PDF created on 13th May 2022 for rickandcathyjames@gmail.com

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 6 - Learning what works

Key Texts: Proverbs 12:15; Matthew 22:37

Prepare: paper and pens

Feedback from Act of Love:

Ask if anyone is willing to feedback from their Act of Love around getting involved in a campaign to seek systemic change, getting everyone to play their part.

Activity: Asking Questions

Steps:

1. Form two groups of equal numbers.
2. One group comes up with a series of questions, one per person, about anything and makes a note of them. The other group comes up with a series of answers, without knowing the questions.
3. Take it in turns to read out a question, and then the other group responds with an answer, which obviously will not correspond.

Questions to discuss:

- What did you observe?

- Can you think of any examples in real life when we or others give people answers without listening to the questions, or ask questions without listening to the answers?
- What do we learn from this about bringing lasting change in communities?

Bible study: Loving by learning (Proverbs 12:15; Matthew 22:37)

Pray that God will fill our hearts with his Spirit as we are reading the two verses and really speaks through our Bible reflection.

Questions to discuss:

- What does this verse (and others) in Proverbs show us?
- How do we involve our minds as well as our hearts and souls in loving God and our neighbour?
- How is this relevant to us when we want to help bring God's justice to those who are in need?

Key point: The Bible is clear that we must love God and love our neighbour, with our hearts but also with our minds, using wisdom and taking advice from others.

Further reflection: where to go to learn from others

You cannot assume that, because an organisation is doing something, it is effective. Many earnestly want to help, but have not learned from others what really works. If you are interested in a topic, googling the area and 'best practice' usually brings up accurate information. Check that the websites you are looking on are reliable – here are some examples:

- UN sources - http://www.hdr.undp.org/
- DFID (the UK government) - https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development/about/research
- Overseas Development Institute (a think-tank) - odi.org
- Tearfund – https://learn.tearfund.org/en/
- Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities - https://jliflc.com/

Principles in Practice: Malawi

Case study: Children in Kanyazuka (Northern Malawi) struggled to stay in school. With parents who were busy farming and no early education, they quickly fell behind and dropped out.

Learning from other nearby communities, Kanyazuka set up 7 community-based childcare centres. They contacted the government to train their volunteer teachers in early childhood development. They raised the resources for the trainers' food and accommodation, feeling it a privilege to invest in their development.

Every community member chooses to contribute food to ensure a daily nutritious meal for each

child. They especially welcome children who are often left out of school due to living with disabilities. The potential of this early care and attention could be transformational for these children that usually have no chance of education. Not yet satisfied, the communities determined that the volunteers needed early childhood development training. *(www.eaglesmalawi.org).*

Principles in Practice: UK

Naomi, Doctor: “As a GP, I ‘learn what works’ by reflecting on my own/my colleagues' and our patients' experience, and listening to experts, e.g. the outcomes of research trials – including on how to influence behaviour. It’s a lifelong process!! Sometimes it’s harder for us to be willing to be influenced by research where the evidence-base challenges our personal experience and understanding.”

Act of Love:

Pray for each other, that God will embed in us a real understanding that finding out best practice in how to help other effectively is a tangible way to show our love for him.

Continuing with the same organisations you earlier identified, choose one area of its work in to research best practice. This could be looking online or by asking experts that you know about what evidence and experience teach about how to be most effective.

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

Home Groups is a project of SPCK.

Supported by Allchurches Trust and The Jerusalem Trust.

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