

A Biblical Study of the Poor

For

City Gospel Mission

By

Char Lindner

Dawn Satterwhite

Jack Schrand

Rodney D. Swope

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May Our Lord and Savior get all the Glory!

Introduction

City Gospel Mission (CGM) is a Christian intercity ministry to men, women and children in greater Cincinnati and Southwest Ohio. Serving Greater Cincinnati since 1924, City Gospel Mission empowers men, women and at-risk youth to break the cycle of poverty and despair. CGM collaborates with local churches to offer a variety of one-to-one, relationship-focused programs and services to equip those in need with the spiritual, emotional and physical skills and resources to achieve life transformation. (CGM Website, August 2013)

City Gospel Mission annually serves nearly 139,000 hot and nutritious meals and provides 29,000 nights of safe shelter to the homeless and hurting. It also offers comprehensive men's and women's recovery programs, which include transitional and supportive housing and aftercare. Additionally, City Gospel Mission offers hurting men and women various other resources and services, including a work program, enrichment courses, and chapel services.

City Gospel Mission also annually impacts more than 12,000 at-risk youth in over 50 Greater Cincinnati neighborhoods through more than 10 youth programs and services. These programs include: Whiz Kids tutoring and mentoring, summer camps, college scholarships, basketball, performing arts, cycling, youth groups, and more. The goal of each program is to pair an at-risk child with a caring adult as a way to help foster spiritual, emotional and physical growth and educational development in the child's life.

The vision and mission of City Gospel Mission is founded upon its statement of faith, (See Appendix A) and reliance on biblical truth and revelation to guide its purpose and actions. City Gospel Mission acknowledges and asserts the Lord Jesus as its founder and owner. Therefore, it seeks to understand its call to serve the poor from the perspective of the inspired, only infallible, authoritative Word of God in the Bible.

This study is intended to provide the biblical foundation for CGM's service to the poor. It is written for the edification of present and future Board Members, staff, donors and other supporters. We hope that it clarifies the motivations, content and strategic choices related to our service to the poor. Additionally, for context, we have included a summary of Greater Cincinnati's statistics on poverty. It should be noted that this study references data from prior City Gospel Mission studies on the Poor.

The authors of this study, Char Lindner, Dawn Satterwhite, Jack Schrand, and Rodney Swope were appointed by CGM's Board of Directors.

Summary of Poverty in Greater Cincinnati

"Cincinnati one of nation's poorest cities Sep 22, 2011"

New data from the 2010 U.S. Census shows the city of Cincinnati has one of the highest poverty rates in the nation.

According to the American Community Survey released Thursday, Cincinnati has the seventh-highest rate, with 30.6 percent of its residents living in poverty. The weighted average poverty threshold for a family of four in 2010 was \$22,314, according to the Office of Management and Budget.

The poverty rate in Ohio sits at 15.8 percent, with an estimated 1.8 million living below the poverty level.

The rate is higher for blacks than whites or Hispanics in Ohio. The poverty rate among blacks in Ohio is 32.9 percent, compared to 31.4 percent for Hispanics and 12.9 percent for whites. The poverty rate for Asian in Ohio is 14 percent.

Nationally, the poverty rate is 15.1 percent, according to data from the American Community Survey. That's up from 14.3 percent in 2009 and the third consecutive annual increase.

In the Cincinnati-Middletown metropolitan statistical area, the poverty rate is much lower. For the region overall, the poverty rate is 14 percent. ("Cincinnati one of nation's poorest cities," 2011)

Summary of Poverty, Race and Gender in Cincinnati

(From the Social Areas of Cincinnati: An Analysis of Social Needs: Chapter 4)

In 2005-2009 there were 13,772 families below the poverty level in Cincinnati. Seventy-six percent were African American. This represents a change from 1990 when there were 16,945 poor families, 71% of whom were African American. In 1990 there were 5,052 poor white families. In 2005-2009 there were 3,355, down from 3,367 in 2000. The Hispanic population continued to grow at a high rate and is beginning to be a visible population in several neighborhoods. The percent foreign born has been at 3 percent or below since 1970 but the Hispanic proportion of that number has grown.

When we began this study in 1970 there were nine neighborhoods with African

American majorities. By 2005-2009 there were 17. Eight of these were more than 75 percent African American. The comparable numbers for 2000 were 16 and 10. During the past decade, 21 neighborhoods actually declined in percent African American, most notably Corryville, Mt. Auburn, and Evanston-East Walnut hills (Table 4e). So we have neighborhoods changing racial composition in both directions. The biggest declines are in neighborhoods experiencing gentrification. The biggest increases are in neighborhoods experiencing rapid change such as Price Hill, Westwood and Mt. Airy.

The data in Table 2b show that SES I and II, the two lowest Social Economic Status (SES) quartiles, are substantially less African American now than in 2000. This is also true of SES IV. SES III had a growing percentage of African Americans but the rate of this growth has declined. It is safe to say that Cincinnati is less segregated now than it was a decade ago. We are not a cosmopolitan city. Ninety-seven percent of our population was born in the United States. Our population is overwhelmingly people of European, African, and Appalachian origin. Lack of language diversity has become a handicap in retaining at least one corporate headquarters. The great majority of our Hispanics are “language isolated” (speak only one language) according to the 2010 census (not ACS).

The case can be made that we are an integrated or segregated city depending on how you slice the data. Socioeconomically, we can still see a lot of segregation though we can see some encouraging signs especially in the part of the city between the hills. Most of the poor still live in SES I and II (Table 2b). Fourteen of the majority African American neighborhoods are in the two lowest SES quartiles. Seven are in SES I, 7 in SES II, and 3 in SES III, none in SES IV. Table 4e shows that in 1970 there were 24 neighborhoods with African American percentages of less than 10. In 2000 there were 12 and in 2005-2009 there were only 9.

(Maloney, Michael E, 2013, p. 27-33)

Prologue

Who Will Help the Homeless?

By Chris

Chris is a participant in City Gospel Mission's hot meal program where guests get a nutritious hot dinner with volunteers who sit down with them to share the meal, friendship and hope. Often, a meal served with kindness is the first step on the road to recovery for the homeless and hurting men and women we serve. This letter is reproduced in Chris' own words.

Have you ever took a minute and sat down with someone homeless? Most people read that question and don't know what to say cause when they see a homeless person they quickly walk away.

The homeless live on every street they sleep in the alleys on benches in the park they sleep in the cold and even in the rain. Have you even thought about their pain?

