

Biblical Help to the Poor

A Discussion of Principles for Effective Mercy and Compassion

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There's no guarantee someone will be around to let you into the courtyard for the Seattle housing complex consisting entirely of Muslim families, but small groups give it a try anyway once a month, bringing about 20 bags filled with the very basics of food to give away door to door. It's become a tradition at the apartments celebrated by the dozens of elementary-aged children filling the courtyard on nice days to welcome any visitors that would be willing to start an impromptu game of soccer, try Double Dutch jump rope or just be willing to test their speed in foot races. However, the same tradition of bringing "blue bags" seems to be bothersome and annoying to the adult inhabitants, about half of whom refuse the bags and ignore the deliverers. Groups have been greeted at the gate with a sigh, and a very reluctant admittance to the property. Across town, at the apartment complex in Bellevue where blue bags of food are also delivered, luxury cars dot the parking lot and the absence of children playing outside leaves the task of going door to door to deliver feeling cold and impersonal, if not unwanted. These bags have been delivered once a month by small groups since before I attended Blue Sky Church, but the only interest generated in church or even Christianity that I've heard of has been a woman coming to a Sunday service once and then never coming back. Is "help to the poor" a misleading name for the program? Not only is the attempt at filling a need to provide food failing to support any interest in church or the living God full of mercy and compassion, but it's even unclear what the need is. The program itself seems to be most effective in satisfying the average Seattle churchgoer's often subconscious qualification that a local church do something to advance the social gospel.

But would it be better to throw our hat in the ring of the local homelessness industry? Here there seems to be another large mess of misunderstanding, misappropriation of funds, and misdiagnosis of the actual problem. At first glance, the numbers can appear impressive, with 2,594 unsheltered homeless counted in King County in 2012 (One Night Count: 2012 Results), along with 2,682 people staying in shelters, and 3,554 more in transitional housing (One Night Count: A Realistic). These statistics however are likely inflated, since the unsheltered number includes anyone walking on a street between 2 and 5 AM and anyone on a late night bus, even if they are just working the night shift. Assuming all 2,594 unsheltered "homeless" in King County were in fact in need of a place to stay is there anything being done to

accommodate them? A quick online search provides names of 32 area shelters open year round with an additional 6 open during the winter. Other options include existing tent cities and at least 44 rent and utilities assistance programs. On a larger scale in the United States, one of the most difficult problems of homelessness often seems to be an inability to find people genuinely homeless or with basic needs neglected enough for them to be going hungry (Olasky 15). At Seattle Pacific University there is a program called Urban Plunge designed to help students empathize better with the homeless by living on the streets for a few days and nights in the dead of winter. Instead of highlighting the oppression and affliction of the homeless, most students are struck by the discovery that agencies eager to provide all basic needs saturate the urban area, leaving the homeless with plenty of time for panhandling with drugs, alcohol and cigarettes prevalent.

Panhandling itself has become a window into the soul of the problem with helping the homeless, making it hard to identify actual need behind cons and manipulation of guilt. Seattle has been criticized lately for an increase in dishonest and aggressive panhandling, but even the mayor is unready to take action citing the lack of “consensus in the community about what is the best approach” (Brill) (Heffter). Lack of consensus certainly creates a problem to developing a solution, but it could be the lack of information and harsh exposure to truth that prevents people from developing a stronger opinion. The outcry seems to come from those who have researched the problem in some way. Not only are there an abundance of award winning investigative reports detailing the deception, but almost everyone with regular exposure to panhandlers has at least a few stories to tell of rejection to trying to meet a perceived need (The True Payout to Panhandling) (Eaton). One report by WNDU-TV in particular highlights a man carrying a sign bemoaning the tough life of a homeless man with two kids, who admittedly has no kids and lives at home with his mother. He brags about his car and girlfriend, admitting he has no needs other than some extra money for partying and buying weed. Taking in about \$100 per hour from cars stopping to help, he makes about the equivalent of a normal salary of \$112,000 per year. My own experience in trying to help “homeless” panhandlers in my neighborhood has been a series of disappointments. After offering to come back with a warm winter coat and blanket for a woman who was shivering in the cold, she laughed and answered,

“No, I’m not homeless!” After a failed attempt to give a panhandler a cupcake, and while he was explaining to me his surprisingly healthy diet that put my mac n’ cheese dinners to shame, his “employer” interrupted us to check in to see how much money he made. It had apparently been a good night, and the “employer” congratulated the man, put his arm around him and the last thing I heard as they walked away was “drinks are on me tonight!” If consensus and successful results are hard to come by in a culture increasingly eager to meet the needs of the poor with government programs, sponsored non-profit charities, and a seemingly endless budget to do so, what is the role and responsibility of the church, and specifically the local church?

It’s well documented that the church has provided for the needs of the poor from the beginnings of Christianity. Shortly after the years of leadership by the Apostles, Christians are recorded and recognized for their generosity, not just towards the church as seen in the New Testament, but indiscriminately wherever there was unmet need. The second century novelist and historian Lucian, identifies the early Christian attitude in providing for each other; “See how they love one another! They are willing to die for each other! The eagerness of these men when one of them falls into misfortune is incredible; they spare nothing to bring him aid” (Schmidt 320). Beyond help for each other, the evangelical affect to helping the pagans is bemoaned by the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate, titled for his candid effort to promote any religion other than Christianity in order to restore the Roman empire to pagan worship; “These impious Galileans not only feed their own poor, but ours also; welcoming them to their agapae, they attract them, as children are attracted, with cakes.” (Schmidt 328). This example of Christian charity has been followed throughout the centuries by the catholic church, but today with the emergence of the “Social Gospel”, theological liberalism and an increasingly atheistic society, local churches vary drastically in their emphasis and beliefs behind help to the poor. Even among respected, theologically conservative leaders within the church in this country there are differing ideas, though each has programs for helping members or regular attenders and those outside of the church.

John Piper is one such influential pastor at Bethlehem Baptist church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. On May 22, 2012 Piper tweeted a distinction between Godly and ungodly poor;

“Don’t idealize the poor and afflicted. God is merciful, but he is not a refuge to the afflicted who cleave to their idols.” (Piper) This idealization of the poor is prevalent in many social gospel centered churches, but Piper’s church attempts to serve both poor within and outside the church, the difference being a Biblical model and emphasis. For members and regular attenders, Bethlehem Baptist has a Helping Hands Committee responsible for distributing aid. They make clear the criteria for church involvement by stating, “The closer your association with Bethlehem, the stronger our commitment to help meet your essential needs.” (Financial Help) The goal of the program is to meet every essential need of every member, and they attempt to reach this goal by giving money along with financial counseling, which can be a requirement to receiving help of any kind. These needs are defined by the program as “those necessary for physical, emotional, and spiritual survival: food, shelter, clothing, transportation, counseling, etc.” (Helping Hand Policy Handbook). Despite the repeated emphasis in priority for members, this aid can extend to friends and neighbors of members and walk-ins that the committee confirms to be in need. Furthermore, Bethlehem Baptist Church endorses numerous compassion organizations in the area and supports both short and long term (church planting) missionaries. They refer anyone looking to become more involved to Here’s Life Inner City, a Campus Crusade for Christ subsidiary that oversees dozens of different programs aimed at meeting specific needs in urban areas, and Jericho Road Ministries, one of several of their own Bethlehem Urban Initiatives (BUI) organizations aimed to meet both spiritual and physical needs within the community. Jericho Road Ministries and other BUI programs are a collaborative effort with Bethlehem Community Church and several other local area churches.

Scottsdale Bible Church is another theologically conservative church that has had some influence on Christian culture due to the membership of Wayne Grudem, the author of many books including *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. In this book, Grudem touches on the role of the church in helping the poor when he writes; “This evangelistic work of declaring the gospel is the primary ministry that the church has toward the world. Yet accompanying the work of evangelism is also a ministry of mercy, a ministry that includes caring for the poor and needy in the name of the Lord. Although the emphasis in the new Testament is on giving material help to those who are part of the church (Acts 11:29; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 1

John 3:17), there is still an affirmation that it is right to help unbelievers even if they do not respond with gratitude or acceptance of the gospel message. Jesus tells us, “Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:35-36). (Grudem, Systematic 867-868). In his own notes in the ESV Study Bible, Grudem clarifies one expression by saying “You will be sons does not mean ‘you will become sons’ but ‘you will demonstrate that you are sons’ by imitating God’s care and compassion even for those who are evil.” This care and compassion Grudem speaks of cannot always mean financial assistance, especially when it would enable or worsen the true problem at hand. It is likely that lending money and expecting nothing in return, would be only one example of how to imitate God’s care and compassion. Since Wayne Grudem is not one of the pastors on staff at Scottsdale Bible Church, he doesn’t have any function of designing and implementing church programs but his close relationship with the church, even being asked to teach on Sundays on occasion, must provide some influence. Like Bethlehem Baptist Church, they have a program in place to provide financial help to poor members, but don’t advertise or promote it on their website. Within the church there exists a group of volunteer Financial Stewards that meet with needy members, attenders and pagans within the community to assess need, offer referrals to other programs or budget coaches, and give out financial help that comes from an Elders Fund taken up once a month in the church. Anyone seeking financial assistance must meet with a Financial Steward, who most often give them food gift certificates. Although Scottsdale Bible Church keeps a low profile in monetary assistance, they fund and promote many other forms of help to the community outside of the church, including drives such as a Thanksgiving Turkey Drive, and numerous short and long term missionaries spread throughout the world.

