

The poor you will always have with you Matthew 26:11

IN FOCUS

"Children and Poverty"

The devastating and pervasive effect of poverty on children world-wide causes many of us to ask "What difference can I really make? The problem is so vast, so awful, so complex and so overwhelming. What can I do?"

Jehoshaphat expressed these same sentiments when he said to the Lord, *"We do not know what to do!"* (2 Chronicles 20:12 NIV) A great multitude of fierce enemies had come against Judah and the hearts of the people were overwhelmed. As they came together to seek the Lord with Jehoshaphat, imagine their dismay as their king admitted, with great alarm, that he did not know what to do, but... he said as he continued in prayer, *...our eyes are on you Lord*. God responded to their plea and said through the prophet, *Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army, for the battle is not yours, but God's ... Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, ... Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out ..., and the Lord will be with you,* (2Chronicles 20:15-17). As they obeyed His strategy, God brought great victory.

The Lord's words ring true today for He does not change. The battle is His to win. We may hear ourselves saying "Lord, the challenge is too big." His response is gentle, yet unyielding, as we turn our eyes to Him — *"Take up your positions; stand firm ... Do not be afraid; ... go out... and the Lord will be with you."*

So often the thing that discourages us is that we feel we may not be qualified, or that we are inadequate to really make a difference. But, remember the battle is God's, not ours. All He asks is that we be willing to play a part—a small one perhaps for some or a bigger one for others. As written in *The Heart of Courage* by Roberta Hestenes, *"I'd rather do something I can do than the nothing that awaits perfection."*² Does this take courage? Yes, and a certain amount of risk. "It takes courage to focus ... and to really see" Roberta continues, *"...to allow yourself to feel deeply the indignation of injustice ... to allow yourself to know the reality and feel it deep within your being. Then it takes courage to act. I will not be counted among those who do nothing. I want to be counted among those who do something."*¹ To do something; this is the key. Consider the following true stories:

- *Somewhere in West Africa a young street boy, tattered, abused, exploited, and undernourished, meets a man who wants*

to help. The man takes the boy home where he is offered a bath, some medical help, clean clothes and something to eat. The boy accepts the clothing and bandages, but refuses the food. His staple food on the street has been his own clothing. As days pass, and life on the street assaults him, the boy remembers the man. He visits the man's home and this time he eats a little food. That was four years ago. Today, the boy no longer eats his clothes. He is happy, healthy, in school and attending church regularly.

It all began with an offer of basic first-aid, food and clothing.

- *Two young women somewhere in Asia, in a tiny room, hold school for local orphans, street children and other young ones at risk. They begin each day with a modest breakfast and end with a substantial lunch. The children are responding physically, emotionally and spiritually. They are learning and they are putting into practice what they learn. They are beginning to think they have a hope and a future.*

It all began with two young women and a tiny room.

It is this kind of simple selfless service that models the compassionate, loving character of our God and Savior. This is what we were made for! And it is this radical love that will draw others to Jesus and advance God's Kingdom on earth. It is no wonder that Jesus said, *"The poor you will always have with you"* (Matthew 26:11) for He knew the sinful, fallen nature of man and He knew the enemy's line of attack. He also knew that a drop of His living water on such thirsty ground would bring forth much fruit; He desires for His Church to be the fountain.

Will you be be informed and challenged by this month's contributing authors, to whom we remain eternally grateful? The answer is "Yes." Yet, you will certainly be encouraged to know that you *can* do something. To this end, may these Our Lord's words spur you on: *"Take up your positions; stand firm ... Do not be afraid; ... go out... and the Lord will be with you."*

What an opportunity; what a privilege;

what a great and mighty God we serve!

