poverty
unlocked

Presented by FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY

From Paradise to Poverty:
How God's World Got this Way

Roots of Poverty

Sustainability: Change that Lasts

Walking Like Christ
how to use this curriculum

Poverty Unlocked is a four-week series that introduces Christians to the Bible's teachings on poverty. The group activities, Bible study and stories will deepen your group's understanding of poverty and what you can do about it. Poverty Unlocked is an ideal curriculum for Sunday School classes, Bible study groups, student ministries, or any group interested in hunger issues. Each session lasts two hours.

As you read through this booklet, you’ll notice that it’s written in everyday language. We recommend that you use your own words in teaching the class, but we’ve made it easy for you:
• by writing what you can say in regular font
• instructions or notes in italics, including handouts and other resources on the accompanying CD.

For More Information...

If you have any questions about the curriculum or need help, please contact the Advocate Ministry at Food for the Hungry by calling 1-800-248-6437.

You can also learn more about these topics by listening to our audio program: www.povertyunlocked.com.
Objective:
Participants will understand the degree of physical poverty worldwide and the dimensions of poverty within the Biblical context.

Resources:
- The Constant Gardener (2005) DVD or a movie of your choice that shows poverty
- Whiteboard or easel-sized notepad with markers
- On the CD: Session 1 Handout (print for all participants)
- On the CD: Sheets with triangles, squares and circles (print according to the chart under "Visual Representation of the World")
- On the CD: “God’s Heart for the Poor” Bible study (print for all participants)

Introduction and Prayer (15 minutes)
Open by sharing about yourself...your background, experiences, and what led you to teach this class. Also share logistical information if necessary, such as where the restrooms are located. Lead the group in prayer.

Icebreaker (10 minutes)
Share with someone near you:  What is one image of poverty that stands out to you (personal experience, pictures, mass media)? In other words, why are you here?

Whatever you just shared in the icebreaker, we’re going to touch on it during this class.

Give an overview of the four sessions.
1. From Paradise to Poverty:  How God’s World Got This Way. Today, we’ll look at the big picture of how poverty was born.
2. Roots of Poverty. A moment ago, you shared the images of poverty that stood out to you. Did you realize that the Bible says something about each of those situations? In Week Two, we’ll examine the root problems that keep people in poverty.
3. Dependency and Our Approach. Does God have a plan for every people group and every community? In Week Three, we’ll see God’s plan for the poor and disadvantaged. We’ll also look at the roles that God has given you and me in this plan.
4. Walking Like Christ. In Week Four, we’ll draw all of the lessons together as we consider what it means to follow the example of Jesus Christ.
In the U.S., 13 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. (about $9,800 for a single-person household, $20,000 for a 4-person household.) Because the American poor fall in and out of poverty, about 40 percent of the population falls below the poverty line at some point in a 10-year period. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007)

1. First, let’s look at the percentage of the world that is hungry.
What is hunger? It’s more than missing a meal or feeling ready to eat dinner.

**Hunger:** Hunger is when people do not get enough food to provide the necessary nutrients (carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals and water) for active and healthy lives. Beyond stomach pains, hunger causes the body to be more susceptible to life-threatening diseases. Hunger also saps energy, causing children not to learn in school and causing adults to be less productive at work. Chronic and persistent hunger affects a surprising number of people in our world. If you have a circle on your sheet of paper, stand up. This is the percentage of the world that is hungry – about 13 percent, over 854 million people. (FAO & The State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2006)

You may sit down.

2. Let’s look at income.
What proportion of the world lives on less than $2 per day? Think for a moment about what percentage you would guess. 10 percent? 25 percent? If you have a square on your sheet of paper, stand up. This represents 50 percent of the world – about three billion people. (Population Reference Bureau, 2005)

You may sit down.

3. Finally, let’s look at the number of deaths caused by hunger.
Is hunger something that people really die from these days? Each person who is going to stand up now represents 5,000 people who will die today because they are hungry. If you have a triangle, stand up. 24,000 people die every day from hunger and hunger-related causes, and 18,000 of them are children. (United Nations Hunger Project, 2000)

You may sit down.

Hunger and low income aren’t the only plagues facing our world. What are some other ways we see poverty? Have participants share and write each item on the board. Include examples of social, mental, spiritual, and physical poverty.

**Examples may include:**
- Lack of schools/education
- Child/spousal abuse
- HIV/AIDS
- Broken families
- Illicit/collect government
- Female genital mutilation
- Homelessness
- Racism
- Depression
- Separation from God

In the next three weeks, we are going to get at the root of these issues and understand God’s plan for poverty.

**Film Clip (5 minutes)**
Share a movie clip that visually represents poverty and serves as a bridge into the next section. If you choose The Constant Gardener, begin at Scene 4 with the train whistle and stop the clip after the visit with the HIV-positive man and his wife.

**Bible Exploration (40 minutes)**
Most of us are familiar with some verses that refer to God’s heart for the poor and our instructions to care for them. However, the Bible tells us much more about poverty than a concordance search will reveal. Scripture tells us why people are poor, what God intends for the poor, and how poverty fits into the grand scheme of His redemptive work.

**The Framework of Stories**
People love stories. We live and learn using a framework of stories. God has a story too. We don’t want to talk about poverty in isolation. We want to look at the big picture of what Scripture says to us about poverty, just as we look at the big picture of God’s Word when we consider our own salvation and discipleship. In other words, if we want to truly understand what God has to say about poverty, we must consider God’s epic story.

