

Understanding Poverty

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Poverty is a lot more complex than it looks.

Jesus said: “The harvest is great...but the laborers are few!”

-I maintain that the harvest is great...but our methods of harvesting are out-dated!

I maintain that...“If missions were a business – we’d be bankrupt!

-because we are ignoring the most promising customers (Children)!

There are many theories about the causes of poverty:

1. Poverty as Deficits: The poor lack things (food,shelter,land,water,knowledge,skills,credit,voice)
2. Poverty as a lack of options: (denied opportunities)
3. Poverty as a lack of wholeness: (a thief of hope)

Poverty is a large set of complex issues...and Jesus spoke to every one of them.

The **Great Commission** commands us to obey everything Jesus commended us(Matt 19-20)

Poverty was a big issue for Jesus:

There are more than 2000 verses in Bible on poverty --- only one condemnation (Matt 25)

- Jesus’ first public speaking was from Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,' he says, 'because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.” (Luke 4:18)
 - He has a special place for the poor. In fact, the poor are where God lives.

Half of the world – just under 3 billion people -- live on less than two dollars a day.

-1/6 of the world’s population lives in slums. Those are heart-breaking statistics.

Proverbs 28:27 (NIV) says, “Be generous to the poor—you'll never go hungry; shut your eyes to their needs, and run a gauntlet of curses”.

The concept of *worldview* helps us understand the spiritual roots of poverty:

- A worldview is like a pair of glasses for the mind.
- They color everything we see.

Three Prominent competing worldviews:

1. **An animist worldview**
2. **A Secular worldview**
3. **The biblical worldview**

Understanding Poverty

Before we talk about ending poverty, it's important that we understand the strategic influence of poverty and how Satan uses it to fight against God.

- Poverty is one of the greatest tools of the enemy and one of the least understood tactics of hell.

Satan at Creation:

Satan was watching at creation as God spoke into being the various components of His new world.

God made the earth and the trees and the plants and animals and pronounced them as “**good**”. But when God created mankind there was something special happening for He created them in “**His own image**”. And like a proud dad, He stood back and admired his best creative work – His very own likeness.

It didn't take Satan long before he came to a brilliant conclusion. **He found God's weak spot.** God loved his human creation. From there the plot thickens and Satan's evil mind concocts a devious plan as he concludes “**the way to hurt God is to hurt His favorite creation**” and the enemy of God knew that the earlier he could do this, the better. So he sets out to attack the weakest member of creation – children. He starts in the womb with abortion. He attacks the survivors through child abuse and neglect and he quickly learns that his most effective tool is poverty.

Poverty's Cruel Message:

Poverty steals the very inner worth of humans. It flies in the face of the very message God communicates to His creation.

- **God says “you are loved”.** Poverty says “you are not even worth loving”.
- **God says you are more valuable than all other created things**. Poverty says “you are worthless...of less value than a dog”.
- **God says “with Me you can do anything”.** Poverty says “you'll never amount to anything...you are doomed to failure and destitution”.
- **God says “I am love and I give my Son to prove it.”** Poverty says “God has abandoned you and He only loves the rich.”

If we are going to address poverty with impact we must take aim at this condition called ***fatalism!***

When a poor child says, “***I matter,***” he has just taken the first step out of poverty!

Satan's Tool:

Poverty is one of Satan's favorite tools and when employed against children it is most effective. Children are like **wet cement**. It's easy to make an impression. The older they get the more difficult it becomes. That's why communism adopted the motto "give us a child until he is 5 years old and we will have him for life."

Children at Risk

Children at risk are children who are outside the normative framework of society.

-Children who need some sort of external assistance to achieve what, within their culture, is thought to be normal life; spiritually, emotionally & physically.

I submit to you that every child born is a child at risk!

-The greatest risk any human being faces is to be without God for eternity.

