

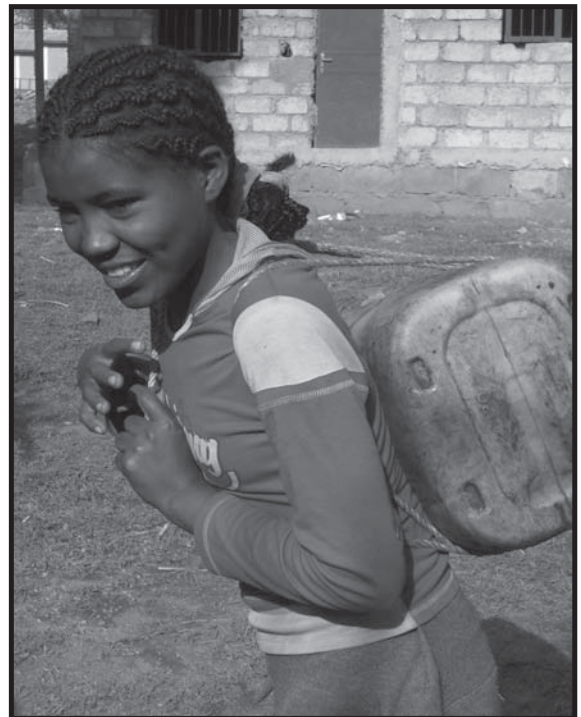
Making the Poor Visible

BY BRIAN FOREMAN

The United Nations set its first Millennium Development Goal to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Estimates from the World Bank show that 1.4 billion people were living in extreme poverty in 2005. In recent years oil prices and food production prices have risen to a level that may push many more into poverty. Yet in America we equate poverty with the homeless or people “somewhere else.” The reality is that the poor are among us yet invisible and oftentimes voiceless.

Brian Foreman is an educator focused on helping organizations develop strategies for being socially just. When not doing that, he chases his other passions—his family and good coffee.

This chapter examines the disconnect between our ideas of poverty and the reality that exists worldwide. The Bible study will demonstrate the responsibility given to Christians at Corinth by the apostle Paul. His exhortation is that the people who have much should assist those who do not, striving for equality. The mission study will highlight the work of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel who are working toward poverty relief in several African countries. The mission project will provide ideas for local poverty relief and options for supporting the field personnel in Africa. Finally the chapter concludes with a worship service that encourages youth to look at their position in the world, the haves, and how Paul challenges them to assist those without, the have-nots. Youth should also find that one way to assist those whom others fail to see is to become their advocate.



Children in Ethiopia collect drinking water for themselves and their family.



KNOWING THE SOURCE • BIBLE STUDY

Leaving No One with Too Little

Background: 2 Corinthians 8:8-15

The atmosphere in the church at Corinth was one of pain for Paul. He was saddened by the lack of unity he found between Jewish and Gentile Christians. He was further saddened by the economic conditions facing the Corinthians. While many people had enough to meet their needs, others were left with basic unmet needs.

As Paul writes chapter 8, he addresses the needs of the community. Take a moment to consider the needs that were obvious. The first is the distinction being drawn based on whether people are Jewish or Gentile. The second is the gap between those whose needs were being met and those who were going without. Do these needs seem foreign to you, or is this a relevant topic in today's global culture? How do socioeconomic class issues affect how "our neighbors" are treated today?

learning goal:

Students will be able to connect the concept of Paul's words to at least two situations they see in the world around them, and they will find ways in which they can contribute to fulfilling this charge.

Gratitude and Giving

Throughout chapters 8 and 9, Paul uses the Greek word *charis*. This word is translated as "grace," "generous act," "thanks," "privilege," and "generous undertaking." Literally it refers to the benevolence of Christ and God. It is also a reference to humanity's response to the actions of the Holy through thanksgiving and reciprocal giving. This is the setting for the passage in this chapter. Beyond what they mean to us as individuals, Paul's words speak of the work of God in humanity.