**Have someone read:**
“The Bible is the narrative of God’s creative and redemptive work in the world; thus it also contains the story of the Christian community. It is God’s story about what God is doing. The Christian story was received; we did not make it up. It is not our story about God. Nor is it the sum of our individual stories, even though God holds these stories in high regard. It is this
story of what God wants and is doing that compels us to care for the poor and to work for human transformation. God’s story is the source of our motivation, our vision, and our values of mission.”

_Interrupt here to reinforce what the quote is saying. Continue with the quote, asking someone else to read._

“The Biblical story also puts our stories in their place. We learn that it is not my story, or your story, or our story that is the main story, the story that gives meaning. Meaning only comes from God’s story. To pursue human transformation as Christians means understanding where humanity is coming from, where it is going, and how it can get there. To do the work for transformation, we have to embrace the whole of the Biblical story, the story that makes sense and gives direction to the stories of the communities where we work, as well as to our own stories.” – Bryant Myers, _Walking with the Poor_ (1999)

It is within the context of God’s story that our stories have meaning, and in that same context, we must consider the stories of the poor.

**God’s Story**

Elements of God’s story (invite participants to fill in the blanks):

1. The beginning: Creation
2. The conflict: Fall
3. The center: Jesus
4. The mission: The Great Commission
5. The end: New Earth and New Heaven

Let’s look at the beginning: Creation. Open your Bibles to Genesis 1-2. In small groups, write down every relationship you see that Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden.

After groups write down their answers, list all the relationships they have noted in four quadrants on the board, as diagrammed below. Do not write in the labels (physical, social, etc.) until after all the relationships have been noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
<th>SOCIAL</th>
<th>SPIRITUAL</th>
<th>INTELLECTUAL/EMOTIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day and Night (1:5)</td>
<td>Spouse (1:27)</td>
<td>Creation (1:21, 30) Role as Steward (2:15)</td>
<td>God (1:27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land and Sea (1:10)</td>
<td>Family (2:24)</td>
<td>Plants (1:11)</td>
<td>Beauty (2:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals (1:20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good and Evil (2:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Law (2:17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can roughly categorize these relationships into four types of relationships: physical, social, spiritual and intellectual/emotional. All relationships we experience today also fall into these categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Spiritual</th>
<th>Intellectual/Emotional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>with Creation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gen. 3:21-2</td>
<td>banished from the Garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gen. 3:11, 12</td>
<td>casting blame on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Creation</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gen. 3:17-19</td>
<td>work is difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with oneself</td>
<td>Intellectual/Emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gen. 3:24</td>
<td>wandering, lack of purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let’s bring poverty into this analysis. Look back at the list created during the first hour. Assign each form of poverty to one of the four relationship areas, as shown in the following example.

**PHYSICAL**
- HIV/AIDS
- Child/Domestic Abuse

**SOCIAL**
- Broken Families
- Unjust/Corrupt Government

**SPIRITUAL**
- Separation from God

**INTELLECTUAL/EMOTIONAL**
- Lack of schools/education

As we examine each form of poverty, we recognize that poverty results from a complex breakdown of one or more of the relationship areas (physical, social, spiritual and intellectual/emotional). If poverty is about these relationship areas that don’t work, what implications does this have for the way we address poverty? (God must be at the center of our interventions, because only He can fix what has been broken. Just as our broken relationship with God led to other relationships falling, the way to reconcile physical, social, spiritual and intellectual/emotional issues is through relationship with God.)

2. The Fall
   We all know what happened after all of these wonderful relationships were put in place – Adam and Eve blew it! They listened to the serpent, ate the fruit, and experienced shame.

   Of the relationships we listed on page 8, which were broken by the fall?

   Broken relationships and corresponding developmental areas:

3. Jesus
   As we just learned, poverty reflects a fallen world. But as Christians, we know that the story doesn’t end in Genesis 3.
God provided a solution to the Fall when He sent Jesus. He lived among us, experiencing what we experience. He died for us, and then rose again demonstrating victory over death.

Why did Jesus shed his blood? Many of us grew up hearing that Jesus shed his blood so that our sins could be forgiven and we could go to heaven. This is absolutely true, and it’s the most important reason He shed his blood. However, it’s not the entire reason.

Read Colossians 1:15-20, making special note of “reconcile all things.” Forgiving our sins and restoring our relationship with God is the crux of the story, but it’s not the whole story. God was reconciling “all things” to Himself through Christ. All relationships are part of that reconciliation. So any message that overlooks the social, physical, mental or emotional ramifications of the Gospel is incomplete!

On which relationship does the American church tend to dwell? (Spiritual) Is it Biblical to focus exclusively on spiritual development? (No.) Conversely, is it Biblical to focus on physical development without a foundation of spiritual development? (No.)

4. The Great Commission
Read Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus tells us to make disciples of all men. You may wish to discuss the difference between a convert (one who believes) and a disciple (one whose life is transformed).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Once again we see the language of reconciliation. This verse tells us that we are the ministers of reconciliation. Not only did Jesus come to reconcile the world to Himself, but He has also given us the ministry of spreading this good news.

5. New Heaven and New Earth
We can take comfort in knowing that what we do today isn’t the end of the story. Read Revelation 5:9-14. God’s big plan includes every people group.

