

A Shared Journey

Bible Study Course 2024



Take the time to hear the most important stories.

Session 1 - Introduction

We invite you to share a journey with us, with people for whom the struggle against poverty is etched in our lives on an ongoing basis. People, whose faith in Jesus (and Jesus' faith in us) is important in keeping on going.

We will share a passage of Scripture (or sometimes several passages) in each session. These are passages which have been food and drink for our souls even if, at times, we face the injustice of hunger.

A Latin American theologian once described the Bible as being a bit like the engine of a car. For many we only ever know about the engine from sitting in the car, or behind the steering wheel. But for others, we know the engine as mechanics, often lying underneath it, covered in oil, trying to repair it or see how it works.

Much of the Bible was written in the context of struggle. It is about people whose lives were oppressed by injustice. When it is read by people who today share that experience, fresh insights and renewed wisdom can emerge.

We invite you to hear our sense of how the Bible comes alive to us; to respond to the questions that we offer you; and to share in the prayers that flow out of our ongoing faith journey.

Each contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.

The Bible Stories are taken from the NRSV version.



Shirley's Story

The Lord is my Shepherd

Start this today's reflection by watching Shirley's story.
Visit the url under the video thumbnail to watch the film.



trusselltrust.org/shirley-psalm23

Reading - Psalm 23

*The Bible Stories are taken from the NRSV version.
Each contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.*

¹The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

³ he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil,

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

Reflection

Favourite Bible passage? The Lord's my Shepherd. And The Good Samaritan. Helping others; that's how I have always tried to live my life.

The Lord's my Shepherd. I like a version we do with the band - I'm a singer - with lots of harmonies in it. It gives you a nice feeling.

I wish I could say that it was a reminder that all is well with my soul, but right now it isn't really. At the moment I don't know whether I feel abandoned by God or I have removed myself from God. There's a 98-year-old woman at work (I work in a care home). We pray together. She's good for me.

One of the things of the Psalms is that they deal with reality. And there is a lot of reality going on at the moment. For me and for others.

People often say that God never gives us more than we can deal with. But I sometimes think, "Is it not someone else's turn?"

"Lying down in green pastures." It's a comfort thing, just very comforting. But it doesn't sugar coat what's real. "Walking through the valley of death." Life can be tough.

There's bad stuff going on. Going on everywhere. Nationally and internationally. But also in my own back yard.

And sometimes trusting is hard. Sometimes I just want to scream out: "God, where are you?" And I wonder if maybe I'm not asking the right things.

Asking can be difficult for me. When life is difficult for a lot of people, it is difficult to ask for help. I find it hard to ask for help, and when you are in a dark place it is even harder. It is really scary to fear rejection. What if people don't say "Yes." What if God doesn't say: "Yes."

Green pastures. Dark valleys. The Lord's my Shepherd. Life can be tough.

Oh, and the Good Samaritan. I like the fact that there is a good person in the story. I've tried to be that person. I try to share just so I can help folks.

Questions

What struck you about Shirley's reflection on The Lord's My Shepherd?

How honest are we with ourselves and others that life can be more of a 'deep valley' than a 'green pasture'?

Shirley's Prayer

At times God,
life is more of a deep valley
than a green pasture.

At times God,
you feel more absent
than present.

At times God,
when I say that you never give me more than I can bear,
it doesn't feel that way.

God,
in the darkness,
help us still to glimpse hope,
and to be sustained by it.

God,
help us not just to say that you are always there,
but to know it,
and feel it.

God,
help me to be the person you know I can be,
and to forgive myself,
as you have forgiven me,
when,
some days,
I manage better than others.

Amen.

Take action, session 1

"You prepare a table before me..."

Consider downloading and using the 'Bank the Food' app. This app allows you to quickly see the items food banks need most urgently. If a few people from your church commit to using this app once or more a week, it could make a real difference to the people running your local food banks. It is a really practical way of providing meaningful, compassionate support to people facing hardship today in your area.