—Rosemary Sabatino

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1. Hestenes, Roberta; *The Heart of Courage*; The Heart of the Matter: Women in Poverty; Women of Vision National Conference; 1994; pg.12

Opportunity: *A Prescription for Poverty*

—Tracy Alin



We have often heard it said, “The love money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). Could it be that the opposite is also true? Lack of money also seems to be at the root of many problems in our society as well as abroad. Without a steady, adequate income people become victims of poverty, crime, malnutrition and an overall feeling of despair. This lack is precisely why many of our efforts in the West to make a difference in the Third World have been ineffective at bringing lasting change. Instead of a handout, the poor really need a hand up. They need to be given an opportunity to provide for themselves, to develop and use the God-given talents and abilities that they possess. An attitude of fatalism says, “I don’t matter; I’m not smart or capable.” An opportunity says, “I believe in you. You can do it!”

Where would any of us be if someone had not believed in us somewhere along the road? Where would we be without opportunities such as student loans, an education, a job lead, health care, sanitation, clean food and water? What about emotional and spiritual support and encouragement? If we really think hard about our lives, we will realize that we are where we are today because someone gave us an opportunity. Many of the poor are extremely resourceful, as they have to be just to survive from day to day. Yet so many in the West still believe that the condition of the poor is their own fault or they did something to bring it on. Others of us, as we hear that over one billion people survive on less than one dollar per day, become numb. We simply cannot even begin to grasp what this kind of poverty looks like. Even if we could fully understand, we often wonder how we could ever make any kind of impact when the problem is so vast and complex.

They need to be given an opportunity to provide for themselves, to develop and use the God-given talents and abilities that they possess.

What if we all started looking at the possibilities of the poor instead of all the obstacles and problems? What if we started looking at them as individuals, made in the image of their Creator, who has blessed them with potential, abilities and God-given dreams? What if we did not see them as victims

but as what they might become in the future? Isn’t that what Christ did for us on the cross? He saw beyond our problems and sin and perceived each one of us as the best we can be, both now and for the future. He is for us not against us. Another important point to remember is that Jesus did not encourage dependence. While he showed love and concern for the poor, healed their diseases and performed miracles, it was also clear that He expected them to do something with the gifts they received from Him. “Go and tell what God has done for you” were His words to the one healed in Luke 8:26–39. Often His intention was to build the faith of others. Jesus always acted strategically and with purpose.

The following story is a beautiful illustration of the possibilities of what can happen when someone in poverty is given an opportunity. It is taken from Richard Stearn’s book, *The Hole In Our Gospel*.

“A few years ago, on a trip to Zambia, I was introduced to a man named Rodrick who was about thirty. Rodrick’s story was heartbreaking. After serving in the Zambian military, he hoped to return home to his wife, Beatrice, but was instead falsely accused of plotting against the government and thrown into prison. Beatrice gave birth to their son, John, while Rodrick was imprisoned. After several years, Rodrick was released, only to come home to a wife and child living in poverty. The next few years were grim as they had more children and struggled to support them. They tragically lost one child to cerebral malaria. Meanwhile, they literally had nothing—no income, no food, no health care, and no opportunities. But Rodrick and Beatrice were hardworking and clever. The one possession they had was a small hair dryer, so they started a haircutting business to earn a few dollars. World Vision staff, impressed by their initiative, looked past Beatrice and Rodrick’s poverty and saw instead their assets. They were industrious and entrepreneurial, willing to work hard. So instead of giving them food and other *things*, World Vision gave them a small loan for an idea they had. Their idea? They would buy bolts of cloth and tie-dye them in hopes of selling the cloth to women who made their families’ clothing. I have to admit I was skeptical. How in

the world would this couple ever sell enough cloth to make a living? I had spent a career in consumer product marketing and knew a bad idea when I saw one. This idea seemed like a loser to me in a place where there seemed to be no market at all for tie-dyed cloth. Even after they presented me with a beautiful bolt of fabric to take home to my wife, I only felt pity for them, knowing their business would likely fail.

