



Photo: Tom Price/Tearfund

Transforming Communities Bitesize

A discussion guide for small groups

tearfund



A message from the churches team

Welcome to Tearfund's Transforming Communities Bitesize!

Through this video series and discussion guide, we're going to look at what it means for a church to become a centre for transformation in the community.

At Tearfund, we believe in the local church's ability to bring about lasting transformation to communities around the world and play a vital role in ending extreme poverty.

After we share our understanding and theology around poverty and why it exists, we'll introduce you to how we're tackling extreme poverty – through Transforming Communities; our innovative training which enables churches to serve their local community by helping them identify the challenges they face and using their God-given resources to overcome them.

So, join us in a ministry of restoration to end extreme poverty, with a vision of equipping 250,000 local churches around the world to become centres of transformation in the community.

Poverty isn't God's plan. You are.



Buddy Owen,
Church & Community Lead





A note for leaders

This discussion guide is designed to be used in a small group setting, alongside watching Tearfund's 'Transforming Communities Bitesize' video series.

These are principles and values that Tearfund and our partners have learned through our Transforming Communities work in more than 32,000 churches over 50 years of working to end extreme poverty. We trust and pray that they will also guide you in your own context – and help you to partner with God in bringing transformation in your community.

The series consists of four sessions, and each week there is a short video to watch together, and then an opportunity to read, reflect, discuss and pray.

We hope the reflections, questions and prayers will help you share ideas and thoughts, learn from one another and support each other as you go on this journey.

To find out more about Tearfund's Transforming Communities work and how your church can play a part in ending extreme poverty, visit www.tearfund.org/churchhub



Session 1: What is poverty?



Reflect

‘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



Watch the video

Key points

- ✓ Poverty isn't just financial; it can be spiritual, educational, and relational, and more...
- ✓ We have God-given resources in and around us
- ✓ Transforming Communities is a process to help local communities realise their God-given resources and lift themselves out of poverty



Read

Poverty takes many different forms and happens for many different reasons. Some people live in educational poverty; others in spiritual poverty. Some live in financial poverty; others in relational poverty. With poverty affecting so many communities in so many different places, no two instances look the same. But one thing is always the same – the devastating impact poverty has on individuals and communities.

We see the consequences of poverty all around us, from the parents doing all they can to feed their hungry children to the oppression by corrupt governments of the communities they're meant to serve.

Poverty robs people of their agency and dignity, leaving them feeling powerless. Poverty is brokenness; it's vulnerability; it's hopelessness. Poverty isn't God's plan. It brings the sense that something's missing – something more than wealth and material possessions. The solution to that emptiness is found in scripture; through the teachings and work of Christ and the word of God.



Discuss

1. What different forms of poverty (material, spiritual, social, etc.) have you witnessed or experienced in your community?
2. How do you see the root causes of poverty playing out in your local context?
3. In what ways does poverty rob people of their dignity, agency, and hope?



Pray

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the rich resources you have placed in and around each one of us. Would you open our eyes to see and understand the needs of people living in poverty, and fill our hearts with your compassion so that we can pray and act to bring an end to extreme poverty and see your kingdom come.

In Jesus' name, amen.



Notes

Session 2: Broken relationships



Reflect

‘All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.’

2 Corinthians 5:18-19



Watch the video

Key points

- ✓ Poverty isn’t God’s plan
- ✓ Poverty is a result of broken relationships
- ✓ Restoring relationships through Jesus unlocks our God-given potential to live a life free of poverty



Read

We know that poverty isn’t God’s plan. A loving, merciful God wants us all to flourish. When we read scripture, we see why poverty exists.

Poverty is a product of four broken relationships: broken relationships with God, broken relationships with ourselves, broken relationships with others, and broken relationships with creation.

We’ve seen the consequences of these broken relationships in Aya’s story. But through Christ, we have the opportunity to mend these broken relationships. When these relationships are healed, hope is restored and communities in need are empowered to realise their God-given resources and lift themselves out of poverty.



