

Act Justly update 6

Make poverty history

Make Poverty History is a campaign that few of us will have missed in 2005. It encourages us to petition our government to use their power to alleviate extreme poverty.

This Act Justly Update looks at what the Bible says about how we should relate to our governments and remain true to our Christian calling.

Introduction

If you were ruler for a day what would you do?

Worship

- 1 Read aloud and meditate on these verses: Psalm 148:11-14, 1 Timothy 2:1-4
- 2 Bring pictures of local, national and global leaders taken from newspapers and lay them out on the floor. Ask the group to reflect on the fact that God is supreme over all these leaders, and that one day they will bow before his throne.

Lift to God their lives as politicians and as people and ask him to help them lead wisely.
- 2 Sing or listen to:
'All the kings will bow' by David Gate (2002 Kingsway music)
'Everlasting God' (Yesterday, today, forever) by Vicky Beeching (2002 Kingsway music)
'Let everything that has breath' by Matt Redman (1997 Kingsway music)

Word

1. Read aloud Romans 13:1-6.
 2. This passage was written by Paul to the church in Rome when the notorious Nero was Emperor. We know Paul spent a lot of time in prison, yet here he talks about submitting to rulers. What do you think he means?
 3. How does the advice given by Paul in the preceding verses (12:14-21) help to shed light on the possible tensions that arise from this passage?
 4. Martin Luther King Jr lived in the United States at a time when people were discriminated against by the government because of the colour of their skin, something he believed was wrong in the eyes of God. He said: 'I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law.' How do you feel about this? How does this compare with Peter and John's behaviour in Acts 4:18-20?
 5. We know that our government has the capacity to impact millions of lives by taking a stand on issues of poverty. Can you think of ways of continuing to call our government to account, while remaining faithful to Paul's instruction to submit to our leaders?
 6. Read the two stories below. Both talk about how to be citizens. Compare them with the advice Paul gives in Romans.
 7. How have you felt challenged by today's stories and discussions?
- Angola. the focus of this year's Christian Aid Christmas appeal, is a country where there is an urgent need for poverty to become a thing of the



Tabita and her children Josue and Jaeli, whose lives have all been improved by the training Tabita has received through ICEA

past. After 40 years of almost continuous civil war, peace finally arrived in 2002. The country still bears many scars. Countless families fled fighting in the countryside, by moving to the very overcrowded cities. Some returned home, but many are waiting for landmines to be cleared and for the assurance of peace.

Tabita lives in Luanda, the capital city, where she became involved with the International Association for Community Education (ICEA), an organisation providing basic education for women. Her teacher, Urraca is a trained pastor who teaches women about their rights and duties, and those of other people. She says: 'People need to know that the government has responsibilities, like providing schools, hospital and security. If the government isn't fulfilling those responsibilities, we as citizens have a right to confront them and demand that they carry out their duties to the people.'

The Make Poverty History campaign says: 'The gap between the world's rich and poor has never been wider. ... It isn't chance or bad luck that keeps people trapped in bitter, unrelenting poverty. It's man-made factors like a glaringly unjust global trade system, a debt burden so great that it suffocates any chance of recovery, and insufficient and ineffective aid. Half the world's population now lives on less than US\$2 a day.'

The campaign has three targets: trade justice, more and better aid, and debt cancellation. Its aim is to challenge ministers around the world, in the G8 and Europe to use their power to make 2005 the year extreme poverty becomes history.

Further study

Think about other situations in the Bible where God has called people to confront their leaders and how they responded (the story of Daniel is a good example).

Our response

'It is not the kings and generals that make history, but the masses of the people.'

Nelson Mandela

There was some good progress on Make Poverty History's aims at the G8 summit at Gleneagles in July 2005. As we watch the news in the coming months we should keep an eye on whether the promises are being kept. We need to hold the world's most powerful leaders to account and keep pushing for further action.

Act

Find out about the Make Poverty History campaign at www.makepovertyhistory.org

Pray

To help you pray we can send you Christian Aid prayer diaries. If you, or someone you know would like to receive them, phone Christian Aid on 020 7523 2248.

The story from Angola is featured alongside others in our Christmas resources. Contact Christian Aid to find out more about the Angolan people and how they are working towards a lasting peace.

Give

Present Aid is Christian Aid's scheme to help you give a present with a difference. The gift catalogue contains items provided by Christian Aid's partner organisations to change lives in the world's poorest communities. Gifts are priced from a few pounds upwards. You can 'buy' a mosquito net for a child in Angola for just £11 (€16).

For each item you choose to buy for friends or relations, we'll send you an attractive card to give them, explaining how their present is making a difference. You will also be able to buy online at www.presentaid.org from this autumn.

You can contact Christian Aid to:

- regularly receive notification of further Act Justly updates like this one
- order a free sample copy of our new *Act Justly 2* booklet, a collection of six sessions for cells or small groups. You can also download them from www.surefish.co.uk/actjustly
- order packs of the booklet for use with your group (a pack of four costs £5/€8)
- support the work of Christian Aid
- ask to be taken off the Act Justly mailing list.

You can phone the Supporter Relations team on 020 7523 2248 or write to Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London, SE1 7RT. If you live in Ireland contact the Dublin office on 01 611 0801.



Christian Aid

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