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Session created by Cathy James, Rick James & Steffie Kemp for Home Groups.
View the session and the rest of the series here.

home groups

Session 3 - Long-term Change

Key Text: 2 Kings 4:1-6

Prepare: lay out two pieces of string to be the river-banks and some A4 sheets of paper as stepping-stones across the 'river'. Also, print out the drama which can be found at the bottom of this page.

Feedback from Act of Love:

Go round in a circle and ask anyone willing to say a few sentences about what they did in response to last week's session.

What helps bring long-term change in people's lives, not just meet needs?

Activity: River Crossing

Mime:

1. Three people are heading to a wedding. They come to the river and look for a place to cross. The current is very strong and they are afraid to cross.
2. Person 4 comes along and sees their difficulty. Person 4 shows them some stepping stones but they are both too afraid, so person 4 agrees to carry person 1 on their back.
3. Person 4 successfully carries person 1 across and then comes back for person 2.
4. This time, by the time they get to the middle of the river, the weight is too heavy and they are

exhausted. Person 4 puts person 2 down on a stepping stone.
5. Person 4 goes back to get the other person on the bank. However, this person refuses as they can see their friend stuck in the middle of the river. Instead, they ask to be shown how to cross. Person 4 takes person 3 by the hand and encourages them to step on the stones.
6. Halfway across the river, person 3 starts to manage alone. They both cross the river. Person 2 is left in the middle.

Questions to discuss:

- What did you see happening in the drama?
- Who could this represent in real life?
- How will each person feel returning from the wedding? Who will be able to get back across?
- What can we learn from this about how we should work with vulnerable people?

Key point: long-term change comes from breaking people's mindset of dependency so that they can solve problems for themselves. Many organisations work by training communities to solve one specific problem or giving them the solution e.g. training in better farming methods or to dig a well - this is what person 1 represents. They can get across the river once but are stuck when something else happens. Worse, person 2 is like those who are left stranded when the organisation's money runs out or no sustainable change has been achieved. Person 3 represents an approach where people are equipped to solve problems together and have confidence to face new challenges in future.

Two images to further illustrate this concept:

1. **A fruit tree:** Mindset is key to EVERYTHING. Ideas have consequences and what we believe changes how we act. Imagine that the seeds of a tree are our beliefs and our behaviour is the fruit. If we plant apple seeds, an apple tree will grow. If we pick the apples and instead tie mangoes to the tree, it will still be an apple tree. The next year, it will grow apples again. In the same way, we cannot just focus on changing people's behaviour to solve a problem as behaviour-change without belief-change will never last.
2. **'Teach a man to fish':** you have probably heard the phrase 'give a man a fish, feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime.' Unfortunately, this does not actually work. In an ever-changing environment, you are left with questions like 'what if the river dries up?', 'what if the fish population is destroyed by over-fishing?', 'what if the man is no longer allowed to fish there?' or, even more simply, 'what if the man does not like fish?' The slightly less pithy (but more accurate and less gendered!) adaptation could say: 'give someone a fish, feed them for a day; teach someone to fish, feed them for a while; equip someone with the skills to identify their own resources and creatively solve their own problems, enable them to feed themselves for a lifetime.'

Why of these images do you find more helpful? Why?

Bible study: The Widow and the Oil (2 Kings 4:1-6)

Activity: pray for God's Spirit to bring this passage to life and enable us to engage emotionally as we are reading it. Ask someone to read the passage. Then ask two volunteers to perform the radio drama based on the passage.

Questions to discuss:

- What problems and resources did the widow have at the beginning of the story? Remember, resources are not just physical.
- What changes had taken place in her and her sons' lives by the end of the story?
- Why do you think God chose to perform the miracle in this way?
- What can we learn from this story about how God works?

Key points:

- God brings long-term change in the widow and her sons' lives – Elisha did not just help her solve the immediate problem of slavery but enabled the family to have a sustainable income.
- God calls the widow first to recognise and use all her own resources rather than waiting passively for a miracle.
- God has created us to work together in community.
- As an outsider (like Elisha), we should take time to listen, find out people's needs, and help them to solve their problems for themselves with God's power.

