

## Breaking the Spirit of Poverty

Understanding poverty will guide the steps we take in releasing others from it. This week we'll explore what poverty is—its causes and effects and how it's a spiritual matter at its core.



Deuteronomy 15:7-11 (NRSV) If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tight-fisted towards your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near', and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt. Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.'

## Reflections

What would you do if suddenly the grocery stores went out of business and your car broke down? Many of us would panic and not have a clue what to do. However, thousands of people live with the reality that dinner may be a slice of bread; that they might not have any drinking water that day.

Two weekends ago, a group of about 150 youth with nearly 30 adults, came together and did not eat for 30 hours. Why? To raise awareness of what the third world countries face every day. While we began to feel the hunger pains, we were reminded that children our age feel these pains endlessly. While at the Famine, we are encouraged to play various games to help us understand a little better about the situation. Each game focuses on a different topic, such as, finding food with obstacles, trying to cross a 'river', stealing food, and so forth.

Playing these games is a challenge in various ways, because it's cold outside, and we're hungry and exhausted. Yet, while we complain, our leaders remind us we are only getting an idea as to what over half of our population deals with on a daily basis.

I never thought I could make a difference. I hear story upon story about how all these people had a dream to help, followed it, and saved so many lives. Then, at the Famine, I heard some news that not only surprised me, but gave me an overwhelming feeling of success.

Last year, 29 thousand children died every day of hunger. However, this year we have reduced that number to 26 thousand. Which means 3,000 lives a day are being saved thanks to all of us coming together to accomplish one goal: help end world hunger. I know that alone I cannot save the world, but what I've learned is that working together we can.

Giving is never completely easy, especially when we feel we don't have enough ourselves. However, when you put feelings and fears aside, it's easy to see we have so much. We have a place to lay our head, clean water to

drink, and food to eat. It may not be the biggest house, the coldest water, or the best dinner, but it's enough.

Sometimes I find myself looking in the fridge or in the pantry and complaining to my mom that there is *nothing* to eat. In reality there is plenty, just nothing that satisfies my desires. Participating in the Famine has been an amazing experience, because it helps me see how lucky I am. Last year, I raised enough money to feed a child for 6 months. It may seem small to some people, but to me, it means the world.

So far this year our local event has already raised 26 thousand dollars. That means we will feed each starving child for one more day. Money is still being collected which gives all of us hope that maybe we can save each of those children for two days, or more. I know I can make a difference. Are **YOU** willing?

— Kayleigh McQuaid

### My Prayer

Dear Lord, please fill me with your hope. I don't want to be a cynic about poverty, because I know you're not. I know you want to transform people and situations. I know you have hope and plans for me and those living in poverty. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and with your hope for this world. Please help me to be your messenger of hope in this world. Amen

## Readings

### Sunday, March 15

#### Deuteronomy 15:7-11

What can you do each day to ensure that you're viewing the people in this world through Christ's eyes? Is there someone in your life to whom you feel God calling you to be Christ?

### Monday, March 16

#### Luke 12:48

What good works do you think God may have prepared for you to do?

### Tuesday, March 17

#### John 12:8

How has your concept of poverty been challenged? What are your thoughts and misconceptions about poverty?

### Wednesday, March 18

#### Colossians 3:11

Do the people in poverty seem real to you, like flesh and blood? What are your perceptions, and perhaps misconceptions, about those in poverty?

### Thursday, March 19

#### Isaiah 40:27-31

Do you have hope for those in poverty and your part in reaching out? Why or why not?

### Friday, March 20

#### Isaiah 6:8

Do you believe you are in a spiritual battle yourself? In what ways?

### Saturday, March 21

#### Ephesians 6:12

Do you agree that poverty is a spiritual issue? If so, how do you think this affects you personally?

***Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).***

#### **Resource:**

"Hope Lives: A Journey of Restoration"

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Although Ethiopia has one of the highest child mortality rates in the world, the rates have declined 40% in the last 15 years. UNICEF reports that Ethiopia is making steady progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals set in place in 2000 by a UN Millennium Summit, to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015.

#### **Some Organizations That Attack the Roots of Poverty**

Opportunity International:

[www.opportunity.org](http://www.opportunity.org)

Compassion International:

[www.compassion.com](http://www.compassion.com)

Healing Waters International:

[www.healingwatersintl.org](http://www.healingwatersintl.org)

- A lack of clean water is killing almost 2 million people a year.
- 15.2 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS.
- 1 billion people live in extreme poverty.
- 1 million children are trafficked into exploitive labor each year.