Discuss

1. What are some other consequences of these broken relationships that you have seen or experienced?
2. What can we do as individuals/communities to restore each of these broken relationships? Can you think of one way to begin to restore one of these broken relationships in your own life?
3. How did Jesus' teachings aim to restore these broken relationships?



Pray

Heavenly Father,

Would you reveal to us the broken relationships in our own lives,
and forgive us for the brokenness we have caused.

Give us the strength to forgive others where we need to, and to work for reconciliation,
just as you reconciled us to yourself through Jesus.

Help us to model Jesus' love and to bring your healing presence to a hurting world.

In Jesus' name, amen.



Notes

Session 3: Abundant Communities



Reflect

‘There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the Lord is sure to bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession to occupy if only you will obey the Lord your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today ... If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your needy neighbour. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be.’

Deuteronomy 15: 4-8



Watch the video

Key points

- ✓ Our mindset determines how we act in the world
- ✓ We can see God’s creation as scarce or abundant
- ✓ A mindset of scarcity creates scarcity; a mindset of abundance creates abundance



Read

We can either see the world in terms of scarcity or abundance. A mindset of scarcity causes us to live as if resources are limited, leading to stockpiling and hoarding. Overnight, neighbours can become competitors, battling for ever-decreasing, limited resources.

But as Christians, we’re called to see the world in terms of abundance. We see the world – God’s creation – as our shared home, with enough resources for all. Competition for resources is replaced by relishing in the shared gift of God’s creation. Of course, we don’t ignore the facts that tell us where resources are dwindling. But we know that, in God’s world, there is always enough; not enough to hoard or exploit, but enough to share generously with others. When we live this way, we can live in abundance – not only abundance in possessions and resources, but also in love and hope.



Discuss

1. How do you think our mindset, whether it's scarcity or abundance, influences the way we interact with others and our community?
2. Where can you see the outworking of a scarcity mindset in your own life, church or community?
3. What causes a mindset of scarcity?
4. How did Jesus show us the abundance of God's creation?



Pray

Heavenly Father,

Forgive us for the times we have had a mindset of scarcity, and failed to see the abundance you have blessed us with.

Help us to obey your word and be a community who are ready to open our hands and meet people's needs, whatever they may be.

In Jesus' name, amen.



Notes

Session 4: Process, not product



Reflect

‘Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.’

Romans 12:2



Watch the video

Key points

- ✓ We have God-given resources in and around us
- ✓ Offering people a process out of poverty is a better long-term solution than offering a product to relieve poverty
- ✓ Transforming Communities is a process to help local communities realise their God-given resources to lift themselves out of poverty



Read

Tearfund’s process of Transforming Communities is unique. It’s a process, not a product. We train local pastors so that they can train and equip their own communities to lift themselves out of poverty. This means that communities don’t rely on Tearfund for support; they lean on God, themselves and each other. Simply giving communities the resources or products they need isn’t a long-term solution. This way of giving has its place in times of emergency – when a conflict or disaster has ravaged a community unexpectedly – but it’s not always appropriate to provide lasting, sustainable relief.

Our innovative training equips local churches to tackle extreme poverty in the world’s poorest countries. Churches learn how to practically serve their local communities by helping them identify their challenges and use their God-given resources to overcome them. With Bible-based training and practical support, this approach lets communities rewrite their own stories, building a future filled with hope and opportunity.



Discuss

1. What are the benefits of offering a process over a product?
2. Where can you see in your life, church or community that product is being offered instead of process? What are the dangers of this?
3. How can communities transform when they can craft their own vision for the future?
4. What role can the local church play in transforming communities?
5. Are there any ways your church's current programmes could change so that lasting change is the goal?



Pray

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the local churches and communities around the world who are transforming their lives and lifting themselves out of poverty.

Help us not to be conformed to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Please reveal to us the ways that we too can play our part in transforming our communities and see your kingdom come.

In Jesus' name, amen.



Notes



Photo: Tom Price/Tearfund

tearfund.org

Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE

☎ 020 3906 3906 ✉ info@tearfund.org 🌐 @tearfund 🐦 /tearfund

tearfund