While similarities abound between the church that John Piper leads and the views of Wayne Grudem, two churches with striking differences are Redeemer Presbyterian in New York City led by Tim Keller and Mars Hill Church in Bellevue, WA led by Mark Driscoll. Though both are thoroughly reformed in theology, their practices of church help to the poor are on opposite ends of the spectrum. Keller places a large emphasis on the responsibility of the church to

address and overcome social justice issues within the surrounding culture. He even goes so far to say that, “The mark of the church is that it pours itself out for the people who are most in need in its city.” (Keller, *The Good*). This implies that not only is a true church to be identified as one that emphasizes serving the poor, but that the church ought to leave a social imprint on the culture it exists in. Redeemer Presbyterian offers a wide variety of this kind of help, by funding numerous non-profit organizations throughout the city, as well as their own self-described program for mercy and justice outreach called Hope for New York. Their vision is “to create a city in which individuals and communities experience spiritual, personal, social and economic well-being through the demonstration of Christ's love.” (Hope for New York) The Hope for New York program connects volunteers to over 35 programs, each of which focuses on a different niche in helping the poor or afflicted in the city. They also support several short term mission trips every year to spread their help to the poor to impoverished countries and people groups as well. While they derive the theology behind their emphasis on help to the poor on numerous Old and New Testament texts about mercy and justice, the main thrust of their perspective seems to come from the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:29-37. Keller often preaches on this passage and has even written books expanding upon his call to increase Christian compassion and justice (Keller, *Ministries*). He understands the heart of the parable to be the “who is my neighbor?” question and interprets Jesus’s answer as “anyone in your path” (Keller, *Blueprint*). This interpretation enables Keller to tie the second greatest commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself” to the social justice mission. Without distinction as to who receives the efforts of a Christian’s mercy, programs designed at bettering an individual’s social and economic standing outside of the church become just as important, if not more so, than similar programs within the church. Not only are the most obvious needs often found outside of the church, but if the purpose of mercy is designed to make the gospel palatable, then the pagan is much more in need of mercy directing him towards Jesus than the Christian. This thinking drives Redeemer Presbyterian’s focus on mercy in the outside community. The ideal visible results are undefined, at least partly because they vary between individuals and communities, but success is also measured by effort. Keller describes those in need of mercy from the church as those that “take time, they take money, and they take tremendous expense like in the case

of the Good Samaritan” (Keller, *The Good*) With a responsibility to provide assistance to “anyone in your path” and the high standard for sacrifice in doing so, it’s no wonder that much of the mission of Redeemer Presbyterian appears to be within social justice as a means to spread the gospel.

In addition to social justice outside of the church, Redeemer Presbyterian has established a program to help the poor within the church through their Diaconate. The program offers financial help with bills, food gift certificates, counseling, and housing placement among other things distributed by members that have been set apart in the church for this function. To justify the program they list Luke 10:25-37, Matthew 5:7, 1 Timothy 1:12-14, James 2:12-18, Micah 6:8, Colossians 3:12-17, Luke 17:3-4, Matthew 18:15-20, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 4:12-13, Deuteronomy 15:7-11, Acts 2:44-45, 1 Thes. 4:11-12, 2 Thes. 3:6-10, 1 Peter 1:3-9, 2 Peter 1:3-11, which will be examined in context later (Diaconate). The model for deacons likely comes from the appointment of seven leaders in Acts 6:1-6 to oversee the daily distribution of food for the widows in the church after complaints that many had been overlooked. Like the context in the early church as told in Acts, the Diaconate at Redeemer Presbyterian limits the needs met to those within the church.

Mars Hill Church, led by Mark Driscoll is a stark contrast to Redeemer Presbyterian in application of scripture. A lack of any programs providing money or resources is indicative that help to the poor is defined differently, though small clothing drives and partnerships with organizations such as Union Gospel Mission do exist. They exercise discrimination in giving financial help to the poor, not just as a church but individually as well. Driscoll states in a sermon “I would encourage you don’t give money to people in need unless you know them in life or you give it to an organization that actually assesses the legitimacy of their need. (Driscoll). Within the church, they highlight the Biblical model of financial help to the poor among Christians in 1 Timothy 5 and treat the issue as a private matter in providing for family. This is done internally by church leadership, and only to those fitting the qualifications in Paul’s letter to Timothy, with a specific application to their own membership. For example, since widows who are unable to provide for themselves aren’t as prevalent at this time, the parallel is made to single mothers who struggle to provide for and raise their children at the same time.

Just as widows were required to have remained faithful to their husbands, the same is expected from single mothers, as well as devotion and service within the church. An important distinction made, and interpreted from the same passage in Timothy, is that the financial burden falls to family first. Driscoll makes this clear when he says; “Before the burden goes on the church or goes on the state, the Bible assumes that the family will take care of its own.” (Driscoll). Under this practice, the church takes responsibility for single mothers that faithfully follow Jesus in the church and don’t have family to provide for them. For such a large and influential church to lack ambitious programs aimed at fulfilling some economic need such as ending homelessness or digging wells in a third world country speaks just as loudly as the constant calls and fund raising to address these needs by Social Justice proponents. Is doing only what is specifically outlined for the church to do in Scripture enough, or does the rest of the Bible, as a whole, require more from the church? The vast majority of the culture would say that it does, but can the culture be trusted when it carries a secular humanist worldview? Most people today would deny spiritual solutions exist to physical needs, and so of course programs aimed at meeting these needs through effort and money are most prevalent. Biblical texts are quoted on every side of the argument, and to answer the questions that surround the church’s mission and role in helping the poor, I now take time to examine the more famous texts that are said to speak on the matter in order to determine what they say in their proper context. I recognize my own deficiency in interpreting every subtlety and nuance of scripture, but I hope to show that the Bible is clear in what it speaks to regarding help to the poor.

I would like to proceed topically, as the Bible speaks to specific areas within help to the poor, but most passages contain commands or warnings that would blend the subjects so much that these texts would have to be broken up and referred to without their broader context. This would present a danger in quoting a sentence or two which would appear to promote a particular point of view, but could be misrepresented outside of the balance or clarification surrounding it. Because I believe it is dealing with the text in this way that has led to most of the confusion about the Social Gospel, I will attempt to go through texts speaking to “help to the poor’ issues chronologically, as they appear in the Bible. I will attempt to interpret what

each text contributes to the discussion on helping the poor in order to provide clear positions for Biblical actions.

Leviticus 19:9-18

The first major text associated with the Israelites care for the poor, and applied to the social justice movement is seen in Leviticus 19:9-18. The passage immediately follows God proclaiming his Holiness and calling the Israelites to likewise be holy in the first part of chapter 19. The instruction focuses on economic responsibility and fair treatment by first commanding the Israelites to remember the poor in the way they collect their harvest. They are told to leave some of crops in their fields for the explicit purpose that they would feed the poor and sojourners among them (vs. 9-10). This would have functioned as a type of welfare program in those days that would have extended to Israelites and foreigners among them. Since this law looks forward to possession of the Promised Land, and inheritance based land ownership of the tribes, Israelites without any share in the land would only suffer this kind of poverty temporarily until the Year of Jubilee when all lands were returned. This idea of the poor collecting the left-overs from harvest is demonstrated at the beginning of the book of Ruth, as she meets Boaz while collecting food in his fields. As for the sojourners in the land, there would be no possession of land, except for acquiring it from needy Israelites, only to lose it again in the Year of Jubilee. They would have been in a more destitute situation, although they were likely following the Israelite's laws and perhaps even worshipping the living God to be permitted among them. In fact Leviticus 24:16 holds sojourners to the same punishment of death as Israelites for blaspheming God's name, and Leviticus 24:22 holds them accountable to the same laws as the Israelites. The modern day equivalent to economically care for the poor seems to be programs that function like Medicare, which are abundant today, along with food banks and housing shelters as previously discussed. As for sojourners, since Christian authority does not extend into economics and government, the equivalent hospitality seems to apply to a stranger coming into a church service on a Sunday, eating donuts, drinking coffee, experiencing the effects of the Holy Spirit's presence and being treated kindly by the church. The purpose for the law sets up a social care system for the most basic of provisions in food, but still requires work for those taking advantage of it. The instructions were not to harvest all the crop and then hand

some of it over to the poor, but instead to leave some for the poor to harvest themselves, allowing for the poor to work in order to eat, a principle to be discussed later, as well as preventing greed from rising up in the landowners and a consideration for the poor in the land.

