

Missions & The Poor

Christian Ministry Class
September 28, 2011

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Four Questions

- ◆ What does it mean to be poor?
- ◆ What is the basis for our concern?
- ◆ What are the best ways to help?
- ◆ What is Xenos doing?

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Books on Poverty

Walking With The Poor
(Bryant Myers)

When Helping Hurts
(Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert)

Beyond Charity
(John Perkins)

The Hole in our Gospel
(Richard Stearns)

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What does it mean to be poor?

The poor are people.

4

Face in a Magazine

A symbol of injustice
Skin and bones without meat
Are you a real person
Or a face in a magazine?

What substance hides under
Your skeleton, gaunt and hollow?
A spirit, I guess, that outlasts the
body,
A soul and a mind, full hopes and
desires,
Just like mine.

But why the injustice?
It fills me with rage
Grief
Guilt
Helpless hopelessness
For the moment.

It's easy to turn away
To close my eyes
To shut it out
To name you the face in the
magazine.

How many suffer in ways beyond
belief?
How many others haven't I seen?
Are you the only face in a magazine?

Lord Jesus, come soon, redeem
Us from ourselves, our rage
Grief
Guilt
Helpless hopelessness
Forever.

5

What does it mean to be poor?

The poor are people.

“The world tends to view the poor as a group that is helpless; thus we give ourselves permission to play god in the lives of the poor. The poor become nameless, and this invites us to treat them as objects of our compassion, as a thing to which we can do what we believe is best... Whenever we reduce poor people from names to abstractions we add to their poverty and impoverish ourselves.” (Meyer 57-58)

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What does it mean to be poor?

The poor are people.

“The identity of the non-poor is also marred, but with a marring of a different kind. When the non-poor play god in the lives of other people, they have stopped being who they truly are and are assuming the role of God. Losing sight of their true identity leads to the non-poor misreading their true vocation as well. Instead of understanding themselves as productive stewards working for the well-being of their community, they act as if their gifts and position are somehow rightfully theirs, or earned by merit, and hence are solely for themselves and for their well-being.” (Meyer 89)

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What does it mean to be poor?

The nature of poverty is fundamentally relational.

“Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable.” (Meyer 86)

The poor are despised even by their neighbors, while the rich have many “friends.”
Proverbs 14:20

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What does it mean to be poor?

The nature of poverty is fundamentally relational.

“At the center of this relational understanding of poverty is the idea of the poor not knowing who they are or the reason for which they were created. When people believe they are less than human, without the brains, strength, and personhood to contribute to their own well-being or that of others, their understanding of who they are is marred. Similarly, when the poor do not believe that they have anything to contribute, or that they cannot be productive, their understanding of their vocation is distorted as well. With marred identities and distorted vocations, the poor cannot play their proper relational role in the world, either within themselves or with those around them.” (Meyer 87-88)

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What does it mean to be poor?

The cause of poverty is fundamentally spiritual.

“Sin is what distorts these relationships. Sin is the root cause of deception, distortion, and domination. When God is on the sidelines or written out of our story, we do not treat each other well.” (Meyer 88)

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What is the basis for our concern?

Proverbs 14:31
Deuteronomy 15:10-11
Ezekiel 16:49-50
Isaiah 58:6-11
Luke 4:18-19
1 John 3:16-18
Galatians 2:9-10
James 1:27

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What are the best ways to help?

“...one of the biggest problems in many poverty-alleviation efforts is that their design and implementation exacerbates the poverty of being of the economically-rich - their god-complexes - and the poverty of being of the economically poor - their feelings of inferiority and shame.” (Corbett & Fikkert 65)

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What are the best ways to help?

“Poverty alleviation is the ministry of reconciliation: moving people closer to glorifying God by living in right relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the rest of creation... Material poverty alleviation is working to reconcile the four foundational relationships so that people can fulfill their callings of glorifying God by working and supporting themselves and their families with the fruit of their work.” (Corbett & Fikkert 78)

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What are the best ways to help?

Relief vs. Development

Relief: *urgent and temporary* provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a natural or man-made *crisis*

Development: a *process of ongoing change* that moves both the ‘helpers’ and the ‘helped’ closer to right relationship with God, self, others and the environment

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What are the best ways to help?

Development requires a long-term commitment to reconciliation.

... to God “There can be no practice of transformational development that is Christian unless somewhere, in some form, people are hearing the good news of the gospel and being given a chance to respond.” (Meyer 88)

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What are the best ways to help?

Development requires a long-term commitment to reconciliation.

... to others

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What are the best ways to help?

Development requires a long-term commitment to empowerment.

Principle: *Do not do for others what they can do for themselves.*

Strategy: *Train the poor to be aware of their assets and to use them assets to participate in their own poverty alleviation.*

Goal: *Reconciled relationship and the ability to earn enough to survive through their own labor*

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What are the best ways to help?

Chinese Poem

Go
To the People;
Live among them;
Love them;
Learn from them;
Start from where they are;
Work with them;
Build on what they have.

But of the best leaders,
When the task is
accomplished,
The work completed,
The people all remark:
"We have done it ourselves"

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What is Xenos doing?

Urban Concern

Central Ohio Youth For Christ - City Life Center

Medical Clinics (Fourth Street & West Side)

Renegade Ministry

Bhutanese Refugee Ministry

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What is Xenos doing?

All who follow Jesus are called to love and serve the poor.

How is God calling you?

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