabilitation, Development



We usually help individuals and communities at different times and stages.

Relief comes about following an emergency – perhaps a famine or an earthquake. It's about stopping the bleeding.

Rehabilitation is about helping people to get back to their pre-emergency state, by perhaps helping to rebuild a home or their livelihood.

Development is about long term sustainable change. It involves walking together, restoring the relationship between God, self, others and creation for the helped and helper. It looks at doing with rather than for.

Think through the work you've been involved in as a church. Have you been employing the right response in the right situations? Use the worksheet below to help you work through this.

# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response

Last week you plotted your work on a quadrant chart. Thinking through the difference between relief, rehabilitation and development, list below the work where you think you've got the response broadly right and where you think change is necessary.

**BROADLY RIGHT**

**CHANGE NEEDED:**

For the work placed in the 'change needed' category, what could be potential next steps to make the change needed?

As we review investing our funds in poverty-alleviation work overseas, these are the sorts of questions we should ask our partners or those we may fund in the future:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free"*

*Luke 4:18*



## Session Four



### Joining God's Word

#### INTRO (8 minutes)

The aim of this session is to understand that releasing the potential of those we seek to serve, and the resources already available within the community, is the best form of poverty alleviation practice.

In this session we will start to think through the gifts and skills God has given us and how these can be used to help bring about change in our own lives and the lives of others.

Ask each group member to think of someone else in the group. Then describe something they are good at and how they use this gift and skill to benefit others. If you have a larger group involved in the review split into smaller groups to undertake this exercise.

#### FILM (12 minutes)

Together, watch the fourth film in the series.

#### DISCUSSION (40 minutes)

Having watched the film, discuss following:

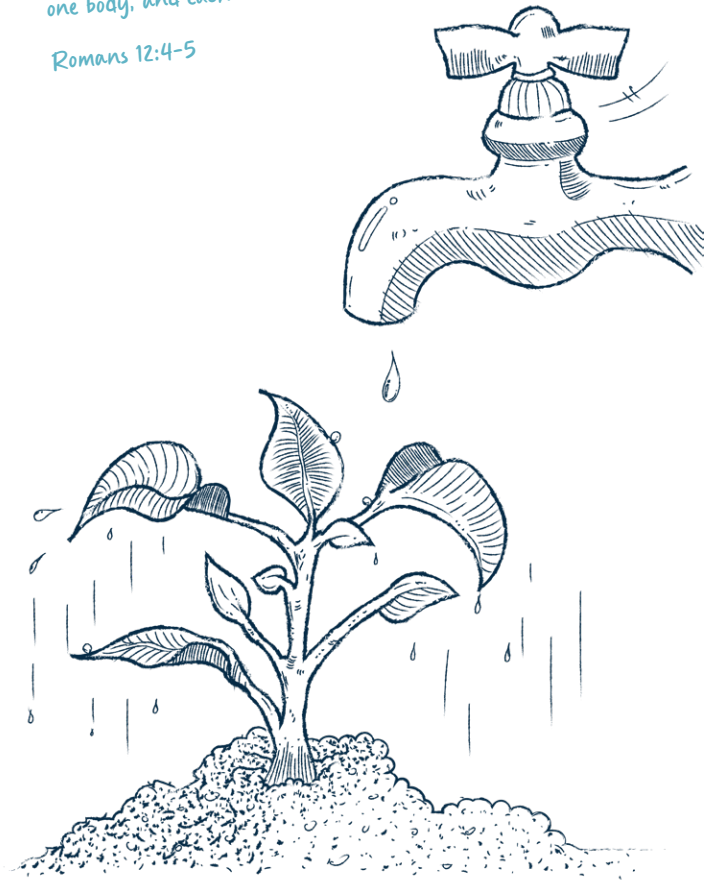
- Q. How is your work focussing on drawing out the gifts and talents of those you seek to serve?
- Q. Why is it important to draw out the skills of those you are trying to help?
- Q. What hinders you from releasing people's potential as part of your work?

#### REFLECT (30 minutes)

Spend time together as a leadership team completing the following sheet.

*'For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.'*

Romans 12:4-5



# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response

What are some of the gifts, talents and passions we have as a church and/or group that could make an impact in our community?