In 2008, I returned to Zambia and had an opportunity to see Rodrick and Beatrice again. It had been four years since they started their little enterprise. I was stunned. Their tie-dye business had succeeded. With the money they saved, they paid back their loan and then started a small store-front to sell food, diapers, and sundries. One store had turned into two, and they hired their first employee. Rodrick was able to get connected to the electric grid, and he started a welding business. Once on the grid, Rodrick began charging batteries overnight for a fee. (These batteries are often used for home electricity by people who can't afford to be on the grid.) Next door he built a Cel-Tel station, where those with cell phones can buy their minutes. He then built a long building out of scrap lumber and tin; filled it with benches; bought a TV, DVD player, and satellite dish; and opened the first movie theater in his community. Not only did he show movies, but he also received all of the professional soccer matches, which the men of the community gladly paid to see. When I visited, he was showing—I kid you not—*The JESUS Film* in the middle of the day to about ten customers.



During my visit, Rodrick took me to a concrete slab with a roof over it that he had just built. The next week, he said, a pool table would arrive and the first community pool hall would open—a good thing, he explained, because it helped keep the younger men occupied and out of trouble. The young men in his community looked up to Rodrick.

In all Rodrick and Beatrice, a couple I had pitied just four years earlier, now had eleven different businesses! When I first met them I had seen only their deficits, not their assets—a mistake I will never make again.

I wanted to test Rodrick's values so I asked him a question. "Rodrick," I said, "you are now a rich man. What are you going to do with all of your newfound wealth?" Rodrick thought for a moment and then told me he had been teaching

a Sunday school class at his church for many of the orphans in his community. There are forty-one in his class; he has committed to visiting each one at his or her home twice a month. Then he said, "God has been good to us and with His continued blessings, I hope to build a school for the orphans. Pray that he will allow me to do this."¹

*An opportunity says,
"I believe in you.
You can do it!"*

There is no space here to do justice to all of the various theories of why people are poor and how they can move toward wholeness, but it is important for you to understand that poverty is highly complex and that there are no simple and quick fixes. And when we prescribe one particular "pill" because we see one particular symptom, the poor never seem to get well. In fact, they find themselves gulping down handfuls of pills prescribed by too many would-be-doctors with too little real understanding of their lives. They have hopes and dreams, tragedies and triumphs in their lives. They need us to love them first and listen to them. They need us to see their assets and their God-given abilities. Mother Teresa once said, "When we see [those in poverty] as God sees them, we will glimpse His image in their faces—Christ in His most distressing disguise."

Organizations like *Care International*, *Rainbows of Hope* and *Crisis Care Training International* do a beautiful job of speaking love, encouragement and hope to the needy children of the world. The workers are all in it for the long-term. We need to be committed long-term to the fight against poverty and all the ills that go with it. We need to see all people as the beautiful creations with much potential that God created them to be.



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1. Stearns, Richard; *The Hole in Our Gospel*; World Vision; 2009; Kindle pages 1673-1695

The Mustard Seed Project

—Sharon Lim

*The Kingdom of heaven
is like a mustard seed, which a man took and
planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your
seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants
and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come
and perch in its branches.*

Matthew 13:31–32



The Lord had put this verse in our hearts when the WEC team was preparing to hand over the Community Health & Education project (CHE). Comprising an informal primary school as well as a local church and started by WEC Cambodia in 2001 and 2004 respectively, CHE was scheduled to be handed over to Cambodian leadership by July 2008. At that point, we had been praying and asking the Lord how we could help the school and church become self-sustaining when the WEC team phases out from this village. Over the years the school has benefited many children who, due to poverty, did not have the privilege of receiving education.

In October 2007 the thought came of starting an income-generating project producing handmade soaps. This idea was brought up to the church for discussion and prayer. In April 2008 the decision was taken for the church to undertake the project. The church contributed US\$500 as a setup capital, and the Lord provided another US\$2500 through individual giving. We took the pastor and a youth to learn soap making from another organization. After a period of trial and error, the project finally was officially launched in October 2008; we named it The Mustard Seed Cambodia. The Mustard Seed is indeed a faith project. Earlier, when we had started the school project, we had only US \$150, and from conducting lessons under a mango tree to a rented hut to a proper school building, we had seen how the Lord provided. Now we believed that the Lord would provide for this soap project as well.