The next several verses address sin in business practices such as stealing (v. 11), swearing falsely (v. 12), failing to pay workers (v. 13), taking advantage of the disabled (v. 14), showing partiality to rich or poor in court (v. 15) and slander (v. 16). These commands to act righteously are not just to prevent the poor from being oppressed, but to establish righteous behavior within Israelite economics and law. In fact, verse 15 suggests that at times the tendency may be to show partiality towards the poor instead of justice, but discourages the practice as unrighteous. Verses 17 and 18 change the focus slightly and address the Israelites' attitudes towards their brothers. Jesus later described the command referred to in this section the second greatest commandment, to "love your neighbor as yourself". However, in these verses, each command is qualified by "brother", "neighbor", and "sons of your own people". Even the command to love your neighbor as yourself comes as the converse to sins against the "sons of your own people". While in light of the whole scripture, these kinds of attitudes were sinful toward pagans as well, it is likely that a tendency to treat only Israelites with love developed and needed correction by Jesus's teaching in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which I will look at later. These commands certainly don't promote mistreatment of pagans, but they also don't seem to speak to Christian treatment of the poor except indirectly by discouraging greed and dishonest business practice within God's people. These types of sins "profane the name of your God" and were to hold no place in Israelite society as well as the church today.

Later in the same chapter of Leviticus, specific treatment of foreign sojourners is given: to do him no wrong, treat him as a native, and love him as yourself. This clearly reflects the second greatest commandment earlier in the chapter, applying it to sojourners in the land as well. The Israelites are reminded in the second half of verse 34 that they themselves were "strangers in the land of Egypt," likely to humble them and clarify that even the land they were to possess was given to them. This seems to serve as a measure to prevent the Israelites from treating sojourners poorly because of their lack of land ownership and hereditary rights. Verses

35 and 36 repeat the command of righteous business practices to prevent the Israelites from cheating each other and sojourners through false measurements or goods.

Leviticus 25:8-55

The descriptions of the Year of Jubilee are often used in arguments for economic help from Christians to the poor, and even in extreme cases, a Christian society that strictly follows principles regarding debt and land ownership. In Leviticus, the Jubilee is kicked off on the 50th year with a trumpet blast on the Day of Atonement, on the tenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 25:8-9). At this time, those sold into slavery will be returned to their lands with their debts forgiven and property that had been sold will be returned to the clan that owned hereditary rights to it given by God. This ensured that no group of people dominated the wealth in Israel, and that even if land or people were lost due to economic blunders or bad management, they would be returned so the next generation did not suffer as a result. These provisions do not speak to other possessions such as money and cattle, and so wealth could be accumulated over generations without taking away land from others that would need it for survival. Verses 15-17 ensure that this return of property is not taken advantage of by requiring those that buy and sell land to do so with adjusted prices, looking towards the restoration of the lands at the Year of Jubilee. This is a necessary practice since the land itself is not truly sold, because it will be returned, but the profit from crops that are to be grown on that land in the meantime belong to the new land owner. A fulfillment of the Year of Jubilee without cheating each other is accompanied by the promise of provision (v. 19) and even a miraculous three year harvest to provide for the Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee during which no harvest is permitted (v. 20-22).

The rules of redemption of property are described in further detail in verses 23-34, but follow the same principles that maintain property within a clan throughout generations, but not necessarily possessions. Houses within the city are not to be returned at the Year of Jubilee, but houses outside of the city are to be given back. These rural houses likely came with property used for agriculture, which was not to be lost permanently. Kindness towards Israelites who have fallen into poverty is to be given in the form of no-interest loans, and free food. Poverty was not to be taken advantage of, and wealth was not to be gained at their further expense.

When Israelites fell into poverty, and land sold was not enough to reestablish themselves financially, they would sell themselves and/or family members to work as servants. These servants were to be returned to their people at the Year of Jubilee unless they could be paid for before then (v. 40-42), and were to be treated well, with a proper fear of God (v. 43). However, there are different rules applied to slaves that are purchased from pagan nations surrounding the Israelites. These people were allowed to be made into slaves that would even pass from generation to generation, unless they were purchased back (v. 44-46). A distinction is made between Israelite and foreigner (sojourners in the land) in that Israelites were not to be made into slaves like the others. The same principles applied to property sale regarding the Year of Jubilee are also applied to the sale of Israelites as servants (v. 47-55). In direct contradiction for treatment of pagan servants as slaves, Israelite servants may be purchased back by family according to time remaining before the Year of Jubilee, at which time they are to be released. Even though this doesn't promote or condone the mistreatment of pagans, there is a precedent established in special treatment and preservation of rights for Israelites, not extended to others, even foreigners living in their lands and observing their laws.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19

After making distinctions between sojourners and Israelites, the Lord affirms his love for the sojourners living in Israel. In the first part of Deuteronomy 10, God's commandments are given on new stone tablets. He immediately follows with an appeal for the Israelites to obey them for their own good (v. 13) as a reflection on his own character. He describes himself as a God who is "not partial and takes no bribe" (v. 17), . after giving them the Ten Commandments. He declares his justice, his care for the fatherless and widows and his love and provision for the sojourners. He then follows with the command to love the sojourners because Israel once sojourned in Egypt. God's love for these foreigners is used in parallel with the command to love. A direct example for how to go about doing this would be to provide food and clothing. They are to do the same, but just as God has not promised his provision to those who set themselves up as his enemies so I don't think he is commanding the Israelites to do what he won't. God loves the elect that come to him no matter where they come from, but a Christian's attempt to provide for those that reject God would only enable them to go on, unaware of their need for

Him. God's love in this passage is likely a referring to the elect sojourners who have come to Israel to worship him and follow his laws.

Deuteronomy 15:1-18

With the Israelites on the verge of gaining the Promised Land, many of the Levitical Laws are restated for their behavior once they take possession. This includes the Sabbatical Year, which in Leviticus was described in terms of agricultural use, that the seventh year was not to be sown or harvested to provide rest for the land, and a benefit for the soil. In Deuteronomy 15 another aspect of the Sabbatical Year is described with the forgiveness of debt loaned to fellow Israelites. "Every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the Lord's release has been proclaimed" (v. 2-3). All debts were to be forgiven between Israelites, a detail highlighted by the addition of "his brother", and contrasted in verse three with the allowance for debts to still be collected from foreigners. The apparent purpose of the Sabbatical Year is not to create an economically equal society, but to prevent the Israelites from becoming impoverished (v. 4), a result that would have brought disgrace on God's chosen people from the surrounding pagan nations, so long as they follow his commandments (v. 5). This lack of basic need among the Israelites would have been recognized by other nations, who would borrow from and be ruled over by the Israelites, giving God glory.

Though God promises the Israelites a freedom from poverty should they "strictly obey the voice of the Lord your God," an assumption is made that they will ultimately fail at some point with the instructions to help the poor in the rest of the chapter, and an explicit statement in verse 11. For these Israelites that become poor, no distinction is made for how they fall into it, whether their own fault, someone else's or causes completely outside of their control. The response from their fellow Israelites is to be the same, to "open your hand to him, and to lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be" (v. 8). Forgiveness in lending is followed by a command to release poor Hebrews sold as servants to pay their debts. Not only are they to be freed in the seventh year, but they are to be provided with livestock, food and wine generously, as a reflection of God bringing the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Although the idea of forgiving the debts of fellow Hebrews is consistent with expectations for Christians today, as in

Luke 6:35, the practice must be held with the rest of the Bible, so that it is not done to enable or promote laziness and irresponsibility within the church. The rest of the Sabbatical Year commandments provide a helpful principle, not a blueprint for help to the poor since basic provisions for the poor are prevalent in government social programs. A distinction is again made in this chapter that Christian charity ought to extend first and to a much higher level to fellow Christians. In fact, the idea of the Hebrews lacking poor when following God's laws and creating an admirable society to be seen by others is consistent with the way the church is to be seen today, and glorifying to God. And finally, I think it important to note again that a redistribution of wealth is not the idea promoted here. Though basic needs are to be met for poor Hebrews generously, there is no call for the wealthy to become poor, or sacrifice their wealth. The rich are not condemned, only the greedy, a principle to keep in mind as we continue through the Old Testament teachings on help to the poor.

1 Samuel 2:7-8

The story of Samuel begins with a barren mother, who after conceiving and dedicating Samuel to a life of service to God, prays a beautiful declaration of God's authority and control. She states "The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor" (v. 7-8). Like many passages from the Bible are taken from their context to declare sin for the Christian that doesn't fund every homeless man who begs for money, this passage could be used improperly to excuse a lack of mercy by leaving it to God to lift up the poor. Although God's sovereignty includes economic distribution, it doesn't prohibit or handcuff those who would be agents of mercy on behalf of God, as promoted elsewhere in scripture with balance of responsible giving. That being said, what seems to me to be one of the fundamental flaws in the Social Justice movement is the humanistic approach that would solve all the economic problems in the world with physical solutions and lots of manpower. Ultimately instead of being guided by scripture and the Holy Spirit, this approach ignores any effects the solution will have long term, the purpose of God in poverty, and the actual needs and wants of the poor. The truth is that ultimately God makes poor and makes rich, has access to more than the world's resources, has plans with a scope far beyond our lifetimes, and values

spiritual wealth far more than physical. Any program that forgets God's authority in this way, likely has forgotten a means to help poverty that will effectively spread the Gospel.

