

Common Theologies about the Poor

(Developed from Richard Mouw's "Thinking about the Poor" & Bryant L. Meyer's [*Walking with the Poor*](#))

View of the Poor	Theological Emphasis	Key biblical Texts	Expressions	Explanation of Poverty	Theological Response
Poor as God's Image Bearers	Creation	Genesis 1-2	Poor as creative, a work of art, & source of God's glory	The poor lack skills, knowledge, and opportunity	Enable the poor to be more fruitful and productive
Poor as Rebellious	Fall	Genesis 3; Proverbs	Poor as lazy, prone to make bad choices; God helps those who help themselves	The poor are in rebellion, and their culture keeps them poor	Challenge the poor with the gospel and encourage them to make better choices
Poor as Christ Incarnate	Incarnation	Gospels	Christ in the distressing guise of the poor; "What you did for the least of these..."	The poor lack love and attention	Accompany the poor and relieve suffering as possible
Poor as God's Favorites	Prophetic Eschatological	Exodus; Prophets	Blessed are the poor for their will be the Kingdom; God as liberator	The poor are oppressed by the non-poor; poverty is structural	Work for justice; help the poor find their voice & place in socio-political economic systems
Poor as Lost Souls	Soul Salvation	Matthew 28; Acts	Save as many souls as you can; heaven is the better future; poor will always be with you	The poor are lost from God and Christ is coming soon	Proclaim the gospel and encourage the poor to respond