Well you need to remember Jesus started out that way nobody would give Mary a bed to lay her head so she had to stay in a stable and laid Jesus on some hay. Yes Jesus was born homeless and look at all he done for you; and me. So next time you see someone homeless don't just walk away. Take the time to listen to see what they got to say and you never know you might have helped that homeless person if only for that day.

Some homeless people might have lost their way when they lost their job and home and now they got no were to stay. Some homeless people cannot go back home cause of stuff there family might have did. Just because we are homeless does not mean that we can't be your friend and teach you what we know. Homeless people stick together and watch each other's backs 'cause they feel each other pain.

So here how me and my friends help the homeless:

Just sit down and listen to what they got to say. Ask them if there anything you can do to help them find some where to stay. If you got a place that you know of to keep them safe that day just don't tell them walk with them and show them were to go.

If they are looking for some food take them to a store and buy them a bag of chips and a bottle of juice.

Don't judge them cause there already feeling down just walk beside them and try not to turn away

So you can help the homeless and be their friend you see 'cause me and you could be homeless any day.

I. Who are the Poor?

For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, you shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy in your land.

Deuteronomy 15:11 NKJV

The word "poor" appears in English translations of the Old and New Testaments. The frequency of the use of the word "poor" varies within Bible translations. For example, the word "poor" is used 205 times in 197 verses in the King James Version, and 176 times in 170 verses in the New International Version.

Key Terms and Definitions from the Old and New Testament

For clarification purposes in this study, and because English Bible versions use the terms "poor" and "needy" interchangeably, this paper cites the *Strong's Concordance*. This section of study began with an examination of key words for "poor" or "needy" along with words similar in concept and linguistic form. Please refer to "Biblical Words in the Poverty- Oppression' Semantic Field Table 1" (the appendix)

Both the Hebrew and Greek words for "poor" and "needy" describe a condition of having "less than enough." The terminology for the poor pictures real people lacking the necessities of life. Hebrew and Greek key words listed below vary in emphasis and distinguish degrees of poverty. They do not merely describe; they evoke sympathy and summon God's people to action on behalf of these people created in His image.

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The Hebrew words aniy or ani (Strong's 6041) mean poor, afflicted, and depressed, in mind or circumstances. A nuance of *ani* is that it emphasizes some kind of a disability or distress. Financially, the *ani* lives from day to day and is socially defenseless and subject to oppression.

The Hebrew words 'byown or ebyon" (Strong's 34) mean destitute, or needy person. Vine illuminates (Vine, Kohlenberger, Swanson, & Vine, 1984)

... This noun refers, first, to someone who is poor in a material sense. Such a one may have lost the land of his inheritance.....(Exod. 23:11) He has come into difficult financial straits (Job 30:25) and perhaps lacks clothing (Job 31:19) or food (Ps. 132:15) Secondly, ebyon" may refer to the lack of social standing which causes a need for protection...

The word "dal (Strong's 1800) means weak, thin, humble, needy reduced to helplessness. The key word translated "poor" in the New Testament is ptōchos (Strong's 4434) which means a beggar, destitute of wealth, influence, position, and honor.

The Bible teaches that God identifies with and protects those with the least economic and social power.

God instructs us to:

Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other'
Zechariah 7:9-10

The Hebrew word for "justice" in Zechariah 7:9 is *mishpat* (Strong's 4941). Keller discusses the equitable treatment of the vulnerable. The word *mishpat* in its various forms occurs more than two hundred times in the Hebrew Old Testament. It's most basic meaning is to treat people equitably... *Mishpat*, then, is giving people what they are due, whether punishment or protection or care.

This is why, if you look at every place the word is used in the Old Testament, several classes of persons continually are highlighted. Over and over again, *mishpat* describes taking up the care and cause of widows, orphans, immigrants, and the poor – those who have been called "the quartet of the vulnerable." (Keller, Pg. 19)

Causes and Conditions of Poverty

In order to biblically help a person, one needs to understand the real causes for his or her circumstances. Being impoverished for reasons beyond one's control requires

different solutions than being impoverished because of one's own actions. Some are born into impoverished conditions. Others make choices that result in poverty. Some are victims of disease, accident or major calamity. The following briefly describe the common root causes for poverty.

Injustice [Violation of the rights of others; unjust or unfair action or treatment]

An unplowed field produces food for the poor, but injustice sweeps it away. (*Proverbs 13:23*)

If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. (*Ecclesiastes 5:8*)

Drunkenness, Drugs or Substance Abuse [Excessive consumption or misuse of substance for the sake of its non-therapeutic effects on the mind or body]

Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor and drowsiness clothes them in rags. (*Proverbs 23:20-21*)

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*)

Refusal to work, or laziness [Not wanting to work/conducive to idleness: unwilling to do any work or make an effort]

How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man. (*Proverbs 6:9-11*)

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." (*2 Thessalonians 3:10*)

Foolish Behavior and Undisciplined Folly [Not sensible: showing, or resulting from, a lack of good sense or judgment]

A person's own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the Lord. (*Proverbs 19:3*)

Whoever brings ruin on their family will inherit only wind, and the fool

will be servant to the wise. (*Proverbs 11:29*)

Idolatry/Materialism [Focus on possessions: devotion to material wealth and possessions at the expense of spiritual or intellectual values.]

They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. (*Psalm 106:36*)

Those who trust in their riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf. (*Proverbs 11:28*)

Sudden catastrophe and external circumstances [Natural disasters, a recession, crime, disability, illness, loss of property, possessions or family members.] *Job 1:13 – 2:8* describes how Job, within a span of a few days, lost his possessions, family and health.

One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (*Acts 11:28:2*)

This happened during the reign of Claudius. The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea.

Sinful people hide and wait near the villages. From their hiding places they murder those who aren't guilty of doing anything wrong. They watch in secret for those they want to attack. (*Psalm 10:9*)

Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at His feet; and He healed them. (*Matthew 15:30*)

"As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied "I don't have any bread – only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it – and die." (*1 Kings 17:12*)

Judgment and correction used by God [to return His people to righteousness, back to Himself, and ultimately to bless them.]

This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not relent. Because they have rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed, (*Amos 2:4*)

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And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” (*Hebrews 12:5-6*)

To summarize, the “poor” are distinguished as the needy and vulnerable as a result of willful, circumstantial or environmental causes. Irrespective of how one becomes poor, in Christ there is hope for all. We may sometimes be position to help the individual. Other times we might need to address changing the environmental causes that result in poverty

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (*John 10:10*)

II. What is God's desire for the poor?

The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings **to the poor**; (emphasis added) He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3, NKJV)

These three verses are part of a longer prophecy given through the prophet Isaiah, to God's people foretelling of His redemption of them following the time of their captivity. He promises release, favor, restored vision and adorning them in regal beauty. It helps us to understand His desire for the poor, for it is a proclamation of His desire for all His people.