Modeled by God

The actions by God toward humanity are a model of *charis*. It is a remarkable act of giving and sacrifice seen through the incarnate Christ. More specifically, when Jesus walked the earth, he demonstrated compassion for the dregs of society. He sat with the lepers, ate with the sinners, and defended the woman caught in adultery. He spoke for those who could not gain an audience with the religious leaders. Jesus stood for the oppressed, the invisible, and the silent. This image of Christ is the very one that Paul is speaking about when he exhorts the people to finish the work to which they committed.

Shared Resources

Some in the community lacked the resources to meet their basic needs of food and shelter. Others had all that they needed and much more. As Paul writes, he is not seeking to make all things equitable but rather

to see an appropriate balance struck where those who had an abundance of resources shared with those who did not. He references Exodus 16:18 when he says, “The one who had much did not have too much,

One area where students do understand this comes from where they spend much of their time: school. Unless in an elite private school, they likely share classrooms and hallways with people who live below the

is an important exercise for you as you read this Scripture and prepare for this Bible study, as it will help you recognize the ways in which the words of Paul are still relevant to you and your youth today. You may seek to do

Paul recognizes, as did the author of Exodus, that too much or too little is not acceptable. Paul’s ideal guarantees that no one would ever go without having basic needs met.

and the one who had little did not have too little” (v. 15). Paul recognizes, as did the author of Exodus, that too much or too little is not acceptable. Paul’s ideal guarantees that no one would ever go without having basic needs met. Jesus speaks of the reality that the poor will always be in the world, but this does not excuse Christians from caring for them or even trying to eradicate poverty. While the task is overwhelming, one should be motivated toward action, not paralyzed by the volume of the problem.

Connection

Poverty exists. It exists in Africa. It exists in big cities. It exists in rural counties. It exists in your town. Perhaps your students have a great deal of privilege, and poverty is a difficult concept for them to grasp. They may understand it cognitively, but sympathy and empathy are two different understandings.

poverty line. The struggle for teenagers is sensitivity. The poor may be marginalized as outcasts, possibly choosing to hide due to self-consciousness. If the poor are invisible to them, then the work is to raise their awareness and to note how their lives are connected.

Reflection

Students have many opportunities to connect with poverty at a tangible, local level, yet if poverty is relegated to a condition in developing nations, students cannot relate. As you read this, determine how well you connect to poverty. What does poverty relief mean to you? How do you contribute to relief in developing countries? Where do you see it in your community?

Take a few moments to write down images that come to mind when you hear the word poverty. Consider your awareness of global, national, and local images and situations. This

a similar time of reflection with your students.



For detailed lesson plans, check the *Ignite* CD-ROM.



UNDERSTANDING THE NEED • MISSION STUDY

Doing What Needs to be Done

The African continent has been ravaged by civil wars, genocides, and famine for many years. This has left a significant portion of the population without basic needs. When needs for clean drinking water and basic nutrition are unmet, famine and disease take over, and a vicious cycle is perpetuated. Breaking cycles like this is difficult. Resources might be sent to regions of the continent, but proper distribution of resources is not guaranteed. While the food sent may fill a stomach for one day, it does not provide education and infrastructure to those who can help create sustainable change.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel are living in many parts of Africa, each providing resources that can lead sustainable change. Melody and Sam Harrell are doing urban work in Nairobi, Kenya. Jessy Togba-Doya is educating ex-child soldiers in Liberia. Dee Donalson is training kindergarten teachers and setting up schools in Ethiopia.

facts

- ▶ 70,000 children live in poverty on the streets of Nairobi.
- ▶ In Liberia, many ex-soldiers are middle school aged.
- ▶ In Ethiopia, teenagers want to start their educations so badly they will begin at the kindergarten level, with kindergartners.
- ▶ In the U.S., opportunities exist, but poverty is still prevalent.

