

Act Justly update 7

Making something out of nothing

Every year during Christian Aid Week, people's pennies are turned into millions of pounds that can transform poor people's lives. This *Act Justly Update* looks at the biblical principle of how something seemingly insignificant can become something life-changing.

Introduction

Ask group members to think about their most valuable possession. How would they feel if they had to give it away? Then ask them to think of things that have little economic value, but have been used to achieve great things, for example, a visit to a person in need.

Worship

1 Ask three people to read out the following verses with short breaks between for quiet meditation:
Psalm 68:4-6; Psalm 37:25-26; Psalm 37:16-17; Psalm 68:3

2 Sing or listen to:

'Knowing You'

'All I Once Held Dear'
by Graham Kendrick
(Make Way Music)

'Love Mercy'

by Andy Bromley
(Kingsway Music)

'God of Justice'

by Tim Hughes

Word

Poor widows are a theme in both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus taught that they should be respected and cared for. The following stories of two poor widows can teach us some important principles.

'Out of her poverty, she put in everything' (Mark 12:44).

Read aloud 1 Kings 17:7-16 and Mark 12:41-44.

- What do the two women in these passages have in common?
- What do these passages teach us about giving?
- How can we follow the example of these women in today's world?
- Read Friewion's story (below). In what ways can you compare Friewion with the widows?
- What do these stories challenge us to do?
- How can our faith and love for God be put into practice in our daily lives?
- Think back to your most valuable possession. Could it be used to benefit others in any way?

Friewion Aregaw, 22, is a counsellor with Christian Aid's partner, the Organisation for Social Services for AIDS (OSSA), in Ethiopia.

When Friewion found out that an elderly lady living nearby was HIV-positive, she felt compelled to find out more about the virus. Friewion was shocked to find that the elderly lady had been abandoned by everyone who knew her. Friewion approached OSSA and it gave her the opportunity to train as a counsellor. She began to visit the lady and told her: 'I can't support you financially, but I can clean your



Christian Aid/Francis Webb

Friewion Aregaw is a voluntary counsellor with Christian Aid's partner OSSA in Ethiopia. Her story is featured in the Act of Worship for Christian Aid Week

house, I can cook for you and I can spend my time with you.'

Friewion is now fully trained to support people affected by HIV and AIDS. She counsels children whose parents have died from HIV-related illnesses and runs workshops to raise awareness in the local prison, as well as continuing to visit the elderly lady.

Although Friewion's own family struggles to get by, and despite her responsibilities as the oldest of ten brothers and sisters, Friewion says that their own problems simply deepen the compassion she feels for others.

She prays for the strength to fulfil her calling. 'God can do anything,' she says. 'As we receive his love, let us love one another and support each other. Let us pray for this.'

Further study

Read Matthew 25:14-30. This passage teaches that whether we have much or little, it should be used to grow God's work. How does this passage relate to the earlier ones? What 'talents' do you have? How could they be used and multiplied?

Our response

'What is that in your hand?' (Exodus 4:2). Whatever we have to offer God, he can use. You could offer God your prayers, actions and gifts in the following ways:

Pray

Prayer is something we can all offer. Our prayers may seem insignificant, but they can make a huge difference.

- Pray for Friewion and others like her who are caring daily for those living with HIV.

- Friewion's story is featured in the Christian Aid Week worship materials. Contact Christian Aid to order a pack and to find out more about Friewion, OSSA and other Christian Aid partners.
- Pray that God will challenge you about what you give to others.

Act

The spread of HIV is fuelled by poverty. To tackle HIV we need to combat the underlying causes of poverty, including unjust trade.

- Add actions to your prayers by ordering a Christian Aid Week 2006 prayer and action card. It includes Friewion's prayer and a postcard to send to the prime minister.
- Order the latest campaign materials from Christian Aid or explore trade issues at www.christianaid.org.uk/campaign
- Find out more about HIV/AIDS and organise an event in your church to raise awareness and combat the stigma attached to it.

Give

Every year in May, thousands of volunteers collect money for Christian Aid in the biggest house-to-house collection in the UK. Last year, they raised more than £15 million.

- Find out how to join in by calling 0845 33 00 500 or visit www.christianaid.org.uk/worship/church/getinvolved/collectors.htm
- Find out more about the *Act Justly* appeal which raises funds for HIV and AIDS projects at www.fish.co.uk/faith/actjustly/appeal.htm and organise a fund-raising event or collection in your church.
- Think about who in your community might need help and what you can offer them.



Catherine Abanogu, from Tooting, about to start the Christian Aid Week sponsored Circle the City event in London

Christian Aid

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