Find out more about this app at bankthefood.org



Session 2 - John's Story

Prayer and Kindness

Start this session's reflection by watching John's story.
Visit the url under the video thumbnail to watch the film.



trusselltrust.org/john-matthew25

Readings - The Book of Ruth, Matthew 6 and Matthew 25

You might like to read the whole book of Ruth like John did.

The Bible Stories are taken from the NRSV version.

Each contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.

Matthew 6

⁵And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name

¹⁰Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.

¹²And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you;
¹⁵but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 25

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” ⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?” ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”

Reflection

For John prayer and kindness are at the heart of Christianity and his choice of Bible readings reflects that.

John chose the book of Ruth from the Old Testament - a book he has come across recently as his church are reading through the Old Testament. He read it straight through in 20 minutes. He said: “I was really drawn to this book. I liked the way Ruth looked after her mother-in-law, Naomi. If someone hadn’t helped me I wouldn’t be here today. This is a story about kindness, compassion and empathy. Naomi wasn’t the easiest but Ruth was determined to look after her. That kindness is what we need today. People say these stories from thousands of years ago are not relevant, but they are.”

“The people listening to Jesus in Matthew 25 didn’t know when they had fed or clothed Jesus, Jesus had to tell them, it was when you care for people in need. If Jesus was about now, I think he would be serving in a food bank, maybe washing someone’s feet in a corner. It all goes back to compassion.”

“I also really like that Jesus taught his disciples to pray. I don’t think we say the Lord’s Prayer enough. After our food bank we have a time of prayer giving thanks and praying for the people we have met. Some of the older people often suggest that we pray the Lord’s Prayer and I think it’s a really good thing. I learnt it at school but I have rediscovered it. It says it all - give us our food for the day, forgive us and keep us safe - that’s it. That’s what we need right now: food, safety and forgiveness. And it doesn’t go on too long, that’s good!

“God has always been here for me. I used to turn to God in the bad times. I always had a sense of the presence of God but I only used to ask for help in times of trouble. I pray more often now and its conversational. Sometimes I still have to pray ‘God help me...God help me to love this annoying person!’ But now prayer is a proper conversation, often I am just saying to God how great it is to be somewhere.”

Questions

Think about a time when you were shown kindness and how it impacted you?
How could you take that experience of kindness and share kindness with others?
How has prayer changed for you over time?

John’s Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
But close to us in our life day by day, hearing our prayers and answering with kindness.

hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Help us to make earth more like heaven by being kind to one another, helping each other out and showing compassion whenever we can.

Give us today our daily bread.
Please make sure we all have enough to eat today and when we have more than enough, help us to share with those around us.

Forgive us our sins
*We all do things wrong, please forgive us when we make mistakes
as we forgive those who sin against us.*

Help us to keep caring for people around us even when they are difficult, because we know you love us even when we are difficult.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Amen.

Take action, session 2

John’s reflection on Matthew 25 and Jesus’ association with people facing hardship focuses our minds on the various ways people face hardship today. It is upsetting and hard to read about the reality of these hardships, but if we want to make a change in our society, we must start by understanding more about the level of need for support in our communities.

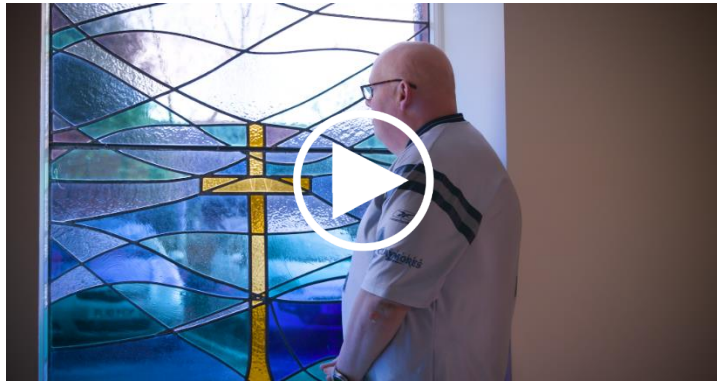
Consider spending some time looking at our latest research into who is facing hardship in our Hunger in the UK report, viewable here: trusselltrust.org/hunger



