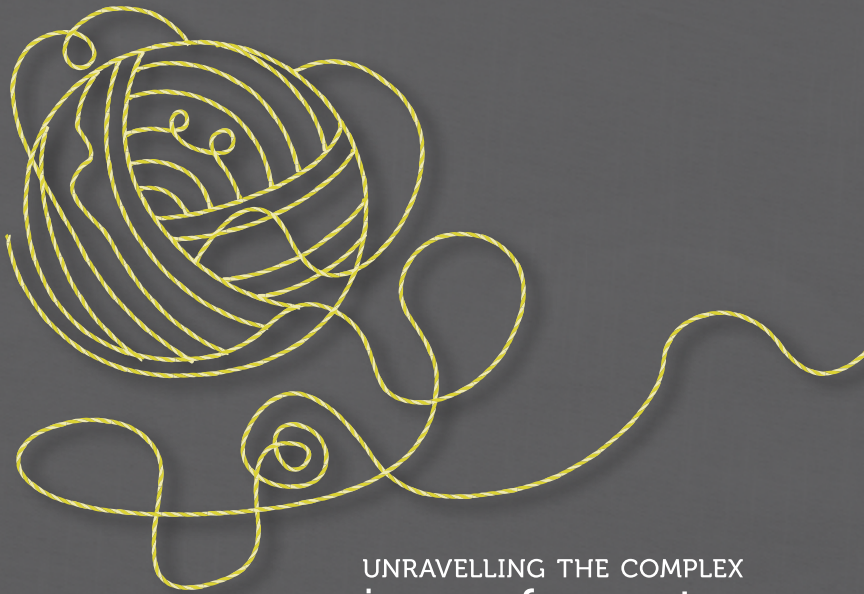


Reality Bites



UNRAVELLING THE COMPLEX
issue of poverty



Anglicare

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Why Reality Bites

Australia is sometimes known as the lucky country, and in many ways we are. Over recent years our nation has experienced a long period of sustained economic growth – but not everyone enjoys the fruits of this prosperity. The Australian Council of Social Services and Social Policy Research Centre have reported that close to three million Australians are living below the poverty line. Poverty and social isolation are big issues in our country but often don't get the attention they deserve.

Inspired by Anglicare's gospel-focused vision to care in Jesus' name, Reality Bites provides the opportunity to explore a little of what the Bible has to say about reaching out to our neighbours in need. The emphasis throughout this series is on how our Christian faith inspires us to live a life of care and generosity in response to God's great love for us. Each week consists of a Bible study, video, prayer and discussion. Make sure you check out the Food Budget Challenge. If you want to take up the challenge you will need to do some work before the first study.

Each short video is designed to not only inform you of how Anglicare is seeking to engage with poverty in our Diocese but also inspire you to think how you, your group or your church can make a practical difference to those in your street, the next suburb or another part of our city who are experiencing great need.

We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19

What to expect

Week	Bible Study	Video	Food Budget Challenge
Preparation			<p>In own time Prior to the study series commencing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep a food diary for a typical week • calculate your normal weekly food budget
Week 1	God's love and example	Going it Alone	<p>Within group time Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insights gained from individual preparation (above) • attitudes towards people who live on benefits <p>In your own time Work out your budget allowance. Think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to cope with living on your Food Budget Challenge amount for the week • any changes you may need to make to regular spending, eating and socialising habits
Week 2	Responding to God's love for us	SHIFT	<p>Within group time Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insights gained from individual preparation (above) • expectations of what living with limited means will be like <p>In your own time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • live on the benefit for seven days • donate the difference to Anglicare
Week 3	Loving your community	Mobile Community Pantry	<p>Within group time Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experiences from the Reality Bites week – expected/unexpected, attitude change etc • talk about ways to respond to need in the local community <p>Beyond the Reality Bites period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunities for further action

Week 1

Bible Study - God's love & example

A Christian ethic of care and concern must start with the character of God himself. We worship a God who is not distant or removed from his creation, but who is personally involved in caring for what he has made and expressing his holy character through action. This was an integral part of the experience of ancient Israel and has now been extended to the whole world through the incarnation of Christ. By recognising how God has acted towards us we see the principles by which we ought to act towards each other.

Read Deuteronomy 10:12-22. God has rescued the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt and, after 40 years of wandering, has brought them to the edge of the Promised Land which they are to inherit. Moses is now giving a long sermon on the Law which God had given them and how they are to apply it in this Land.

1. What is it that God requires of Israel if they are to live as his people? What does it mean in practice to walk in his ways, and how can they know what these 'ways' are?
2. How did Israel come to be above the other nations? What does Moses say is the appropriate response to their identity?
3. What does this passage tell us about the character of God? What sort of things does God do/not do? How is his care and compassion for the vulnerable expressed? What are the implications for us?

