

Session 6

Living to please God

‘Hate what is evil; cling to what is good... Share with God’s people who are in need.’ (Romans 12:9,13)

Christians are rightly determined to give the God of all the world the worship he deserves in our churches on Sundays. But how are we to live from Monday to Saturday so that we worship God with our whole lives?



6.1 Introduction

During Christian Aid Week each May, more than 300,000 people respond to Jesus' challenge to be good news by collecting money for the world's poorest communities. It is believed to be the biggest act of Christian witness anywhere in the world. But every single day a much, much larger group of Christians is putting into practice God's call to act justly. Every action or prayer, large or small, that is made with the needs of the poorest people in the world in mind is proof of the Christian belief that every one of the world's human beings is created in the image of the loving God.

'It's impossible for any one person to change the world, but when we can join together with organisations such as Christian Aid, our individual acts of kindness can change the atmosphere of a nation. I encourage you all to contribute to something that can display God's grace on a big scale.'

Martin Smith, Delirious?

Right: Sam Kisolo, director of Youth with a Mission (YWAM), Uganda, a Christian Aid partner running clinics and programmes to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS

Left: The Harrison family (from left to right, Helen, Rozzie, and Tim with Natalie behind) from Thornbury Baptist Church, Bristol travelled to Brighton to vote for trade justice at the Trade Justice Movement's lobby of the Labour Party Conference in September 2004

There are some things that a lot of us do nowadays because of our concern for the future well-being of the planet and its people that 20 or 30 years ago only a tiny handful of people would have done. (Examples might be re-using bottles or buying organic vegetables.) As a group, write on a large sheet of paper a list of as many things as possible that at least one of the group does in order to care for the needs of people and places beyond their own immediate circle of friends and family. Why have these things become increasingly important to Christians? (As a post-script, ask whether anyone in the group whose memory stretches back that far would like to challenge the assertion that these things rarely happened 20 or 30 years ago!)



Christian Aid/Roger Allen

6.2 Worship

I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O Lord, I will sing praise. I will be careful to lead a blameless life – when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with a blameless heart. I will have nothing to do with evil.
Psalm 101:1,2,4

Choose from the following, depending on the time available:

- *In the middle of the group put a simple cross (if you don't have one readily available simply cut the shape from a sheet of paper). Read the words of the psalm and ask people to reflect on how they want the love and justice of God to be made real in their own homes. Suggest that they take their keys (or any other object they have with them that reminds them of walking into their homes) and place them near the cross. Then praise God and invite him to be present in all the homes represented here.
- Sing some songs of personal commitment. Numbers 8, 10 and 13 from the list on page 30 may be particularly appropriate. Follow this by inviting people to say words in praise of God that focus on his just and loving perfection.

'All of life is holy to God – the spiritual and the physical. God loves all people and the whole person. When we suffer, God suffers. To Christian Aid supporters in the UK, I say: "your investment has changed lives. God is using us to pass on life to people. Your giving and participation with us helps us to incarnate Jesus in these difficult situations we are in. Invest in life for life!"'

Sam Kisolo, director Youth with a Mission (YWAM), Uganda (left)

6.3

Word

1

Read Romans 12:1-21 aloud. Give everyone two minutes to look at the passage in silence, and invite each one in turn to choose one phrase that seems significant to their personal lives (they don't have to give the reason), and one that seems significant to the needs of the entire world.

2

Read verse 2 again. In the light of what you have discussed during the series, what would it mean in practice to 'not conform any longer to the pattern of this world'? List specific suggestions. How can minds be renewed to achieve such a transformation?

3

Looking at verses 4 to 8 ask each group member to name a God-given gift. How can this be used to serve members of Christ's body that you have heard about in this course?

4

In verses 9 to 12, Paul suggests many ways that living lives that are 'holy and pleasing to God' will be shown. How would our behaviour differ if we applied these to the way we treat our entire world, rather than just the people we know and see regularly?