Session 3 - Brian's Story

The Story of the Lost Son

Start this session's reflection by watching Brian's story.
Visit the url under the video thumbnail to watch the film.



trusselltrust.org/brian-luke15

Reading - Luke 15

*The Bible Stories are taken from the NRSV version.
Each contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.*

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Reflection

When I first encountered Urban Expression, the church I am a part of, I was an atheist - a follower of Dawkins. I knew bits of the Bible and I always associated with the story of the Lost Son. I thought of myself as the lost son, but I wasn't. I thought that I wasn't worthy of love. A lot of people in poverty think that they are not worthy, not worthy of being loved. I was like the lost son who took his inheritance and went away. But his father gave him it back.

I've always been driven by anger. Anger against injustice. It's why I appreciate that part of my church's commitment is to making sure everyone is heard. It's also why when I was getting treated for cancer recently, I was so scared about losing my voice.

But my days of ranting are over. Now it's about building relationships with people, including people in power. It's about sitting down and listening, persuading. Listening, I've learnt about the experience of others, including asylum seekers. 'New Scots' as we call them here.

I wasn't angry at God. I wasn't angry with Jesus. I was angry with their supporters and their failure to behave properly, justly. Reading the Bible, I came to realise that that is the way that we all are. It isn't God's fault. I came to faith at a time when I was angry with the Church. But in the Church, I found people who didn't preach at me, who just loved me.

And when I read the story of the Lost Son, I recognised myself moving from orphan to son. People don't think that they are worth something, worth anything. You can encounter poverty in so many places. I was an E Grade nurse.

It's time to get rid of the 'them' and 'us' labels. There is only an 'us'. Just as God has seen the good in us, so we should see the worth of others. The worth of those who have struggled. I keep coming back to the lost son. It's so full of meaning.

We might not have used our inheritance the way that we should have but that doesn't matter to God. God loves us just the way we are.

It's a theme that runs all the way through the Bible, There's never a 'them' and 'us'. It's just an 'us'. The Beatitudes - a beautiful piece of writing. I love the Beatitudes. They are written for the poor. To tell us that we matter. And the Good Samaritan. And the Book of Acts. There is never a 'them' and 'us'. There is just an 'us'.

That's why I love the story of the Lost Son.

Questions

What struck you as you read how the story of the Lost Son has impacted Brian?

What was new there? Or reassuring?

How is our understanding of God as Father changed by the story of the Lost Son?

Brian's Prayer

God,
Father,
Dad,
we are never lost to you,
even though we feel lost.

You give us freedom,
like a loving parent,
to make choices,
even when they are bad choices.

But the door is never shut;
the coat remains in the wardrobe;
the ring remains in the drawer;
waiting for us to return,
to you.

God,
Father,
Dad,
take away our anger of 'them',
of those that infuriate,
and fill us,
instead,
with the Father's love;
the gift to see others,
as you see us.

Amen.

Take action, session 3

Brian talks about how important it is for him to use his voice to persuade and influence people. There are many misconceptions around poverty in the UK and we know many people don't know how to make a difference. Could you use your voice and begin some conversations about food banks and hunger in the UK? Download our Conversation Starter Cards and begin exploring the issues with friends, family, colleagues and church members. You can find these here: trusselltrust.org/conversation-starters



Session 4 - Jean's Story

God's gifts to us
and our gifts for one another

Start this session's reflection by watching Jean's story.
Visit the url under the video thumbnail to watch the film.



trusselltrust.org/jean-matthew6

Readings - Psalm 34 & Mathew 6

*The Bible Stories are taken from the NRSV version.
Each contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.*

Psalm 34: 1-9

- ¹ I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- ² My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.
- ³ O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together.
- ⁴ I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Look to him, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
- ⁶ This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,
and was saved from every trouble.
- ⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
- ⁸ O taste and see that the LORD is good;
happy are those who take refuge in him.
- ⁹ O fear the LORD, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.

Matthew 6:26-27

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

Reflection

‘When I was thinking about a Bible verse or story that I wanted to share there was one that kept popping into my mind. It is a verse that was very important to me about five years ago. At that point my marriage had ended traumatically, and my husband had left me with nothing. I had lost my job, lost friends, and after many struggles and deeply troubling circumstances reached a place where I found myself with just £2 in my pocket.