Toolkit (5 minutes)
Most of this class deals with the big picture of poverty, but we also recognize that practical, everyday ideas are useful. Each week, we’ll offer one or two tools for you to consider as you minister to the poor. These are practical ways to put what you’re learning into practice.

Wrap-up Discussion (10 minutes)
Choose one of the following activities:
1. Review what participants have learned today. Ask if and how their perspectives have shifted today.
2. Pray together for the world’s poor.
3. Hand out blank sheets of paper ask participants to write down what they hope to learn in the next three weeks.

Explain the homework:
Participants will take home a copy of “God’s Heart for the Poor” Bible Study to work through. Copies can be printed from the CD included in this curriculum.

Today we saw that God has a lot to say about poverty. Many times, Christians fail to share Scripture because they’re not sure of the exact reference. Sometimes we think it’s better to summarize from our own point of view without mentioning the Bible. But God’s Word is powerful!

Read Hebrews 4:12. Incorporate Scripture in your conversations whenever you can. You don’t have to open the book or cite the reference. But you will probably find yourself memorizing more Scripture as you put this principle into practice!
Objective
Participants will discover why people are poor in the context of biblical values and experience the vulnerability and hopelessness felt by victims of poverty and injustice.

Resources
- 8 large easel-sized sheets of paper
- Masking tape to attach paper to wall
- Large markers for group work
- Ball-point pen with a company logo, e.g. a bank or drug company – something you would get for free
- Computer and projector to show a movie clip and Hungry Decisions
- On the CD: Session 2 Handout (print for all participants)
- “Problems, Ideas and Consequences” worksheets (print a sheet for each group
- Hungry Decisions activity (use with computer and projector)

Icebreaker (10 minutes)
Ask participants to share responses to one of the following questions:
- What is one verse that impacted you from the Bible study (God’s Heart for the Poor)?
- Without looking at your notes, what are the four relationships we discussed last week?
- How do you imagine it feels to be poor? Describe it in five words or less.

Pray to open the evening.

Hungry Decisions Activity (30 minutes)
Read the following introduction from Hungry Decisions.

“A large proportion of the world’s population goes to bed hungry every night.” Though we have heard this many times, most of us cannot comprehend it. We cannot fathom the suffering.

“We cannot grasp the difficulties faced right now by millions of people who are barely clinging to the edge of life. But it may help us understand their plight and sense our kinship with them if, in our imaginations, we try to make some of the tough survival choices that such people are facing day after day.”

“On the following pages you will take the part of a man or woman who is trying to eke out a living in a poor rural area of a developing nation. At the end of each page you will face a difficult decision between two courses of action. Your choice of one or the other will direct you to another page, where the consequences of your decision will lead to a new dilemma, another choice, another page and so on – and finally to one or another of sixteen possible endings. The
story of your life — your very survival and that of your family — will depend on how you make these ‘hungry decisions’.”

“You are invited to work through each decision thoughtfully, trying to weigh the pros and cons of both alternatives.”

“Of course, this story is fictitious and oversimplified. But ‘any resemblance to real persons, living or dead,’ is very intentional! The story is true, many times over. Perhaps as you take part in this story you will gain a greater sensitivity to your brothers and sisters around the globe, trapped by poverty and injustice, who are making these very decisions as you read.”

Go through Hungry Decisions as a class. If you have the capability to split into small groups with laptops, provide copies of Hungry Decisions on CD for each group. Instruct them to go through both genders’ stories if they have enough time. Encourage them to work through the discussion questions when they are finished. Explain that there are two rules: (1) your group must agree on each decision, and (2) you cannot hit the “Back” button.

After the exercise, begin the group discussion by asking, “Which of the decisions took your team the longest to make?” Then look at the discussion questions together.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How did you feel as you played the part of this man or woman? How would you feel if you were in his/her position?

2. What additional choices would you hope would be made available to people in such situations? What new routes to better nutrition and health would you like to see opened up?

3. How do you compare the “hungry decisions” faced in this story with those faced by people in your own community?

4. Based on this story, what would you say are the major causes of poverty and hunger? What are the consequences?

5. What can we do to open up more choices and more opportunities for hungry people? What will you do?

**Relationships in the context of Hungry Decisions (10 minutes)**

Ask participants to list the four relationships discussed in last week’s class (physical, spiritual, social and intellectual/emotional). Ask how they saw each relationship play a part in the Hungry Decisions exercise.

Answers may include:

- **Physical**: lack of water, death of spouse/child, poor crop productivity
- **Spiritual**: (This exercise does not directly address spirituality, although missionaries are mentioned. Ask how participants would feel towards God based on their situations.)
- **Social**: deciding whether or not to have children, joint decision making with spouse, death of spouse, roles of women
- **Intellectual/Emotional**: decisions requiring factual knowledge such as infant formula, medications, etc., going to school, implementing new farming ideas

**Case Study: Rwanda (15 minutes)**

We have considered four relationships that impact poverty. Last week, we discussed how Scripture calls us to address all four of these areas, not just what we would label as “spiritual.” Let’s look at a real-life example that illustrates this point.

Rwanda is a small country in Eastern Africa. About 9 million people live there. There are primarily two tribal groups in Rwanda — similar to what we would call two ethnicities — the Hutus (HOO-tuhs) and the Tutsis (TOOT-sees). In the 19th and 20th centuries, Rwanda was a great success story for Christianity. By the 1990’s, almost everyone in Rwanda had converted to Christianity. Over 90 percent claimed to be Christians.