Job 29:12-17

The story of Job is a helpful reminder that God does not hate the wealthy, and that being so is not sinful in itself. As Job prepares his summary defense to his distracting friends, he not only asserts his righteousness in answer to the claim that he has somehow sinned and offended God, but he details his generosity. Though respected and in a great place of honor, "I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous and made him drop his prey from his teeth" (v. 12-17). Job has gone further than required in scripture for the normal citizen, even preventing others from causing injustice. His care for widows and those perishing reflects James 1:27 and his care for the blind and lame is similar to Isaiah 29 which Jesus fulfills in Matthew 11:5. He is however, not the normal citizen, with a high position of power and authority. It should also be recognized that through all of his help to the poor, Job does not become poor or despise his wealth. Instead he uses his wealth to provide for the poor in his society, likely those that would have been at least mostly fellow Hebrews, since even though the setting is likely outside Israel, Hebrew laws would have necessitated a subculture. What can be gained from Job's treatment of the poor is that they are the product of his righteousness. His love for God has created a character that holds high power and wealth, but remembers the poor and provides for those who are unable to provide for themselves. A similar product could be observed within the church today, when a Christian loves and follows Jesus, the effects are noticeable within the church, and the result is a love for the Christian that causes hearts to sing for joy.

Psalm 112

Psalm 112 is a celebration of the righteous, describing the life of one who follows the Lord well. Characteristic to this life is provision from God with the ability to give to those in need (v. 3). This wealth is not caused by crooked business dealings but a generosity to lend (v.5), and the result is giving to the poor (v. 9). Although the scope of these Psalms can be assumed to be those living within Israel who worship the true God, extra context is given from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. I'll stop to look at this text in more detail later, but the quote is used to encourage giving to poor Jewish Christians in Judea (2 Corinthians 9:9). Although treating all people with mercy and compassion is necessary, this text again speaks to people within the community of Israel when it celebrates generosity and giving money to those in need. These actions are present in the life of a righteous person, but it seems especially so towards God's people.

Proverbs 6:6-11

It's difficult to derive much of a context from passages in the book of Proverbs since many seem to stand alone even as a single verse. However, every piece of writing has an audience, and it's fairly safe to assume that Israelites were in mind with the writing of this book. Even if the wisdom was not all directly from the mind of King Solomon himself, the purpose behind it is a guide for followers of God and can be applied within that community primarily. The first proverb to be examined is in chapter 6, verses 6-11 which speaks as a warning to the "sluggard" who is bound for poverty. The ant is used as an example of responsibility, preparing food without compulsion, and the result of sleep and rest is told to be poverty. This Proverb begins as many do, with the address to "my son", and even sounds like a father giving a serious warning to his child. This passage fits in with Paul's assertion that those who don't work shouldn't eat (2 Thes. 3:10) and ought to act as a balance in our understanding of charitable giving. The goal for the giving already discussed is not to enable the poor in society to get by without any effort, but that they may be given the dignity of the chance to work and provision only when this is impossible. Charitable giving, mercy and compassion has gone seriously wrong if it promotes the laziness of the "sluggard."

Proverbs 14:31

Proverbs 14:31 addresses an important issue in response to the poor. The call is to be generous and not oppressive, but the ultimate reason is out of honor to God. Because Man was made in God's image and continues to bear that distinct honor within creation, there is a baseline of honor to be given to all men. This is why mercy and compassion extends beyond those who themselves honor God. Although those belonging to God most properly reflect him, even those who are his enemies are to be treated with the respect that comes with bearing his image. Because of this, oppression insults God and generosity honors him. A similar point can be made from Matthew 25:31-46, and I think that the clarification "my brothers" places an emphasis on help to Godly poor being especially honoring to God.

Proverbs 19:1

I have already stated that God is much more concerned with our spiritual state than our economic state, because it will have an incomparably larger effect on our eternal state. Proverbs 19:1 maintains this value with instruction specific to the poor. This time, instead of wisdom to gain responsibility and the monetary benefits it brings, the poor person who "walks in his integrity" is held up. The right to achieve wealth by any means is never given in the Bible, and that means that the same standards for justice and righteousness that apply to the wealthy apply to the poor. The easy road to wealth and prosperity is not for the Godly, even if there were such a thing. A poor person is vastly better off if he were to live his entire life in poverty but gain the kingdom of God than one who achieves all the luxuries in life by crooked means.

Proverbs 19:15

Later in the same chapter, a similar warning to chapter 6:6-11 is made against laziness in verse 15; "Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger." Here again, a warning is issued for those who would rely on the work of others to get by in life, and the direct consequence of this inaction is assured to be hunger. This shouldn't come to as a surprise, however, because beggars that refuse to work are assumed to be hungry (though many are well fed) and it's out of this assumption that the guilty giver supports much of the homeless industry. Hunger is not the focus here, just an ends that points to a the problem of laziness, which is what ought to be addressed. Within the church, the lazy feed off the charity of the hard working, and rob from the orphans, widows and disabled and ought to be

admonished. If necessary, the lazy should be trained to work hard. Outside of the church, guilt for the same robbery exists, although lack of relationship prevents the means to get at the true problem of laziness when it exists.

Proverbs 21:5

To accompany laziness along the road to poverty, Proverbs 21:5 adds “everyone who is hasty.” Compared directly to diligence, and the abundance it brings, hastiness is warned against in chapter 19:2 as well, but here for the first time is directly related to poverty. Careful planning and even shrewd business, as long as it is done justly, are promoted within the Bible and ought to be spread and implemented as much or more than money. Learning and putting them into practice helps an individual work for their own provision, free up resources for those who can’t, and enables them to honor God in giving themselves. Many in today’s culture seem to seek an easy path to wealth, or a “get-rich-quick” scheme and the poverty that follows ought to direct them towards refining their character not getting by on the help of others so they can give the same method another shot.

Proverbs 21:13

It is good to balance the harsh lessons laziness and haste can bring with a warning to those in position to give. Later in chapter 21:13 this warning is “whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.” The consequence for ignoring the poor is dire and ought to affect the heart of a Christian. However, it ought not to make the Christian abandon all expectation for responsibility in the poor as just discussed in order to sooth their concern for God to hear them. The quick fix is not the correct one, because giving to the lazy and hasty and preventing them from the need to change may ease the conscience but it is not truly helping in the way it should. The cry of the poor ought to be heard by the Christian, but it should also be interpreted and acted upon with the wisdom from the rest of scripture. Since these proverbs are meant for the correction of those fearing God, the concerned Christian should first help in the learning of responsibility as it applies to cases individually.

Proverbs 30:8-9

With all the talk about rich and poor, one might begin to think of economic position as two extremes. However, the last text to discuss in Proverbs, Chapter 30:8-9, the ideal position is shown to be a type of middle class. The author prays for “neither poverty nor riches” as to not forget their dependence on the Lord and not be tempted to steal and profane His name. Although not everyone will be able to fit nicely into this position, since there will always be rich and poor, it is the best spot to be in to prevent money from replacing God. I think the first part experientially makes sense to most Christians in America who have felt themselves void of pressing needs and far from God. More than the temptation to steal, most at some time or another have likely felt covetous or envious of those that have more. Like stealing, this dishonors God and his provision, worshipping the material and money instead. Throughout focusing on the issue of help to the poor, one understanding that ought to persist is that money and possessions are temporary and pose a threat for stealing our adoration from God. We examine this problem because of the desire to bring honor to God with our money, and must be careful that it doesn’t become the focus and so replace him by creating systems that fit rules but lack, mercy, compassion and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 1

It is clear that the book of Isaiah was written for the Israelites, as it contains calls to turn back to God, with warnings of destruction and promises of prosperity if they listen, as well as many prophecies looking forward to Jesus. The first chapter holds a plea for the nation to turn away from wickedness, and describes them as having “become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them” (v. 14). Although turning back towards God involves for them more than how they treat the poor, they are told to “learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s case.” Spoken to the Israelites, the application is likely towards fellow Israelites, but honest business dealings (almost always referred to in “justice”), opposing oppression, and treating the orphans and widows fairly don’t need to be isolated to only those who worship the real God. Doing the opposite of any of these would be sinful and dishonoring to God, and ultimately result in God’s displeasure and turning away from them (v. 15). This must apply to anyone, but it doesn’t necessarily speak to poverty. The focus

on the passage is not lifting up the poor, but treating them fairly and ending oppression. This job would have applied to everyone in smaller business dealings, but the problems with corrupt officials and bribes which were denying the poor justice would need the king and appointed judges to correct. And so, although the passage calls for justice, it doesn't speak to help to the poor beyond this.