He wants the poor to have the good news that He has come to:

- 1) Heal I broken hearts,
- 2) Free the captives,
- 3) Release them from bondage,
- 4) Proclaim favor and vengeance,
- 5) Comfort from mourning and grieving,
- 6) Clothe in royal garments, and
- 7) Make them be known as a vision of righteousness and splendor.

Jesus emphasized His role as foretold in Isaiah 61 by quoting it in Luke 4:18 on the Sabbath day in the synagogue of Nazareth. The Bible says that Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit. He had just finished resisting Satan in the desert where He had been tempted three times at the end of a forty day fast. Jesus answered His tempter by reminding him what is written in the Scriptures.

When Jesus had finished rolling up the scroll in the temple he said, *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* (Luke 4:21)

Chapter seven of Luke it tells of John the Baptist's two disciples being sent back to John to answer his question, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

He replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

Jesus confirms the Good News proclaimed to the poor. This same account is told in Matthew 11:5.

Jesus emphasizes His desire for restored health. He desires healing: spiritual, and physical and mental wellness.

"And the Lord will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay them on all those who hate you." (Deuteronomy 7:15)

"So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days." (Exodus 23:25)

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken." (Psalm 34:19)

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. (3 John 1:1-3)

Jesus desires that they the poor have freedom from anyone, or anything that diminishes their ability to fellowship with Him. Whether bound by sin, sickness, slavery, poverty, addictions, or even avarice, He wants them to be in fellowship with Him. Some struggle with their sin, health or relationships. Others may struggle with addictions to drink or drugs. Still others struggle with gambling or other forms of irresponsible behavior that destroys homes and careers. He desires that all are in fellowship with Him. He desires that hope in Him is restored and strengthened.

"You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor, but the Lord is their refuge. Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!" (Psalm 14:6 & 7)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1-2)

The Good News includes Christ's desire to see everyone live the abundant life of being in fellowship with Him. He wants them clothed in royal garments and to be a vision of righteousness and splendor. This may sound like a mighty tall order for the poor as we see them. He wants the very best for them and all his descendants. God desires that the poor be encouraged to embrace and trust His promises. He will keep those promises in this world or in the next

He wants this so much that He sent Jesus that they might have life to the full.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)

Ultimately, He wants the poor to remain with him, return to Him, or come to know Him. God has been calling all unbelievers back to Himself, for many have succumbed to the ways of wickedness in the world. Earlier, in chapter 55:6-8 Isaiah says,

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.

God wants to set each of us free from the bondage of not knowing His love. He knows the inherent value in each person, poor or otherwise. We must see past conditions of poverty and hopelessness, and be an example of God's love.

God is looking for people who will boldly share His vision and hope with those blinded to what He is offering to them today. We again think of the warning and the promise found in John 10:10 as quoted above. King David puts it this way:

If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life. Save me, for I am yours; I have sought out your precepts. The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will ponder your statutes. To all perfection I see a limit, but your commands are boundless. (Psalm 119:92-96)

Poverty is a temporary condition from which The Lord is offering relief and redemption either in this world, through the next generation, or when we join Him in His kingdom. He's not so concerned with what we've done or where we've been. He wants to give each of us a bright future. Relief and redemption will require a bold move toward God and His promises through obedience to His instructions and His principles. While some may not see full deliverance from material poverty in their lifetime, restored hope in His righteousness, and the promise of abundant life to the next generation is paramount to breaking the cycle of poverty.

God wants us all, regardless of circumstance, to take refuge in Him. When we refrain from our futile attempts to better our own condition and trust God, follow His instruction and act on His promises, we will see redemption. The condition of Haggai's countrymen began to improve the very day they determined in their hearts and by their actions to take God at His Word. God delights to bless everyone who is faithful and obedient to Him, regardless of circumstance.

I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved from my enemies. (Psalm 18:1-3)

As the Isaiah verse 3 concludes, God's wants the poor to glorify Him. Jesus declared the poor as blessed. He wants them to be served. He provides promises to those who serve the poor. (We will discuss this more in the section regarding our responsibility.)

Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. (Luke 6:20-21)

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (James 2:5)

The psalmist said it this way:

I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy. (Psalm 140:12)

The Lord desires that the poor have the abundant life and live with Him in freedom and the glory of a child of God. The cause of the poor is His cause and therefore, our cause. He wants the poor to know Him and to have and hold the good news of grace.

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God desires to reconcile all people to Himself, especially the poor. His desire is for all people to turn from their own ways and to live life to its fullest. God takes no pleasure in a man's demise. His plan is for redemption – for all men and women to be reconciled to Himself.

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither — whatever they do prospers. Psalm 1:1-3

III. What are the needs of the poor?

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:35-40)

1. Basic Needs of Food, Water, Clothing and Fellowship

Clearly the Lord desires for the poor to have their basic needs of food, water, clothing, and fellowship to be met. He says that providing these needs to the least is doing so to Him.

From the beginning of time, God designed His creation with provision. God created for six days, providing every facet of sustenance necessary to supply for the well-being of man. Throughout the Scriptures, we see that the provision of food and water is necessary to sustaining life.

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:11-13)

In the beginning, Adam and Eve were given food by God in the Garden of Eden.

Then God said, "I give you every seed bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." (Genesis 1:29a)

The children of Israel were God's chosen people. God moved miraculously to free His children from 400 years of slavery under Pharaoh. Even after God performed many signs and wonders to free the Israelites, they complained against Him. God heard their grumblings but promised that He would provide for them. He was teaching them to trust and obey Him.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you.
(Exodus 16:4-5)

The Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.'" (Exodus 16:11-15)

The children of Israel continued their journey through the wilderness. They continued murmuring and complaining against God because they were thirsty and had nothing to drink. Once again, God proved Himself faithful to them amidst their unbelief and lack of trust toward Him. God continually proved Himself faithful to the Israelites providing for their every need. The poor today have this same basic necessity. He recognized their thirst and gave them a way to relieve it.

Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." (Exodus 17:5-6)

In Matthew 14:15-17, God once again demonstrates His power to provide for those in need as Jesus miraculously feeds over 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus used this opportunity to teach His disciples that He was the bread of life by taking the little that was available and multiplying it and create abundance to serve the people. He also teaches us here of the need for the people to be fed real food.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, He gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. (Matthew 14:15-18)

Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed in the Garden of Eden until man fell as a result of his disobedience to God. Once sin entered, Adam and Eve's eyes were open to the knowledge of their nakedness and they were ashamed (Genesis 3:1-7). But God in His mercy clothed them in garments of skin resulting in the first animal blood sacrifice.