Looking for a suitable place for this project was a challenge. Our budget for the house rent was only US \$150 per month. We went house hunting for a couple of months with no success. Either the rental was too high or the owner, for some reason, was not keen to rent to us. The Cambodians, particularly the rich, will not trust their fellow Cambodians, especially those coming from the rural villages. While we were desperate, we also believed there must be a house hidden somewhere that God had yet to show us. Praise the Lord, a kind Cambodian woman, whom we did not know well, took us to rent her brother's house. She even bargained for us, and the rental was

within our budget—US \$150. Compared to many houses we had seen this house was much better, having a big compound where the school's teachers can meet for their morning devotion and prayer as well as park their motorbikes.

The project vision is to see Cambodians own and run the project and at the same time provide a skill training and job opportunity for the church members, many who have no stable income. One other objective is to help the Christians have good business ethics and be a living testimony in the community. The team is comprised of a WEC missionary plus four workers from the church.

*The children
are becoming the solution
and communities
are being
transformed.*

Two of these workers are students, one of them a graduate from the village school. Both have a desire to go for higher education but their families cannot afford to support them. Hence, we give them a job so they can provide for their own education. They study in a local public school and work part time at the Mustard Seed. The oldest is 29 years old, a young believer in the church. He had always wanted to be girl since he was six. He dressed like a woman, behaved like one and even wore makeup. Other villagers often mocked him. Praise God, he came to know the Lord in January 2008 and was baptized in July the same year. The church accepted him, encouraged and prayed for him. Since becoming a believer, he became very hardworking, no longer lazing around, drinking and gambling. Finally in June 2009, he took the step of faith, cut off his long hair and put on trousers. We at the Mustard Seed were overjoyed by his transformation. Today he is working hard to save money; he desires to have his own family in three years time. Indeed, what he is today is the work of the Holy Spirit.

While we hope to generate income, our desire is also to see the team grow and mature in their faith. The project was finally handed over to the team in November 2009 under the leadership of a mature Cambodian Christian. We believe they will meet with challenges like the teachers, but we trust that the Lord will continue to guide and lead them to greater heights, seeing the smallest seeds grow to become trees to bless their community.

Mustard Seed Cambodia

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This Is

an income-generating project producing handmade body soaps. It is a project undertaken by the Life with Hope Church, an indigenous church located at the Tuol Tamok village of Kandal Province.



Our Beneficiaries

are the students of The River of Life School. All income generated goes to this informal primary school where many poor children are given the opportunity of education. Upon graduation they now have the opportunity to go on to higher education which is the first step in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Our Vision

is to see this cottage industry owned and run by the Cambodians. Its objective is to help a local informal primary school, started by WEC International Cambodia eight years ago and now handed over to local leadership, become self-sustaining. It also provides a skill training and job opportunity to the local community.



Sharon Lim, a Singaporean, started her missionary career with WEC International in 1997 after attending Bible college in her native country. Her service in Cambodia included church planting, community health education and help in initiating the Mustard Seed Project. She is currently on home assignment awaiting deployment to a new field of service.

Breaking the Yoke of Poverty

—Peter Campbell



Farming God's Way (FGW) is a holistic ministry that is being used to bring people to Christ while lifting them out of poverty. It teaches people to make a sustainable profit using the resources God has given them. Ambassadors for FGW describe themselves as people "sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with boots on." Brian Oldreive first developed Farming God's Way in Zimbabwe in 1984. Today people are successfully practicing FGW in many African countries and beyond. It is mainly focused on growing maize, which is a staple food in Africa.

We aim to break the spiritual yokes that hold people in poverty by challenging them to live wholeheartedly for God.

The motivation of those who are spreading the gospel message through FGW is compassion and love for the poor. Isaiah 58 is a foundational scripture for this ministry.