-Every child is at risk from the time of birth (Matt 16:26)

Child sacrifice happens everyday ... its called "Neglect"

It happens globally and it happens inside the church

-85% of all adult Christians came to faith as a child

-Yet less than 15% of the church's mission program is directed to ministry to children

-We sacrifice children to cater to the adults' "needs" (tradition, worship, control)

On The Offensive:

With this understanding of the sinister and strategic influence of poverty comes the power of the most dominant force on earth – **love**.

- God's love demonstrated through real people and coupled with the potent force of prayer. Sponsorship through Compassion is not simply writing a cheque or filling an empty belly. Compassion uses the sponsorship model to wage war on poverty and defeat the enemy. To release children from their poverty "in Jesus name".
- A Compassion sponsor is more than a donor... a missionary to that one individual child.

As we consider the concept of breaking the cycle of poverty we begin to see that we must adopt a **new method of harvesting** in order to reap the spiritual harvest of saved souls.

- We can no longer simply throw money at the poor children around the world.
- Education, healthcare and nutrition are a mere band aid if not strategically coupled with evangelism and discipleship.

What is this "new method" of harvesting?

Heart Vs Head:

Some people have a "**heart**" for the poor...but we need to also have a "**head**" for the poor!

-We must be **strategic** (head) about helping the poor & saving the next generation.

If we are going to do good and help the poor...why not be strategic?

Sir Edmund Burke: “All that needs to happen for the triumph of evil,
Is for good people to do nothing”

Albert Einstein: The world is a dangerous place to live. Not because of the
people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it.”

To Summarize:

- There are many theories about the causes of poverty
 - It really is a spiritual problem
 - -It requires a spiritual solution!
 - Poverty was a big issue for Jesus (+2000 scriptures) ...and it still is!
 - We need a biblical world view.
 - Poverty is one of Satan's key tools in his war against God.
 - We must go on the offensive...we need to develop a new method of harvesting.
 - We must be strategic.
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Three C's of Compassion's Ministry

Christ-CenteredChurch-based....Child-focused

Join in the **strategic** fight against povertyJoin Compassion!

Test your knowledge about Global Poverty (True or False)

1. There has been little progress made in reducing global poverty in the last decade.
2. Overpopulation is part of why sub-Saharan Africa is so poor.
3. Malaria kills more children in Africa than any other disease.
4. Obesity threatens the life expectancy of some developed countries.
5. The average daily income for a poor person is \$5.00
6. The poorest people in the world are most likely to become terrorists.
7. Prostitution is illegal in most of the world.
8. Child labor is mostly found mainly in sweatshops.
9. One of the root causes of poverty is laziness.
10. Nearly one billion people cannot read or sign their name.

Answers:

1. False Much progress has been made over the last decade
2. False Sub-Saharan Africa is not densely populated except for a few major cities
3. TRUE About 3,000 children die each day from Malaria (every 30 seconds a child in Africa dies of malaria)
4. TRUE More than 300 million people worldwide suffer from obesity and related health conditions
5. FALSE More than 1 billion people live on less than \$1/day (2.7 B live on less than \$2/day)

- 6. FALSE Most of the poorest of the poor lack the energy or resources to do much more than survive daily.
-Terrorism tends to come from lower and middle class unrest
- 7. FALSE It is actually legal in many countries and leads to human trafficking
- One million children enter the commercial sex trade every year (Unicef)
- 8. FALSE According to UNICEF most children work in agriculture, street vendors or as domestic workers
-246 Million children are engaged in child labor
- 9. FALSE Most poor people work harder than the middle class
-They lack tools. No day off. No health care. Work even when they are sick
- 10. TRUE

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WORLD POPULATION

If we could reduce the world's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all existing human ratios remaining the same, the demographics would look something like this:

60 Asians	12 Europeans	5 US Americans and Canadians	8 Latin Americans	14 Africans
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5 would control 32% of the entire world's wealth, and all of them would be US citizens

50 would be children

80 would live in substandard housing

24 would not have any electricity

(And of the 76% that do have electricity, most would only use it for light at night.)

67 would be unable to read

1 (only one) would have a college education.

50 would be malnourished and 1 dying of starvation

33 would be without access to a safe water supply

1 would have HIV

7 people would have access to the Internet