

A world Plagued With Human Suffering

Jesus Christ tells us that his mission includes the offer to us of abundant life. Let's look at John 10:10 and see what it says.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Side note to John 10:10. In contrast to the thief who takes life, Jesus gives life. the life he gives right now is abundantly richer and fuller. it is eternal, yet it begins immediately. life in Christ is lived on in a higher plane because of His overflowing forgiveness, love, and guidance. have you taken christ's offer of life?

Satan is the one that has caused so many death and crippling injuries on the battlefield but heartbreak, the destruction of families, and poverty. he also sows the seeds of enmities that last centuries. and the first half 20th century and the worldwide disruption. and mankind has also enjoyed a moderate reprieve in the sense that wars since then have been regional rather than global. yet nothing has changed in our nature that offers much-enduring hope for the future.

But suffering exacts itself on to people in poorer, backward countries. in so many countries people struggle simply to have enough to eat.

Recent estimates for global poverty are that 9.2% of the world, or 689 million people, live in extreme poverty on \$1.90 or less a day, according to the World Bank.

In the United States, 11.8% of the population, or 38.1 million people, live in poverty – with an income of less than \$33.26 per day – according to the 2018 census.

These numbers are calculated based on income and a person's ability to meet basic needs. However, when looking beyond income to people experiencing deprivation in health, education, and living standards, 1.3 billion people in 107 developing countries are multidimensionally poor.

Although poverty is often discussed in terms of dollar amounts, quality of life is also part of the conversation. Living in poverty means a life of struggle and deprivation.

Children living in poverty often lack access to quality education. Sometimes it's because there are not enough quality schools, their parents cannot afford school fees, or because impoverished families need their children to work. Without a quality education, children grow up being unable to provide for their children – thus the generational cycle of poverty.

Living in poverty also means not being able to afford a doctor or medical

treatment. It means no electricity, limited shelter, and often little to no food on the table. For young children, improper nutrition can mean stunting and wasting that permanently impact their development. In impoverished countries where many people lack access to clean water and sanitation, poverty means the spread of preventable diseases and the unnecessary death of children.

Historically, poverty has been calculated based on a person's income and how much he or she can buy with that income, but new multidimensional measures are more holistic.

Absolute poverty is when a person cannot afford the minimum nutrition, clothing, or shelter needs in their country.

Relative poverty is a household income below a certain percentage, typically 50% or 60%, of the median income of that country. This measurement takes into consideration the subjective cost of participating in everyday life. For example, plumbing is a necessity in some places, without plumbing, a person could be considered impoverished. But, in other places plumbing is a luxury. Relative poverty is useful for considering income inequality within a country.

Multidimensional poverty acknowledges that poverty isn't always about income. Sometimes a person's income might be above the poverty line, but their family has no electricity, no access to a proper toilet, no clean drinking water, and no one in the family has completed six years of school.

The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index looks beyond income to measure a person's healthcare, education, and living standards to determine poverty levels. It was developed in 2010 by the U.N. Development Program and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative.

Within the categories of health, education, and living standards, there are 10 key indicators of multidimensional poverty that include nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets. If a person is experiencing deprivation in three or more of these standards, then he or she is multidimensionally poor.

The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index offers a thorough look at poverty and can guide the specific interventions necessary in each country to eliminate poverty.

Poverty is measured by each country's government, which gathers data through household surveys of their population. Entities like the World Bank provide support and may conduct their surveys, but this data collection is time-consuming and slow. New forms of high-frequency surveys using estimates and mobile phone technology are being developed and tested.

A poverty line, also called a poverty threshold, is the line below which it is difficult, if not impossible, to afford basic needs. The poverty line is determined in each country by adding up the cost of meeting minimum needs, such as food and shelter. Household incomes that are too low to afford minimum needs, such as food and shelter, are below the poverty line.

The income necessary to afford meeting minimum needs typically sets the poverty line for a country. Poverty lines can then be compared between countries. The international poverty line is the standard poverty line for measuring poverty globally. However, relatively new measures such as the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index include measurements of health, education, and living standards, all as signs of poverty.

Poverty lines are not the same in all countries. In higher-income countries, the cost of living is higher and so the poverty line is higher, too. In 2017, the World Bank announced new median poverty lines, grouping countries into low-income, middle-income, and high-income countries and finding the median poverty line for those groups:

\$1.91 per person per day – in 33 low-income countries

\$3.21 per person per day – in 32 lower-middle-income countries, such as India and the Philippines

\$5.48 per person per day – in 32 upper-middle-income countries, such as Brazil and South Africa

\$21.70 per person per day – in 29 high-income countries

The international poverty line, currently set at \$1.90 a day, is the universal standard for measuring global poverty. This line helps measure the number of people living in extreme poverty and helps compare poverty levels between countries.

