



**remember  
the poor  
2010**

# **Personal Bible Studies**

# Why Help The Poor?

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In order to accomplish anything in life, we need motivation. An important ingredient in proper motivation is this—we must understand why we do what we do. Why help the poor? This series of quiet time studies will help us understand why we need to help the poor and why we should have a heart for the poor.

## Day 1: Why Help the Poor? Because God Has a Heart for the Poor.

**Psalm 140:12**, “I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor.

**Isaiah 25:4**, “For you (the Lord) have been a defense for the helpless, a defense for the needy in his distress.

**1Samuel 2:8**, “He (the Lord) raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap.”

Based on what you read in these verses, answer these questions:

- What do you learn about God’s heart for the poor?
- What are specific ways that God helps the poor?
- If you were poor, how would you be comforted knowing that the Lord is your defense?
- What do these verses teach you about how you should respond to the needs of the poor?
- What are some practical ways that you can work alongside of God to “maintain the cause of the afflicted?”

God defends the cause of the poor, the needy, and the afflicted. God has a heart for the poor. When we help the poor, we stand alongside of God to defend those who can’t help themselves. This is a noble call.

**Psalm 68:10**, “O God, you provided for the poor.”

**Challenge:** Before you go out and do something for the poor, begin by checking your motivation. Pray for God to work on you heart. Pray to God and ask him to give you his heart in connection with helping the poor.

## Day 2: Why Help the Poor? Because God Hears the Cries of the Poor.

**Isaiah 41:7**, “The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst. I, the Lord, will answer them myself, as the God of Israel I will not forsake them.”

**Job 34:28**, “They (the evildoers) caused the cry of the poor to come before him (the Lord), so that he heard the cry of the needy.”

- What characteristic or characteristics of God do you see demonstrated in these verses?
- If God hears the cries of the poor, then shouldn't we be attentive to their cries?
- How can we hear the cry of the poor in our society?
- Are there poor near you? What is their cry?

God hears the cries of the poor, the thirsty, and the hungry. Do we hear their cries? Today, many people stay insulated from the cries of the poor. Sometimes this is by choice. Other times it is because life is so frantic that we don't take time to hear the cry of the poor. It's like we live in a soundproof booth, shielded from the hurts and needs of the world around us.

Do we hear the cry of the poor? When you see an appeal to feed the hungry on the television, what is your reaction? Do you quickly turn the channel? I have. It is easy to grow deaf and callous to the needs of the poor. But God isn't deaf or callous to their cries. He is attentive. God has a heart for the poor.

**Psalms 35:10**, “My whole being will exclaim, ‘Who is like you, O Lord? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them.’”

**Psalms 140:12**, “I know the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.”

**Challenge:** Go to the HOPE *worldwide* website ([www.hopeww.org](http://www.hopeww.org)) and look at the faces of the poor. Imagine that you are hearing their cries. Put yourself in their place. Now pray to God and ask him to help you hear the cry of the poor in the same way that he hears their cries.

## Day 3: Why Help the Poor? Because Jesus Did.

**1 Peter 2:21**, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”

Why help the poor? If I were to give only one answer to this question, it would be this—because Jesus did. Jesus had a heart for the poor. He touched lepers. He gave sight to the blind. He caused the lame to walk. He fed the hungry. He preached good news to the poor. He had compassion on people who were hurting, helpless, hapless, and hopeless. Jesus had a heart for the poor.

**Matthew 4:23-24** reads, “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. **24**News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.” Take a look at the ministry of Jesus:

- Verse 23 models the ministry of Jesus. What three actions are modeled in his ministry? (See if you can find three participles in vs. 23. A participle is a verb ending in “ing.”)
- Does your ministry contain these three characteristics of the ministry of Jesus (teaching, preaching, and healing)? If yes, then how? If no, then how can you develop those characteristics in your ministry?
- Many people were brought to Jesus. Describe these people?
- When these people were brought to Jesus, what did he do for them?

The ministry of Jesus can be summarized in three words: teaching, preaching, healing. We teach when we open the Bible and share the meaning of scripture with people. We preach when we share the good news of the gospel with people. We heal when we help people overcome obstacles in their lives that keep them from living a qualitatively good life. (For example, I see our chemical recovery ministry as a healing ministry.)

Jesus healed people of various diseases. It is within our power to help God heal people with disease today. In the next five minutes, 19 people will die of disease due to poor sanitation, 9 people will die from malaria, 19 will die from AIDS and 25 more will contract the HIV virus, 7 will be diagnosed with leprosy, 4 will die from measles, 8 will die from chicken pox, 3 will die from heart worms. All of these are curable or treatable diseases. God has given us the resources to help heal disease across the world today.

**Challenge:** Think of one way that you can qualitatively help a person change his or her life. Now reach out and help that person.

## Day 4: Why Help the Poor? Because the Early Church Did.

Around 49 A.D., leaders of the church in Jerusalem met with Paul and Barnabas to discuss their mission to the Gentiles. This is often referred to as the Jerusalem Council. The Jerusalem Council decided that Gentiles could become Christians without following Jewish ceremonial laws. The Council sent Paul and Barnabas back to the Gentiles so that they could bring people to Jesus. Paul summarizes this event in **Galatians 2:9-10** by writing, “James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.”

