# Proper Response to the Poor

*Topic chosen due to recent influx of requests for help and wanting to ensure the right thing is being done by all. Definitions used are from Bing Dictionary unless otherwise noted. A quoted scripture is from the Holman Christian Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

* + - 1. Scripture Reading: James 2:1-13

1. Introduction
   * + - 1. What do you do when you see a person in need or who is poor?
         2. What do you do when a person in need asks for help?
   1. There can be a range of responses to the poor, especially those who ask for help

Let’s consider the attitudes first…

* + 1. Potential Attitudes
       - 1. Apprehension and Fear

Apprehension, that feeling of anxiety or fear that something bad or unpleasant will happen

Fear, being frightened of somebody or about taking action

*“Are they truly poor? Are they a liar/swindler/con-artist/addict/alcoholic? What will they do if I help them, buy more cigarettes and beer? Waste it on luxuries like cable TV?…”*

* + - * 1. Resentment, Contempt, and Indignation

Resentment, that angry, unhappy feeling you have when you think you are being asked to do something unfair

Contempt, that powerful feeling of dislike toward somebody considered to be worthless, inferior, or undeserving of respect

Indignation, anger because something seems unfair or unreasonable

*“I work hard for my money and now this person expects that I should just give it away so they can go waste it. I have worked hard to not be like that!”*

* + 1. Resulting Actions
       - 1. Ignore the poor, avoid them at all costs, and under no circumstance make eye contact
         2. Take the path of least resistance, just give them some spare change or even serious amounts just so you can get away as fast as possible
         3. Perhaps a more direct approach – tell them if they worked half as hard at real work as they worked at begging they wouldn’t need money, now pack up and go away!
  1. Sermon – Proper Response to the Poor  
     NOTE: The title is not “Proper Christian Response to the Poor”
     + - 1. This adjective is inherently implied

As a Christian you know the proper response is always the response that Christ would have you to make

Also as a Christian you believe the response Christ would have us make is the best, most proper response that exists

* + - * 1. If this isn’t true then you are living a very confused and frustrated life trying to mix man’s wisdom with God’s, using your wisdom to determine which is better, remember our goal—to have the mind of Christ (Romans 12:1-2)

Let’s start by considering a couple simple question…

1. What is Being poor? Who are the poor?
   1. Dictionary Definitions
      * + 1. Poor Definition: people who lack money or material possessions

Not very specific is it? Let’s also consider “Needy”

* + - * 1. Needy Definition:

living in poverty

a needy person does not have enough money, food, clothing, etc.

* + - * 1. Wikipedia Poverty Definition: Poverty is a state of privation (the absence or lack of basic necessities), or a lack of the usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions.

The most common measure of poverty in the U.S. is the "poverty threshold" set by the U.S. government.

For a single person annual income before government assistance it is set at $11,670 each additional person adds $4,060 such that a family of 4 would be $23,850

* 1. Biblical thoughts
     + - 1. Poor are with you with you always

John 12:1-8 – Jesus condones the use of expensive oil to honor him

It might seem that the poor are pushed aside, but considering Mark 14:3-9, the point is clear: v. 7: “You always have the poor with you, and you can do what is good for them whenever you want, but you do not always have Me.”

Very similar to Luke 10:38-42 where the serving of tables is presented as more important than listening to Jesus

* + - * 1. Seeking to end poverty if futile (Deuteronomy 15:11)

We will explore the Biblical definition as we continue, another basic question…

1. Why are people poor?
   1. Reasons
      * + 1. Bad Decisions

Consider the Prodigal son – Luke 15:11-32:

In particular v. 13: “…he squandered his estate in foolish living.”

V. 16 he was poor, he did not have the basic necessities of life: “He longed to eat his fill from the carob pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him any.”

Solomon offers many reasons why someone may be poor in the book of Proverbs

Proverbs 10:3-5 – idle hands verses hardworking hands

Proverbs 14:23 – endless talk verses hard work

Proverbs 20:13 – loving sleep (lazy)

Proverbs 21:5 – reckless verses having a plan

Proverbs 21:17 – loving pleasures and costly nonessentials

Proverbs 22:16 – oppressing the poor and giving to the rich

Proverbs 23:21 – drunkard and glutton

Proverbs 28:22 – being in a hurry for wealth

* + - * 1. Outside Influences

Consider the Israelites during the time of the Judges – Judges 6:1-6

Specifically mentioned is the sin of Israel and God punishing the people

What about the individual Gideon? Why was he poor?