Isaiah 58

A common text used to justify the Social Gospel, especially globally, comes from Isaiah 58:7. Here the call to "share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover him," has been the battle cry for mercy driven Christians to devote their lives to homeless ministries or third world country aid organizations. However, like the previous passage from Isaiah, the main point of the text is not care for the poor. God is speaking to the Israelites to correct their religious practices such as fasting (v. 3) where they have done an outward practice with evil hearts (v. 4). Instead of humbling themselves, they have gone after their own pleasure (v.3). Instead God describes the type of fast that he would choose; freeing the oppressed (v. 6), feeding the hungry (v. 7) and housing the homeless (v. 7). Although the passage primarily speaks to performing religious acts with pure motives and clean hearts, and ending oppression, as Kevin DeYoung states in his book *What is the Mission of the Church?*, "The implications of Isaiah 58 are straightforward: God's people should hate oppression and love to help the poor" (DeYoung 156)

Isaiah 61:1-2

Because Luke 4:18-19 is often quoted to insist the focus of Jesus's ministry was primarily social, and because he is quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2, I'll take a brief look at the context for the original text to shed light on what Jesus meant. From chapter 60 through 62, the focus has shifted from Israel's sins and guilt towards the promise for redemption, God's kingdom being established forever, and the coming of the Messiah to usher it in. Chapter 61 looks forward to the coming of the Messiah, who will have the Spirit of the Lord on him, from which he will "bring good news to the poor" in a new powerful preaching with authority, proclaim liberty to the captives in returning the exiles from Babylon and a spiritual freedom from oppression by the Enemy, and announcing the coming of a new kind of blessing from God in the coming of his

kingdom. This text looks forward to the Messiah and the benefits of his reign. Preaching to the poor would apply to all who heard and believed without economic distinction, and the liberty is also meant to be seen spiritually. In fact the text is not primarily speaking to economic position. Although the passage again does not speak to help for the poor, the promises of God's kingdom do foreshadow the shared provision within the early church and the end of poverty and suffering in the kingdom of heaven.

Jeremiah 21-22

In Jeremiah 21 and 22, instructions are given to several kings, each of which contains at least a small amount of instruction regarding the poor. The highlight of these is in 22:3 for the king of Judah; "Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place." Any Christian would do well and honor God in following these commands, but the specific audience for the passage is those with the authority to oppress and end oppression, such as the kings. Although the principles of fairness, not oppressing the weak, and not bringing physical harm to the innocent are necessary for Christians to follow, this passage is not meant to speak in particular to providing for and helping the poor.

Amos 5

During a time of brief economic prosperity for Israel under the kingship of Jeroboam, before being destroyed by the Assyrian Empire, the Israelites took their wealth as a sign of blessing from the Lord. Instead, Amos was sent to tell them of their impending destruction due to their turning "justice to wormwood" (v. 7). They are guilty of taking bribes, afflicting the righteous and ignoring the needy despite their wealth. These being a small number of their offenses, the Israelites were guilty of completely turning away from God, and the signs were far more abundant than neglecting the needy alone. Instead of the emphasis on care for the poor, the majority of the crimes involve injustice by the powerful over the weak. DeYoung states, "Amos 5 reaffirms what we've seen in the previous Old Testament passages. God hates injustice. But injustice must be defined on the Bible's terms, not ours. Injustice implies a corrupted judicial system, an arbitrary legal code, and outright cruelty to the poor." (DeYoung

159). The cries from the public against injustice from Christians and Non-Christians alike often spread to causes like environmental stewardship, though this is not what is spoken about in these texts concerning justice. Seeking justice in our society is a noble cause but Christians should not stretch texts like this one to justify the devotion of a life to a project when the main focus is turning back towards God in obedience and submission.

Micah 6

The setting of the book of Micah is very similar to that of Amos. Israel is in the same state, enjoying some wealth, but lacking a pursuit of God. Like in Amos, Micah sends news of God's judgment against them for idolatry (v. 1:7), oppression through the unjust seizure of land (v. 2:2), false prophets (v. 3:5), corrupt business practices (v. 6:11), violence and lies (v. 6:12) and taking bribes (v. 7:3). So the famous verse in 6:8 that says "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" is not referring to care for the poor, but care for society by ending oppression. Here again, injustice is used to describe crooked business dealings and corruption within the civil government, rather than distribution of wealth or care for the homeless that many Social Gospel proponents have interpreted. Instead of caring for the poor, the primary need for society in Israel is to end corruption. This passage speaks about fair treatment and kindness, not economic equality or even equal opportunity towards wealth.

As I now move into passages in the New Testament regarding help to the poor, I'd like to comment on some of the persistent themes in the Old Testament. First, it seems that most, if not all of these passages used to promote the Social Gospel have been taken out of context. This seems to be a dangerous practice, likely the result of going to the Bible for confirmation of an already devised point with a thick cultural lens. Those basing "ministries" and vocation on such interpretations ought to be lovingly helped through a more careful examination of the texts. Second, God is clearly interested in making a distinction between the Godly and ungodly. Third, despite a greater love for those that belong to Him, God pours out a general grace on mankind and requires justice not only for the benefit of the ungodly, but for the hearts of those who love him. Fourth, God addresses justice much more often and with higher expectation or disappointment than he does physical help to the poor. This justice ought to be defined based

on what the Bible speaks to (honest business practices, fair judicial decisions and protection of oppression like seizure of property) and not subjective definitions of justice. I'll take time after examining New Testament passages to revisit some of these ideas as they connect with the following texts.

Matthew 5:3

After Jesus begins teaching, telling about the Kingdom of God, and performing miracles, he addresses a large crowd in the Sermon on the Mount to give some insight into what the Kingdom of God is like. In the beatitudes especially, truths about the Kingdom of God are counterintuitive and some even seem in direct contrast with earthly experiences, such as blessings to the poor in spirit (v. 3), those who mourn (v. 4), the meek (v. 5), the persecuted (v. 10) and the reviled and persecuted (v. 11). Although the theme to these attitudes is the pursuit of God above the material, and a dependency on him, the "poor in spirit" text has been used to show God's favor especially falls on the poor in society. Although lacking material possessions and even provision could have the effect of increased dependence on God, Jesus is not speaking to the physical, but the spiritual. This is explicitly stated in verse three, indicating that Jesus is instead blessing those who recognize their own need to be saved and their inability to get there without the help of a savior. "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven" not because they have rid themselves of wealth but because they have rid themselves of pride and humbled themselves before God, confessing their sin and need of redemption.

Matthew 6:1-4

In the same sermon, after instructing the crowds on several other topics, Jesus teaches how to give to the poor in Chapter 6:1-4. He is not instructing the crowds to give, because he is assuming this form of righteousness is understood and taking place. Instead, he is getting at the heart behind giving, whether they are seeking attention and praise from those around them, or attention and praise from God "who sees in secret" (v. 4). Giving to the poor is not to put on a righteous face, but to fulfill an act of righteousness that has been prepared in advance. Instruction is not given for what is most helpful to the poor, because the focus is on the heart of the giver. Therefore the passage speaks to us about our motives behind charity; not to please or impress men, but to have generous hearts pleasing to God. When a person comes into the

church asking what we do for the poor, I have often felt the need to impress them or at least satisfy them with how sensitive we are to those needs. Instead, my attitude should reflect a confidence in God's pleasure knowing all the generosity privately done within the church.

Matthew 19:21, Mark 10:17-30 and Luke 18:18-30

Jesus often used physical commands to get at someone's spiritual deadness, and a prime example is his interaction with the rich, young ruler also told in Mark 10:17-30 and Luke 18:18-30. After asking Jesus what to do to make it into heaven, Jesus responds with the assertion that "No one is good except God alone" (Mark 10:18) in order to show him no amount of deeds would be enough. He sets the bar at perfection and brings up the commandments, which the man claims to have followed since he was young. Jesus loves him (Mark 10:21), and out of that love tells him that in order to gain what he is lacking, he must "sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21). I have heard this text used harmfully before to tell people you cannot have wealth and follow Jesus, and so lay an intense burden of guilt on an entire room of Christians comparing themselves to the third world poor. Although, Jesus does admit that "only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of God," (Matthew 19:23) after the man leaves, Jesus does not exclude the wealthy. In fact, if he did, it would be hard to imagine all of the Patriarchs to be turned away from God, and even some of Jesus's own followers who cared for his body after his death. Verse 25 in Matthew shows us that "when the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?'" Jesus responds that "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Their answer is that left alone to earn heaven through good works, man is unable to succeed, but God is able to intervene and bring people into his kingdom. The issue for the young man was not that he had wealth, or that others didn't around him, but that he trusted his wealth above Jesus. When it came down to it, he could not give it up to follow Jesus and so relied on his good works to save him instead. Although Jesus tells the young man directly to give away his wealth in these accounts, it is not a universal command to all Christians. Instead each Christian is called to trust Jesus above all forms of good works and all physical securities in this life. The love of money may be a stumbling block to some, or even most, but the love of anything over Jesus makes a person unworthy of him.

Therefore, this passage cannot be used as a template for giving all earthly possessions away, or any model of charity since it speaks instead to trusting in Jesus for salvation.

Matthew 23:23

Just like the Old Testament is full of warnings to those in positions of authority who have neglected justice and forgotten the poor, Jesus reiterates the same warnings to the powerful in his day. In the midst of a long list of woes to the religious leader Pharisees who set themselves up to oppose Jesus in Matthew 23, he exposes their neglect of “justice and mercy and faithfulness” in verse 23. The religious leaders have taken great detail in their tithes, to ensure even small gains were accounted for, but completely ignored justice, mercy and faithfulness. Though they are supposed to be spiritually leading the Israelites, they have forgotten whole chunks of the law. Jesus does not condemn the tithing practices, but tells them they ought to treat the rest of the law with the same care. As we have seen in Leviticus, depriving the people of fairness and mercy and giving them instead oppression is dishonoring to God. Justice indicates fair business practices and judicial impartiality, and an attitude towards others that reflects mercy received from God. This text also does not speak specifically towards help to the poor, but reminds the religious leaders that God loves justice and mercy.

