

Fact #1 *Care for the poor is a major ethical theme in Scripture.*

Isaiah 10

“1 Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, 2 to **deprive** the poor of their rights and **withhold justice** from the oppressed of my people, making widows their **prey** and **robbing** the fatherless.”

Ephesians 4:28

“Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to **share with him who has need.**”

Fact #2 *Some texts have been misunderstood.*

Matthew 25:31-46 (Two popular views)

“37 Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? 38 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite you in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40 And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, **to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.**’”

1. As a nation we will be judged on the basis of our care for the needy among us.

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2. Jesus uses the term “brothers of mine” to refer to the covenant community of faith.

Acts 2:44 (as seen from the political left)

“All those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began to sell their property and possessions, and **share them with all, as anyone might have need.**”

- ✓ Christians should be sensitive to the material needs of everyone.
- ✓ Christians should promote socialism.
- ✓ A Christian nation should be socialistic.
- ✓ Capitalism is driven by self-serving greed and is therefore not Christian.
- ✓ Democrats tend to care for the poor more than Republicans.

Acts 2:44 (as seen from the political right)

“All those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began to sell their property and possessions, and **share them with all, as anyone might have need.**”

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

“For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If any one will not work, let him not eat.”

Acts 2:44

“All those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began to sell their property and possessions, and **share them with all, as anyone might have need.**”

- ✓ This passage is descriptive not prescriptive.
- ✓ This passage is reflecting the internal social relationships of the community of faith.
- ✓ The sharing was voluntary and individual.
- ✓ The sharing was sacrificial and sensitive.
- ✓ The sharing grew out of a sense of unity.

Fact #3 Poverty has three dimensions.

Social

- not connected to a supportive community or the social structures of power.

Spiritual

- not empowered from within to experience personal dignity, power, and hope from a relationship with God and His people.



Material

- not able to afford basics (food, shelter, etc.)

“Prosperity is a way of living and thinking, and not just money or things.

Poverty is a way of living and thinking, and not just a lack of money or things.”

Eric Butterworth

Fact #4 Poverty is about justice and human dignity more than material wealth.



Psalms 69:33

“For the Lord hears the needy and does not despise His who are prisoners.”

Psalms 72:12-13

“For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help, the afflicted also, and him who has no helper. He will have compassion on the poor and needy, and the lives of the needy he will save.”

“The needy” עֲנִיִּים ev-yon

- ✓ Those who are materially poor
- ✓ Those without social standing or power
- ✓ Those who are spiritually humble

Fact #5 Poverty is related to systemic injustice and public policy.

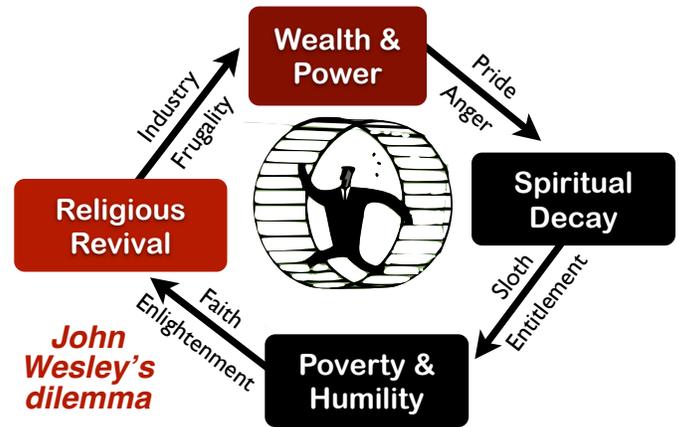
Isaiah 10

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Leviticus 10:15

“You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be **partial to the poor** or **defer to the great**, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”

Fact #6 Poverty can be both a blessing and a curse.



Proverbs 30:8-9

“Give me neither poverty nor riches - Feed me with the food that is my portion; that I not be full and deny You, and say, “Who is the LORD?” Or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God.”

Matthew 5:3

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Biblical Principles

- The Biblical instruction on social ethics centers attention on relationships within the **Covenant Community of Faith**.
- There are **several causes** of poverty mentioned in the Scriptures, and various causes require differing responses from the Lord's disciples.
- God has a special interest in all who are **powerless and vulnerable** (including and especially the materially poor).
- The Bible assumes the ownership of private property and calls for **personal, concrete, action** by individuals on behalf of the poor.

- In the teaching of Jesus, all temporal concerns fade into the background when compared to the **eternal issues** of life, death, judgment, and salvation.
- Since the Fall, **all institutions are flawed**, and can never of themselves bring society to some state of utopian perfection.
- **Justice** is a central theme in the Biblical teaching on poverty. God warns against granting special favors to the rich and powerful, and also prohibits giving special treatment to the poor.
- “**Profit**” is not evil, but is an important cog in the free-market system and viewed as a positive blessing in Scripture.