I couldn’t work out what to do. Should I buy bread and potatoes, or should I buy milk and tea bags? I felt really depressed and I went out for a long walk. While I was out I saw a woman outside the local Post Office - she looked very thin and pale. She was stopped, while the people passing by were just walking past and ignoring her.

When I got close to her she stopped me and said: “Excuse me, lady, I am so hungry. Have you got £1 so I could go and buy some chips.”

Without thinking I said: “I have £2, go and get some chips and some curry sauce or something to go with them.” She was so pleased and grateful I thought she was going to hug me at one point. She ran across the road and into the chip shop to get the food straight away.

I had responded automatically when she said she was hungry and carried on walking thinking ‘What a shame, no one should be that hungry’

But then I suddenly realised that I now had nothing. I had been holding on to that £2, I was annoyed with myself asking ‘Now what am I supposed to do?’.

I cried out to the Lord ‘What have I done? Why did I do that when I’m so hungry myself?’ I prayed as I continued to walk along the street feeling helpless and weak, ‘Please help me Lord’. A sense of peace and calm flowed through me, the scripture that came into my head was Matthew 6 26-27.

But I was so upset and angry that I challenged God, asking ‘but how does this help me Lord, I’m still hungry and have no money’. Then I found myself humbly asking for forgiveness for not trusting God through the storm, I continued walking and crying and reflecting on the Bible passage that was dominating my thoughts, and then I walked past a tree and spotted something underneath it. I glanced at it as I walked past it but then I stopped as I realised ‘That looks like money’. I walked back and picked it up, it was a £10 note.

It didn't feel right for me to take it when it didn't belong to me, I actually looked around me to see if there was anyone close who could have dropped it so I could give it back to them, but there was no one to be seen.

Then it struck me, I had asked God for help, and help came. I saw it was a gift from God and I thanked God for providing me with what I very much needed. I prayed under the tree where I found the money. It bought me enough food for four days.

I learnt then that the more we give the more we receive.

I am in a better position now but I will never forget how tough it was and the help that came my way. My benefits were eventually sorted out and I began to receive the help and support I needed to find my feet again, and adapt to doing life on my own but with the Love of Jesus.

It has been through the experience of my own trials that I have learned the biggest lessons, I live comfortably now, and I am able to reach out and help other people based on the experiences I've had myself and the understanding of what it's really like. I make sure I listen to people and ask how they are and if I can help I will. I meet with people from time to time who are in need of a hot meal and I offer to take them out. I can give to charities and put food in the trolley at the supermarket for the food bank.

I enjoy giving back what I can. Picasso said: "The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away." That quote reminds me how much I have been given and now I can pass those gifts on to other people.

My gift is listening to God and knowing that the Holy Spirit will guide me. It helps me understand what I need to let go of and what I need to do that will make a difference. I pray the Serenity prayer often which is a powerful prayer and one I like to encourage others to pray also:

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Amen.

Questions

What are your gifts and how do you pass these on to other people?

Are there things God is calling you to let go of?

Are there things that you are called to step into?

How do you discern these things?

Jean's Prayer

Based on Psalm 34

Abba Father,
You gave us promises in your Bible and in our lives we see you answer our prayers
Today I remember
'I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.'

Abba Father,
You know that sometimes we feel we have failed but you never turn us away
Today I remember
'Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.'

Abba Father
You understand our needs before we even ask you and you hear our prayers
Today I remember
'This poor person called, and the LORD heard him;
he saved them out of all their troubles.'

Abba Father
You see the concerns of our heart and the worries that threaten to overwhelm us
Today I remember
'Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.'

Abba Father
You are with us and bring us what we need whatever our circumstances
Today I remember
'Fear the LORD, you his holy people,
for those who fear him lack nothing.'

