

Faith and Poverty

Module 2: A Solidarity Response

The second eight-session program of the JustFaith series explores local poverty and introduces participants to the tips and tools they need to respond. Together, participants navigate questions such as: “why are the poor poor?”, “why don’t people in poverty just get a job?”, “what are some common hurdles that people in poverty face?” and “what are some practical tools for alleviating poverty in my community?”.

In addition to the readings, group members engage in prayer and spiritual practices throughout the week between sessions. Participants emerge from this program better equipped to help alleviate poverty in their communities, as well as stand in solidarity with those experiencing poverty.

Books:

- Evicted by Matthew Desmond
- Toxic Charity by Robert Lupton
- The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right by Lisa Sharon Harper

Overview of Sessions

Session 1: Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers — In this session, participants review group guidelines for holy conversations. They then learn about and discuss the biblical and theological basis for advocating for the rights of workers.

Session 2: The Cost to Live — In order to better understand how much it really costs to “get by,” the group engages in a simple simulation called “Making Choices.” They also explore the cost of living in their local community, as compared to the standard income of low-wage workers. Participants then explore ways to advocate for living wages and stand in solidarity with workers in poverty.

Session 3: The Social Safety Net — Participants learn about public benefits. Who is eligible? How much do they receive? What is it like to live on public benefits?

Session 4: The Cliff Effect — The group explores a common obstacle that traps people in the “welfare system,” keeping them from better wages and a better quality of life. Participants then explore ways they work alongside those experiencing poverty to eliminate this barrier to financial health.

Session 5: Poverty and Health — After hearing from a guest speaker, participants learn about the detrimental effects of poverty on health. The group then brainstorms ways to ensure access to physical, emotional, and spiritual care for all people.

Session 6: Trauma and Addiction — Participants learn about a common correlation between trauma, addiction, and poverty. They then envision ways to improve access to mental health care for those experiencing poverty, as well as support those in recovery. Immersion Experience in the Local Community

Session 7: Housing — The group explores systemic barriers that keep people from accessing affordable housing and envisions ways in which they can help reduce homelessness in their own communities.

Session 8: Grassroots Organizing 101 — The group learns how to mobilize others to create sustainable change in their local communities.