Besides being Christian, they were also tribal. The tribal tension between the Hutus and the Tutsis ran deep. Although they had lived at peace in history, many Rwandans would tell you that there was an underlying tension between the two groups. The feud had flared up in the 1970’s and Rwanda fought a civil war off and on for 20 years. Still, most Rwandans managed to live fairly peaceful lives.

In April 1994, the President of Rwanda was killed. He was a Hutu. The Hutus blamed the Tutsis for the murder, and mayhem broke out. The clip you’re about to see is from the movie Hotel Rwanda. Don Cheadle plays a man who is Hutu, and he is married to a woman who is Tutsi. This clip starts the morning after the President’s death. (You will see some violence. Please look away or leave the room if you think it will bother you. This clip is not appropriate for children.)

Play Hotel Rwanda beginning at Chapter 6. It begins with a smoky hillside and then shows a mother and son seated on a bed. Stop the video when Don Cheadle arrives at the hotel and gets out of the van.
In this country of 9 million people, over 800,000 people – possibly a million or more – died in the 3-month genocide. It was not just soldiers doing the killing. Regular people took up machetes and sliced their neighbors.

Rwanda was over 90 percent Christian before the genocide. Many Christians killed other Rwandans. How could this happen among Christians? (Allow participants to respond from their own perspectives.) Again, let’s revisit the four areas of development. From your observation, what were some of the Biblical truths about each area ignored in Rwanda? Allow participants to respond.

Answers may include:

- Physical: God has given us everything we need to make a living out of the resources we’ve given, so we don’t need to fight over resources. (2 Peter 1:3)
- Spiritual: God does not only care about us claiming a relationship with Him. He wants us to live by His principles, including “You shall not murder.” (Exodus 20:13)
- Social: Human life has innate value, regardless of ethnicity. Jesus said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44)
- Intellectual/Emotional: We are to think on “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable.” (Philippians 4:8) Hatred of people based purely on ethnicity, or feelings of superiority based on ethnicity, is never condoned in Scripture.

As you look at your own life, which Biblical truths about each area do you ignore?

The Tree is Known by its Fruit (45 minutes)

As we see in the example of the Rwandan genocide, faith in Christ must encompass much more than saying a prayer, going to church, and claiming a title. Faith in Christ should change our values. In other words, our reality is defined by God.

There are many things that compete with God’s reality. These things influence our beliefs, answering questions such as “Who is God?” “What is the meaning of life?” and “What is moral and just?”

Have you heard someone – maybe a politician, a teacher or a spokesperson – say that “personal beliefs” should not influence one’s actions? It might sound like a nice sentiment, but it’s impossible. Your beliefs determine your values. These values answer questions such as “Who am I?” “What is important?” and “What action should I take?” Think of your beliefs as the roots of a tree. Draw a tree with roots, a trunk, branches and fruit. Write “beliefs and values” next to the roots. Roots are usually unseen, aren’t they? Although you can’t see roots, they anchor and feed the tree. In the same way, our values feed our actions. Each of us has beliefs and values that apply to others, creation, God and ourselves.

Values establish motivation to acquire new knowledge and skills. Write “knowledge and skills” next to the trunk of the tree. How are knowledge and skills similar to a tree trunk? Can you think of an example of a value that motivates someone to acquire new knowledge and skills?

Have some examples ready, such as:

- You care for the poor (value), so you came to this class to learn about serving them (knowledge and skills)
- The Bible is God’s Word (value), so you study it diligently (knowledge and skills)
- You recognize that your body is God’s temple and you should live a healthy life (value), so you start using a low-fat cookbook and learn how to do aerobic exercises (knowledge and skills)
- You believe that a goddess determines the fertility of your crop land (value), so you spend time thinking about how to appease the goddess rather than learning productive techniques for farming (knowledge and skills)

Behaviors are the outflow of our values, and they are fueled by our knowledge and skills. Write “behaviors” next to the branches of the tree. Use one of the examples that were given for knowledge and skills above. Point out that the behavior is the “doing” part, while knowledge and skills are the “knowing” part. In the case of the genocide in Rwanda, the world took notice of a behavior. Rwandans killing one another. However, there were deep-seated values influencing this behavior.

Finally, from our behaviors come our quality of life. In short, we reap what we sow. Write “quality of life” next to the fruit on the tree. Take a moment to think about something positive in your own quality of life, such as the job you have or your family relationships. Can you trace your own progression from a set of beliefs and values? Allow a moment for sharing examples. Have your own example ready in case participants have trouble thinking of something.

Let’s look back at the roots – beliefs and values. Beliefs can be influenced by truth or deception. If beliefs are influenced by truth, they will produce good fruit! If they are influenced by deception, the fruit will be bad. Read Matthew 12:33-35.

Is it possible that people are poor because of beliefs and values? Absolutely. In our example of Rwanda, we saw that Rwandans operated out of the belief that God was on the side of their own tribe. The behavior that stemmed from this belief was mass genocide. Alternately, if my beliefs tell me that inanimate objects are actually gods and spirits (this is a belief in animistic cultures), then I may live in fear and act accordingly. If a culture believes that certain castes are less valuable than others, they will systematically oppress the lower class. If a society concludes that people only have value if they can “contribute to society,” the value of life comes into question and actions such as abortion and euthanasia become acceptable.