Abba Father
Help us by the power of your Holy Spirit and with your amazing grace
To walk lovingly forward with you in friendship and fellowship
Knowing the freedom Jesus brings us through his death on the cross.
Guide and strengthen us as we grow to be more like you, reflecting your light
In all we think, do and say.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

Take action, session 4

You might want to think this session how you use your gifts and consider whether you could offer help to your local food bank as a volunteer. You can find details of these here: trusselltrust.org/volunteering



Session 5 - Laura's Story

Jesus heals the woman
who touched his hem

Start this session's reflection by watching Laura's story.
Visit the url under the video thumbnail to watch the film.



trusselltrust.org/laura-luke8

Reading - Luke 8

*The Bible Stories are taken from the NRSV version.
Each contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.*

As he went, the crowds pressed in on him. 43 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. 44 She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, and immediately her flow of blood stopped. 45 Then Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are hemming you in and pressing against you." 46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I noticed that power had gone out from me." 47 When the woman realized that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed. 48 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Reflection

My favourite story is the one where the woman goes through the crowd and touches the hem of Jesus's cloak.

You can imagine the people in the crowd seeing her and saying: "Don't touch him, don't touch him," but she did.

That woman had been shunned. I have been through a lot and I know how that feels. But it still amazes me that whatever you have done Jesus is always there. He treats you just the same as the person with the cleanest sheet, the person who has been a Christian all their life.

People can be so horrible in the outside world - but no matter what is happening to you, a physical thing, mental health or you have done something horrific, Jesus is not bothered. He recognises that you had the audacity to go and touch him. He just turns round and says you have come to me and you are healed.

The woman in that story, it didn't matter who she was, she was someone who needed Jesus. I wouldn't be here without Jesus.

People are shunned so easily today but to God none of it matters. Or you could say it mattered so much to him he sent his Son to die for us on the cross making our sins void. He doesn't care what you have done previously.

Some people don't know that.

I didn't know that.

No matter what you have done - God just says: "What can I do for you?"

Sometimes I thought that Jesus was so perfect that I couldn't go to him with the stuff that had happened to me. But when you do you find yourself literally set free.

Questions

Have you had a time when you needed a lot of courage to approach Jesus?

What does the freedom Jesus gives mean to you?

Laura's Prayer

No matter what
You offer healing to us
You see our pain and disease
You make the impossible, possible
Thank you, Jesus

No matter what
You offer forgiveness to us
You free us from our wounds and scars
You make the impossible, possible
Thank you, Jesus

No matter what
You let us come close to you
You never shun but always accept
You make the impossible, possible
Thank you, Jesus

No matter what
You look at us with love and kindness
You see the worth in each of us
You make the impossible, possible
Thank you, Jesus

No matter what
When we come to you,
However we come,
Hurting, ill, shamed, despised,
We hear you say
Go in peace
And we go, we go on
Because you make the impossible, possible
Thank you Jesus.

Amen.

Take action, session 5

Ending the need for food banks might seem like a big task but we know that it is possible if we all work together for a more just and compassionate society. We are 1,300 food banks, supported by 36,000 volunteers, 12,000 churches, 100,000s of community groups and schools, and millions of people around the UK. We're determined to make this a reality.

Consider spending some time exploring how we invite people to raise their voices to call for change and make sure no one has to use a food bank to survive. Have a look here: trusselltrust.org/GOE-Page

Session 6 - Where our stories lead us

The Guarantee our Essentials Campaign



When

People are going without

It's time to

**GUARANTEE
OUR ESSENTIALS**

Visit trusselltrust.org/church-petition



Through *A Shared Journey*, you have had chance to hear the stories and reflections from some of our lived experience partners. Each of these experts by experience represent the millions of people we support in our food banks. People who have faced some hardship or had to use a food bank when in a time crisis.

Our vision at the Trussell Trust is a future without the need for food banks. We are inspired by our lived experience partners and include them in co-creating our solutions to the poverty we see in the UK today.

Churches play a crucial role in delivering immediate support to people facing hardship, but support is also needed to help us build a future where nobody needs to visit a food bank. People of Christian faith, and their churches, are vital partners in calling for justice and the right level of support when people face hardship.

But how do you go about calling for this justice as a church?

One of the important ways you can call for justice is by joining our Guarantee our Essentials campaign.