Matthew 25:31-46

It seems that the most persuasive arguments within Christian culture for the full on pursuit of social justice and help to the poor are the texts that seem to set them up as a prerequisite for entrance to heaven. This is also perhaps the most dangerous misinterpretation of scripture because it undermines the truth that salvation comes by God’s grace alone, through faith in Jesus. An important passage that has been interpreted dangerously and caused much confusion and false terror in the elect is Jesus’s teaching about the final judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus is explaining what it will be like when he is to return in full glory to judge the earth, and he describes the distinction between those belonging to him and those that don’t as separating sheep from goats. He will welcome his sheep into eternal life by telling them “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me” (v. 35-36). When the elect strain to remember these

specific occurrences, Jesus clarifies that, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (v. 40). Those who don’t belong to him, Jesus later sends away to eternal punishment after explaining the failure to do what he has just described. It makes sense that this sends the concerned reader into a frenzy of guilt induced charity, since no one who seeks Jesus wants to be sent away to eternal punishment because he was somehow tricked into not recognizing him. And what a frenzy it could be! The list is quite extensive with provision of food, drink, welcome, clothes, care for the sick and care for the prisoners. Yet the thoughtful Christian will remember that none of these things are capable of providing enough righteousness to save them and become confused at what Jesus is requiring. First, a small but important distinction must be made. Jesus is not talking about the poor of the world, but “the least of these my brothers.” He is actually talking about Christians specifically, since this word for brother is only used in the New Testament to describe blood relatives or fellow Christians (What is the mission of the church? P. 163-164). Christians would do well to complete the list of provision to fellow Christians who are truly in need, but the second distinction to make is that even then, the provision is still not enough to save a man alone. Instead, like the works described throughout the book of James, this kind of love and affection for the church is evidence for the saving work already been done in him. Because a person has been saved by grace through faith, they respond to Jesus in love and so love his church as he does. Therefore, rather than use this passage as a holy checklist for entrance to heaven, or a model of help to social justice issues, it ought to serve as a heart check for Christians working out their salvation through fear and trembling by examining their love for Jesus’s church.

Matthew 26:6-13 and John 12:1-8

If there is ever a doubt in a Christian’s mind as to what is most important, social justice or the gospel, the account of Jesus anointed at Bethany in Matthew 26:6-13 and John 12:1-8 should clear it up. Jesus is reclining at dinner when a woman identified as Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus, in John’s account, pours a very expensive jar of oil over Jesus’s head. The disciples are indignant at the perceived waste of money, and Judas in particular asks why it was not instead sold and the money given to the poor (John 12:5). Although it is made clear that Judas was not concerned about the poor, but stealing the money for himself, Jesus answers

that the poor will always be there to give generously to, but he won't (Matthew 26:11), and he alludes to his death and the ointment as a symbolic preparation for burial. Jesus never condemns the act of giving money to the poor in this way, but he establishes himself, and his death and resurrection that are foreshadowed, to be of a greater importance. The importance of the gospel and devotion to Jesus over help to the poor is an important principle to recognize, especially since many social justice programs require pulling people away from their local church where they are being used to primarily spread the gospel. More often than not, those who were pulled away from their local church are required to perform a function elsewhere where they are used primarily to better someone's economic rather than spiritual standing. Although mercy and compassion projects may be effective in accompanying preaching of the gospel, Christians should oppose their tendency to become primarily economically based.

Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4

Jesus often directly opposes the religious leaders of the time, who have an outward appearance of piety but wickedness stored up in their hearts. Jesus has just been speaking to, and answering the questions of the scribes and Sadducees when he gives the people a warning not to follow them in their hypocrisy. He immediately follows this warning by giving the contrasting heart that is to be emulated in a poor widow giving her offering at the synagogue. Jesus sits in front of the offering box to watch the charity of the people and takes particular notice of a poor woman who gives the equivalent of a day's wage, all she had to live on (v. 44). It should first be noted that all the offerings were given to the synagogue, which would be the equivalent of the church today. Many Christians prefer to dispense of their tithe and offering to various organizations as they see fit, but the model for giving to the church for the church to distribute based on need is seen several times in the New Testament. The main focus of the passage rests in the circumstances and the heart of the giver. While others had given much larger amounts out of their abundance, she gave willingly, and probably what she thought was discretely, out of her poverty. Her act of charity required a trust in God for basic provision which is much more pleasing to him than the kind of charity that refuses to go beyond comfort. Furthermore, Jesus did not reject her gift because she was poor, but loved her trust in God

above wealth, which is the main principle to be taken from the passage, and one of the goals for helping the poor and the wealthy alike.

Luke 10:25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan has given me more trouble in determining the main point of the passage than any other I'm aware of. An expert in the law tests Jesus by asking him how to inherit eternal life. Jesus turns the question around on him and asks him to interpret the law on the matter. He recites the two greatest commandments, to love the Lord and love your neighbor, and Jesus confirms that he is correct. But the lawyer doesn't leave it alone and "desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" I believe this to be an important point to the issue for help to the poor because even though the contexts of the passages where this command is given imply the community of believers in the Israelites, as discussed earlier, if Jesus explicitly defines the term outside the church, it would prove my expositions wrong and imply a much higher level of responsibility for Christians to the poor in society. However, I believe the emphasis would not change in its submission to the gospel and the principles about giving in the rest of scripture. Jesus's answer to the question is the parable, in which an Israelite travels along a dangerous road and is attacked, robbed and left for dead. One by one a priest and then a Levite pass by, but do nothing to help the man. It is possible they were worried about falling into a trap, but it's safe to say out of all the Israelites, these would be expected to have the most compassion and help the man. Instead, a Samaritan stops to help, cleans him up at his own expense, takes him to an inn and pays for the rest of his care, promising to come back and pay whatever is spent. The Samaritans were considered half-Hebrews and hated by the Jews. They had a long history of mixing pagan worship with worship of the true God, though so did the rest of the Hebrews, and they were hated as betrayers, even worse than the surrounding pagans. After asking which of the men had shown mercy, Jesus tells the lawyer to "go, and do likewise." I would like to make two distinctions before beginning to discuss the possible interpretations of the passage. The first is that Jesus' parables were used to teach a single point, and that harm can be done in taking the parable too far by using details to teach important truths. The second is that the man in trouble was not poor, but oppressed, and through no apparent fault of his own. In analyzing the details, perhaps too much, the example

is not truly help to the poor. Another aspect that troubles me is that the Samaritans recognized the true God and looked ahead for the Messiah, even if they didn't worship or follow him well. Jesus even spent time teaching the Samaritans in John 4, during which many were saved.

I've heard this passage explained in multiple ways and have spent too much time trying to decide which seems more accurate for the still small amount of clarity I have. Tim Keller uses this passage in many of his works (*Ministries of Mercy, Sermons*) to define the term "neighbor" that is used throughout the Bible as anyone in someone's path. He asserts that like the Samaritan, we are responsible for needs as they are presented before us with the same effort and cost that the Samaritan undertook. Located in New York City, where very large social and economic problems are prevalent, this interpretation necessitates high effort of the part of every Christian. This drives their pursuit of social justice as a distinctly Christian undertaking outlined in this passage. In fact, this treatment of the poor is seen to be evidence of salvation according to Keller (sermon, *the good Samaritan on love*). However, if the answer to the question of "who is my neighbor?" is anyone in your path, then understanding that parables teach a single point not a how-to list would mean that the definition is applied to elsewhere in scripture and the details for implementation are drawn from there. The details within the parable would not be reliable for the blue print of expectation if they were used by Jesus as hyperbole to get his point across.

Although most other interpretations I have heard honestly seem to dance around the point without a clear definition, another more direct conclusion is that Jesus is commanding us to do something. This view fits with Keller's in that it allows for neighbor to be defined as anyone in your path, but it differs in identifying the command to show mercy (v. 37) without a detailed explanation of how that should look. I tend to lean towards this interpretation, but I am still unconvinced that Jesus means to define neighbor as everyone in your path. This could be an impossible task, depending on the level of need that warrants action, and how big the path is in such a globalized world. I can see why the lawyer asked who his neighbor was, hoping for a small population of responsibility. In fact, it was wrestling with this same question that made me realize many parallels to teachings about salvation within the parable. In assuming the first question, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life," is the subject of the parable and the

teaching, the lawyer's idea involves the fulfillment of commandments. Jesus affirms perfection to be the standard and so the lawyer, faced with his own shortcomings, desires "to justify himself." The ensuing parable contains many parallels to salvation if taking the perspective of the man who has fallen into harm. Encountering sin in life, we have been attacked, our dignity stolen, and left in a miserable state, unable to heal or help ourselves. Individuals representing the law do not help us, perhaps only showing us the impossible disparity between our tattered and bloody clothes and their rich and beautiful robes, just as the law is powerless to save us, only showing us how far from perfection we truly are. When the Samaritan passes, he condescends to save us, as a representative messiah, treats and cares for our wounds and pays the price for our care and protection. He then leaves giving what is needed to continue healing, and promising to come back one day to settle the account once and for all. I am not convinced this is the purpose of the parable, but found the gospel parallels to be encouraging. In my own opinion, I believe Jesus told the parable to take away the lawyer's ability to justify himself so that he might trust Jesus instead, and I believe the call to do something with those in need in front of us fits with Biblical ideas on help to the poor.