Now that we have a grasp on the connection between ideas and consequences, let’s do some work in small groups. We will talk about specific beliefs and think about corresponding behaviors and quality of life. I will tell you a situation and a corresponding belief. As a group, make a list of behaviors or conditions that would result from this belief.
Place easel-sized paper with the following headings on the walls around the room:

- health
- social justice
- american culture
- HIV/AIDS
- hunger
- child development

Allow participants to choose their group based on their area of interest. Hand out worksheets (available on the CD) to each group listing a problem and idea.

As groups work, walk around the room and offer to help. Some teams may not grasp the idea right away. Remind them that this is a brainstorm; they don’t need to know the real-life consequences of the belief.

After 10-15 minutes, call the group back together. Ask them to present their thoughts. Discuss each list as a large group.

**Hunger**

**Situation:** Residents of the community live on the edge of starvation.

**Belief:** If I grow more crops than my family can eat, the gods will be angry.

**Possible Behaviors and Resulting Quality of Life:**
- When drought or a crop disease strikes, there will be no surplus to feed us
- Malnutrition/hunger
- With no leftover crops to sell, there is no money for school supplies, medicines, clothing, etc.
- Those who grow more crops are ostracized by the community
- Missionaries or foreign workers that encourage increased crop production are seen as troublemakers

**Child Development**

**Situation:** My children are noisy.

**Belief:** Children are a nuisance. Beating them is the best form of discipline.

**Possible Behaviors and Resulting Quality of Life:**
- Children are abused
- Children learn violence
- Children do not trust their parents
- Children do not have a voice
- Parents have a poor relationship with their children

**Health**

**Situation:** All available drinking water is dirty.

**Belief:** Spirits live in the water.

**Possible Behaviors and Resulting Quality of Life:**
- Fear of boiling/filtering water
- Outside attempts to build clean wells or kill parasites are rejected
- Parasites and bacteria are ingested
- Villagers succumb to water-borne illnesses
- Children cannot concentrate in school due to water-borne illnesses

**Social Justice**

**Situation:** I lack money.

**Belief:** Women are the property of men.

**Possible Behaviors and Resulting Quality of Life:**
- Prostitution
- Women are forced to work long hours
- Women don’t get enough to eat
- Men receive education instead of women
- Men become lazy, expecting the women to work for them

**American Culture**

**Situation:** People need purpose.

**Belief:** Happiness is all that matters.

**Possible Behaviors and Resulting Quality of Life:**
- Pleasure-seeking at the expense of others: fractured relationships, child abuse
- Addictions
- Shallow faith
- Rejection of God
- Suicide

**HIV/AIDS**

**Situation:** Tribes in Southern Africa believe that when a man dies, his wife remains bound to his spirit.

**Belief:** A widow must have sex with one of her husband’s relatives to break the destructive bond to her husband.

**Possible Behaviors and Resulting Quality of Life:**
- HIV/AIDS is spread
- More villagers die of AIDS
- Women are raped
- Women are impregnated, giving birth to fatherless children
- Women who resist tradition are ostracized

**HIV/AIDS (2)**

Use this bonus HIV/AIDS selection if the HIV/AIDS group is large.

**Situation:** People in your community have AIDS.

**Belief:** AIDS can be caught by touching an infected person.
Possible Behaviors and Resulting Quality of Life:

- HIV/AIDS victims are ostracized
- HIV/AIDS victims experience social rejection and emotional pain
- HIV/AIDS victims hide their status, infecting others through sexual contact
- Christians miss the opportunity to show love to their neighbors
- HIV/AIDS victims become impoverished, not being able to work or go to school

When we approach situations this way, by looking at underlying beliefs first, it is easy to see what must be done for behaviors to change: beliefs and values must change first. If beliefs and values are not grounded in truth, attempts to change the fruit – quality of life – will be only temporary. However, what do people see first when they look at a tree? (its fruit and branches, not its roots)

When we see poverty, we first see quality of life and behaviors. For Christians who care about the poor, then, our challenge is to identify the roots – beliefs and values.

Toolkit (10 minutes)

1. Be a kindergartner: Ask “Why?”

Kindergarteners could ask “Why?” until they’re blue in the face. They spend their days figuring out how the world works. The word why is their tool. We can learn something from kindergarteners. Imagine you’re at a local ministry and a woman approaches you asking for a few dollars. You could treat the symptom by giving her money, or you could pursue the root issue by asking, “Why don’t you have any money?” As you probe, you may find that her root is too high. Perhaps she lost her job or spent her money on drugs. Now you have begun to find out the potential “heart of the matter,” and may be able to help address the deeper problem.

2. Charge a nickel.

Hold up a pen with a company logo on it. Ask the audience who would buy it for $20. Barter down until you are offering it at a price that a few people would pay for it (a dime or a quarter). Why do we hesitate to spend money on a pen like this? (Because we always get them for free.) We have received so many freebies from companies that we don’t value them. We throw them away when we have too many. Now, what if this pen was actually something you needed, such as vitamins for your child? What if you became accustomed to receiving free vitamins for your child? Even if you knew that they were good to have – like the pen I offered you – you would put less value on them. In the developing world, if we offer handouts, people devalue what we’re giving.

When you have something to give, if you charge a nickel – or a dollar, or five dollars, or whatever is appropriate – you will also be encouraging the recipient to value what you are giving.

Would someone pray to close us?

Only by addressing these root causes can we facilitate lasting, God-honoring transformation.

Objective:
Participants will consider the God-given potential of people who are poor, gain a greater understanding of why it’s so hard to get out of poverty, and discover ways everyone can spark change.