Melody and Sam Harrell

In the U.S., people talk about children being the future and the most precious resources. The same can be said of children around the world. Melody and Sam Harrell work in Nairobi, Kenya, to protect and develop those resources. More than 70,000 children live on the streets of Nairobi. Imagine how overwhelming the need is, yet the Harrells continue their work knowing that each effort helps. Their work is focused on two

main ministries. The first is the orphanage of the Baptist Children's Center, which serves the children in the center but also the community. The Center provides technology training, medical care, a chapel, and a nursery school. The second is a program that feeds street children and provides them with an education. The Harrells have several dreams to assist the children and the nation of Kenya—dreams to provide trade education for children so that they might one day become self-sufficient and to address the AIDS pandemic in the country.

Jessy Togba-Doya

For many years, Charles Taylor ruled Liberia with a heavy and fearsome hand. He was considered one of the most brutal dictators in the world. Part of his military force was comprised of child soldiers. While American children were in school, their Liberian counterparts were being trained, often against their own will, to be soldiers in Taylor's



One of the children from the streets of Nairobi, Kenya, who are served by field personnel, Melody and Sam Harrell.

army. Many of these children are now orphans of the civil war that tore apart their country.

Calandra and Jessy Togba-Doya work diligently to educate these former soldiers and provide them with a new way of life. Through a partnership with Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, the Togba-Doyas provide education and healing through the Balama Project. One major effort is the creation of the Balama Elementary School. In just two years, the enrollment is more than 300 students, many of whom are former soldiers and/or parents themselves. The school meets many needs, including education, clothing, and food. Ultimately their work will be to transform the lives of the people in the Balama region through reconciliation, rehabilitation, and

reintegration of those bearing the scars of the civil war.

Dee Donalson

Dee Donalson knows the importance of education, having earned her doctorate in education and teaching at various levels of schools in the U.S. Today she is sharing that passion in Ethiopia by training kindergarten teachers and setting up schools.

In 2007, she began work in Hosanna, Ethiopia, to set up another school. The process has been slow and challenging because no building is designated for the school. Dee has been raising funds for a school to be built on the college campus for the children of staff, college students, and neighbors. They hope to realize their dreams as Compassionate Alliance has the

capacity to bring a prefabricated building to Hosanna, followed by a team experienced in setting up the school building. To support her ministry, Dee also sells her watercolor paintings.

Dee says that in Ethiopia few teenagers have an opportunity to attend school. They are so eager to learn that if they can get into kindergarten by drawing lots, they leap at the chance. “Age and size make no difference here. Education is the most important thing in their lives unless they are devout Christians. For Christians, Bible study and prayer life become even more important than going to school. Praying for four to six hours is not unusual for these believers.”

Dee also supports a wheelchair project. In her part of Ethiopia, more than 500 people need transport because of polio or rickets. Through a partnership with Joni and Friends, 100 wheelchairs have been shipped to Hosanna.



For detailed lesson plans, check the *Ignite* CD-ROM.



FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE • MISSION PROJECT

Every Effort Makes a Difference

Melody and Sam Harrell both grew up in East Africa. Jessy Togba-Doya is from Liberia. Dee Donalson saw a need and set out to meet it. Regardless of where your story begins, you will have opportunities to respond to the call of Christ on your life in ways that change others' lives as well as your own. When responding to needs around you, you join the cause of Christ, becoming the presence of Christ to the world, particularly the world you can influence.

These four field personnel have a number of characteristics in common, but one stands out: passion. All of them have put their passions into practice to be the presence of Christ in the world. Whether they have known they would serve in some mission capacity since childhood, came to it later in life, or were inspired by the vision of a spouse, all are equally passionate about sharing Christ's love in the world. Their passions have helped them to see where God has called them and

to address social and human issues too big for them to ignore.

American teenagers face a hindrance to relating to poverty on a global perspective. In the U.S., many government programs and service agencies address issues of poverty. Obviously the problems still exist, but for many teenagers it is a hidden problem. They do not see children living in the streets or as former soldiers, and education is taken for granted. Service projects help open teenagers' eyes and make these issues tangible. You can help raise teenagers' awareness and help them see poverty.

