

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO HUNGRY PEOPLE

"But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need, and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."

(I John 3:17 / Gal. 6:10)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. HUNGRY defined: Webster's says, ". . . the general word expressing any degree of wanting or needing food; Famish suggests hunger to the point of actual weakness or suffering; Starved implies a continued lack or inadequacy of food resulting in emaciation or death "

B. ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS:

1. Poverty
2. Illiteracy
3. Inadequate Medical Care
4. Disease
5. Brain Damage
- f. Death

C. CAUSES:

1. Historical
 - a. Colonialism -- gap between the landed and serf classes.
 - b. Resource abuse -- corporations exploit Third World countries and their resources with the motive of profit.
 - c. Low status for agricultural development -- Law makers have historically placed a minor emphasis on the problem and thus have spent little money on the solution.
 - d. Arms Race -- money is spent on nuclear development rather than on feeding the poor and developing their resources.
 - e. Aid disenchantment -- tired of giving money out and receiving nothing in return.
 - f. Population Growth -- increasing faster than agricultural supplies and development can keep up with.
2. Biblical
 - a. Sin (Gen. 3; with result expressed in vv. 17-19)
 - b. Failure of the rains with consequent failure of the harvest (I Ki. 17:1)
 - c. War; wanderings in the desert (Ps. 107:5)
 - d. Idleness (Prov. 19:15)
 - e. Godlessness (Ps. 34:10; Isaiah 65:13)
 - f. Judgment (Dett. 32:24; II Sam. 24:13; Ezek. 5:15f)
 - g. Selfishness -- Affluent lifestyle can produce greed and insensitivity to needs of others (Ezek. 16:49; Book of Amos)

D. STATISTICS

1. 10 of 14 Ethiopian provinces report failed rains resulting in 80-100% crop losses .
2. 5 ½ million Ethiopians out of 33 million face starvation .

3. 2.2 million Ethiopians have left their homes in search of food
4. Approximately _____ people, the majority of which are children are dying every day. (Worldwide estimates range from to 16,000 -20,000, deaths daily from malnutrition alone. That is approximately 4 million to 7 million deaths per year. Compare that to the "Holocaust" of World War II).

E. GOD ' S ULTIMATE WILL :

- 1 . For the hungry -- salvation of the whole man; especially in the future kingdom. (Psalm 107:36ff; 140:12, 146:7; Isaiah 65:13)
2. For believers – a corresponding attitude toward the poor. (Is. 58:7, 10; Ezek. 18:7, 16; Prov. 22:9; 2 :21 cf. Rom. 12:20; Lk. 3:11; Mt. 6:9-13 – note prayer for God's kingdom to come and will to be done on earth as it is in heaven)

II. MAJOR VIEWS ON HOW TO RESPOND TO NEEDS OF THE HUNGRY :

A. DO NOTHING

1. Pro:
 - a. Always have had poor with us so don't worry about them. They will always be with us. (Jn. 12:8)
 - b. Its their fault that they are starving. (No birth control)
 - c. Make them work for their food . (II Thess. 3:1C)
 - d. Have to meet my own needs and those of my family first. (I Tim. 5:8)
- 2 . Con:
 - a. John 12:8 simply states the poor will be with us (the disciples) to serve later, but Jesus would only be with them a short time longer. It was a matter of priority, not example
 - b. It was our fault that we were in sin, but God still gave His Son to meet our need. We are to love as He loved

B. COMMUNISM & SOCIALISM

1. Pro:
 - a. It was the practice of the early church. (Acts 2:42ff; 4:32ff)
 - b. Practiced in OT with Year of Jubilee and Laws concerning "gleanings" of the fields. (Lev; 25; Deut.24:1 9-21; Lev. 19:9f; Deut. 14:28f; 26:12)
 - c. Owning of property is evil. Money is evil.
2. Con
 - a. It was not - practiced by the early church. They shared with one another, but they still owned property and there were still class distinctions between them. In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira did not have to give the money to the church (v. 4).
 - b. The Year of Jubilee simply restored the prior wealth to its original owner and forgave past debts. The laws providing “gleanings" from the field was not a total sharing of all wealth, but a bare minimal provision for [the needy and] those who were sojourners in the land (permanent residents but not Jewish by birth - Example: RUTH) . See Leviticus 19:9. They had to work extra hard to get the crops that were left on the fringes of the fields. Neither of these practices are related to Communism or Socialism.
 - c. Owning of property is not evil or the owners of land would not have received back their land in the Year of Jubilee.

C. GIVE AN ORGANIZATION THE MONEY FOR THE POOR TO BE FED .

1. Pro:

- a . God will take the money where it needs to go, I just need to give
- b. Widows mite -- she gave to the wicked Pharisees and synagogue leaders yet Jesus still praised the act. (Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 21:1-4)
- c. A rabbi was rebuked by his students for giving his last coin to a beggar. He replied, "*Shall I be more particular than God, who gave the coin to me?*"
- d. It is the humanitarian/philanthropic thing to do:
 - i. "Brotherhood of man
 - ii.. "inalienable rights of all men."
 - iii. Sanctity of life made in God' s image .

2. Con:

- a. Need to be wise stewards with the money God has entrusted us with. Don't squander it.
- b. The point of Jesus' illustration of the widow was not to commend her decision on who to give the money to, but the heart attitude in giving it. She had no other choices at that time on who to give the money to, but we do. [It was not for the poor - it was a gift to support the Temple worship]
- c. We can not give based on humanitarian ideals, but only on biblical principles and commands .