What small steps can we take to better draw out the gifts and talents of those we serve in our community – helping them to begin their own lives?

In the work we support overseas, we believe we should ask partners or potential partners the following questions on how they are drawing out the gifts of the local community...



# Session Five



## Fostering Change

### INTRO (8 minutes)

The aim of this session is to understand how poverty-alleviation can only come about when a person wants to change.

Get people to split into pairs and tell each other about a major change that happened in their life — perhaps around employment, a big house move or maybe a change such as deciding to get fit.

Discuss what led to the change, how it made them feel and what the consequence of the change has been.

After a few minutes, draw everyone together and ask people to discuss the different triggers of change that came up in the conversation — think through how many came from choice eg, wanted a change, and how much came from external circumstances eg, I was made redundant.

### FILM (12 minutes)

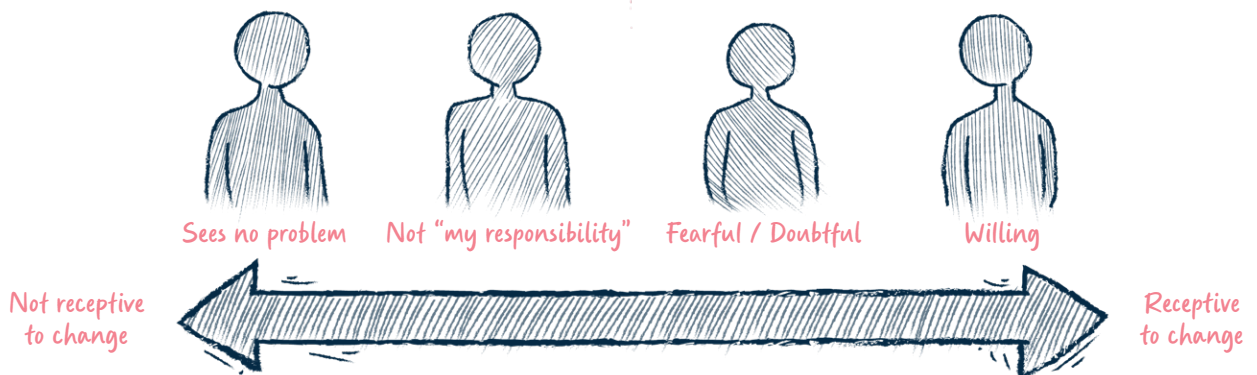
Together, watch the fifth film in the series.

### DISCUSSION (40 minutes)

- Q.** Thinking through your local and global work, how receptive to change would you say those you currently serve are?
- Q.** How might you be able to focus your church's resources?
- Q.** How is your current work responding to the fears and doubts of those you serve? If it is not, how could you do this?
- Q.** How much are you investing in the building of relationships to help bring about change?

### REFLECT (30 minutes)

In Luke 19 7-8 we read the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector meeting Jesus. He saw that his life needed to change and was willing to pay the necessary price. How much are you concentrating your resources on people ready or open to change? Spend time filling in the next worksheet.





# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response



In our local work with those in poverty, we will take the following steps to better utilize our resources in order to prioritise those who demonstrate willingness to change...

In our work, we will seek to invest in relationships through:

When investing in international organisations, we will now ask the following:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*"All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."*  
Luke 19, 7-8



# Session Six



## Moving Forward

### INTRO (8 minutes)

By the end of this session you should be able to plan how to put into practice what you have learnt from this guide.

Begin by reading out Colossians 1:15-23.

Ask people to reflect on moments where they have seen the reconciliation of Christ — in their own lives, in their relationships, communities and perhaps internationally. To give everyone a chance to reflect, you could do this in smaller groups if there's a lot of you in the room.

### FILM (12 minutes)

Together, watch the sixth film in the series.