4. How do you think the God of Israel's character would have been different from the other gods of the ancient world? How is this character different from the sorts of 'gods' that people worship today?
5. How should this passage shape the communal life of Israel in the Promised Land?

Read Philippians 2:1-18. The Apostle Paul has been thrown in prison by the Romans for preaching the message of Jesus. Instead of seeing this as a sign of defeat, Paul writes to encourage the Philippian church that his imprisonment has in fact provided many opportunities for the gospel to be spread and that they should continue to bear witness to Jesus even in the face of hardship.

6. What sort of behaviour from the Philippians will make Paul's joy complete? What should be their priorities?
7. What are the two ways in which Jesus shows the pattern of humility? What does each one show us about the sort of humility that we ought to embrace?
8. How does Paul expect that the Philippians will 'shine like stars'? What sort of contrast does he expect that they will make with the world?
9. How do you think that Jesus' movement from humility to exaltation ought to shape a Christian approach to practical care for others? What will motivate us to keep going when we are called on to make sacrifices for the benefit of others?

Insights from the Food Budget Challenge

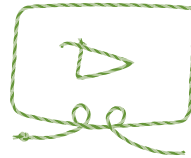
Share within your group:



- any reflections on the experience of keeping a food diary
- what calculating your normal weekly food budget revealed to you.

Video 'Going It Alone'

<https://youtu.be/7zjZ6WIDgQw>



Prayer focus – Christian care

As a Christ-centred organisation, Anglicare recognises that Jesus is both the source and the object of all that we do, enabling us to love and serve our clients as image-bearers of the living God. Motivated and equipped for all that we do through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, we look for opportunities to share this good news wherever and however possible.

Pray:

- That Anglicare will continue to deliver Christ-centred, professional and effective Christian care programs that meet need, bring the gospel and harness the passion and gifts of Christians in local churches.
- That Anglicare will continue to identify unmet needs in the community and develop solutions to meet those needs.
- That Anglicare will serve all clients in a way that reflects prayerful dependence on Jesus.

Food Budget Challenge

During the coming week:

- calculate the food and drink allowance for a person or family in your situation (refer to the table on page 25)
- think about how you will cope with living on that amount for a week
- consider changes you think will need to be made to your regular spending, eating and socialising habits.

"A Father to the fatherless, a defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling." Psalm 68:5



Week 2

Bible Study - Responding to God's love for us

Last week we considered the heart of love that God has for humanity. We were left with a sense of the broadness and depth of the love of God as expressed in the sending of his Son, Jesus. This week we will consider how that love of God, expressed in Jesus, transforms our lives into lives of love.

Imagine a setting in which you have felt loved. It might be receiving a thoughtful gift or, as a child, being picked up by a parent after falling and hurting yourself. It doesn't matter what action – if it is inspired by love it will cause some sort of reaction in you. It would be a strange situation in which no thanks or reciprocal love was expressed. Jesus, however, experienced this very thing.

Read Luke 17:11-19.

Jesus heals ten lepers and only one of them returns to thank him.

1. Jesus seems perplexed that nine former lepers had not come back. What was Jesus expecting as normal behaviour? Why would this have been a fair expectation?
2. Has there ever been a time when thanks was not expressed to you? How did that leave you feeling?
3. Do you think the one man's response – throwing himself at Jesus' feet – was too extreme? What level of impact would this healing have had on this man's everyday life? Why do you think Luke makes a point of telling us that this man was a Samaritan?

4. What did Jesus mean in verse 19 when he said, “your faith has made you well”? Is this any different to the healing experienced by all ten men?

It seems from Jesus’ questions to the returning leper that experiencing God’s love requires a response, a transformation causing a person to live differently. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, picks up on this idea of God’s love transforming us into people who respond and, as part of this response, love others.

Read Romans 12:9-21. In the letter so far, Paul has unpacked the gospel in detail in regard to the sinfulness of humanity and the sovereignty of the love of God, who saves us by his grace. He opens Chapter 12 with the great ‘Therefore’ implying a new way of living and then in this passage catalogues ways in which we should respond.

5. Which aspects of Paul’s list stand out to you the most? Why do they stand out?
6. How does Paul say we should act towards our fellow believers? How does he say we should act towards everyone else?
7. What do you think Paul means in verse 12? How does the following verse relate to this?

8. In verse 21 Paul is quoting Proverbs 25:11-12. Some have said that “heaping burning coals on his head” relates to punishment. Other commentators have said it relates to a burning sense of shame, remorse or change of heart that takes place as a result of a deed of love. Look again at the context of the passage, what do you think the Apostle Paul is saying in verse 21?
9. Can you think of any examples you think do the things in this passage well? What are some specific ways you could improve at loving those around you according to Paul’s teaching in this passage?