Resources:
- Water is Life video (included)
- An object, such as a stuffed animal, taped to the wall/whiteboard with 6 pieces of tape
- On the CD: Session 3 Handout
- Change Obstacles (print one copy of each)
- DVD: Water is Life (15 minutes)

Water is Life showcases the Tomoyo Project, which brought water channels to the Tomoyo region of Bolivia. Use this example of sustainable development to set the stage for this session’s discussion of sustainability.

Intro & Review (5 minutes)

The video showed how God’s work done by Christians can change a community. Last week we talked about “charging a nickel.” Can anybody remember what that concept was? (If development costs something for the recipients, it’s more likely to be a lasting change.) In this video, we didn’t see members of the community putting in money. But what did we see them contributing? (Work, prayer, cooperation, planning)

Last week we learned about the roots of poverty. We showed that poverty can manifest in many ways, but underlying beliefs and values are at the heart of lasting change. Today we’ll build on what we talked about last week by discussing why people remain poor instead of being able to rise out of poverty. Then we will consider some Biblical truths that must be incorporated when we work with the poor.

Pray to open.
Positive change is extremely difficult if others are actively opposing our efforts to change.

Later in the session, you will take a look at why people don’t change by discussing six change obstacles.

According to this process, the poor should be able to release themselves from poverty. In other words, “Why can’t—or why don’t—the poor help themselves?” This question does not ask how someone tries hard enough, he should be able to rise out of poverty. This conversation begs the question, “Why can’t—or why don’t—the poor help themselves?” This question does not ask how people become poor—there are an infinite number of reasons! We are asking why people remain poor. In other words, “Why can’t people change their own condition?”

To answer this question, we’ll look at:
- how people change
- why people don’t change

People generally follow a process of change shown by the diagram (right). Walk through this process, beginning with Life Experiences. Using a hypothetical example that anyone can relate to (e.g. losing weight or kicking a nail biting habit), follow the process through each step.

According to this process, the poor should be able to release themselves from poverty. The change process always works—unless there is an obstacle to the change. Let’s take a look at why people don’t change by discussing six change obstacles.

**Group Skits (40 minutes)**

Split into six groups. Give each group a slip of paper, printed from the CD, with one of the change obstacles listed below. Ask them to develop 1-minute skits to illustrate the change obstacle without using the words on the slip of paper. Participants can speak during the skits; they just can’t use the words or definitions listed on the slips of paper. Have the other participants guess the obstacle based on the skits. Discuss change obstacles as they are presented.

**Change Obstacles:**

1. **Lack of Resources**
   Positive change is difficult to achieve without adequate material and financial resources to carry out the desired change.

2. **Lack of Knowledge**
   Positive change is not possible if we are unaware that there are other ways of viewing and doing things.

3. **Human Sinfulness**
   Positive change can be blocked by our sinful nature.

4. **Lack of Supportive People**
   Positive change is blocked without the encouragement and support of others.

5. **Presence of Opposition**
   Positive change is extremely difficult if others are actively opposing our efforts to change.

We must consider all six obstacles when we work with the poor. For example, if we address lack of resources (#1) by drilling a well, we aren’t necessarily promoting lasting change. It could be that lack of knowledge (#2) will prevent community members from using the well because they don’t understand the importance of clean water. Due to a lack of supportive people (#4), perhaps the community leaders will not maintain the well and the pump will break.

Suspend an object such as a stuffed animal from the wall, whiteboard or ceiling using six threads. As you mention each obstacle in the following paragraph, cut one thread. This exercise shows that unless all change obstacles are removed, a community cannot be released from poverty.

These change obstacles have implications for the way we give. For Food for the Hungry and other Christian development organizations, it is often easiest to raise funds for physical projects such as drilling a well. That’s because most people understand that “lack of resources” (#1) is an obstacle to positive change. Cut a piece of thread. Even though one obstacle is removed, the community has not been released from poverty. It is often difficult to raise funds for educational projects (#5, cut another thread). Biblical values training (#3, #6, cut two more pieces of thread), or leadership/community development (#4, #5, cut the last two pieces of thread and allow the object to fall). But unless we address all of these change obstacles, we won’t see people permanently released from poverty. Next time you give to a program, ask yourself how many of these change obstacles are being addressed.

Consider giving towards projects that address all six obstacles.

**Heart for the Poor (10 minutes)**

Until now, we have been studying why people are poor and how God views poverty. Now we will turn a corner to look at the way God would have us work with the poor. We have covered “who, what, when, where and why.” For the rest of today and next week, we will discuss “how.”

Scripture gives us the basis for our identity as human beings. The Bible tells us that God made all people—rich and poor (Prov. 22:2). It tells us that we are all sinful (Rom. 3:23), as we discussed in the last exercise. It also tells us that we were made in God’s image. Our Scriptural identity has implications for the way we approach the poor, as image-bearers of God.

**Genesis 1:26, 27. Read aloud.**

If people are made in the image of God, what are some attributes that we can assume are true of them?
As Christians, we are ministers of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:18-20) This means that we proclaim the truth about God and people, and we give people opportunities to respond to the truth. One of the truths we must proclaim is that people are made in the image of God. But do we always proclaim this fact – not with our words, but with our behavior?

In our interactions with the poor, sometimes we inadvertently send messages that rob them of their identity as image-bearers of God. What could a well-meaning Christian do or say that would imply that a poor person was not made in the image of God? List some examples of how someone who wants to help the poor could actually end up robbing them of these qualities. Make a list on the right side of the above list, matching them up as much as possible.