### DISCUSSION (40 minutes)

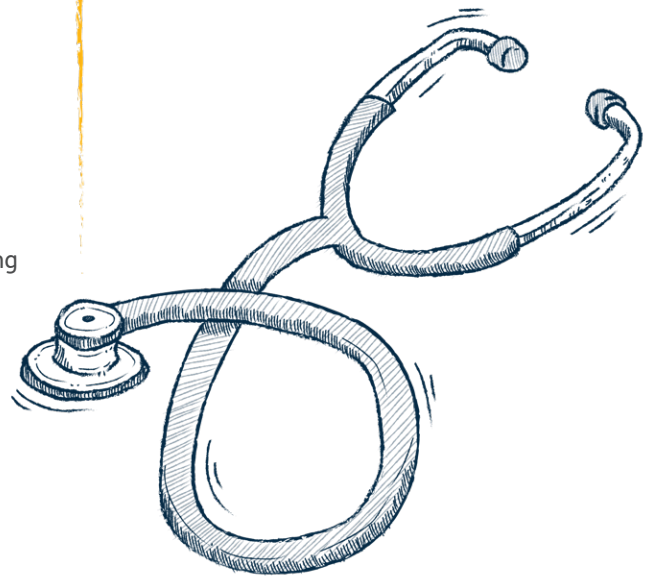
- Q.** Have you achieved the objectives set on page 4? Go through each one and discuss.
- Q.** Discuss the role you can play as a partner to churches and ministries that are on the front line of serving those in poverty.
- Q.** How can you ensure those you serve are demonstrating their commitment to the process of change?

### REFLECT (30 minutes)

Use the final worksheet to solidify some of the discussion that has taken place previously. After this session do take time with your leadership team to reassess and plan your strategy in the light of all that has been discussed.

*'For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.'*

Colossians 1:19-20



# Poverty Matters

## *Rethinking Our Response*

We believe that successful partnerships will incorporate the following elements...

We believe that as a church we can best support the work of international organisations in the following ways:

And we think these organisations can best serve us by...

# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response

We believe that our work among those living in poverty can shape us as a church body in the following ways:

After working through the final session, these are the additional questions we would like to ask the organisations we currently support...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response



## Next Steps

You've come to the end of the six sessions. It's now time to work out your next steps — armed with questions, decisions and knowledge, what now?

It's essential to agree together your next actions— who will do them, when and how.

### Discuss and decide the following:

**1.**

As a result of using this guide, if there are organisations that you feel you should stop supporting, agree together who these are and how best to end the relationship in a positive and healthy way.

**2.**

Agree together which organisations whose work you feel you need to review. Use the questions and information you've gained from these sessions in this guide and agree a timeline for engaging with the organisation.

**3.**

Now you have a clearer view of best practice development work and sustainable poverty-alleviation approaches, agree on a list of organisations you may want to consider supporting and why.

# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response



## Acknowledgement & Thanks

The films used in this guide have been adapted and produced thanks to the generosity of the Chalmers Centre and Life Church.

The Chalmers Centre, based in Georgia in the US, are the creators of the *When Helping Hurts* series of books, written by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. The Chalmers Centre, in conjunction with Life Church which is based in Oklahoma, produced a number of films inspired by the books. The two organisations have kindly allowed Tearfund to adapt the films for use.

We'd highly recommend the purchase of *When Helping Hurts*, which is available from a number of retailers including Amazon and Indigo.

# Poverty Matters

## Rethinking Our Response



## About Tearfund

**‘There are so many special things about Tearfund, but at the top of the list is its unwavering commitment to strengthening the local church. This unique and highly-leveraged approach makes Tearfund a truly rare jewel in the fight against global poverty.’**

Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* co-author

Tearfund is a Christian aid and development agency, committed to seeing people freed from poverty, living transformed lives, and reaching their God-given potential. We work with churches to help communities unlock their own potential to overcome poverty and have full-life.

We are by no means the only agency doing great sustainable development around the world. There are many. But what we do through the local church is transforming and that we have some great answers to the questions raised through

*When Helping Hurts* — most critically, including empowerment, the local church and sustainability.

We don't claim to be the best partner for every church. But we'd love you to consider us. Perhaps we can be one of the organisations that you can question or consider after using this guide?

To find out more about our work, why not get in touch with our Church Relations Director at **905-415-8181**, or [connect@tearfund.ca](mailto:connect@tearfund.ca), or visit [www.tearfund.ca](http://www.tearfund.ca)

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