

Serving the Poor, Myths and Pitfalls

Definitions of Poor

Individual vs. group or class
Deficient, lacking in resources or means
Inadequate, inferior
Impoverished, indigent
Destitute

Reasons for Poverty

Oppression, exploitation, social injustice
Natural disaster, flood, famine, pestilence
War, economic recession/depression
Personal sin, moral failure, addiction, pride, criminal activity
Ignorance, unwise stewardship

Myths

“Noble Savage” closer to unspoiled humanity
“Salt of the Earth” history is the story of the common man
What is “normal”?
Christ favors the poor and is incarnate in them, not others

Pitfalls

Excusing and romanticizing sin/evil
Burnout, ripoff
Prejudice against non-poor
Not seeing Christ in all people, regardless of means
Falling prey to the oversimplification of “-isms”
“Noblesse oblige” Not seeing our own poverty.

Selected Scripture References:

Causes of Poverty: *Proverbs 6.6-11; 10.4; 13.4; 14.23; 19.15; 20.13*
23.19-21; 28.19.
Poor always present: *Deut. 15.11; 1 Samuel 2.7; John 12.8.*
Condition of the Poor: *Job 24, Proverbs 14.20-21; 18.23; 19.4; Eccles. 9.13-17.*
God cares: *Job 15.5; Psalms 9.18; 69.33; 72.2; 102.17; 113.7; 132.15; 1 John 3.17.*
We should care too: *Proverbs 14.21, 31; 17.5; 19.17; 21.13; 28.8.*
Not fooled by appearances: *Proverbs 13.7.*
Moderation goal: *Proverbs 22.2; 30.7-9; Leviticus 19.15.*
Rights of Poor: *Proverbs 29.7.*