Is this not the fast that I have chosen:

To loose the chains of injustice,

And to untie the cords of the yoke,

To set the oppressed free,

And break every yoke? Isaiah 58:6¹

Jesus himself went to the poor (Luke 4:18) and FGW allows us to demonstrate the love of Christ in a practical way. Poverty is more than just physical circumstances. FGW aims to break the spiritual yokes that hold people in poverty by challenging people to live wholeheartedly for God, to turn away from traditional practices such as ancestral worship and consultation of witchdoctors and to only take on the yoke of Jesus (Matthew 11:28-30).

Dependency, where people rely on governments, aid agencies, churches and other organizations to provide for them, is also addressed by FGW. It breaks dependency by encouraging people to look to God as a God of all sufficiency who is the source of all their needs (2 Corinthians 9:8). He has given them land, organic fertilizers such as manure and anthills, and composting material such as grasses. It is God who provides the sun and sends the rain.

1. Scripture references are taken from New International Version

In Africa 85% of the population are subsistence farmers. The average maize yield in Sub-Sahara Africa is seven bags per hectare (ha: a field measurement of 10,000 square meters). A family of six requires 25 bags per year to survive. With successful implementation of FGW it is possible to increase the yield to 40 to 100 bags/ha. For a family of six, one hectare would then produce an excess of maize to sell. One farmer using FGW testified he lifted his maize yield from five bags



per year to 69 bags/year over a four year period.

FGW uses conservation farming techniques, with minimum disturbance to the soil. The aim is to build up the soil and increase its nutrient value. Mulch from previous maize crops, grass, leaves, and cut weeds provide a covering for the soil called 'God's Blanket'. This increases the efficiency of rain by retaining soil moisture. Plowing and burning are not used as these two practices destroy the blanket. Crop rotation is used to break pest and disease cycles.

To create a sustainable profit three management keys are

used in FGW: *On Time, To High Standard* and ***Minimal Wastage***.

ON TIME

To achieve the best yield it is necessary to do things *on time*. God has given us a time for everything (Ecclesiastes 3:1). It is necessary to have the land prepared *on time* so that it is ready to plant when good rains come. In South Africa, fields should be prepared by the end of October, as rain generally comes in November. Maize is planted by the 25th November, as a decline in yield occurs after this date. Weeding the crop *on time*, when the weeds are small, reduces the time and effort required to weed.

TO HIGH STANDARD

A *high standard* is maintained by having straight rows and accurate spacing. This keeps the crops free of weeds all year



round and helps in applying the correct amount of fertilizer.

MINIMAL WASTAGE

Minimal wastage involves not wasting one's resources, including rain. In conventional farming, where one ploughs, land preparation only begins after the first rains. In FGW the crop can be planted after the first good rain. Applying mulch (God's Blanket) reduces runoff, increases the penetration of the rain into the soil and protects the soil from erosion. To start Farming God's Way all you need is a hoe, some rope, a tin can, teaspoon and tablespoon for measuring fertilizer, pegs, measuring sticks (60 and 75 cm), seed and fertilizer.

Our WEC ministry is situated on the edge of Johannesburg near townships where many people live. This is an urban area so we are adapting the FGW model to the growing of vegetables. We have a young Zimbabwean man on the team who is trained in FGW and is our main instructor. We hope to incorporate FGW as part of a discipleship program so that more people are trained to share FGW within their own community. Presently we do trainings both at our site and in the Townships

for churches and community groups.

When we train groups from the community we see it as an opportunity to evangelise and to challenge those who already profess to be Christian to allow Jesus to be Lord of all areas of their life. The people are oral learners so we use biblical story-telling to convey the spiritual keys. Jesus told parables that had agricultural settings. At a recent training some of the participants testified that they hadn't realized that God could be a part of their garden.

