

Are We Helping or Hurting?

The material gap between the rich and poor is so great locally and globally. How do we respond with grace and genuine love for our neighbour? Let's together explore biblical principles and real-life situations that remind us of the need for mutual transformation.

If you were to explain to someone why Jesus came into the world, what would your response be?

Biblical References: Luke 4: 17-21; Matt. 6:10; Luke 7: 22-23.

WORD and DEED

What are descriptions at times used to describe those who are helped and those who are helping?

<i>helper/helped</i>	<i>able/unable</i>
<i>giver/receiver</i>	<i>blessed/cursed</i>
<i>needed/needy</i>	<i>whole/broken</i>

What is Poverty?

<i>state of mind</i>	<i>lack of finances, food</i>
<i>can't provide for self</i>	<i>instability</i>
<i>poverty of relationships</i>	<i>lack of resources and food</i>

How do the poor describe their own poverty?

<i>shame</i>	<i>inferior</i>
<i>everything is terrible</i>	<i>powerless</i>
<i>inferior</i>	<i>no say in public</i>

Poverty is rooted in broken relationships, so the solution to poverty is rooted in the power of Jesus' death and resurrection to put all things into right relationship again.

According to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, poverty exists when persons, associations or institutions lack the resources and space they need to fulfill their God-given responsibilities and callings.

Scenario of poverty:

(a) Relief or (b) Rehabilitation or (c) Development

Relief – urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from natural or man-made crisis i.e. tsunamis, earthquakes, fire death etc.
seldom, immediate and temporary

Rehabilitation – Seeks to restore people and their communities to the positive elements of their pre-crisis condition. Key feature is working with the victims as they participate in their own recovery.

Development – the process of ongoing change that moves everyone closer to a right relationship with God, self, others and the rest of creation.

Development is not done to people or for people but with people.

It is crucial to determine *whether relief, rehabilitation, or development* is appropriate in each situation.

In our helping, when are we hurting? What is helpful?

There are some good rules that are extremely useful in cutting through a lot of the complexity:

1. Conviction:

Christ loves each of us! What is good for us is not necessarily good for others! What is valued by others is not necessarily known by us! Have the willingness to learn, to not assume, to be willing to be corrected, to admit mistakes, to try something new. Each individual is different. Much divine wisdom is needed. Not all poverty is created equal – not a “one size fits all” approach.

humility

2. Be present:

Become present with others who are hurting. Come alongside others with a deep passion, a deep desire to be in a place of “suffering with”. Do not be haughty in regards to spirituality (assuming that we have a lot to teach the materially poor about God) and knowledge (assuming that we have all the best ideas about how to do things). Pursue a relationship with a person so that he/she may be able to use their gifts, abilities and resources.

compassion

3. Avoid:

*Avoid paternalism: do not do things for people that they can do for themselves. We need to have the WILL to do what benefits our neighbour. Solution to poverty ought not to be seen in material terms. Let people be stewards of their own time and talents. Instead of doing the work and the decision-making that needs to happen, ensure participation of affected people in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of any program put into place. **Raise up** leaders from the community it seeks to help.*

justice

Justice is the ultimate expression of loving God and loving our neighbours.

In your ministry, may the words of Micah 6:8 guide you!

*To act justly and to love mercy and to
walk humbly with your God.*

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