D. GIVE ONLY TO CHRISTIANS

1. Pro:

- a. The NT example is in giving to the church and to "brothers" (Acts 2 & 4 ; 6:1ff; Mt . 25:35-40; James 2)
- b. Paul only took collections for the "saints" (II Cor. 8; 9:1, 12f; I Cor. 16 ; Rom. 15:25-27)

2. Con:

- a. Jesus consistently gave to people whether they were believers or not (Matt 14:1`4: 15:32). Often He gave to people for the purpose of illustrating the truth He would be communicating about eternal life (John 6)
- b. Historical argument - - Emperor Julian the Apostate said, "*We out to be ashamed, Not a beggar is to be found among the Jews, and those godless Galileans (i.e. Christians) feed not only their own people but our as well. Whereas our people receive no assistance whatever from us*" (J.D. Douglas, *The Bible on Hunger - A Source of Discomfort*, Christianity Today, July 16, 1976, p. 10).

E. Support Christian Organizations That Feed Physically & Spiritually

1. Pro:

- a. Food is used as a tool for witnessing. (i.e. , Jesus is the "Bread of Life," John 5)
- b. Eternal life is more important than temporal (Matt. 10:28)
- c. Jesus met physical needs as well as spiritual (Matt. 14:13-21)
- d. This is stewardship because the money will actually go to the hungry people

2. Con:

- a. This does not cover the needs of the people in our families families or neighborhoods
- b. Just because an organization is "Christian" doesn't mean it will spend the funds wisely
- c. Once the people are won to Christ how are they followed up? There must be a church planted there to carron on the work. God's ministry is through the local church

F. SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS THAT FEED PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY; PLUS LIVE A MORE SIMPLIFIED LIFE-STYLE (Sider)

1. Pro:

- a. Not enough to give a little. There is too large a discrepancy between the “haves” and the “have nots”
- b. Communal life-style will cut down the costs so more can be given to the needy, plus be a corporate testimony to the world.
- c. Wealth is dangerous, we need to live more simply to avoid temptations of sinful greed (1 Timothy 5)

2. Con:

- a. If we didn't have the "haves" we would not be able to meet the needs of the "have nots." Rich people provide the necessary capital and equipment to produce food on a large scale and meet the needs of others.
- b. The Bible nowhere emphasizes “communal” life-style, but rather “community” life-style. A corporate witness where people come together with their individual wealth and give to meet the needs of the whole.
- c. It is not money that is evil and leads to sin, the love of money. God owns everything yet He is not tempted by sin (James 1:13ff). Job was the most righteous man on earth at his time, yet he was extremely wealthy.

III. BIBLICAL RESPONSE / STEWARDSHIP

A. LAWS OF CHARITY AND LOVE; THE MARK OF THE CHRISTIAN.

1. Giving is to be from the heart (2 Cor. 9:7)
2. Passes on the sanctity of human life made in the image of God
3. Is a sign of true faith in Jesus (1 John 3:17)
4. Was a characteristic of Jesus’ ministry

B. PRIORITIES IN STEWARDSHIP: WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO FIRST

1. Family

- a. Required for being a church leader (1 Tim. 3:4f)
- b. Sign of true belief (1 Tim. 5:8)
- c. Provide for children and their children (Prov. 13:22; Ezra 9:12)
- d. This is a testimony to the neighbors and friends as well as the family members themselves. Show the love of God and His provision to the children.

2. Other Believers in Need

- a. Those in the local church (1 John 3:17f; Gal 5:10; Acts 2 & 4)
- b. Other churches (2 Cor. 8; 9:1, 12f; 1 Cor. 16; Rom 15:25-27)
- c. To “brothers” in need (James 2:14-17)

3. Neighbors - After the needs of family and other believers in need are met

Dr. Thomas Finley in a paper on the Book of Amos states, “A better term than “fairness” to cover what Amos demands of Israel is “generosity.” The supremely practical book of Amos views people, so to speak, through their wallets. Amos recognizes that the true test of compassion for one’s neighbor is whether the neighbor is created generosity in financial matters. Generosity is a major distinctive of true religion throughout the Scriptures (e.g. Heb. 5; Matt 6:12; James 2). Amos is filled with concrete illustrations. He reminds employers, merchants, judges, landlords, neighbors - - all should be generous to others, and especially towards the poor and disadvantaged. For Israel generosity was

- grounded in the Exodus: For Christians, it is grounded in the Cross” (Dr. Thomas J. Finley, *An Evangelical Response to the Preaching of Amos*, Nov. 29; 1983)
- a. Nearby neighbors (Sojourner laws)
 - b. When need is recognized (Good Samaritan)
 - c. Those of a different faith, race (i.e. Good Samaritan)
 - d. Remote neighbors. Now through mass communication we are made aware of needs around the world and those people are our neighbors in this age. Give through churches planted
 - e. Enemies (Provers 25:21; Rom 12:20)

IV. CONCLUSION:

In this paper we have looked at the problem of hunger, its causes and results, and God’s desire for us to respond to the need. We also looked at the different approaches to solving the problem of world hunger and their comparison with the principles of Scripture. Finally, we looked at using a Biblical approach to using the funds we have in a prioritized manner. God desires us to be wise stewards of the money with which He has entrusted us. We would do well to consider the Biblical principles and examples to meet needs as we are able.

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