Luke 12:13-21

There has already been much in the Bible, especially the Proverbs texts, about the poor fool, but in the Parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:13-21, Jesus shows that economic security is not the goal for us. When faced with two brothers fighting over an inheritance, he rejects the position of arbitrator and warns that "One's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (v. 15). He follows with a parable of a wealthy man whose land produced such abundance that his barns were completely filled. Instead of giving the excess to those who would need it, he resolves to build larger barns so that he could "relax, eat, drink, be merry." But death comes to him and his savings are nothing to him. The man is not described to be a fool because of his wealth, or even his stockpiling, but because he has stored up "treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" (v. 21). Many interpret the passage as a condemnation of the wealthy who withholds what he has, but the point of the parable is that riches on earth are temporary and the spiritual wealth gained lasts forever. This idea is lacking within the Social Gospel, where Materialism spurs people on to provide for the poor economically, as if life is

about abundance of possessions. Oftentimes spiritual needs become secondary at best, though their accumulation will last forever.

Luke 16:19-31

The teaching that material wealth and prosperity is powerless to save is again evident in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. In the story, a rich man and a poor leper named Lazarus both die and while Lazarus goes to heaven, the rich man is left in eternal torment, despite his cries for comfort and help sent to his brothers. The rich man's wealth cannot alone be what has damned him, since we have many other examples of wealthy Godly men in scripture. Instead, it is likely the reliance on wealth in place of a need for salvation in Jesus. His unsaved state was made clear by his gluttony and daily ignoring the poor at his own gate. Although this passage does provide a healthy look into eternity that ought to make a Christian consider their life, it shouldn't create a works driven attempt to earn salvation. The warning here seems to be against putting trust in money and physical comforts in place of Jesus.

Acts 2:42-47

In the book of Acts, we are given a clear picture of the early church and its functions and priorities. Although I will be focusing on the texts that speak to helping the poor, the vastly greater emphasis of the early church was preaching the gospel and establishing local churches where more disciples would be made. Immediately following the first great preaching by Peter after the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, we get a picture into how the thousands that were just saved gathered together as a church in Acts 2:42-47. They were thoroughly involved in each other's lives and witnessing miracles and signs done in their midst. The result was recognition in the value of spiritual things over physical, and they sold their possessions to provide for any needs among them (v. 45). This passage does not promote a socialist society where everything is shared, as the apostles taught Christians within the churches to work in order to provide for themselves and release the burden from the church. It does however speak to a much more dramatic provision than seen to this point. This type of provision is explicitly among Christians and to fill any true need within that community. Here again a higher level of

responsibility is given for helping poor Christians that the pagans around them. The specifics for this type of help will be outlined in the passages to come.

Acts 4:32-37

A short time later we again see the state of the very early church in Acts 4:32-37. After experiencing some persecution with Peter and John arrested and threatened, they are still enjoying unity (v. 32), power of the Holy Spirit (v. 33), and provision for needs among them (v. 34). This provision came at a cost, since it was the result of disciples selling lands and houses, and it is again clear that in a Christian community the standard should be a complete lack of true needs because of the persistent generosity. However, some will need correction to work and be productive instead of continuously and unnecessarily burdening those around them. A detail worthy of note also comes in what the Christians were giving too. Instead of giving to needs only as they saw them arise, as has been the standard seen so far, they gave despite any knowledge of need, laying the money at the Apostles feet. The Apostles were then able to distribute the money to the true needs among them as they had the proper perspective and were led by the Holy Spirit. This form of giving should remain the model for Christians today. Instead of giving to many organizations without direction, the leadership of the church should be trusted in the distribution for the good of the church, as in the early church.

Acts 11:27-30

As the church becomes more established through the book of Acts, many more churches are planted and spread throughout the Roman Empire. In Acts 11:27-30, as the church is expanding rapidly, a famine is prophesied in the church at Antioch where Saul and Barnabas are leading. The disciples of the church each provide money to support the “brothers living in Judea” and each give “according to his ability” (v. 29). This passage explicitly states that the money collected and sent to ease the suffering from the famine was for fellow Christians. It also describes the method for giving by sending the collected money with Barnabas and Saul to the elders of the church, who would then distribute it to fill their needs. Giving within the church is consistently done with the trust of church leaders to do with the money as they see fit. This is an important example because it models inter-church relationships in which a wealthy church like Antioch was able to provide needs for a church suffering through a crisis in Judea. As a

connected network of churches, help to the poor has a Biblical context for functioning in the same way, from one church to another.

Acts 20:33-35

After Paul has planted churches in Macedonia and Greece and is about to leave them, he defends his honesty before the Ephesian elders, as recorded in Acts 20:33-35. Paul begins by insisting he has not been laboring to secure wealth (v. 33), but worked hard to provide for himself (v. 34) so that he was able to help the weak among them (v. 35). Although Paul had the right to except provisions from the church he had planted and led, he worked extra hard in order that he wouldn't burden them, and set an example for their own conduct. If Paul wouldn't burden the church with his needs, how much more should the other disciples there work hard to avoid being a burden? This kind of work ethic from disciples roots out laziness and ensures help for those who really are dependent on provision.

Romans 12:13

In a list of the "marks of the true Christian," Romans 12:13 records instructions for help to the poor. Immediately following such foundational practices such as hope, patience and prayer (v. 12), the command is given to "Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." It is important to recognize charity and care for the needy as a mark of a true Christian, but it is also important to again notice the explicit clarification that the needy are Christians. It could be considered that this contribution to the needs of the saints is met by a tithe, but it seems likely that the charity goes beyond tithes until a lack of need is recognized like the beginning of the church in Acts. Hospitality also would have been considered contributing to the needs of Christians especially leaders travelling between churches without accommodations.

2 Corinthians 8:1-15 and 9:1-15

More evidence for giving between churches can be found in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 and 9:1-15. Here Paul encourages the church by first telling them about the faithfulness of the churches in Macedonia, and their generous giving with joy even through extreme poverty. This is done "for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints" (8:4). Paul assures the Corinthians that he is not commanding them to give, but to prove their love genuine by finishing the

offering they started a year before by their own desire. He instructs them each to give according to what he has, “For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened” (8:13). Although some in Macedonia apparently gave enough to burden themselves, Paul is not requiring it, instead leaving it to the individual to give joyfully. In fact it seems like he never required them to give in the first place, but is encouraging them to finish what they started. His statements in giving only according to what one has is good clear instruction for generosity today, when many would be tempted to borrow in order to give and incur a heavy burden of debt. Instead, Christians should give joyfully from what they have; giving sacrificially if led to by the Holy Spirit like the disciples in the churches of Macedonia. After encouraging the Christians to finish giving, Paul reminds them of God’s provision and again states the result to be “supplying the needs of the saints” (9:12). The example of generosity given from the Macedonians is a valuable gift to be emulated, not only because of the blessing it brings to the needy Christians, but also because it effectively roots out the love of money from the church. The opportunity to give generously purifies the church from relying on money and increases faith and trust in Jesus. The poor church in Jerusalem, or whatever the beneficiary church may be, also benefits by the building up of their trust in Jesus and his faithful provision for his church. Benefits abound, but again the giving follows the consistent model of early church help to the poor, going exclusively to fellow Christians.

Galatians 2:10

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul describes his path in unity with the other Apostles and briefly mentions something that adds to our discussion of help to the poor in Galatians 2:10. After perceiving Paul as the one to be sent to the Gentiles with the same authority that Peter had been sent to the Jews, the other Apostles welcome Paul with “the right hand of fellowship.” Their one instruction for him is to remember the poor, which Paul confesses his own eagerness in. Although it would not contradict scripture to apply the care for the poor within the churches Paul was to plant, their instruction likely refers to poor Christians in Jerusalem from which Paul was leaving. (Grudem, ESV 2247) Further evidence of this meaning is Paul’s campaign to provide for the poor in the church of Jerusalem from the churches in Corinth and Macedonia. Paul’s eagerness to remember the poor is seen throughout his instructions to

the churches and particularly highlighted in sending money to the church in Jerusalem, all of which provided help specifically to poor Christians.