It is not uncommon for us to find people mixing Christianity with traditional beliefs. One day after we had taught about the biblical keys of FGW an old lady stood up and spoke strongly to the group. She said to them "We grew up in our cultures, all of us. It was okay then, now Jesus has come into our life and He is the way. Leave those that are dead alone. You hear someone say 'I have dreamt of my great-great grand parents showing me the way' then some rituals are done as a way of accepting their lead. Now is the time of Jesus and the hour is getting closer day by day. God is sending us different people to minister to us but we don't want them." Most of the people at this training were there as part of a feeding scheme. The woman quoted above was one of the few who stayed for the practical session.

I believe FGW is a holistic ministry that can be used for expanding God's Kingdom among the poor. The focus is not on just their physical needs but seeks to break the spiritual bondages that keep people in poverty. It gives people management principles that can be applied to any area of life and it has technology that is simple and easily transferable. When FGW is implemented as it is intended, it can bring about not just salvation and uplifting of individuals but the transformation of whole communities. It is not a quick fix solution. It may take years of faithful demonstration before people overcome their

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Batyk:

The face and facts of poverty and our response

—Rosemary Sabatino



Bakyt is an 11-year-old boy living in southern Kyrgyzstan. In his family, the children are the main breadwinners: he and his two older brothers work in a coal mine. Bakyt's mother was disabled two years ago and cannot walk. Bakyt's parents are divorced, and his father does not pay maintenance for the children and does not provide any support to the family. His grandmother is old and sick. The family's two-bedroom house is run-down—the windows are broken and it is very cold in winter. They rarely heat the house because they cannot afford to buy wood. Bakyt's 13-year-old sister looks after their mother and grandmother. She often misses school for a month at a time because of her caring duties at home.

I do not know what the future holds for me ... sometimes I am horrified thinking about it.

For breakfast Bakyt has tea with bread and for dinner the family usually eats fried potatoes or fried macaroni and bread with tea. They cannot afford to buy much tea, so they dry the tea bags and re-use them several times. Sometimes they gather mint for cooking foods like pelmeni (a pastry with mint filling). Bakyt says: "My favorite food is soup with meat, but we have not made this for a long time...it is very expensive. If I could make a lot of money I would buy meat and cook soup for my mother, grandma and sister."

Due to malnutrition, Bakyt and his sister are often ill. His sister Anara frequently suffers from headaches; she is also anemic but there is no free medication at the local hospital. Bakyt is very concerned about his family's poor health: "Thoughts about my mother's disease and the fact that I cannot help her always bother me. Grandma is sick too, and cannot walk either. Anara and me, both of us are always coughing as soon as winter arrives. I always pray for everybody's health. Those who are poor, they should not get sick. If you are not healthy and do not have money nobody needs you. This is the case with our mother—nobody needs her except us."

In order to earn money to buy food for the family, Batyk often skips school and goes out to work instead. He does not have money to buy books and other school materials. In winter he often does not go to school because he cannot afford warm clothing suitable for the season.

Bakyt says "I do not know what the future holds for me and my brothers; sometimes I am horrified thinking about it, but I

hope for a better future. Every day before I go to sleep, I pray for my mother's and grandma's health. I ask God that my brothers find a better job, and for my sister Anara to attend school. I also pray for myself—I would like to go to school and graduate from high school. I do not want to see my mother crying into her pillow and I do not want us to have to think about what we will eat tomorrow." ¹

Bakyt is not alone. Over 10 million children die every year from poverty related issues, and at the current rates, about one billion children will be growing up with impaired mental development by 2020. ²

The clock is ticking. Every three seconds, somewhere in the world, a child dies. By the time you finish reading this paragraph, 10 children will have starved to death. By the time you finish reading this paper, the hearts of approximately 2,500 children will have stopped beating due to lack of basic nutrition. At the end of this day, somewhere between 26,000 and 30,000 children will have wasted away before the eyes of their parents and/or loved ones while obesity runs rampant in the western world.³

Jesus saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion
Matthew 9:36

Does this picture bother you? It should. Actually, if we are honest the figures are so grave, the pictures so horrible, that we compel our eyes to shun them. We refuse to let our mind absorb them, lest our hearts be broken over that which we cannot fix, and all we are left with is guilt and shame. Yet, looking-on is absolutely prerequisite to the compassionate response mandated by Scripture and modeled by Jesus.