The Lord made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.
(Genesis 3:21)

Through Jesus, the children of God are clothed in salvation and righteousness.

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me

with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isaiah 61:10)

While He desires for them to have spiritual covering, He too wants them to be clothed.

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. (Deuteronomy 10:18)

2. Shelter/Sanctuary

These are basic provisions that God desires for the poor. God consistently provided for the Israelites. He warned them not to forget that He brought them out of bondage into a prosperous land.

When the Lord your God brings you into the land He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you – a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant – then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. (Deuteronomy 6:10-12)

David sought the Lord and found Him to be a shelter during his times of trouble.

For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. (Psalm 61:3)

The Lord is a sanctuary for all who seek and trust Him.

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust. (Psalm 91:1-2)

You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. (Isaiah 25:4)

3. Good health:

Health and healing are often part of God's promises. Jesus as the sinless Lamb of God bore the sins of the world so that all mankind might have eternal life, healing and right relationship with God.

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. (Psalm 103:2-5)

The Believer’s Bible Commentary (1995) states, “He suffered five kinds of wounds known to medical science: contusions – blows by a rod; lacerations – scourging; penetrating wounds – crown of thorns; perforating wounds – nails; incised wounds – the spear (p. 979-980).”

But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

In John’s letter to his friend Gaius, he shared genuine compassion for his friend’s physical and spiritual health. God is concerned about the physical and the spiritual well-being of every person.

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. (3 John 2)

4. A Community of Believers:

The early Church in Acts 2:46-47 gathered together as a community of believers demonstrating their love for God and one another as they worshipped God and provided for the needs of each other. When God’s children gather with others, they usually experience physical, spiritual, and psychological refreshment.

Community is an important aspect of spiritual growth and maturity.

Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46-47)

5. Hope and Dignity:

Nobody should be left without hope. While poverty often coincides with hopelessness, God has not forgotten the afflicted. He makes a way to restore hope and dignity.

Psalm 9 is a praise from David glorifying God for His promises that the needy will not be without hope. In hopelessness and afflictions, God has not forgotten.

For the needy will not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever. (Psalm 9:18)

We see the essential nutrient of hope and its preservation throughout the Old and New covenants.

No one who hopes in you [God] will ever be put to shame, but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause. (Psalm 25:3)

For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. (Psalm 37:9)

Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest (1 Corinthians 9:10)

While the circumstances of the poor might cause them to feel dishonorable or worthless, God provides in a way that maintains dignity. Dignity is the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect. It is easy to imagine how someone in need may lose this sense of honor or even self-respect. Dignity is restored as God responds to a person's needs, even if the world is rejecting him

In Genesis 16:13-16; when Hagar was mistreated by Sarai, Hagar ran away from her mistress. God sent an angel, and Hagar believed she was speaking to the Lord Himself and recognized Him as *El Roi – the God who sees*.

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her:

“You are the God who sees me, for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.” So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael, which means “God hears.”

To be seen and heard is to be honored and respected even in the midst of lack and suffering. Said differently, the poor need to be acknowledged and listened to. The Lord demonstrates this as Hagar is cast out of Abraham's camp.

Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there, she began to sob.

God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." (Genesis 21:14-18)

We know that when Hagar and Ishmael are sent away, God pledged to Ishmael that he would be the father of a nation (vs. 18) and we know from the continuing story that God protected him. Even though Hagar was not of God's chosen people, God still met her in the time of need.

6. Compassion and Respect:

The poor need others who by command or compassion have a heart to help. Not the kind of help that is from afar but compassionate help with real human interaction. It is clear that God requires believers to help those in need: He promises that those who give generously and refresh others will themselves receive the refreshing of the Lord. If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. (Deut 15:7)

The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor. (Proverbs 22:9)

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? (1 John 3:17)

The three verses above and many others speak to God's command to serve, and many believers might be driven by that alone, the poor also need compassion. Compassion denotes suffering along with. They need someone willing to meet them where they are. Whether, down or out, or dirty and unpleasant to smell, they need to be seen as God sees them-with love and respect.

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and we see the unlikely hero of the story inconveniencing himself to aid a fallen brother. In verses 34-35, we see him directly interacting with the poor man.

He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

This is like a respectful hand up that touches the needy and serves with compassion and respect.

One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. (Proverbs 11:24-25)

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen; to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?" (Isaiah 58:6-7)

Believers are to show mercy toward those in need by ministering to their physical needs first so that they may be open to hear. God desires that sustenance be provided for those in need through acts of love demonstrated by those who believe.

7. Jesus

The most essential need of the poor and everyone else is a relationship with Jesus. For those who do not know Him, they need an introduction to Him.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (Romans 10:14)

For a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God, man was separated from Him. God longs for His children to return to Him. God made a way for man to come back to Him through Jesus Christ. Even as sinners, God demonstrated His unconditional love by sacrificing His only Son that the world might be redeemed through Him.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)

God provided the perfect sacrifice through His Son who identified with being poor and challenged in every way known to man and yet remained sinless.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

God's grace is free and available to everyone through Jesus Christ.

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:23-24)

God extends His mercy and grace through Jesus to reconcile His children back to Himself so they may prosper in life doing good works advancing the Kingdom of God.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Jesus Christ has provided the way back to God through His incarnation and resurrection. The "works" of salvation were completed at Calvary by Jesus. The process to salvation is simple and always available to anyone who desires to receive it. *"...God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right."* (Acts 10:34) His gracious gift of salvation is for everyone.

"The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming. That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between

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Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:8-13).

IV. What is the Christian Responsibility to the Poor?

1. The Great Commandment:

Our responsibility is made clear in the Great Commandment. We are simply to live it.

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36-40)

An expert of the Mosaic Law questioned Jesus asking Him which law was the most important. Jesus responded in a manner that was familiar to the expert by quoting the Scriptures from Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5. The life of a Christian is not predicated on maintaining and keeping all the rules of the Bible. Christians are called to embody what is known as the Greatest Commandment which is to love God and to love our neighbors. This is the heart of the gospel message. If every Christian fulfills the first commandment of loving God with all their heart, soul and mind, the natural overflow of that love will be God’s heart of love to others.

