

God's Heart for the Poor Small Group Bible Study

Note to the group leader

Scripture is full of references to God's concern for those who are impoverished, vulnerable, and oppressed. One researcher once cut out, with scissors, every verse pertaining to God's heart for the poor...and ended up with a very hole-y Bible indeed. He learned that God's concern for the poor—and His desire that we share in that compassion—is recorded hundreds of times in His word.

Before you begin, you may wish to prepare by printing out the Scripture references for your group. This preparation will allow you to cover all of the passages in your allotted time. It's also important to have response devices available. Child sponsorship packets, brochures and other resources are available from Food for the Hungry (contact info is below).

This short Bible study will help your small group unlock God's perspective on poverty. As you consider the Scriptures, may you discover God's mandate to "do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

Most groups spend about one hour on this Bible study. For more in-depth resources, please contact the Advocate Ministry of Food for the Hungry at 1-800-2-HUNGERS.

Ice Breaker

When you think of poverty, what image stands out in your mind? (You may include personal experiences, scenes from the news, or the first picture that pops into your mind.)

Introduction

Whenever we want to understand an issue, it's important to consider what God's Word says first, isn't it? Today we're going to discover the Bible's perspective on poverty. Did you know that Scripture mentions poverty and injustice more than any other issue? Yet how many of us have spent time really considering the plight of the poor through God's eyes? Let's ask God to open our eyes through His Word today.

Pray to open the study, inviting God's presence and instruction.

God's heart for the poor

As we read these verses, look for words and phrases that speak about God's heart and actions towards the poor. *Pause after each passage and ask for responses.*

Psalm 10:14-18; Psalm 72:12-14; Psalm 146; Luke 4:16-21

Did you hear any descriptions that you would use to describe ways God has helped you in different seasons in your life?

"Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty." (Mother Teresa) Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

God uniquely identifies Himself with the poor and intimately ties our worship of Him with caring for the poor.

When someone oppresses the poor, whom is he hurting? *Proverbs 14:31; Matthew 25:31-46*

What kind of repayment do you think God gives to those who help the poor? *Proverbs 19:17*

According to the following passage, what does it mean to know God? *Jeremiah 22:13-17*

Not many of us build palaces and upper rooms today, but the above passage from Jeremiah may still apply to us. Can you think of any modern-day actions of Christians that would cause God to say, "Woe to him?"

What does the following passage teach us about the relationship between caring for the poor and worship? *Isaiah 1:10-17*

Imitating God's compassion for the poor is an essential, mandatory part of our Christian lives.

God commands us to care for the poor, offering blessings for obedience and consequences for disobedience. What are the specific commands God gives us regarding the poor? *James 1:27, 2:14-17; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Proverbs 31:8-9*

How does God bless those who help the poor? What are the consequences of not helping the poor? *Proverbs 21:13; 22:9; 28:27; Isaiah 58:1-11*

Conclusion and Application

How should Christians be living in relation to the poor? If you had to summarize God's heart for the poor in one sentence, what would you say? Do you feel God calling you to make any changes in your life today?

Pray for one another.

Call to Action

Would you consider taking a step towards God's heart for the poor today?

1. **Child sponsorship** through Food for the Hungry is a simple, life-changing opportunity to make a difference for an impoverished child and his or her family. To get involved, select a sponsorship packet for a waiting child today.
2. If you feel God stirring your heart towards the poor, consider becoming an **Advocate** with Food for the Hungry. Advocates share God's heart for the poor within their sphere of influence, offering ways to get involved and change lives! Advocates receive training and coaching, and they are recognized as experts on poverty within their local communities. For more information, visit www.fh.org or pick up a brochure.

God's Heart for the Poor Bible Study Scripture Passages

God's heart for the poor

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Psalm 72:12-14

Psalm 146

Luke 4:16-21

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Matthew 25:31-46

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Jeremiah 22:13-17

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James 1:27

James 2:14-17

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

Proverbs 31:8-9

Proverbs 21:13

Proverbs 22:9

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Isaiah 58:1-11

To get involved, visit www.fh.org