Hear the voice of experience

Continue this session's reflection by watching this short film *A Shared Voice*. Visit the url under the video thumbnail to watch the film.



trusselltrust.org/Church-GOE-Film

As part of our work to end the need for food banks we are campaigning, with our partners at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, calling on the UK government to embed an ‘Essentials Guarantee’ into Universal Credit to ensure everyone has a protected minimum amount of support to afford the essentials.

Our social security system should support anyone in need of help, but more and more people are finding it impossible to make ends meet because Universal Credit is falling short, and it’s pushing people to food banks. Around five in six low-income households receiving Universal Credit are going without at least one essential like food, a warm home or toiletries.

This isn’t right, and you and your church community can help make a difference.

Laura (whose story we read last session) reflects in the film her experience of living on universal credit.

“You can only afford to put the heating on for an hour or two hours a day. Last winter it was really tough having to choose between eating and heating.”

She believes that an essentials guarantee, enshrined in law, would help her and lots of people have a better quality of life.

“If Universal Credit actually covered the essentials it would help to end the need for food banks for a lot of people.”

Laura, like the Trussell Trust, believes that churches are vital partners in ending the need for food banks. It is a fundamental element of the Christian belief to speak out on matters of justice.

“God tells us to love each and every one of us and fight for justice.”

A question to reflect on

In your experiences of faith and church, why is it important for Christians or the church to speak out for justice?

The biblical witness for justice

The idea that each person should have enough money to live comfortably and in right relationship with others is a theme reflected often throughout the Bible.

Take some time to reflect on Bible verses that focus on the need for everyone to have enough money to live. Take a few moments of quiet as you ponder God’s Word and ask God to guide you and speak to you. (Below are just a few examples, but you may know of many more.)

Proverbs 31:8

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute”.

Deuteronomy 24:19-22

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner.”

Luke 4:18

“the Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to proclaim good news to the poor, bring freedom to prisoners and to set the oppressed free”
 [Jesus quotes Isaiah as he begins his ministry]

John 10:10

“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”

It doesn't add up

Discover for yourself, through this activity, whether Universal Credit will cover the cost of the essentials we all need. Why not try it, then introduce it to your church community and groups with the tips below? Try it for yourself or with your group. Jot down on the receipt how much you would spend on each essential listed, each week, and then total it at the bottom.

Visit trusselltrust.org/receipt-activity to download a receipt activity sheet.

.....'s week

Food and non-alcoholic drinks.....

Electricity and other utilities.....

Clothes and shoes.....

Phones, internet and postage.....

Travel.....

Sundries: Toiletries, haircut, cleaning materials, bank changes.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Do you think the basic rate of Universal Credit covers these essential costs? TOTAL: £

  **IT DOESN'T ADD UP.**

Questions for your reflection

- How challenging was it for you to work out what your weekly spend is?
- How did it feel to see the total number?
- How much do you think the basic rate of Universal Credit is - a benefit designed to cover core costs listed in this activity?

Right now the basic rate of Universal Credit is only £91 a week for a single adult.

What's your reaction to learning the amount of Universal Credit a single adult receives in a week?

A Prayer for Justice

Grant us, Lord God,
a vision of your world as your love would have it:
a world where all are protected, and none go hungry;
a world where the riches of creation are shared,
and everyone can enjoy them;
a world where different communities and cultures
live in harmony and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.
Give us the inspiration and courage to build it,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Thank you so much for joining us in our Shared Journey Bible Course!

We hope you've found the times of reflection in this course meaningful moments of connection with God. We hope you have been moved by the stories you've heard, and deepened your understanding of, and passion for, living compassionately and in community together.

May we all be inspired to act for justice and a future where everyone can afford the essentials.

What next?

To get more involved in the Guarantee our Essentials campaign and enable your church and wider community to call for justice, have a look at our GOE Churches Pack.

Visit trusselltrust.org/GOE-Church-Pack to view the pack.

For other resources and ways to take action towards our vision of a future where everyone can afford the essentials visit:

trusselltrust.org/churches



Notes

Images © Chris Lacey Photography, Ben O'Connor and Laura.