Insights from the Food Budget Challenge

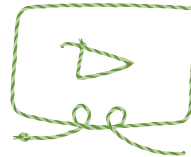
Share within your group:



- Your thoughts about living on the allowance you’ve calculated for the coming week. How do you think you will cope?
- Perhaps you or someone you know has received financial assistance from the government or a charity. Discuss what feelings might be associated with needing to receive help.
- What changes will you need to make to your eating, spending and socialising habits?

Video ‘Shift’

<https://youtu.be/HRHm2kqELbw>



Prayer focus – People in poverty

Anglicare's response to people experiencing poverty and social exclusion includes addressing immediate need and building hope for the future. Thousands of families living on the margins face constant stress as they try to balance the costs of food, accommodation, utilities and medical bills.

Pray:

- That those experiencing financial distress will find the support they need to overcome immediate difficulties and develop strengths and skills for the future.
- That, in partnership with local churches and communities, Anglicare will work effectively to alleviate social isolation and disconnection.
- For strength and wisdom for staff and volunteers as they deal with stressful situations every day.

Food Budget Challenge

During the coming week:

- live on the allowance you have calculated
- donate the difference to Anglicare.

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16



Week 3

Bible Study - Loving your community

Over the past two weeks we have looked at the character and example of God as the one who is love and models love for us. Our response is to be one of gratitude and seeking to reflect God's love in our lives to the world.

1. What sort of society do we live in? What aspects of that society can Christians affirm? What are some of the difficulties and challenges we face?
2. Why should we care for a world that has rejected God?

Read Jeremiah 29:1-11. When God's people were overcome by the Babylonians they were sent as captives to live in Babylon. This is often referred to as 'the Exile'. God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah against the false prophets of his day. He brought a message of God's judgment. God's people would go into exile but Jeremiah also spoke of a future hope when God would restore his people.

3. What is God's promise to his people?
4. How does God instruct his people to live while exiles in Babylon? Why are they to do it?

Read 1 Peter 2:9-17. Peter picks this theme for Christians of living in a society that we are radically different from and yet still needing to engage with it.

5. How does Peter describe the Christians he is writing to?
6. If this is their identity how are they to live in their society?
7. Think about your local community. What are some of the needs around you? How might you, individually, as a group or as a church be able to help meet those needs and similar needs in our neighbourhood and across our city?
8. How has Reality Bites challenged you in thinking about the needs of people in Australia who are struggling?

Insights from the Food Budget Challenge

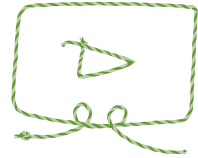
Share within your group:



- your experience of living on the Challenge amount during the last week
- was it as you expected - if not, what surprises were there?
- have any of your attitudes or thoughts changed?

Video 'Mobile Community Pantry'

<https://youtu.be/5eJCIEExTnc>



Prayer focus – Partnerships with parishes

An essential outworking of Anglicare's vision is to develop mutually-beneficial partnerships with local churches. While partnerships look and operate differently, each is fuelled by a desire to reach out effectively with Christ's love in word and deed and to connect those being served by Anglicare with a local church.

Pray:

- That Anglicare's partnerships with churches will enhance the scope and reach of Christian care.
- For Christians in local churches to be increasingly empowered and equipped as passionate agents of change in their communities.
- That the delivery of services in partnership with parishes will make a real and eternal difference to the lives of people in need.

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially those who belong to the family of believers." Galatians 6:9-10

Notes

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Lisa's story

Lisa is married with two children, a daughter aged 14 and a son aged 13. Her husband injured his back and neck so badly that he had to leave his job.

Lisa had to give up her part-time job and her volunteer work to become his carer meaning the only income they had was through Newstart payments.

Suddenly, their lives had completely changed. With a greatly reduced income, Lisa and her family were struggling to pay all their expenses – rent, bills and the extra costs associated with her husband's health problems. Some weeks they just didn't have enough money left for food.

As a mum, Lisa felt awful that she couldn't provide food for her children but there wasn't much she could do as she had to support her husband and look after him properly. That's when she turned to a local Anglicare Food and Financial Assistance program for help. Through this program

the family has received ongoing assistance with food and payment of essential bills such as electricity and water.

While this relief has helped alleviate the immediate crisis, Anglicare's approach to integrated service delivery has helped Lisa's family in many more ways. Anita, their Anglicare Case Manager, referred them to the Anglicare Family Support service so a range of issues contributing to their difficulties could be addressed. This included assistance in paying specialist fees for her husband's treatment, which they otherwise could not have afforded, and helping Lisa to apply for the Carer's payment – a long and complicated process.