2. The Great Commission:

Living the Great Commandment leads to do the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20)

In Jesus last words to the disciples, He commanded them to go and make disciples, baptizing and teaching them to obey everything that He had taught them. This commandment has not changed. It is the responsibility of every Christian to go into the world and make disciples of others to advance the Kingdom of God.

3. Biblical Instruction in Serving the Needy

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 19:9-10)

God blessed the Israelites and commanded them to leave a portion of their harvest for the poor and alien of the land to glean. God demonstrated His love and generosity for the poor and alien by providing for their needs through the obedience of the Israelites. When Christians give to those in need, it is a demonstration of God's love and provision for them.

“Do not pervert justice, do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.” (Leviticus 19:15)

God ordered Moses to relay His laws to the Israelites. By imparting laws to them, God was teaching them how to obey Him. His desire was that His children would display His character to those who did not yet know Him. God is just. Christians are to respond in a Godly manner in situations by judging fairly without partiality or favoritism.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8-9)

Those who are poor and in need may not understand and possess the ability to adequately articulate their rights before others. It is a Christian responsibility to stand up and advocate for those who cannot do it for themselves. As a result, the love of Christ is demonstrated to them and many times draws them to the Lord.

Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.(Isaiah 1:17)

Judah had rebelled against God and was in a state of religious and moral decline. The land of Judah had become a place of two different types of people - - the wealthy and the poor. Those who were wealthy were becoming more so as a result of their conspiracy to rob the poor of their land, rights and freedom. But God sent Isaiah to command them to repent from their evil ways. Even today, God commands Christians to walk worthy of the calling as agents of change to take up concerns of justice and righteousness on behalf of the oppressed, fatherless and widows.

“For I was **hungry** and you gave me something to eat, I was **thirsty** and you gave me something to drink, I was a **stranger** and you invited me in. I needed **clothes** and you clothed me, I was **sick** and you looked after me, I was in **prison** and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of

mine, you did for me.’ (Matthew 25:35-40)

Matthew 25: 35-40 is the subject of Jesus’ return and final judgment. He draws a line of demarcation between the sheep and the goats. The defining line is based on service to “the least of these” who is ultimately Jesus Himself. The sheep will inherit eternal life due to their obedience; but the goats will receive eternal punishment. When Christians see those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, sick, in prison and in need of clothing, it is our responsibility to serve them as ambassadors of Christ.

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ (Luke 10:30-35)

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus provides a picture of care to a man who had been mistreated and left for dead. A priest and a Levite pass by as though not to see the man in need. It was a Samaritan who came to the aid of the man and had mercy upon him. It is of note that Samaritans were outcast during that time; however, the outcast was the one who provided aid to the one in need. God desires that Christians would be like the Good Samaritan and have compassion upon those who have been beaten down by the world and administer appropriate care to them.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (James 1:27)

James instructed the new found Christians how to live as Christ followers. God expects His Church to exhibit faith by doing the works He commands in His Word. Being the Church entails walking in obedience to the Word of God. Christians are to be the hands and feet of Jesus by looking after widows and orphans during distressing times allowing our ethical and moral compass to be rooted in Christ.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions

and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

4. Why should the disadvantaged be helped?

There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:11)

God commanded the Israelites to be generous to those who were poor in the land that He had given to them. Obedience to God was an important aspect of continual blessing and possessing the land He promised them. Many did not receive the promises of God due to disobedience. Obedience to God's Word to be openhanded to the brethren, poor and needy in the land is still the responsibility of Christians today.

The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have Me. (Matthew 26:11)

We are instructed to serve the poor:

... and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. (Isaiah 58:10)

Jesus as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords could have spent His life being served by others. However, Jesus spent His life as a servant leader to others and modeled it before His disciples that they would go and do likewise and receive blessings.

...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28)

When He had finished washing their feet, He put on His clothes and returned to His place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" He asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (John 13:12-17)

V. Who should be helped?

This question speaks to our limitations of helping the poor. Clearly there are times when we want to help and seemingly cannot. There are also times when our attempts to help equate to a dysfunctional rescue, or worse, our good intentions contribute to a person's continued despair. This quandary for the compassionate believer sometimes leaves us wondering if we did the right thing in choosing whether to help or not. We constantly seek biblical guidance regarding who to help and who not to help. We must also identify situations and circumstances where we should not or cannot help.

As we seek direction we are informed by some of the following wisdom verses:

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you" when you already have it with you. (Proverbs 26-8)

Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered. (Proverbs 21:13)

These verses guide us to do our best not to ignore a cry for help.

While the verses above along with many others in the Old and New Testaments make a patent admonition to serve and assist the poor, there are conditions where the form of help can be misapplied.

Corbett and Fikkert layout a framework for different forms of help using the terms Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development:

- *Relief* can be defined as the urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a nature or man-made crisis.
- *Rehabilitation* seeks to restore people and their communities to the positive elements of their pre-crisis conditions. This involves working with them as they participate in their own recovery.
- *Development* is the process of ongoing change that enables the materially poor to fulfill their calling to glorify God by working and supporting themselves and their families with the fruit of that work (Corbett & Fikkert, 2009, p. 104).

They go on to say:

"One of the biggest mistakes that North American churches make - by far - is in

applying relief in situations in which rehabilitation or development is the appropriate intervention."

Oftentimes our encounters with the poor are when they need rehabilitation. The key to effective rehabilitation is the victim's willful engagement in the process of recovery and restoration. It is within this context that in order to extend help we must require the individual's responsibility and some minimum conditions. Our most appropriate action is to invite them or lead them to the right first step. We see Jesus model this as He encountered the man hoping to be healed at the Pool of Bethesda. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, He asked him, "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6, NIV) The man did not answer directly, but offered an excuse for why he could not attain his goal. Jesus commanded him to get up and walk, and he did just that. He needed help taking that much needed first step.

We might encounter those in need who are yet reluctant to come into to a feeding program or shelter. We, as Jesus modeled, need to encourage them to take the first step towards help, provision, or healing.

In the story of the Canaanite woman it seems that Jesus tested the woman's resolve to get the help she had requested.

But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly. (Matthew 15:21-28)

There will be times when it will seem difficult to help a brother or sister in need. This difficulty is not due to a lack of compassion or generosity, but occurs when the needy resist help or behave in a manner that might be harmful to themselves or others. In these instances, we must prayerfully pass.

In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians. Then in the forty-first year of his reign Asa died and rested with his ancestors (2 Chronicles 16:12-13).

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble. (Proverbs 28:13-14)

Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but

whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me. (Luke 10:16)

Some simply will not allow God or his people to help them. They may have a history we will not know or understand; but we should never give up on them. Habits and hurts are often very difficult to let go of. Their albatross may be destructive habits or hurts that will only be defeated by God's love. We may be that love expression at times, but they will eventually need to call out to God.