In Matthew chapter 9, Jesus saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion on them. The word *saw* is translated from the Greek word *eido* which means more than just a passing glance. It carries the connotation of understanding and perception; to turn the eyes, the mind, and

1. A case Study: Bakyt; Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Center.org

2. James commission; Commission on Nutritional Challenges of the 21st Century; 2000; U.N. Report

3. Global Issues; Poverty Around the World; updated 1/31/2008

attention to see about something in order to ascertain what must be done about it. When Jesus looked on the multitudes, He understood and perceived their need to the extent that He was moved within His heart to do something about it. This same pattern is repeated over and over in the Gospels.

Upon encountering the widow of Nain weeping over her dead son, the Scripture says He *saw* her, He had compassion on her ... and He gave her son back to her. (Luke 7:13-15). It was the good Samaritan who *saw* the wounded traveler and who then had compassion on him while the others turned away and walked on (Luke 10:33). And, as the prodigal made his way home and was still a ways off, his father *saw* him, had compassion, ran and fell on his neck and kissed him (Luke 15:20). We see then that Biblical compassion encompasses an intellectual understanding that causes such identification with the object's pain as to elicit a proper response. Phyllis Kilbourn, founder of Rainbows of Hope and Crisis Care Training International, puts it this way: "the heart cannot respond to that which we refuse to let into it".

We must force ourselves to look so that we can see as Jesus *saw*, and then, as our hearts break, we must look back to Him for only He can guide us individually to a proper response.

Respond by Starting Where You Are

Investigate local needs in your community. Check with churches, community social services, etc.

Investigate international organizations that focus on child poverty and hunger such as:

- **Farming God's Way:** In Zimbabwe, where Farming God's Way had its beginning and continues today, is now called "Foundations for Farming." Further information can be found at www.foundationsforfarming.org or www.farming-gods.way.org.
- **World Vision**
- **Word Made Flesh**
- **Compassion International**
- **U.N.—World Food Program**
- **UNICEF—Global Issues**
- **World Health Organization**
- **Childhood Poverty Research Center**
- **Oxfam International**
- **Christian Children's Fund**
- **World Bank – PovertyNet**
- **Bread for the World**
- **International Alliance Against Hunger**
- **Save the Children**

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Resources

Books:

- ***Farming God's Way Trainers Reference Guide / 2009***
Dryden, G.W; download—www.farming-gods.way.org.
- ***When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself***
Brian Fikkert, Steve Corbett ; Moody Publishers / 2009
This book discusses ways in which Christians can help those in poverty without harming those who are already suffering, and how to keep themselves from getting hurt. Beyond helping those in need, it is also the call of every Christian to act responsibly and wisely, while yet being "innocent as doves." In a world of increasing violence and hunger this book is quite timely and will help churches be more effective in both helping the poor and spreading the gospel.
- ***Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger***
Ronald J. Sider ; Thomas Nelson / 2005
Why is there still so much poverty? Conservatives blame sinful individual choices and laziness. Liberals condemn economic and social structures. Who is right? Who is wrong? Both, according to Sider, who explains poverty's complex causes in this new edition and offers concrete, practical proposals for change.
- ***The Poor Will Be Glad: Joining the Revolution to Lift the World out of Poverty***
Peter Greer, Phil Smith; Zondervan / 2009
"What can I do about world poverty?" Greer and Smith point out different ways to stop the downward spiral---from microloans to self-employment---so that the poor can regain dignity and provide for their families. Easy-to-do, practical ideas for small groups and churches.
- ***Hope Lives: A Journey of Restoration, Special Edition***
Amber Van Schooneveld; Group Publishing
If there's such a thing as a worldwide plague, poverty is it. The sheer enormity of the problem pins Christians to their couches. What can we do? Where should we start? Author Amber Van Schooneveld invites you on a journey--one that replaces guilt with grace. A journey that nudges those of us with enough to eat to look beyond the horizons of our bank accounts and expanding waistlines. Not just to save the world, but also to restore our souls.