Not surprisingly, Lisa was suffering from anxiety and depression as she was very concerned for her husband's health and worried about the family's financial situation. She was referred to an Anglicare Counselling program for help in dealing with everything that was happening in her life.

The house they were renting was in very bad condition. No repairs had been done for years and although it leaked in a number of places during rain the owner refused to address the problems. Lisa knew the family would have to move but was worried that they wouldn't be able to afford a removalist – or to pay the bond for a new place.

Anglicare advocated to the Department of Housing on behalf of the family and also provided help with the bond and the removalist costs when housing was made available for them.

A few weeks after they moved to the new place their fridge died – and as they couldn't afford to fix or replace it this meant they were spending extra money on food and were limited in what they could buy. Anglicare was able to assist with a fridge to alleviate this problem.

Lisa was eventually approved for Carer's payment which meant there was a bit more money coming in.

Now, when Lisa's husband is well enough to be left alone for a short time she comes along to the Anglicare Mobile Community Pantry Fresh Food van hosted in partnership with a local Anglican church where she can buy a bag of fresh fruit and vegetables for just \$2. This is a great help with the weekly food budget – especially with two growing teenagers to feed.

Her husband is now on the waiting list for surgery.

Lisa has told us how much she and her family have appreciated all the help Anglicare has provided at the time they have needed it the most.



Further Reading



Good News To The Poor – sharing the gospel through social involvement

by Tim Chester IVP 2004

Generous Justice – How God’s grace makes us just

by Tim Keller Hodder & Stoughton 2012

When Helping Hurts – How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor or yourself by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert Moody 2012

Neither Poverty Nor Riches – A biblical theology of possessions

by Craig Blomberg NSBT IVP 1999

Other Anglicare videos

Edison’s Story – Winter Appeal Dinner 2018

<https://youtu.be/7zjZ6WIDgQw>

Aged Care Partnerships – helping those 55 and older who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

https://youtu.be/avjmvWV_poA

Invisible to the World? Not to us.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5n_osAixc_Y

Take Love Collection

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PeIlywmOm4>

Nobody is Nobody

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRMCQBr6LYU>

Practical application – Food Budget Challenge

By living for one week on a limited allowance for food and drink, participants can share in a small but powerful way the restrictions experienced by many people living in poverty.

This may be something you have experienced before – or are experiencing now – or it may be something very new to you.

You can participate as an individual or family unit. In either case you will need to:

- keep a diary that records your usual spending for food and drink during a typical week
- calculate what an individual or family in an equivalent situation would have available to spend on food and drink each week
- live for seven days on the amount you have calculated
- during the final week, be prepared to share your experience and talk about ways to respond to need in the local community.

Through this experience we hope to highlight the daily challenges faced by many of our neighbours and to encourage further thinking towards building a caring and generous community.

Participants are also encouraged to 'donate the difference' – the amount saved on food and drink spending during that week – to support Anglicare's work with people in need.

Allowance calculator

Participant category	Allowance*
Individual (Adult 17 years+)	\$67.50
Couple with no children	\$110.36
Single parent with 1 or 2 children	\$74.28
Single parent with 3 or more children	\$76.32
Couple with 1 or 2 children	\$113.45
Couple with 3 or more children	\$115.50
For each additional adult in the household add	\$42.82

** This allowance has been calculated based on the Newstart allowance and what would reasonably be left over for food and drink after other expenses such as rent, transport and power have been paid for.*

Surviving a week on the benefit

- tap water and dietary needs as medically required are exempt from the above calculations
- during the Reality Bites week participants should not harvest from their own garden or use food or drink stored in the pantry
- be prepared to research low-cost meal options and give up brand loyalty!

Perhaps you have personal experience of living on a benefit?

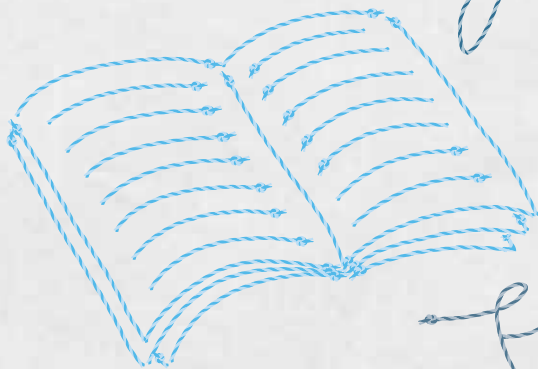
It could be that you have personal experience – either now or at some time in the past – of living on a benefit such as Newstart. Your insights would be of great value to the group. If you're comfortable about sharing your story during the program talk to your group leader about how you might do this.



Online
now!



Reality
Bites
Youth



Online
now!



Reality
Bites
Kids