In this session you will ask youth to choose a project in which to be involved. As part of the process, ask students to reflect on the Scripture of Paul to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:8-15), the mission studies, and their passions. Where is God calling them to be the presence of Christ?

Planning the Project

In planning a project to address poverty needs in your area, you can lead teenagers to choose among obvious needs—food, housing, clothing, and education. You may choose to work through your own church, perhaps in providing a clothes closet; with an agency in your area to provide food for a food pantry or winter coats; or perhaps with an after-school program to tutor children or help them learn to read.

What You Need to Prepare

The ideal project will provide a way for teenagers to help others and, at the same time, raise their awareness of needs close to home. As much as possible, let your youth take the lead in planning the project. Help them find a ministry that excites them.



A view of the homes of the people of Nairobi, Kenya. There are many orphans of the AIDS pandemic who live on the streets of Nairobi.

Be prepared to point them in the right direction to feed clothe, provide shelter, or help educate people in poverty. In many cases, students are not aware of the options and resources in their community or with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to help them in their project.

Another option is to help the field personnel. For example, Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Atlanta is a partner with the Balama Project. They have supported the efforts by having people partner at a local orphanage and participate in a micro-lending effort.

In Ethiopia, Dee Donalson has involved participants in several ways. University Baptist Church in Charlottesville, Virginia, sent Dee's sister to teach

creative activities to use with young children. Her church sent a short-term team to help bring and plant fruit trees. Many groups with teenagers have come to Project Mercy and helped at the kindergarten. John Brown

University students came to Project Mercy to volunteer, and last year they came to Hosanna to interact with the children living on the compound.

Encourage students to think outside of the normal projects and really seek to match their passions to a potential project that excites them and benefits others.



For detailed lesson plans, check the *Ignite* CD-ROM.



Jessy Togba-Doya and his wife, Calandra, live in Liberia where they educate former soldiers and work for healing through the Balama Project.



RESPONDING TO GOD • YOUTH WORSHIP

Lesson 1014

The purpose of this worship experience is to help youth recognize the blessings they have and how they can give to others who are not as fortunate. In essence, it is a time for them to hear the words of Paul again, that one not have too much or too little. After having had a service experience focused on poverty relief, this worship will help provide an opportunity to praise God and reflect on how they may be called to do more. Not everyone is called to ministry of the same kind, but each is called to care for the least of these.

Youth at Worship

Come In

Use this activity to allow youth to come in the room and engage the topic. As they enter, give each a few pieces of play money from a board game or that you print yourself. Have them write on a piece of butcher paper the ways they would spend their money. Since not each student will be given the same amount of money, the answers will vary. You may even have some that will pool their money in order to buy what they want. After a few minutes ask them what they liked about this activity and what they did not like. Obviously those with

more money will have more to say about what they liked. Those who found the money to be restricting may express more that they disliked about the activity. Encourage more discussion if the opportunity presents itself, particularly around how money can open opportunities for many, while the absence of it can prohibit opportunities for others.

Experience

Direct students into small groups, asking them to write down how much they spend in a week. Ask adults to do this as well. After a few minutes, ask them to total their lists. Once complete, explain that 80 percent of the world's population lives on less than ten

Note to Leaders:

- ▶ Remind students that this study is not to make them feel guilty but to help them recognize the blessings they have and the responsibility to care for the oppressed that accompanies their blessings. Once students can no longer ignore poverty, they will become a force for eradicating it.
- ▶ Distribute the litany (Item 3) to read as you close. It is based on the Scripture passages they've studied throughout this unit.

dollars/day or \$70/week. Now ask them to return to their lists and determine what they would have to live without in order for that to happen. You may also want to examine this in light of the finances of their family. For example, if both parents and all children worked for this wage, you would have \$X/week. What would the family budget look like? When would there be time for school? This activity may help illustrate the vicious cycle of poverty in which people can be trapped.

