

## Session 2

# Serving Jesus

‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’... The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’ (Matthew 25:37,40).

In Jesus’ story those people who served the needy are acclaimed as his true servants. So what holds us back? This session explores what it means to join Jesus in being good news to poor people.



At five o’clock this morning Nalyaka Doreen was already out of bed; each day she has to walk for 20 minutes to the water supply at a borehole so that she can fetch enough for her family, and then tend the vegetables in the garden before her brothers and sisters wake up. After eating up the leftovers of yesterday’s meal for breakfast, she walks for an hour to get to school. This seems a more demanding life than most 14-year-olds can imagine, but AIDS Care Education and Training (ACET) Uganda has taught her another skill which is improving the lives of her neighbours. You can read about it on page 12.

Nalyaka Doreen is part of the Bukoto Development Association Youth Club, Uganda, which raises awareness of HIV/AIDS

## 2.1

## Introduction

How would you like to be remembered when you die?

Give the group a minute in quiet to think about this, before inviting everyone to suggest an answer. The group leader should suggest his or her answer first.

'So you've been doing God's work, but what's God working on now? What's God working on this year? Two and a half million Africans are going to die of AIDS. What's God working on now? I meet the people who tell me it's going to take an act of God to stop this plague. Well, I don't believe that. I think God is waiting for us to act. In fact, I think that God is on his knees to us, waiting for us to turn around this supertanker of indifference, waiting for us to recognise that distance can no longer decide who is our neighbour. We can't choose our neighbours any more. We can't choose the benefits of globalisation without some of the responsibilities, and we should remind ourselves that "love thy neighbour" is not advice: it is a command.'

Bono, U2

## 2.2

## Worship

**The Lord will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea. Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord:**

**'The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death.'**

**So the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion and his praise in Jerusalem.**

Psalm 102:17-21

Choose from the following, depending on the time available:

- In a brief discussion and then in words of praise, make the theme of your worship the blessings of God that you would like to pass on to a future generation.
- Choose some songs that recognise God as the one who 'responds to the prayer of the destitute'. Numbers 2, 18 and 20 from the list on page 30 may be particularly appropriate.

## 2.3

## Word

1

Read Matthew 25:31-46 aloud. You might choose to divide this between two readers, with one person reading the words of the king (34b-36, 40, 41b-43 and 45).

2

In Jesus' parable, what characteristics distinguish those who have the king's approval from those who do not?

3

What kinds of people should find this passage challenging? How does it speak to you?

4

These verses refer to real men, women and children with real needs: people who were hungry, thirsty, alienated, unprotected, ill, imprisoned. Name individuals or groups of people who have equivalent needs today.

5

Why do you think Jesus calls such people his 'brothers and sisters' (verse 40)? How is it possible that serving the world's poorest people is actually serving Jesus?

6

How do you think Jesus views people who are living with HIV/AIDS, such as in the story below or those featured in session 2 of the *Act Justly* video?

**\*The Act Justly video**

Part two of the *Act Justly* video shows the work of Ugandan organisations that are funded by Christian Aid to work alongside those living with HIV, and is particularly appropriate to show as part of this session.

**If you have more time...**

The last session (on James 2:1-17) suggested that Christian faith and action on behalf of poor people were so closely linked that faith is meaningless without action. What more does the story of the sheep and the goats tell us?

Read Amos 5:4-24. What has made Amos so scornful of the people's worship? Will the consequences of failing to pursue justice for the poor come in this life or in eternity? What makes you think that? If we were to be serious about hating evil and loving good (verse 15), what changes would that involve?

On her way home from school in Uganda, Nalyaka Doreen visits her neighbour Julias Maruti. At the Bukoto Development Association youth club, Nalyaka and her friends have been trained to care for people who are HIV-positive, and spread the message through drama and songs about how to stay healthy. Julias discovered that he had contracted HIV six years ago, and since his wife died he finds it difficult to bring up his seven children: 'When the youth club first came I was very ill and ready to die. They washed me and took me out, helping me to walk on my own again. They help me with my children and cook for me. They built my house as well. I am so grateful to these young people.' Nalyaka says she takes her inspiration as a Christian from John 3:16: 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

Nalyaka Doreen washes three-year-old Mutonyi Davine, whose father Julias Maruti is HIV-positive



## 2.4

## Our response

**Discuss the quotations and the suggested actions. Decide on something you can do individually or as a group.**

1\*

Find out about the *Act Justly* appeal that accompanies this series of studies, making it easy for people to respond financially to the challenges that God has been laying before them during this series. Turn to the centre of this booklet for details of how to get information about the appeal, and have the literature ready for members of the group to look at during this session.



2

In the privacy of your home, look through last month's bank statement, asking yourself whether it shows evidence of someone whose faith is matched by action when it comes to the way you use your money. Consider what you spent, then what you have learnt from James and Matthew about what it means to be poor and the responsibilities of the rich, and ask God to take control of your finances.

3\*

Make an AIDS ribbon out of red ribbon and a safety pin, and wear it in solidarity with those who live with HIV and their carers.



4

Allow the groups of people whom you named during the Bible study – hungry, thirsty, alienated, unprotected, ill, imprisoned – to be the focus of your prayer for the world. Keep a note in your Bible and continue to pray for them.

'One thing I've learnt, which shocks me beyond belief, is the inextricable link between poverty and HIV. People still die of AIDS-related illnesses because they can't get the very simple and way cheaper drugs that are needed to treat the symptoms that come with HIV.'

Beverley Knight, the UK R&B singer who visited Christian Aid partners in Brazil in 2002



Christian Aid/Harriet Logan/Network

Beverley Knight visiting Christian Aid partners in Brazil

'Young Christians in Norwich were shocked to hear that no one in the city had planned a service for World Aids Day in December 2003. We thought that it was important that the church was seen to engage with HIV/AIDS, both at home and internationally. Members of Christian Aid, SPEAK and the youth congregation "Sundays" got together to plan an event which remembered local people who had died of HIV-related illnesses as well as raising awareness of the global impact of the disease. We did drama, drummed, and lit candles as the Norwich AIDS Helpline book of remembrance was displayed.'

Naomi Tuma, 'Sundays' youth congregation, Norwich