When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, "This is the king of Israel." So they turned to attack him, but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him. God drew them away from him. (2 Chronicles 16:12-13)

When we are careful to be guided by the Holy Spirit we can better witness the genuine cry to the Lord for help. If we intervene too hastily or inappropriately we might merely prolong the destructive behavior.

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (Ephesians 5:11)

We must be careful that our handouts will not simply be used for drugs or alcohol. We learned from those in recover that the panhandler will most often not use money for food.

For He will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight. (Psalm 72:12-14)

Essentially we must seek Him and trust Him to direct our service. Otherwise we will struggle from our own intellect, rules or guidelines as to whom to help when. He does the choosing and sets the timing.

"Truly I tell you," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. . (Luke 4:24)

We cannot discern with our own minds what is the right or best way to respond to the question of whom to help or, but rather to seek His guidance. The Holy Spirit chooses whom He serves and we must simply be willing vessels.

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (James 1:5)

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Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.
(Proverbs 3:5)

VI . In What Manner shall CGM help the poor?

Having responded to the previous questions regarding who are the poor, what they need, and our responsibility to the poor, this section addresses the ways CGM serves the poor. Our perspective, point of view and posture matter much when engaging the poor. Our service is more effective when we strive to:

- See them as the Lord sees them;
- Demonstrate compassion in action;
- Show them the love of the Lord, and finally,
- Introduce them to the Savior.

Seeing them through God's eyes:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16, NIV)

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8, NIV)

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

God adored His precious Son who was most worthy. Father and Son loved the people of the world so much that Christ sacrificially presented Himself to die on the cross as propitiation for the sins of the entire world. In this great act of grace, all people are infinitely valued children of God. This truth reveals that God gives the poor dignity that the world often denies them. The love of the Lord is not earned, nor derived through social, economic, nor religious status.

Those who receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are members of the Body of Christ. In three of the four passages which list spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:12, 25 and 1 Corinthians 12), God uses the metaphor of the human body to describe Christ's body of believers on earth. Those serving cannot distinguish themselves from their brothers and sisters whom they serve, for each one is an indispensable member of Christ's Body.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ... so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. (1 Corinthians

12:12, 25-26, NIV)

Scripture condemns showing partiality or favoritism:

Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. (Leviticus 19:15 NIV)

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (James 2:1-5, NIV)

In Luke 15, the Pharisees and scribes were grumbling to Jesus because He received sinners and ate with them.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Jesus then tells three parables in this chapter. The context makes it clear that all three, *The Lost Sheep*, *The Lost Coin* and *The Lost Son*, go together. In each story, something of great value is lost and then found. Jesus illustrates in the parable of *The Lost Sheep* His great concern over even one lost soul and the lengths He is willing to go to restore even one lost sinner to His Heavenly father. All three parables speak of the joy God feels when someone who has gone astray is found.

Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:1-7)

One of our volunteers shares this story of seeing those we serve through God's eyes:

Makayla and Kathy

– These two met through Whiz Kids when Kathy became Makayla’s tutor. Makayla was behind in reading and showed no interest in school and as a result her grades were dismal. As their tutoring relationship grew Makayla began to believe in herself and her reading levels improved and soon afterwards all her grades improved as well. Kathy eventually became Makayla’s mentor and their relationship flourished. Kathy soon after that developed a heart for Makayla’s entire family which included her three sisters and single mom. Kathy got Makayla and her sisters involved in the Princess Ballet, and helps their mom make sure they get to every practice. Makayla has recently accepted Christ and goes to church with Kathy. Her three sisters are growing in that direction through their involvement in Princesses.

Kathy and Makayla’s mom have developed a very special relationship as well. They have become close friends and Kathy “unofficially” mentors her in parenting, budgeting, and setting goals for herself and her family. As a result, Makayla’s mom went back to school and completed her GED and is now attending a local community college to further her education so that she can achieve her goals and better provide for her family.

Demonstrating compassion in action

Our compassion, which connotes to suffer along with, must compel us to action, and these actions to relationship. It is not enough to give from a safe distance.

Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6:31, NIV)

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:18.NIV)

Compassion demands a relationship. In the New Testament, we see Jesus repeatedly eating with people, attending a wedding, stopping to listen and speak with others.

The righteous will be commended on judgment day, *I was a stranger and you invited me in.* (Matthew 25:35)

Inviting someone into your home requires a relationship. Compassion prompts action. Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain:

When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried *him* stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” So he who

was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.
Luke 7:13-15 (NKJV)

The compassion of Jesus instills truth and hope. In John 4:1-30, Jesus met a Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus recognized her spiritual emptiness and spoke to her of “living water” that would fill her emptiness. While he let her know that He was aware of her sins (verses 15-17), He did not shame her, but treated her with respect. He spoke truth to her and revealed Himself as Messiah. Jesus focused not on her past, but who she could be in Christ. Jesus’ compassion on this woman prompted her to act, to go back to her village and tell others of her encounter with the Lord. Through her witness, a new community of faith was born.

The following story shared by a staffer at Jobs Plus illustrates compassion in action:

Diedra

A desperate knock. Diedra walked through the door and was greeted by the Office Manager. “She brought me in and I began telling her my story like I knew her. She told me to calm down, and got me a soda and a cold paper towel for my head. She asked me to pray with her.” She said, “We’ll help you learn how to talk, dress, fill out applications, get online and find jobs.” We’ll even pray with you. We’ll be your friend.”

“I had 6 months of not having any money to buy essentials,” Diedra says. “And I was lonely. I needed to hear that I was somebody to someone else. Coming here made me feel self-worth and to remember how to talk to someone in an interview, how to respect them and respect myself.” Those moments started Diedra on the road of getting two jobs after going through our new Fast Track program.

What we can learn from the previous story is that helping individuals in poverty requires relationship. Trusting relationships of all kinds include treating others with love, respect, and dignity, when we’re trying to help an individual in poverty.

When an individual panhandles for money, it can be challenging to know how to help. One step in the right direction, though, is to make eye contact, treating them with dignity and respect. It’s also beneficial to know what services are available in the community. City Gospel Mission has business cards for this very reason, as the cards include the times of our meals, information about our homeless shelter and recovery opportunities, and are great tools for volunteers and others to hand out on the street.

