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LastGroove

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Keine Stimmen

The Poor and Needy



While walking on earth, Christ had a special concern for the poor and the needy. He healed them, had compassion on them, and never turned away from those who needed help.

The Poor in the Church

All who believed were together and had everything in common; they would sell their property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone according to their need.

Acts 2:44

All the believers were of one heart and one mind, and none of them claimed any of their possessions as their own, but they shared everything in common. And the apostles bore witness with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who was in need, for those who owned land or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and lay them at the apostles' feet; and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Acts 32–35

The Poor in Society

God has clear expectations regarding how His people should treat those in need. He has clearly defined them in His Word.

"If there is a poor person among your brothers in any of your towns within the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother."

Deuteronomy 15:7

The righteous care for the poor, but the wicked pay no attention to them at all.

Proverbs 29:7

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But this is the fast that I choose: to loose the chains of injustice, to untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to break every yoke, (7) that you share your bread with the hungry and bring the poor and homeless into your house; when you see the naked, you clothe them, and you do not turn away from your own flesh and blood.

Isaiah 58:6–7

Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Matthew 5:42

Whoever has two tunics should share with the one who has none, and whoever has food should do the same.

Luke 3:11

Sell your possessions and give alms. Make for yourselves purses that do not wear out, a treasure in heaven that never fails, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

Luke 12:33

Now when they recognized the grace that had been given to me, James, Cephas, and John—who are regarded as pillars—extended the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas as a sign of unity, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised; we were only to remember the poor, a task to which I devoted myself earnestly and which I strove to carry out.

Gal 2:9–10

If anyone has the world’s goods and sees a brother in need but closes his heart against him, how can God’s love dwell in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech, but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:17–18

Perhaps the most blunt passage is found in the Gospel of Matthew:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. Then the King will say to those on his right: ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you welcomed me; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me.” Then the righteous will answer him with these words: ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” The

King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Then he will say to those on his left: ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, and you did not welcome me; I was naked, and you did not clothe me; I was sick and in prison, and you did not visit me. Then they, too, will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and fail to serve you?’ Then he will answer them with these words: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.” And they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

Matthew 25:31–46

The Role of YS

Encourage the church to support organizations that help the poor.

- Through regular donations
- By getting physically involved in its work
- By promoting its activities (e.g., organizing an interchurch meeting dedicated to the organization’s work).

Use special days of the year (such as Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving, harvest festivals, and Fat Thursday) as motivation to help the poor.

- Announce a food (and other items) drive at church, school, or in your YS group. By collecting items with a long shelf life (canned goods, pasta, sugar), the drive can last up to several weeks or months.
- Organize an “event” where you’ll collect food or money to support those in need.
- Go with your group to a place where people in need are gathered and share sandwiches, soup, or prepared meals.
- Get involved seasonally by partnering with an existing project in your city.

Establish a ministry in your church dedicated to helping the poor and those in need. Regularly remind people about it and support it.

- It can be responsible for keeping track of those in need within the church.
- It could handle one-time relief efforts (e.g., when a church member is ill).
- It may consist of several experts in various fields who can provide knowledge and professional advice in difficult situations, such as a nurse, a lawyer, a pastor, an electrician, or a teacher.

Organize an “event” to draw attention to the plight of the poor and those in need.

- Organize a meeting focused on helping the poor. Prepare an agenda that highlights the issue.
- Organize an event such as an Easter Dance, with the goal of drawing attention to the plight of the poor and needy. Invite all the churches in your city. Ask each participant for a symbolic donation for attending, such as 2 zł. Donate the money collected to support the poor and those in need.

Spread the vision of helping the poor and those in need.

- Organize a worship service centered on the theme of the duty to help the poor and needy.
- Ask Sunday School and youth group teachers, as well as home group leaders, to discuss the duty to help the poor and needy during their meetings.
- Create a weekly or monthly flyer or newsletter containing some information about global poverty and a few points under the heading: “Here’s How You Can Help This Week.”
- Ask representatives from an organization you support or are familiar with to share some information during a worship service or study session about the organization’s work or recent developments.
- Organize a seminar outside of worship services to discuss the topic of global poverty and/or poverty in your country and/or city.
- Organize a “sleepover” for church youth and their friends, during which they can learn more about global poverty, as well as poverty in your country and/or city.

Encourage the church to support the ministry of helping the poor as practiced in other churches.

Sources

Campolo, Tony, and Gordon Aeschliman. "101 Ways Your Church Can Change the World." Regal Books, California: 1993.

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