Political tyranny such as what our brother Jason Hunt described in Africa due to President Robert Mugabe

* + - * 1. Circumstances

Medical

Woman with the flow of blood – Mark 5:25-34 v. 26: “She had spent everything she had and was not helped at all. On the contrary, she became worse”

A man lame from birth – Acts 3:1-6

Career choice – some professions make less than others (Acts 3:1-6)

Loss of the financial provider – Naomi and Ruth

Elimelech moved his family to Moab where he died and after 10 years of being in the land of Moab his sons died (Ruth 1:4)

Naomi was an Israelite and Ruth was a Moabite and it appears due to single reason of there being a lack of food, Naomi moved back to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:6,19)

* + - * 1. Disruptions (change in the economy/technology)

Silversmiths – Acts 19:23-27

The Cagle family is suffering through this in the insurance adjustment world

Warning: Any job where the employee’s job is to make decisions or fill out forms that is defined by a set of general governing rules is in immediate danger.

* + - * 1. Tests and Trials – Job
  1. Additional questions
     + - 1. Is being poor the result of sin? Is being poor punishment from God?
         2. The answer to these questions must be considered on an individual basis

Answer is impossible to say without direct revelation

We know some sinful actions lead to poverty as Solomon pointed out

But to say all poverty is punishment from God is the same as saying all prosperity is from God, so the richer you are the more Godly you are…

* + - * 1. Proverbs 22:2 – God made the rich and the poor
        2. As a sign that Jesus was here he told the disciples of John as evidence of his coming “Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind see, the lame walk, those with skin diseases are healed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news.” Matthew 11:4-5 just as was prophesied in Isaiah 61:1
        3. James 2:1-12 shows that distinction based on economic status is not right
        4. Luke 16:19-31 – the rich man was in torment and the poor man in paradise

How are we to treat the poor?

1. Treatment of the Poor
   1. Old Testament Commands
      * + 1. Do not take advantage of them

Interest free loans – Exodus 22:25

Fair trials – Exodus 23:6, Leviticus 19:15

* + - * 1. Make allowances for their provision

Fallow field on the 7th year – Exodus 23:11

Leave some grapes and all the fallen grapes – Leviticus 19:10

Leave the edge of the field and the gleanings – Leviticus 23:22

* + - * 1. Provision for service

Lower cost sacrifices are allowed, but sacrifice still required – Leviticus 14:21

Special vows – Leviticus 27:8

* + - * 1. Lend to them without profit

Interest free loans – Exodus 22:25

Lead willingly to your brother – Deuteronomy 15:7

Possible nullified loans – Deuteronomy 15:9

* + - * 1. Do not show preference to the poor in judging – Exodus 23:3, Leviticus 19:15
        2. Be kind and fair

Do not use their surety – Deuteronomy 24:12

Do not oppress – Deuteronomy 24:14, Zechariah 7:10

Pay the poor daily for their labor – Deuteronomy 24:15

What happened if this was not done?

* 1. Old Testament Failures
     + - 1. Judah and Jerusalem (Sodom) – Isaiah 3:1-15
         2. Jerusalem (Sodom) – Ezekiel 16:49
         3. Israel and Judah – Amos 2:6-8; 5:10-12; 8:4-6
  2. Proper Attitude and Action
     1. The Good Samaritan – Luke 10:25-37
        + 1. The traveler was robbed, beaten, naked and left to die (Luke 10:30)

The traveler did not ask for help, his need was obvious

Why was this man in this state? It is possible the traveler was:

A swindler – was he targeted because he had swindled money from people in Jerusalem?

Rich – why was he targeted, was it due to his opulent clothing?

A gambler – was he beat and robber because of a gambling debt?

A charity worker – was he carrying money to help the poor of Jericho?

Point: The needy person’s background is not essential information when the need is immediate

* + - * 1. V.33 *“…when he saw the man, he had compassion.”*
        2. Compassion, that feeling of sympathy for someone who is in a bad situation because you understand and care about them
    1. Boaz – Ruth 2:2-12
       - 1. Ruth was a foreigner, she was poor and destitute, she was vulnerable
         2. Boaz was prominent, rich man, capable of good or evil toward those beneath him
         3. The attitude and actions of Boaz show compassion toward Ruth
    2. See to the poor’s need
       - 1. Acts 3:1-10 – no silver and gold but healing
         2. James 2:14-15 – the immediate needs of a person cannot be ignored
         3. Both examples of the Good Samaritan and Boaz the immediate needs were seen to
  1. Practical advise
     + - 1. With compassion and the desire to see the individual obtain what they need, our interactions with those who ask for help should be a fluid as when we speak with each other
         2. Talk with the individual

Seek details about why they are in need, don’t pry, just ask questions related to what they have shared

If the need is gas, electrical bill, medicine, see to that exact need

* + - * 1. While our assistance comes without strings attached, realize the need for their soul—they came to us, why?
        2. Programs available – help them get into them (such as our brother Henry)
        3. Earlier I said seeking to end poverty is futile, but seeking to end a specific person’s poverty is possible
      1. 2014/06/22 Oak Ridge coC w/o PowerPoint