

It amazes me that many people are not willing to face this fact because if they did, they would have to do something about the poor. They would rather live with their heads in the sand and pretend poverty doesn't exist - or believe that all the poor chose to be poor and are no good anyway. My friends, we are not the ones who have the right to say that one person is of worth and another is not.

Working with the poor since 1972, I have discovered that not all poor people are drunks or drug addicts, not all are perverts or lazy, and not all are black or Mexican. The poor come in all sizes and shapes and from many backgrounds. The manifold reasons for poverty are really topics for another discussion, but suffice it to say that *not* all poor people are poor because of one big choice they made early, or late, in life to become poor.

I believe, as one who has had enough experience with the poor to know, that the poor are really a gift from Almighty God to me and you. As Christians, we have the joy and opportunity to express our faith in God and say, "Thank You!" to Him for reaching down into the pit of life and pulling us out. In other words, the poor are for our benefit, not our ridicule. I am shocked that people can call themselves Christians, while despising the opportunity of proving his or her faith in a practical way toward those who have less—especially when Scripture is so clear about God's position on this issue.

Romans 12:8 tells us to help the poor with simplicity. Then I Peter 4:11 instructs us to help with the ability God gives us. The Word declares that we will not lose our reward, even if all we give is just a cup of cold water (Matthew 10:42). When we pity or do something for the poor, we lend to the Lord (Proverbs 19:17). Don't you yet realize that God will not be a debtor to any man? Lend, lend, and keep lending to the Lord. When you

are in trouble, the Lord will deliver you (Psalm 41:1b).

We must choose to be obedient to the following Scriptures if we are to be pleasing to our Lord and blessed by Him:

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I John 3:17:	How can you love God and not meet needs?
Matthew 25:34-36:	When you help someone, you are doing it to God.
James 1:27:	Defines pure religion.
Psalm 41:1a:	Blessed is he that considers the poor.
Matthew 11:5:	Preach to the poor.
Matthew 5:42:	Don't turn away from needs.

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It is sad that, in our time, our Lord has given us the biggest test of Christianity ever given to any generation, and many are failing the test because we are too lazy, greedy, and self-centered to do what Jesus said. "But," you might say, "I work hard for what I have, and I have a family and responsibilities." My friends, the choice to pass the tests of life is ours. God did not put us here to build our kingdoms. He put us here to build His Kingdom. He gave us the gift to be able to work—not to have more things, but to give to him who is in need (Ephesians 4:28).

## Part II

### WHY WE HAVE THE POOR

*"The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up."* 1 Samuel 2:7

In Part One of our discussion on the poor, I stated my belief that the poor people of our world are God's gift to the saints. They provide an opportunity for worshipful service, to express our love for our God, and maybe to "entertain angels

unawares" (Hebrew 13:2). I want to say at the outset that I believe God is an equal opportunity God, but I do not believe all men are created equal physically, mentally, emotionally, or socially. A simple look around your home and family will reveal that we are all different and "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14).

Like the very actions of God, the state of being poor, or rich for that matter, is no respecter of persons. There is not a good explanation for why you and I were born where we were instead of some starving third-world country, but for the unexplained plan and grace of God. We are not in our particular position in the world because we do or do not deserve to have what we have and to be where we are. I hear all the time from well-meaning people that the poor are that way because they want to be. After working with thousands of poor people, I want to respectfully say this is not so in 99% of the cases.

First of all, remember our text (1 Samuel 2:7). God makes the poor. Some folks are poor physically because this is simply the place God put them in the world. I know that many of our "prosperity" preachers are not going to agree with me, but they also will answer to our Lord for what they are teaching.

God, who created us in the womb, has given to some individuals great mental capacities or genius for making money and changing the world; to others, a tremendous ability to perform great athletic feats. But there are many people who are born without so much as the will or the physical ability to achieve. To some it is a struggle just to learn to read what I am writing at an acceptable standard. While we admire those who have turned handicaps into victory and use what they have to its fullest potential, there are many others who cannot even begin to think

in the area of potential.

There are some poor people who, through a series of wrong choices, have made themselves poor. These choices include drinking, drugs, inappropriate marriages, reckless behavior in automobiles (causing wrecks) or in sexual misconduct (causing the contract and spread of disease, including AIDS). No matter what caused poverty in a particular case, it does not diminish our responsibility to the poor one iota! As Christians, God told us over and over in His Book to help the poor.

I do not like to look at the world and see the poor any more than you do, but the fact is they are here, and we have a job to do. We must stop arguing about the whys and hows of the poor and start fulfilling our ministry to them with both physical food and spiritual food. I have never met a person who, at age three or four, when asked what they wanted to be when they grew up said, "Well, I would really like to be a poor person or a drug addict or a drunk or even lost and end up in Hell."

Instead of being part of the debate on the poor, let us be a part of the solution. We should accept the poor as an opportunity to witness to the love of God for His creations. After all, this is why we have the poor.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Matthew 5:3) Sometimes to be poor in spirit you have to be humbled physically. Some cannot be trusted with much physically, for it would ruin them. If you are a Christian and have been blessed materially by our God, then thank Him for trusting you in this way. Just remember, "To whom much is given, much is required." (Luke 12:48) You might find out in the end that in most cases it would have been better to have had little and not have

had so much expected of you.

"Remember the poor," (Galatians 2:10) for "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." (Psalm 41:1)

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# **THE POOR**

by Bro. June Gentry

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***"For ye have the poor always with you;  
but me ye have not always."*** Matthew 26:11

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***"For the poor shall never cease  
out of the land:  
therefore I command thee, saying,  
Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy  
brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy,  
in thy land."*** Deuteronomy 15:11

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## **Part I**

### **WE WILL ALWAYS HAVE THE POOR**

Some time ago, I spoke to a Sunday School class about meeting the needs of the poor in order to get a hearing for the Gospel. One man's response to my plea for bringing the two concepts of spiritual and physical needs together was, "I'm not going to give any handouts to bums." This was quite an interesting statement, which caused me to do some serious soul and Bible searching concerning my position regarding the poor.

The fact is, whether we like it or not and no matter what the government or social liberals tell us, we will never eradicate poverty. There have been and always will be poor people until our Lord Jesus comes to rule this world in person. As sad as it may seem to our finite minds, this question has already been settled for us. We will always have poverty to one degree or another.