Philippians 4:10-20

The relationship between Paul and the church in Philippi is unique in that it includes a distinctive “partnership” in “giving and receiving.” Though Paul claims to have found a trust in God to provide in his times of extreme need, he thanks the Philippians for their generosity to him. Although the financial provision for church leadership is an important precedence, perhaps the most important point in Paul’s description of Philippian giving is his statement; “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases your credit” (v. 17). This, like most other passages about giving, focuses on the benefit or loss of the giver, not the one who receives. Paul is thankful for the material assistance, but especially appreciates the hearts of the Philippians who give joyfully out of poverty, a fruit that demonstrates the inward work of salvation. Within the church today, the primary benefit from a generous church is not the enjoyment of comfort from the poor, but the purity of the church in trusting God over money.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

An important balance to help to the poor within the church that reflects the warnings against laziness from the Old Testament is found in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. The instruction begins with the clarification that Paul is speaking only to Christians by using the term “brothers,” a common distinction by now. Paul commands the church with the authority of Jesus to “keep away from a brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us” (v. 6). Paul uses himself as a contrast in that he did not take food from anyone without paying, though it would have been within his rights, and worked day and night to not burden them (v. 8). He commands “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (v. 10). It’s unclear why some Christians in Thessalonica were idle, but Paul emphatically orders church discipline to be carried out on the guilty individuals in order to prevent the behavior from spreading. This passage works as an important clarification in help to the poor within the church. Descriptions previously discussed in the book of Acts present a community without need, but not one in which the lazy were living off the hard work of others. Help must not be given out without knowledge of true need, and in order to do so, judgments must be

made by church leadership. Instead of perpetuating problems of laziness, church discipline is to be used to grow a Christian in discipleship and protect the purity of the church.

1 Timothy 5:1-16

Paul provides more helpful instruction in details for helping the poor within the church in 1 Timothy 5:1-16 by describing provision for widows. To address the problem of poor widows, Paul insists that the burden of provision falls to any remaining family first. In fact, to any who fail to provide for their own family and leave the burden on the church, Paul calls a denier of the faith and “worse than an unbeliever” (v. 8). This kind of deference of responsibility is a common practice in Western Culture, where many families rely on the state or charity programs to take care of family members in need. It becomes a serious matter in the church that effectively proves the heart of a member one way or another. Paul is clear that help to the poor within the church is not to replace the responsibility of a family to provide for their own. He continues the teaching by clearly defining a widow worthy of provision within the church in verse 9 and 10. She must be at least 60 years old (a very old age at that time), faithful to her late husband (a particular phrase like in the qualifications for deacons), known for her good works, has shown hospitality, served the church, cared for the afflicted and done “every good work.” This list of qualifications seems to be lofty, only allowing proven, godly women who really are without family and too old to possibly provide for themselves. These widows would likely have been rare in the early church and even rarer today. For the widows meeting these qualifications, the church likely provided for them the rest of their life, which is why Paul commands young women to be kept from the list since they would likely marry again or become idlers. Instead, he advises the young widows to marry and so secure provision for themselves from a husband. Within the church today, widows to be provided for in this manner are rare to none, but elements of the practice may be extended to other faithful Christians within the church, as they have been done at Mars Hill Church and, in a way, in the Diaconate at Redeemer Presbyterian Church. With the continued influence on provision for the poor within the church, and standards to determine who are really in need of help, a system is possible to distribute money based on needs. It is possible demographics like single mothers

that are virtuous Christians, full of service and hard workers but unable to provide and raise children are given some form of assistance until they are remarried.

James 2:1-13

Like many of the passages reviewed in the Old Testament, the subject of instruction from James 2:1-13 is against injustice in the form of partiality towards the rich over the poor. This does not speak directly to helping the poor, but to valuing material wealth over spiritual wealth. The author even rhetorically questions, “Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?” (v. 5). As explained before, poverty in itself is not desirable, but the dependence on God and the love for him that it breeds which makes them heirs to the kingdom of heaven. The author corrects the favoritism by showing characteristics helpful for entering into the kingdom of heaven to be more desirable than material wealth, which is used even then to oppress them and drag them to court (v. 6). Again, it is important to observe that not only is the audience identified as Christian by the term “brothers” at the beginning of the chapter, but again in verse 5. Looking past material wealth is to be characteristic of the church, a group of people able to value in right perspective spiritual riches over physical. Another point to mention is the assertion that God has chosen the poor, and in it holds a purpose and a blessing that they would enjoy a greater faith and dependence on him.

1 John 2:15-17 and 3:16-18

I finish my chronological inspection of help to the poor in the Bible with two more short texts out of 1 John in 2:15-17 and 3:16-18. The first is a warning, all too familiar at this point, not to value and chase after the temporary things in this world, or to hold them at higher value than doing the will of God, which will last forever. Spiritual riches are incomparably more valuable than physical riches, in the time they last and in the glory they give to God, since they result directly from obedience to him. This same attitude can be applied to help to the poor by emphasizing spiritual help and disciple-making over physical comfort without ignoring the latter completely. The second text comes within an admonition to love one another as Christians, first identifying Christ’s love as our means for understanding love and applying it to each other. He states in verse 17, “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes

his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" Again the distinction is made that the help is for the fellow Christian, the "brother in need." It is also important to acknowledge the need mentioned is assumed to be a true need, not the result of laziness as clarified earlier. A true Christian with the means to help another Christian within the church with a very real need would be quick to step in to provide help with joy. His love for God and the great mercy and grace shown to him would reflect as love for the church around him and he would be eager to provide help. This important mark of the Church should be prevalent enough for any pagan to wonder at the love of one Christian for another.

In the preceding discussion of what the Bible says about help to the poor, I tried to collect every text that speaks to the subject, but I'm sure the list is not complete. One thing that I have found is that treatment of the poor and money are integral parts in obedience to God, trust in Jesus and love for one another and are therefore woven throughout the entire Bible. However, I believe the texts that have been discussed build clear principles for help to the poor that I would like to state in summary with supporting texts. These points and the passages that support them are by no means exhaustive, but are overwhelmingly supported within the texts and will hopefully be useful for developing a help to the poor program.

1. Economic policies and laws for the Israelites in the Old Testament such as leaving land unharvested, the Year of Jubilee and the redemption of property and forgiveness of debt in the Sabbath Year are society wide care for the poor that is more than covered today by government organizations. Since the Church and government are separated in our society, the authority necessary for such programs has not been given to the church, and so help to the poor programs like these are not within the scope of the Church's reach. (Leviticus 19:9-18, Leviticus 25:8-55, Deuteronomy 15:1-18)
2. God hates injustice and stores up wrath for those who practice it. The type of injustice God opposes is crooked business practices, impartial judges and oppression from the strong over the weak. A community with these unrighteous practices is not functioning in a manner that pleases him. Before focusing on a help to the poor program, a church ought to purify itself from injustice in order to help the poor

- effectively in a loving community devoted to Jesus. (Leviticus 19:9-18, Proverbs 14:31, Isaiah 1, Jeremiah 21-22, Amos 5, Micah 6, Matthew 23:23, James 2:1-13)
3. God warns against laziness, idleness and hastiness that lead to poverty. The church should be careful not to promote such sin when helping the poor, carefully judging the circumstances of each case. While giving money is merciful for some with genuine needs, church discipline may be merciful to those caught in idleness. Poverty is not always in need of remedy, but sometimes repentance from the sin that caused it is necessary for discipleship.
 4. God repeatedly warns his people of greediness and the love of money, since they replace trust in God's provision with independence and a false security. Those who love money do not love God, and so the pursuit of wealth over the pursuit of God cannot become the effect of a program to bring help to the poor, since it would then be harmful to the poor. The spread of the gospel and making disciples must be maintained above any form of social justice in all aspects of the church. (Proverbs 21:13, Proverbs 30:8-9, Matthew 19:21, Mark 10:17-30, Luke 18:18-30, Luke 12:13-21, Luke 16:19-31, Matthew 26:6-13, John 12:1-8)
 5. The majority of passages that address help to the poor in their correct context are referring to the poor inside the community of believers in the Old or New Testament. The remaining texts are less clear, but imply they are also talking about God's people. God does maintain the requirement for a general mercy and compassion to humanity, but does not promise provision to those who oppose him. Christian help to the poor should therefore primarily be directed towards care for fellow Christians, with any help outside of this done more sparingly and for the direct purpose of spreading the gospel and making disciples, not solving economic problems. (Matthew 5:3, 6:1-4, 19:21, 23:23, 25: 31-46, 26:6-13, Mark 10:17-30, 12:41-44, Luke 12: 41-44, 16:19-31, 21:1-4, John 12:1-8, Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37, 11:27-30, 20:33-35, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, 9:1-15, Romans 12:13, Galatians 2:10, 1 Timothy 5:1-16, James 2:1-13, 1 John 3:16-18. The Old Testament passages

- examined also implicitly support this principle, but usually do not speak directly a type of help to the poor.)
6. Giving ought to be done out of joy, from actual possessions not debt, despite poverty or any financial circumstances, in secret without expectation of reward, and to the church for the leadership to distribute as needed. Examples of giving in scripture include individual needs met relationally as they are presented, family bearing financial burdens before the church, and money sent from one church to another in times of need. Other forms of charity may exist within a program for helping the poor, but they should fit within the Biblical guidelines that have been discussed. (Matthew 6:1-4, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4, Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37, 11:27-30, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, 9:1-15, Galatians 2:10, Philippians 4:10-20).

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