Principles in Practice: Malawi

Case study: The pastor of Nanjiri, central Malawi, after Eagles' training, determined to fight poverty in his community in a way which brought about self-reliance rather than creating dependency. So he trained people from his congregation (who wanted to start businesses) in budgeting and management. This group started a business together to earn enough capital to enable each of them then to set up on their own. Learning from a man in a neighbouring village, the group began baking buns twice a week in a massive brick oven they constructed. Each time, they make 210, sell them in the market and save all the money. Within a couple of months, they had enough for every member of the group to take a loan to set up their own business.

Every week, the business group give money to support the poorest in the church: the elderly, widows and orphans who cannot care for themselves. Although they all have their own business, they continue baking together purely to provide for these vulnerable groups. Grateful for the way that the business has transformed their lives, the group is eager to serve the community. *(www.eaglesmalawi.org).*

Principles in Practice: UK

Paloma, Management Consultant: "We place a huge emphasis on 'problem-centric' approaches

whenever we're faced with a project. There can be a real temptation for all of us to jump to 'solutionising' without really delving into the root cause. Only by starting with a robust human-centred understanding of the problem can we ensure our solution is fit for purpose and actually addresses what's not working."

Peter, Founder of Genesis Trust, an organisation working with the homeless community: "Our aim at the Genesis Trust is to help people to move forwards in their lives. Many of our clients have major issues. Our job is to give them hope for a better future. We are alongside them as they make many small steps. We don't tell them what to do. They have to decide themselves, and then we help them."

Reflect

Think about how and where we give our money to help others. To what extent do these initiatives live out this principle of ensuring long-term change? Pray together, thanking God for his love and his care for the most vulnerable, both physically and spiritually. Ask him for wisdom to show where we might need to change our giving, so we love God with all our heart, soul and *mind*.

Act of love

Identify a local organisation that supports vulnerable people to create long-term change in their lives, for example debt counselling, helping the homeless community to find jobs etc. Take action this week to support them in some way yourself (in general, it is much better to help organisations in an ongoing way if you can). Be ready to share a few sentences about their work next session.

Gods-Heart-for-Justice-session-3Download

Cathy James

Cathy James is a social development consultant and practitioner with over twenty-five years' experience in international development. She combines a strong academic background with twelve years living and working in Africa and Latin America. Her extensive consultancy work provides support for UK and international organisations and their southern partners across the world. It includes working with faith groups and organisations, helping them work in effective, empowering ways that bring about long-term and holistic change. She brings expertise in church and community processes, participatory development, theory of change, monitoring and evaluation and assessing. She has also co-founded two Malawian NGOs and two UK supporting charities.

More by Cathy James

Rick James

Dr Rick James is an organisational change specialist in international development. He has spent 30 years working in Africa, Latin America and Europe, consulting for more than 100 aid agencies and churches. His focus is on leadership development, strategy and culture change. As well as consulting, coaching and training, Rick is a Senior Teaching Fellow at CASS Business School, London University, as Course Director for the Masters in NGO Management pathway. Rick has published extensively including books on: ‘Consulting for Change’, ‘Creating Space for Grace’; ‘Inspiring Change’; and ‘Capacity building for NGOs: Making it work’.

More by Rick James

Steffie Kemp

Steffie Kemp has lived in Malawi for twelve years and currently works for Eagles Relief and Development Programme (www.eaglesmalawi.org) in church and community mobilisation as the Advocacy and Learning Coordinator. Eagles mobilises and empowers local churches and communities to work together, take responsibility for their own development and achieve holistic change. Her focus is on the role of faith and mindset change in community-owned development and the connection to long-term change. Her consultancy work includes UNICEF, Mothers’ Union, Comic Relief and the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI). She is pursuing an MSc in Human Rights Law from Oxford University.

More by Steffie Kemp

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