It doesn’t help to give panhandlers money. Giving money contributes to the cycle of

poverty. And while it sometimes feels good for the giver to give money, it's typically void of what's really needed, which is relationship. City Gospel Mission, its' staff and volunteers, are equipped to build those crucial relationships, and making a referral is always the preferable response.

If you have the time and are willing to make the commitment to build relationships with individuals in poverty, there is a specialized training at City Gospel Mission which helps volunteers and other community members understand poverty and begin to break the cycle of poverty and despair...one life at a time.

Showing the love of the Lord:

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. (John 15:9, NIV)

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. (John 15:12, NIV)

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45, NIV)

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5, NIV)

In John, Chapter 15, Jesus states that He is the Vine and His followers are the branches. The branches are to bear fruit that remains. Jesus then describes His disciples' relationship to each other and to the world. Christ commands His followers to love each other *as* He has loved them.

At the last supper (John 13, NIV), Jesus took on the role of a servant by washing the disciples' feet. He left a vivid example of being a servant for His followers to replicate. Moreover, Jesus warns Peter after he refuses his master to wash his feet.

Peter said to Him, You shall never wash my feet! Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with (in) Me" [you have no share in companionship with Me]. (John 13:8, Amplified Bible)

Jesus is teaching is this profound object lesson that when we serve others they become a part of us. We are joined to them and them, to us. This active suffering together through service makes us one. In this way we are not merely giving service to them, but joining them with us in the grace of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul exhorted the Philippian Christians (Philippians 2:1-8) to take upon themselves the mindset of Christ Himself. Jesus set aside his rights as God and emptied Himself to become

human. He came to the world in complete humility and was obedient to His Father by dying on the cross for the sins of the world.

An example of a young man being shown the love of the Lord by a volunteer and it changed his life forever:

Mike and Terry

In the past nine years, Mike has gone from a directionless high school freshman, admittedly going down the wrong path, to a college graduate and now intern at City Gospel Mission with a heart for helping youth who were once in his shoes. All because caring adults came alongside him to support him every step of what has been a long, gradual process.

One of those adults was his mentor, Terry. Before his senior year of high school, Mike received news that his girlfriend was pregnant. Having also grown up in a single-parent home, Terry was determined to help Mike chart a new course. So Terry invited Mike to move in with him and his family prior to Mike's senior year of high school. Terry's support helped Mike stay on track, graduate, and get accepted into Cincinnati Christian University's Urban Scholars program. Continued support at CCU from Terry and faculty helped Mike overcome academic challenges to become part of the university's first Urban Scholars graduating class.

Mike says. "Terry showed me how to be a good listener, a good father, how to be a follower of God and how to lead other people." "Early on, I saw a lot of negative things and was around a lot of negative people – robbing, stealing, smoking weed, drinking. I had never seen a positive role model. I needed a leader to show me what roads to take,"

Mike is receiving continued support at City Gospel Mission as he becomes one of the first young people to participate in a new youth program called Leadership and Career Development. "I have a passion for youth," Mike says. "I plan to change as many lives as I can and win them over to the Lord."

Introducing them to the Savior:

As asserted previously, Christians are accountable to *live* The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and *do* The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

As agents of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Christ followers and faith based enterprises like City Gospel Mission must hold to the primacy of proclaiming the gospel. Gospel ministry not only

includes the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ; it also includes shepherding and discipling new believers and assimilating them into Christian community and a local church.

In the Parable of *the Good Samaritan*, Jesus commended the Samaritan for loving his neighbor by meeting the pressing needs of the man: food, shelter, and medical care. Yet if agencies of the Gospel only act out compassionate deeds of mercy toward people, they would fail to obey Jesus by carrying out the Great Commission. Alternatively, we must consider the effect of *only* communicating the Gospel message to a homeless person who has not eaten in two days. Consequently, individual Christ followers and the Christian agencies they serve must adhere to *The Great Commission* and the *Great Commandment* as two distinct but inseparable Biblical commands with the proclamation of the Gospel as central. As we engage with the poor and discover they are without the Lord, we must keep before us this mandate to introduce them to the Savior.

In what manner and by what practical means shall we accomplish this? We take inspiration from the book of Hosea. Hosea is a parable of God's love enacted and lived out. In Hosea's relentless pursuit of his harlot wife Gomer, we are astonished. God constantly expresses His love for us and goes after us at our worst. Even as we sin, He keeps after us.

New Testament Scriptures describe the manner in which we are to love:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:12-15).

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. (1 Timothy 6:17-19, NASB)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians

13:4-7)

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:5-6)

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

In view of the above Scriptures, we seek to introduce our clients to the Savior in this manner:

We ask Christ to be formed in the CGM staff, Board, and volunteers, making us living epistles so we love as He loved us.

As we see our clients through God's eyes, treating them with dignity and turning our compassion into action, we pray that our clients see Christ in us.

As we constantly express God's love, we look for opportunities to extend an invitation to individuals who do not know Christ, to receive Christ. We may ask:

- Have you given your life to Christ?
- Would you like to?
- Would you like to do that now?"

If the person is not ready, we continue to love, pray for and pursue them. Relationship is paramount in sharing the invitation. It earns us the right to share the Gospel.

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City Gospel Mission and Statement of Faith

Our mission- Breaking the cycle of poverty and despair one life at a time

Our Statement of Faith:

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in the deity of Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death. through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

We believe that regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for the salvation of lost and sinful people.

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost: they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe in compassionate service that builds and preserves dignity, dependence to the Lord, and interdependence with other believers.

Appendix- City Gospel Mission Ministry Philosophy

It is CGM's philosophy to walk alongside participants to encourage them to become disciples of Jesus Christ. We strive to model Christ's example of being godly, compassionate, and relational in every interaction, with the end that participant's lives are truly transformed. Below is an explanation and some practical examples of how that plays out in real life.

Godly:

Every CGM program is bathed in prayer. We ask God to become real to each of our participants. We pray for wisdom. We pray God will grow each of our staff and volunteers to better reflect Him. And we pray God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is glorified in everything we do at CGM. Also, we believe that God established the Church, and He intends for His people to be active participants in a local church body. Therefore, all of our participants must be tied in to a local Bible-believing church. That is why all of our programs are done in partnership with local churches. When a participant is ready to leave one of our programs, we want them to be part a local church with several relationships already established in that church. And of course, in order for CGM to be godly, all of our staff and ministry volunteers must have a personal relationship with Christ and be working to become more and more like Christ.