**Illustration (15 minutes)**

Let’s read a fictional story called “The Best Big Sister in the Whole Wide World.” As you listen, think about the qualities that we just noted.

**Read the story.**

**The Best Big Sister in the Whole Wide World**

Richard’s older sister Harriet was so happy when he was born. She had always wanted a little brother. She watched her mom change his diaper. She watched her dad sing him lullabies before bedtime. She watched Richard grow and grow until he was old enough to walk, talk and eat all by himself.

Harriet played with Richard a lot. There were many things that Richard couldn’t do. He couldn’t tie his shoes. He couldn’t make his bed. He couldn’t pour his own milk. So Harriet helped Richard. She tied his shoes because she was good at tying shoes. She made his bed because she knew how to tuck in the sheets just right. She poured his milk, and she almost never spilled it.

The years passed, and Richard got bigger and bigger. Now he was in the seventh grade. Now he was as tall as his mom. He liked to joke around and play football with his friends. Harriet grew too, and she kept on being the best big sister ever for Richard. One day, Richard came downstairs for breakfast and saw Harriet scrambling eggs like usual. “Harriet,” he said. “I was wondering if you could show me how to scramble eggs someday.” Harriet giggled. “Richard,” she replied. “You’re only in the seventh grade. I’m happy to make your breakfast. It’s how I show you how much I love you. Now sit there at the table – I’ll be right over to tie your shoes.”

Harriet’s mornings were very busy. Every day after she made Richard’s breakfast and tied his shoes, she would run upstairs to make his bed. She had gotten really good at folding the corners of the sheets just right. Then, if she hadn’t finished Richard’s homework the night before, she would sit down and finish it before they left for school. (It didn’t make any sense to have Richard do his own homework. Harriet could do it much faster. She was much better at arithmetic, penmanship, spelling, and practically everything she could think of.)

Richard always told Harriet how much he appreciated her. “What would I do without a sister like you?” he often said. Then he would think inside, “What would I do without Harriet?” He had grown so dependent on Harriet that he couldn’t imagine living without her help.

More years passed. Richard and Harriet grew up into adults. Harriet got married and had children of her own. Today she lives in a house with three bedrooms: one for her and her husband, one for her kids, and one for Richard. Harriet is teaching her husband and her kids how to take care of Richard too. They’ve gotten really good at vacuuming around Richard’s feet when he is watching TV. Everybody tells Harriet that she reminds them of Jesus. She sacrificially gives everything to make sure that Richard has what he needs. Sometimes, Harriet feels like she gets more out of helping Richard than Richard gets out of being helped. It’s a win-win situation.

At the end of every day, Harriet and her family tuck Richard into bed. They know that all of their sacrifice is worth it when they see his grateful eyes closing, safe and sound in a place where he has everything he needs.
Discussion Questions:
1. What went wrong in this story?
2. What messages did Harriet inadvertently send to Richard? Look back at our list of qualities that people have as God’s image-bearers. Can you point out ways that Harriet may have sent Richard the message that he was not made in God’s image?
3. What parallels does this story have with the way we might approach the poor?
4. Comment on this quote: “If poverty is the world trying to tell the poor they are God-forsaken, then transformation is the declaration that they are made in God’s image, that God allowed his Son to die for them, and that God has given gifts to the poor so that they too may be fruitful and productive.” — Bryant Myers
5. Did Harriet have an accurate view of her own identity? Why or why not?

Playing God (10 minutes)

Harriet played God in Richard’s life. It was obvious that Richard’s identity was marred by Harriet’s actions, but Harriet’s identity was marred too. She crossed the line between displaying all of the good qualities we listed (refer to the qualities of an image-bearer) and elevating herself to the place of God. When we start making decisions for other adults and communities, we are playing God.

We cannot – and should not – make decisions for other adults. Sadly, the poor live under the control of other people every day: wealthy bosses, unfair landlords, corrupt politicians, etc. When we work with the poor, sometimes it’s tempting to tell them what they need and how to get it. It’s even more tempting to shower them with material blessings. But they’re desperate for a voice, more than they are desperate for money.

Review 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. Our role is to let God make His appeal through us. We are not the saviors.

Toolkit (5 minutes)

Practical tools for working with the poor.

1. Eat.
   Sharing a meal is a nearly universal symbol of brotherly love. If you have the privilege of working directly with the poor, you will certainly be offered something to eat. Accept it!

2. Meet the Mom.
   If you are ministering to children, remember that they already have parents (or other relatives) who are caring for them. You will make the most lasting impact if you visit and affirm their parents. Build up parents through classes, etc. They are God’s hands in their children’s lives.
Objective:
Participants will learn from Jesus’ ministry to the poor and will be invited to prayerfully consider how knowledge can translate into action.