Reflect

During a time of silent reflection, ask guiding questions to help students transfer into a Scripture study: The Scripture explains that many have more while others have less. Which group do you fall into?

In advance, enlist three students to read these Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 8:8-15; Acts 17:28; and Psalm 82:3-4.

Begin with Psalm 82:3-4. Ask students to think about people they meet or go to school with each day whom this Scripture describes. How do others respond to these people, or do others even notice them? How do you respond to them? Are they easy to miss? Do you think they might choose to be invisible?

Read Acts 17:28. To whom do you belong? To whom do the impoverished belong? As far as God's love goes, are you any different from another? What does this Scripture say about your responsibility to others?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:8-15. Which group of people do you fall into? Have you ever thought you were less fortunate because you did not have what some of your friends have? What does unfortunate mean to you now?

As you ask the following questions, you may wish to have butcher paper on the wall to record students' answers.

- Just how fortunate are you?
- What do you have that you do not need?
- What luxuries do you take for granted?
- How is school a luxury?
- Having heard these Scriptures, what does poverty have to do with you?
- How are you to respond?
- What types of things keep people from helping others?
- What did you learn about giving to others during the service project?

Discover

Transition by writing the number 1014 on a focal wall. Instruct them to guess what can happen 1014 times in an hour. Expect some goofy answers and allow it. Write down as many of the answers as you see fit.

Tell students that the number represents how many children will die around the world from poverty-related causes during the hour you are together. These deaths may be related to nutrition, housing, immunization, or other preventable needs that take the lives. Ask students how that makes them feel. Ask them how the work of CBF field personnel (the Harrells, the Togba-Doyas, and Dee Donalson) is helping reduce that

number. How are you helping to reduce that number by supporting those ministries? How can you help by limiting your purchases and wasteful habits? How can you help being a voice for the invisible in your community?

Go Out

Why does any of this matter? You have what you need and more. You give at Christmas and occasionally through fundraisers. You go on a summer service project with the church to help paint houses. What more are you expected to do?

Let's start by determining how you could have spent the money you were given as you entered the room tonight. Most likely students spent the money on themselves. Ask them now to consider how that money could have been used to help eradicate poverty. Encourage them to be creative. Encourage them to pool their resources. Ask students to write their answers on the other sheet of butcher paper provided on the wall.



For detailed lesson plans, check the *Ignite* CD-ROM.

Item 1

Where I See Poverty

Instructions: Please answer the following questions individually. You may choose to answer in words or pictures.

1. The country I live in is:
2. The state I live in is:
3. The city/county I live in is:
4. The school I go to is:
5. The neighborhood I live in is:
6. What do the people look like in my neighborhood?
7. What sounds or smells come to mind?
8. What are homes like in my neighborhood?
9. When I think about poverty in the world, the first images that come to mind are:
10. When I think about poverty in the United States, the first images that come to mind are:
11. When I think about poverty in my state, the first images that come to mind are:
12. When I think about poverty in my city/county, the first images that come to mind are:
13. When I think about poverty in my school, the first images that come to mind are:
14. How is God calling me to help others who have less than I do?

Item 2

Map of Africa

Link: http://www.communitywalk.com/balama_africa/africa_field_personnel/map/328622
(This link will take you to a similar interactive map on the Internet.)



Item 3

Worship Litany

Based on 2 Corinthians 8:8-15; Acts 17:28; and Psalm 82:3-4

Leader: Give justice to the weak and the orphan.

Students: Look after the rights of the lowly and the penniless.

Leader: Rescue the weak and the needy;

Students: Deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Leader: This is not a command but a test of the genuineness of your love.

Students: Jesus Christ, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor.

Leader: It is appropriate for you not only to do something but even to desire to do something.

Students: Our eagerness will be matched by our efforts.

Leader: If the effort and the eagerness are there,

Students: The gift is acceptable.

Leader: I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need.

Students: Balance is that, “the one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.”

Leader: In him we live and move and have our being.

Students: For all, rich and poor, are his children.