Compassionate:

All of us, helpers and the helped alike are the same – sinners in need of God's grace to become like Jesus. Compassion is not limited to "giving" things to participants. It is the compassion of loving them as Christ loves them. It is helping people dream and set goals. It is helping them figure out not only how they can reach their dreams, but how to sustain themselves. We call the folks in our programs "participants" because they have to participate in the process. We are working together. They have to have skin in the game. Compassion is loving them enough to let them make their choices, let them fail and continue loving them through the process.

Relational:

CGM has learned that most people become disciples of Christ through long term relationships. Participants need to know we love them no matter what (even if they choose not to follow Christ). They need to know we have their best interest at heart, even though we don't always do what they ask us to do. It is a mutual relationship: both sides sharing resources, helping each other, and challenging one another to grow. The two (the helped and helper) work together to reach the goals they set. The one being helped must participate in the process, so he/she is not robbed of the joy of being part

of the solution, and is not kept in a perpetual state of need. This type of ministry takes a long time, usually years, but it produces lasting results.

Transformational:

And finally, the purpose of CGM programs is to see God bring transformation to a person's life. We know it is God who brings life change through the blood of Christ. And we know that each participant has to make his/her own decision to follow Christ. But we also know Christ called us to make disciples. Therefore, if a program is not producing disciples, then we will either revamp the program or put our resources into another one that is producing disciples. Every quarter, we evaluate our participants to measure their growth as disciples of Christ (and thus, our effectiveness).

Another way to say all of this is that in order to help someone, one must know the person's real situation (i.e. one has to have a compassionate relationship with him/her to know what is really going on). In *When Helping Hurts*, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert put it this way,

...failure to distinguish [what the situation really calls for] is one of the most common reasons that poverty-alleviation efforts often do harm."(Corbett, Fikkert, 2012, pg.99)

The help one gives needs to depend on the person's situation. If the person is in an emergency (life and death at stake), and he is incapable of helping himself, he may need "relief" – urgent, temporary provision of aid (often material) to reduce his immediate suffering from a crisis (Ibid., 99-100) .

But, if she is not in a life/death situation, her life is stable, then helping through "rehabilitation" or "development" is the appropriate intervention. The goal of rehabilitation is to restore her life to its pre-crisis condition. The goal of development is to work with her to become more of what God created her to be – to grow in her discipleship with Christ. (Ibid., 100).

This is a brief explanation of CGM's ministry philosophy. We believe that the attached Biblical Study on the Poor gives the basis for our philosophy. Following are some concrete examples of how we apply these principles to real life.

The Christmas Store and Thanksgiving Exchange

These two CGM projects are geared for people in situations requiring rehabilitation or development. The local church has a relationship with the people they register to participate. They know their situations; these are people whose low-income budgets

would be destroyed by the economic strain of providing extra food for Thanksgiving dinner or Christmas presents for their children. So CGM partners with the church to help make those family celebrations affordable.

With the help of many volunteers and donors, CGM sets up distribution centers. Those registered pay an affordable fee to shop at the distribution centers. In this way, a person with low-income can provide a Thanksgiving feast for herself and her family or Christmas gifts to delight her children without sacrificing the family's financial well-being. Throughout the year, the churches continue their efforts to help the participants become mature disciples of Christ, and CGM commits to pray for their success. Our overarching goal is to deepen each participant's right understanding of (and relationship with) God, himself, his family & the church, and the resources God provides to enable him to care for himself and his family.

Camps:

Summer camps are a wonderful way of taking the youth out of their normal (often dysfunctional) environment. Our camps place youth in surroundings and in activities wherein they experience who God is and how much they are loved. All of the youth that attend a CGM camp are a part of our year-long programs. We have found that it is important for the youth to "pay" for their Summer camp experience...this could be through cash, a reward for hard work through the year round programming, sweat equity or a combination of all three. Also all of our camps include mental and physical challenges to help the youth realize they can do more than they ever imagined...from riding a bicycle to Niagara Falls; to climbing a wall to; solving an initiative test. And of course each camp provides an "immersion experience" for the youth to discover or deepen their faith in Jesus Christ.

At Risk Youth programs

All of our At-Risk Youth programs are in partnership with a local Bible believing church. Whether it is Princess Ballet, Basketball, Soccer, Whiz Kids or a neighborhood program, they are all designed to bring the youth into a particular church. It is a mutual partnership where both the folks from the church and folks from the CGM are working together to bring holistic transformation in a youth's life. All our programs are Engaging (the youth really want to attend), Equipping (teaching the principles and skills the youth need) and Empowering (youth uses the learning outside of the program). And all of our programs place Christ-centered caring adults in the lives of the youth.

Recovery programs

The recovery program at City Gospel Mission serves both men and women. When someone is coming off Drugs or Alcohol they need a period of relief so our orientation phase gives them 45-60 days of a positive and nurturing drug free environment. At no cost to them they can experience a Godly opportunity for change. This also gives us the chance to love on them with Godly compassion. If the participant makes the choice to continue the process of transformation, then they will begin in the first of seven phases. At this point they begin the rehabilitation process and are required to "pay". Payment could be cash and/or sweat equity. In each of the phases the participant sets goals they want to accomplish with their case manager and then shares with the whole community. They set goals in these areas: financial, recreation, education, spiritual, social, exercise, and addiction. So in each phase they are going deeper with God, themselves, and others. Phase seven (development) is aftercare where the participants keep their relationship with the recovery community as they put their new skills into practice.

Job Readiness -

After an initial application and interview with a career counselor, the Participant attends weekly Club Meetings which involve a class and discussion on 10 biblically based life skills necessary for success in the working world and in life. Topics include Vision, Faith, Love, Responsibility, Hard Work, etc. Each class includes a lesson, bible lesson, and discussion on how it relates to work.

During the 10 week program, the participant meets with his or her career counselor to work on goals, barriers, and possible jobs. In many cases, evangelism and discipleship takes place during these sessions.

Job Placement-

While a Jobs Plus participant is working through our Job Readiness Program, we are preparing them for finding a job. Included in our 10 week Readiness Program is a 2 day seminar which focuses on developing Job search skills, building a resume, interviewing skills, mock interviews, learning what an employer expects, getting along with one's supervisor and co-workers, and developing a mindset to think about advancing in one's career. Upon completion of the two day seminar, participants receive a certificate and congratulations from our staff and their peers.

At this point, participants begin working on the job search on their own at our Computer lab. Staff then works to help arrange interviews with our Employer Partners and other employers we find with openings. For the interview we provide coaching, business attire, and prayer for success

If the participant does not receive the job, we review with him or her and discuss what happened. Then we help them to prepare for the next, successful, interview, until they are successful. We provide on-going career guidance for our graduates who can come back to us at any time to update a resume or get some additional counseling.