Caregiver's Time-out

—Mark Iacono



Not What You Would Expect

The days of Isaiah and Malachi were very dark indeed; much like the times we find ourselves living in today. It was a time when God's people, including His priests and prophets, were full of immorality, greed, corruption, injustice, covenant breaking and carnal religious activity. These behaviors appealed to man's fleshly, worldly desires and encouraged God's people to forsake their gracious Lord and abandon righteous living altogether.

Such conditions caused the Lord to cry out through Isaiah:

Oh My people! Those who guide you lead you astray and confuse the direction of your paths (Isaiah 3:12); Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood and sin as if with cart ropes.... Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness..." (Isaiah 5:18–23); and Woe to those who deprive the needy of justice ... so that widows may be their spoil and that they may plunder the orphans (Isaiah 10:1-2).

What should our response be to these dark days in which we live?

Combined with the writings of Isaiah's contemporaries, Amos, Micah, Malachi and Hosea, we are confronted with the sordid state of affairs that existed in their day. Malachi records how God rebuked His people for not only offering Him their garbage leftovers (Malachi 1:12-14) but also for complaining about the drudgery of even making such an offering. In addition, God reproached His priests for corrupting His word and causing many to stumble (Malachi 2:7–9). Sadly, the conditions of Isaiah's day find plenty of parallel with much of what is going on today in the body of Christ. Scripture predicts such a time as this. A time in which we find believers falling away from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1-5) or distorting the Word of God for fleshly, evil motives (2 Timothy 3:1-14).

So what should be our response to these dark days in which we live? Should we conclude that we have endured enough affliction with the people of God (Hebrews 11:25) with all this unpopular and outdated sacrificial, holy living? Should we now cast off moral restraint and go enjoy some of the pleasures of sin for a season? Or should we be "more noble" and turn

to isolationism in order to protect ourselves and our families from such corruption? Should we disconnect from the Body of Christ and *forsake the assembling together as is the habit of some* (Hebrews 10:25)? We see many in the body making these very choices today. But, what should we do?

I believe Isaiah and Malachi can help us. What word from the Lord do these prophets give us in the midst of darkness and despair? Look first at Isaiah 50:10: *Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant, who also walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust and rely on his God.* Wow! Not what you would expect. Isaiah identifies the God-fearing, obedient ones as those who are walking in darkness. Not their own sinful darkness but the darkness of sin that surrounds them. And Isaiah simply says, in effect, keep clinging to God. Hold on for your life and don't let go. Isaiah follows that with a severe warning to God's people to not turn aside to the false comfort, teaching and self-saving practices of the day, which amount to idolatry. (Read Isaiah 50:11–12 and do a study on that sobering text.)

The prophet Malachi weighs in with his response from the Lord in a surprisingly rarely expounded verse. *But those who feared the Lord talked with each other and the Lord listened and heard and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem his name* (Malachi 3:16). This passage also is not what you would expect! Here God is listening and responding—not to a prayer but to a conversation between two members of the faithful. They are exhorting and encouraging each other to persevere in following the Lord and His ways. This even in a time when many of the spiritual leaders, as well as the people, are giving up on the Lord and godly living. Why? Because it did not give them the comfortable life they desired. (See Malachi 3:13-15 for the context that is so prevalent today in current comfort driven Christianity) In effect Malachi is saying, keep clinging to God and hold onto one another, for their lives and yours, and don't let go. The Lord was deeply moved by just "overhearing" one brother encourage another to keep clinging to God and each other.

Finally, is this not the conclusion of the author of Hebrews when he parallels the words of Isaiah and Malachi? *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful and let us consider how to provoke one another unto love and good deeds not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the habit of some, but encourage one another all the more as you see the day approaching,* (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Cling to God and to each other until Christ returns!

Amen and Amen!



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