Resources:
- Equipment for playing a sound clip (e.g., computer and speakers)
- Advocate Brochures, Service Opportunities Brochures and child sponsorship packets from Food for the Hungry (order by calling 1-800-2 HUNGRY; ask for the Advocate Ministry)
- Flyers for local involvement opportunities

Optional:
- Guest speaker(s) from a local ministry implementing holistic principles (this can replace the group reflection time, or you can shorten group reflection time)
- On the CD:
  - Session 4 Handout
  - “The Pastor and the Grocery Store” audio clip
  - “Letter to Myself” (optional; print one for each participant)

Welcome, Prayer and Introduction (10 minutes)

“The Pastor and the Grocery Store” Audio Clip (5 minutes)
Play the audio file from the CD. This story is told by Dwight Jackson. Dr. Jackson is now the Country Director for Food for the Hungry in Rwanda and Burundi, and Regional Director for the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

Principles from Jesus’ Ministry (45 minutes)
It’s clear from Scripture that Jesus cared about the poor. He gave sight to the blind. He healed a man who was lowered down through his roof. Remember the woman who had bled for many years and Jesus healed her? He addressed physical and spiritual needs. But let’s go deeper in acknowledging the example of Jesus as it applies to our work for the poor.
3. Humility
Jesus said, “I am gentle and humble in heart.” (Matthew 11:29) He said this even though He was God. He had all the answers; we don’t. For us, humility means acknowledging that we don’t have all the answers, but God does.

4. Loving People and Appreciating Culture
Example: Samaritan woman at the well, John 4:4-26. How did Jesus show love and appreciation of this woman’s culture without compromising truth?

“The ministry of Jesus is notable for its clarity of focus and flexibility of response. Jesus responds to people in that way. Jesus allowed people to set the agenda. But Jesus always responded out of who he was and what he represented. We know that Jesus both announced the Kingdom of God and embodied that reality, God’s new order.” - Wilbert Shenk

5. Serving in the Center and the Periphery
In Jesus’ lifetime, power was centered in Jerusalem. On the periphery – in Galilee, the Decapolis, Samaria – were the untouchables, the widows and orphans, and the powerless. Jesus chose to serve in the periphery, among the powerless. At the same time, He advocated to the powerful on behalf of the powerless.

We can follow Jesus’ example by going to the periphery ourselves. We can also follow his example by advocating in the powerful centers of our day: Washington, D.C., local governments, and often our own church.

As we discuss each of these principles, think about how well you are living them out. On your handout, mark where you would rate yourself on the continuum. You won’t be asked to share your ratings; this is a tool for you to evaluate strengths and weaknesses.

1. Walking with God
You can only give away what you already have. Jesus had just three years for his whole ministry, but he managed to “fit in” time with His Father. (Luke 5:16; 6:12, 9:18, 28; 22:39)

2. Identifying with People
Christ became flesh and lived among us! (John 1:14) When He came to earth, He didn’t just come as a conquering problem-solver. He laid down His rights and comforts. He emptied Himself.

Philippians 2:5-11

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be grasped,
but made Himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled himself
and became obedient to death –
even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place
and gave Him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”

Are we willing to empty ourselves? What would it take for us to truly identify with those whom we serve?
Congratulations! After four weeks of studying the Scriptures and poverty issues, you have far more knowledge of poverty than most other Americans. Does this mean that you have done your duty? No! Having knowledge without action is worse than not having knowledge at all! With your knowledge comes responsibility to act.

Here are three ideas to get you started:

1. **Advocate**

   **Read Proverbs 31:8, 9.**

   "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

   One of the most powerful ways we can serve the poor is to give them a voice. And when they cannot speak for themselves, we ARE their voice. The verb "to advocate" means "to speak on someone's behalf." Advocates don’t have to teach lengthy classes like this one. They just speak on behalf of the poor to their sphere of influence – friends, family members, church… whoever will listen.

   I would like to invite each of you to become an advocate with Food for the Hungry. Again, this means that you would be speaking out on behalf of the poor and offering people ways to get involved with Food for the Hungry. If that’s something you feel led to consider, there are brochures at the back table.

2. **Serve**

   In what ways can you show tangible love the poor and marginalized? Is there a local organization where you can get started with holistic ministry? What would holistic ministry look like in your neighborhood? (Point people to flyers/brochures on the back table of local ministry opportunities.)

   Perhaps serving will also include going overseas to serve the world’s poor through short-term and long-term missions (Hunger Corps) with Food for the Hungry.

3. **Give**

   We have already considered Scripture passages that command God’s people to give. There are opportunities for child sponsorship available at the back table. Consider this simple way to make a difference in the life of one child and his/her community.

   On a grander scheme, you may be called to reconsider your lifestyle more radically so that you can give to the poor. Are there luxuries in your life that you and your family could abstain from for God’s kingdom?

   With all of these action steps, you should feel empowered rather than overwhelmed. Consider this thought from Ron Sider:

   “God does not want anyone to feel guilty for not doing everything—or for taking time off for relaxation and recreation. Everyone should prayerfully ask God what limited, specific things God wants him or her to concentrate on. It was God, after all, who made us finite with only twenty-four hours each day. Being called to do all God wants us to do to correct social sin is not a heavy burden. It is an invitation to joy and meaning in life, an occasion for blessing our neighbors, and a wondrous opportunity to be a coworker with the Lord of history.”

   Pray together, asking God what limited specific things He wants each person to concentrate on.

**Closing (10 minutes)**

Allow time for participants to ask questions, mingle and visit the back table. Consider using one of the optional activities below if there is extra time.

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**Optional Activity #1:**

**Elevator Speech**

Create a 30-second answer to one of these questions:

- What should Christians do about world poverty?
- Why should I care about poverty?
- What did you learn from the class you took on poverty?

**Optional Activity #2:**

**Letter to Myself**

Write a letter to yourself, beginning with, “In the coming months, I plan to…”

Print out the attached template. Be sure to have participants write their address on the back. Mail the letters about 60 days later.

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