5

Throughout the course, your group has been dealing with some serious and extremely sad subjects. Has anything you have considered led you to believe it is possible to 'overcome evil with good' (verse 21)? What do you plan to do to put Paul's final instruction into practice?

If you have more time...

Read Proverbs 11:24-28, 20:10-14, 30:7-9 and 31:8-9. Where in today's world will you find the equivalents of 'hoarding grain' (11:26), 'differing weights and measures' (20:10), the buyer who boasts about forcing someone to give him a bargain (20:14), 'neither poverty nor riches' (30:8), 'speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves' (31:8)? In each case, what do we learn about God's attitude to these things?



The children of Cambodia, where the photograph was taken, share the need to drink clean water with boys and girls all over the world. And they deserve to thrive and play safely and happily. However, there is a hidden danger underfoot for Cambodian children. A long and brutal war has left behind as many as eight million landmines which can kill or maim a child in an instant. In Cambodia, Christian Aid supports Church World Service, which funds mine-clearing and trains people who have lost limbs to help them earn a better living

6.4

Our response

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

1*

As a group, organise a fundraising event to support the *Act Justly* appeal. There are ideas in the appeal pack (see the order form in the centre of this booklet), or you could order a copy of the booklet *Fundraise in Fun Ways* (F916) from Christian Aid on 020 7523 2225. Plan what needs to be done to make the event as effective as possible in your church, and among your family and friends. Set yourselves a target for the amount of money you might raise. Pray for God's blessing on what you are doing in his service. And then get excited about the possibilities!

2

Use surefish.co.uk for your internet access and you'll be joining the fight against global poverty. This Christian Aid-owned ISP is the most ethical service provider on the market and all profits go to the charity. Look at the Surefish Promise on the surefish.co.uk website for the full ethical policy. You'll find sections on faith, ethical living, campaigning, a protected site for kids and lively discussion boards. Call 020 7523 2225 or visit www.surefish.co.uk



3*

On a file card, write down the most significant things that you feel God has challenged you with as you have followed the *Act Justly* course. Put the card in your Bible to remind you of them from time to time, and to check whether you are living up to God's call.

4

Make sure that you keep up to date with the *Act Justly* appeal and resources by joining the *Act Justly* mailing list, using the order form in the centre of this booklet.

5

Go back to the list you made as an introduction to this session. Picking out actions from the list that seem particularly important, pray that more and more people will undertake them, and that it will become easier to do so.

Conclude by blessing each other's homes – looking at the keys in the centre of the room and saying the words of 'the grace' (2 Corinthians 13:14), before trying to remember whose keys are whose!

'We set up a social justice group in our church, so that everybody with a heart for justice issues could encourage and support each other. We also want to motivate as many people as possible in the church to 'act justly'. We start by encouraging everyone to take small actions, such as sending postcards, before getting involved in bigger actions, such as doing the *Act Justly* course in their small groups, helping during Fairtrade Fortnight or coming to Trade Justice Campaign events.'

Pauline Berndes, Bristol Christian Fellowship, Pioneer

'For the last four years I have collected door to door for Christian Aid, the last two years in my own road. Some people are daunted by knocking on the door collecting, but I have found it an enjoyable way to spend a couple of evenings whilst having the opportunity to help make a difference to other people's lives. The challenge has been to get finished because it is remarkable how many people want to stop and chat!'

Derek Simmonds, Brickhill Baptist Church, Bedford, Newfrontiers

'It was wonderful to be able to get involved in a small way with Christian Aid by stewarding for Tyneside's Bridge the Gap sponsored walk – and to see what a difference we made on the day itself. We had a great time! The sun was shining and it was a real privilege to greet so many strangers on the streets of Newcastle – all of whom had smiles on their faces! We even had the chance to talk to a few early revellers on the Quayside about why we were there and what Christian Aid is all about.'

Kate Graham, Hexham Community Church, Salt and Light



Christian Aid/Jon Challicorn

Volunteers from Hexham Community Church help Christian Aid supporters on Newcastle's Quayside taking part in Tyneside's Bridge the Gap sponsored walk