

Kingdom Report

Week of 23 February 2019

God's Poverty Intervention Program

There is a remarkable amount of scripture that relates to the poor, poverty relief and causes and remedies for addressing poverty. I want to spend some blogs on this issue but lets start with the Biblical concept of immediate poverty relief.

Last week I wrote of the happiest nation in the world....Costa Rica. Their secret was that they had disbanded their army and spent the money savings on social welfare programs. This was one of many Biblical commandments that scripture gives us for increasing the wealth of a nation....turn military spending into productive investment...or as scripture in Isaiah 2 says...swords into plows.

The idea of increasing the general wealth of the people in the nation by lowering the overhead cost of government and all the corruption and inefficiency that goes with it is a strong theme in Old Testament scripture. I want to take that further in a future blog by introducing you to the idea of God's governmental plan for Israel was in fact a Libertarian, rule of law Republic....what we would identify today as a Libertarian, free enterprise, capitalist system overlaid with a social justice framework and communal socialism....yes I know that is a mouthful, but lets keep that for another time.

Apart from low overheads you also need a strong capitalist system to actually create new wealth with which you can distribute surplus wealth to the poor and needy. That is another issue that needs attention and it has to do with the creation of capital and the diffusion of capital. And that in fact is another big issue that scripture actually gives guidelines on. Again lets cover that later.

And then you need proper monetary and fiscal policies for the nation state and again believe it or not...scripture has guidelines for that as well.

And then you need a proper legal framework for a nation's relational practices...and again scripture gives guidelines for those. I will cover that later.

All the above are issues that we as Christians actually need teaching and conferences and discussions on....but we leave it to politicians and corporations and the media....as we as a nation sink ever deeper into debt and poverty. But that time is coming for us to make our voices heard.

The issue I address here in this blog is that the Bible has guidelines for immediate poverty alleviation. For those of you concerned with these issues I will provide you with short descriptions and ideas and many scripture references for you to follow up on your own to meditate on and see how you can take these ideas forward in your church and community.

Please keep in mind what I am writing here below and what I am not writing. The Bible recognizes that there are people who need immediate help, which I will cover here....but we must also work towards long term "healing the nation" strategies that will lift the poor out of poverty and into the prosperity that the Lord wants for all...that is for future blogs.

Our attitude to the Poor....

Scripture recognizes that there are poor in the land that need immediate help.

I frankly like our nation's social welfare system of giving grants to the poor and elderly and disabled. I know it gets abused but of all the tax money I send to government this at least is the best use of my tax....17 million people helped every month.

However the best form and most effective charity intervention is personal involvement to those we personally meet that we know are in trouble and need immediate help. Lets go through scriptures to see what the Lord has to say and let these be a guide to our actions as individuals:

We are to be charitable to the poor and hungry:

Deut. 15:7-8, Math. 25:40-45, 1 Cor. 13, 2 Peter 1:7, 1 John 3:17

We must give not of necessity (as many tithes preachers claim....you must) or grudgingly, but freely. God loves a cheerful giver:

2 Cor. 9:7, 1 Peter 4:9

Do not neglect to show hospitality:

Heb 13:2 Isa. 58:7, Luke 14:13 Rom 12:13, 1 Tim. 5:10, 1 Peter 4:9

Give to someone who asks you...such as car watchers at the mall and people who stand in the street asking for help:

Math. 5:42

The righteous person gives bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked:

Ezek 18:5, 7, 12, 13.

A care for the poor is characteristic of the righteous:

Ps. 112:9, Prov. 29:7, 2 Cor. 9:9, Gal. 2:10

We should defend the poor and deliver them from the hand of the wicked (thank you to our daughter and son-in-law who as attorneys set aside a tithe of their law cases as pro-bono for the poor!)

Psalm 82:3-4

You are not to mock the poor

Prov. 17:5

You must not oppress the poor

Deut. 24:14, Psalm 10:2, Isa. 10:1-2 Zech 7:10

He that helps the poor lends to God and the Lord will surely repay.
Prov. 19:17

Neglect towards the poor and needy is a neglect towards Christ
Math 25:34-46

Regarding the issue of widows and orphans....

The Bible has much to say about the care for widows and orphans. In our country the sad fact is that we have a majority of effective widows and orphans because 70% of all children born do not have father listed on their birth certificate. Our women are effectively widows and they must care alone for fatherless children. This is a major cause of poverty....

We must help and aid the fatherless and widows in their troubles.
Deut. 14: 29, Job. 24:21, Job 29:12-13, James 1:27, 1 Tim. 5:16

You are not to oppress or afflict a widow or fatherless child
Exod. 22:22-23. Deut. 27:19, Jer. 7: 6-7 Jer.22;3, Zech. 7:10

We should defend the widow and the fatherless
Psalm 82:3, Isa. 1;17

Curses and punishments on those who neglect or cause affliction to the fatherless and widows:
Deut. 27;19, Job 31:16-23, Mal. 3;5

The Handicapped:

We are to invite the maimed, the lame, and the blind to our feasts:
Luke 14:13

We must show respect for the aged:
Lev. 19:32, 1 Tim. 5;1

You should support and help the weak:
Acts 20:35, Rom. 15:1

Providing for the poor.....

A portion of our crops are to remain unharvested or unpicked so that they can be left for the poor. The practical applications of these scriptures mean that the Lord wants us to make work opportunities available for the poor. We don't need to do everything with machines...give the poor an opportunity to work.
Lev. 19:9-10, Lev. 23:22, Deut. 24:19-21

In Israel every third year the annual tithe was to be given to the poor....try telling that to your local tithe preaching church leader:
Deut. 14:28-29, Deut. 26:12

The needy may come to a farm field or vineyard and take what they need for a meal, but may not take a basket full or use a sickle, only what they can take with their hand for immediate hunger...give someone a meal who comes to your door hungry:
Deut. 23:24-25

Causes of individual poverty....

A lot of poverty is caused by structural national economic policies....a lot is caused by individual bad behavior. We can lift a significant amount of people out of poverty by changing their hearts and getting them saved and repurposed to fulfil God's plan for their lives. We can help the poor through teaching them the Word of God...

Poverty caused by laziness and lack of work ethics:

Prov. 6:10-11, Prov. 19:15, 24. Prov. 20:4, Prov. 24:30-34, 2 Cor. 9:6, 2 Thess. 3:8-12

He who loves pleasure will become a poor man:

Prov. 21:17

Poverty will come to that person who refuses instruction and is unwilling to learn...skill development is important:

Prov. 13;18

He who follows empty pursuits will become poor:

Prov. 28:19

Idle chatter leads to poverty:

Prov. 14;23

Poverty comes to drunks and gluttons:

Prov. 23;21

He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches will come to poverty:

Prov. 22;16

Poverty caused by love of sleep....and that includes today's social media that puts people into a sleep like trance of inactivity wasting their lives:

Prov. 6:9-11, Prov. 20:13

You become poor when you deal with what the Bible calls a slack hand, but to the diligent there comes wealth...meaning get on with your work, keep at it, work hard!

Prov. 10:4

I trust that these scriptures I have provided you can form a frame of reference for you when we discuss poverty as Christians. These are not the complete solution to poverty but they are a start for what we as individuals can do...don't look to government...we have a personal responsibility ourselves to help those the Lord brings on our path.