When Paul and Barnabas left Jerusalem, the council could have asked anything of them. They could have asked for monthly reports. They could have asked for revenue to be sent back to Jerusalem. Instead, they asked him to remember the poor (something that Paul was eager to do). Notice that mission work and service to the poor are complementary ministries. Paul was a missionary who was eager to remember the poor.

- What is the one thing the Jerusalem Council asked that Paul and Barnabas do?
- How did Paul feel about this request?
- Are you eager to remember the poor? Is your ministry eager to remember the poor?
- How would you define pure and faultless religion?

I might have tricked you with that last question. The definition isn't found in Galatians 2. Pure and faultless religion is defined by James (yes, the same James of the Jerusalem Council). **James 1:27** states, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” James had the poor on his heart.

Church historians record that the early church was known for its compassion. In the Greco-Roman world, when someone didn't want their child, they practiced infanticide. The adult usually placed the child outside the city limits at night exposing the child to the elements. The early church was known for going out at night in search of babies who had been left to die. The disciples would take these babies into their homes, care for them, and raise them as their own. This is one way the early church practiced pure and faultless religion.

**Challenge:** Is there a widow or widower who lives close to you? Do something nice for him or her today.

## Day 5: Why Help the Poor? Because When We Love Others, We Are Good Neighbors.

I'm sure we have all heard the adage, "People don't care how much you know until you show them how much you care."

- How does this adage apply to the ministry of helping the poor?

Read **Luke 10:25-37**

- Take a moment to picture the victim in this story. How did he look? What did his wounds look like? What might he have said to people as they walked by?
- What are some excuses the priest and Levite might have given for not stopping to help the man in need?
- What are some excuses the Samaritan could have given for not helping?
- Name specific ways that the Samaritan helped the victim.
- Answer Jesus' question in verse 36, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"
- What is the last exhortation that Jesus gives to the expert of the law in verse 37? How does this exhortation apply to you?

I read a story of a boy living on the streets in one of our big cities in the Northeastern United States during the winter. The boy was standing near a heat exhaust vent to warm himself. The owner of a clothing store saw the boy and thought about offering him some help. Before he made the offer, a customer came over asking for help, and the store owner forgot about the boy.

Later, the man saw the boy in his store. He was with a woman who had invited the boy into the store to purchase him clothes. She was buying the boy new shoes, new gloves, and a new coat.

The storeowner overheard the boy ask the woman, "Are you God's wife?"

The woman answered, "No, I'm just one of his children."

The boy said, "Well, I knew you were related to him somehow."

- Who was a neighbor to the little boy?

**Challenge:** Think of the needs of the poor in your town or community. How can you be a Good Samaritan to someone today? Now, "Go and do likewise."

## Day 6: Why Help the Poor? Because When You Help The Poor, You Help Yourself.

**Proverbs 14:21**, “He who despises his neighbor sins,  
but blessed is he who is kind to the needy.”

**Proverbs 22:9**, “He who is generous will be blessed (happy),  
for he gives some of his food to the poor.”

**Deuteronomy 15:10**, “You shall give generously to (your poor brother), and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.”

**Proverbs 19:17**, “He who is gracious to a poor man, lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his good deed.”

**Acts 20:25**, “In everything I (Paul) did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

- What happens to the person who gives generously to the poor?
- Proverbs 19:17 states, “He who is gracious to a poor man, lends to the Lord.” Imagine in your mind’s eye how is God smiling at you when you are gracious to the poor. Carry that image with you throughout the day.
- Think of a time when you have given to the poor. How have you been blessed because of that act?

Every time I have taken time to give to the poor, it has helped my own heart more than I have helped the needy. Paul quotes a saying of Jesus that is not found in the Gospels, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” The word “blessed” can also mean “happy.” Jesus states a truth here, “We are happier when we give, than when we receive.” I feel happy when I help the poor. Whether I’m washing dishes at a soup kitchen, teaching martial arts at a Hope School, or delivering food to seniors; I also come back from those activities feeling like I’ve done something that has brought glory to God. The more I give, the happier I am. Why? Because when we give, God blesses our hearts.

**Challenge:** Perform one “random act of kindness” to someone today. Be a giver. When you give, pay attention to the joy the act of giving brings to your life.

## Day 7: Why Help The Poor? Because when we help the poor, we see that possessions are not important.

Whenever I am with the poor, I am reminded of how much my life is cluttered with stuff. The poor live with so little. They teach me that life can be lived without rooms full of stuff.

**Ephesians 5:3**, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.”

- Paul names three specific items in this passage that we must not allow even a hint of this item into our lives. Names these items.
- Why we must be vigilant against these three items.
- In what ways are you tempted with greed?
- How do you act out on that temptation?
- How do you fight against that temptation?

Read the parable of Jesus in **Luke 12:6-21**.

- What are ways that you store up things for yourself?
- How can you become rich toward God?

In our culture we don't necessarily buy bigger barns, we just rent a storage space for all our excess stuff. We fill our attics and garages. We build bigger barns. Today they are called self-storage units.

Most of the world could live and would love to live on what we throw away. We need to take a good look at our lifestyles. Where does all of our stuff get us? Do things satisfy? We just want more. The bills pile up. The stuff piles up. We build bigger barns. Indirectly, we teach our children that things will make us happy. However, we don't find true happiness in things. Isn't it time for us to simplify our lives? Wouldn't it be more satisfying to live on less so that others might simply live?

**Challenge:** Remove clutter from your life. Find something that you haven't used in years and give it to someone who can use it.