As the cost of living increases, poverty lines increase too. Since 1990, the international poverty line rose from \$1 a day to \$1.25 a day, and most recently in 2015 to \$1.90. This means that \$1.90 is necessary to buy what \$1 could in 1990.

In addition to the lowest-income poverty line at \$1.90, the World Bank also reports poverty rates using two new international poverty lines: a lower-middle-income line set at \$3.20/day and an upper-middle-income line set at \$5.50 a day.

In the U.S. for a family of four, the poverty line is \$26,200 a year. This means that families who earn less than that cannot afford rent, food, or other basic needs. For an individual in the U.S., the poverty line is \$12,760 a year, or \$34.96 per day. This poverty guideline is calculated based on information from the Census Bureau and is

updated by evaluating recent price changes using the Consumer Price Index.

President Lyndon Johnson in 1964 coined the term "war on poverty." In President Johnson's first State of the Union address, he acknowledged that one-fifth of Americans were living in poverty and called for "a national war on poverty." With his war on poverty, President Johnson launched Medicare and Medicaid, expanded social security benefits, solidified the food stamps program, and subsidized school districts with a large share of impoverished students.

The root causes of poverty are not only a lack of access to necessities of life like water, food, shelter, education, or healthcare. Inequities including gender or ethnic discrimination, poor governance, conflict, exploitation, and domestic violence also cause poverty. These inequities not only lead a person or a society into poverty but can also restrict access to social services that could help people overcome poverty.

The places most entrenched in poverty are fragile contexts, which can be entire countries or areas of a country. In fragile states, children and communities face higher rates of poverty due to political upheaval, past or present conflict, corrupt leaders, and poor infrastructure that limits access to education, clean water, healthcare, and other necessities

Poverty can be a trap. For someone to get out of poverty, they need opportunities such as education, clean water, medical facilities nearby, and financial resources. Without these basic elements, poverty becomes a cycle from one generation to the next.

If families are too poor to send their children to school, their children will have a difficult time earning an income when they grow up. If a community lacks clean water, women will spend much of their day fetching water instead of earning an income. If medical facilities are far away, a parent loses income every time they take a sick child to the doctor.

Natural disasters and conflict can add to the cycle of poverty or add people to it. When a natural disaster strikes an impoverished community without functional public institutions, families are more vulnerable and often lack basic resources to recover, thus further entrenching a community in poverty or jeopardizing one that had recently emerged.

We can help end global poverty by identifying what is causing poverty in a particular community and then determining what needs to

change. Because poverty looks different in various places and is caused by different factors, the work to eradicate global poverty varies in the context.

World Vision works with a “Theory of Change” for each community. In partnership with the community members, we determine the desired outcomes for that community and identify key steps to reach that outcome. The desired outcomes might be the same for many communities, but the path to get there depends on the context and the resources available.

Perhaps infrastructure needs to be improved with new schools, medical clinics, or access to clean water. Or maybe, people need more economic resources to help boost their income so they can better provide for themselves and their families. Regardless of the solution, to ensure poverty doesn't return, the work must be sustainable. So, the community must be involved in each step.

To end extreme poverty, the U.N. estimates that the total cost per year would be about \$175 billion, less than 1% of the combined income of the richest countries in the world.

Since 1990, more than 1 billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty and child mortality has dropped by more than half. Reducing extreme poverty rates was a central goal in the Millennium Development Goals – eight goals signed by all United Nations member states in 2000 to achieve them by 2015. Since then, the world has made much progress in reducing global poverty.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a plan of action for countries worldwide to unify in a global partnership for the benefit of people, the planet, and prosperity. By 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals aim to end extreme poverty for all people everywhere and at least cut in half the proportion of people living in poverty in all its forms. The United Nations member states adopted this goal to end poverty as one of 17 goals in September 2015.

Since 1950, World Vision has been working to pull up the root causes of poverty's weeds and plant the seeds of change. We see the multidimensional reality of global poverty, and so our work targets the biggest challenges: hunger and food security, clean water, health, education, economic empowerment, gender equality, disability inclusion, spiritual poverty, disaster relief, and child protection.

With our donors' support, in a single year we worked to:

Bring clean water to 3.3 million people

Assist 12 million people with food projects

Impact 1.4 million jobs

Transform the lives of more than 2.8 million sponsored kids

Help 20.1 million disaster survivors and refugees

Improve the quality of education for children in nearly 50 countries

Distribute almost 16.7 million long-lasting insecticidal bed nets

As a child-focused organization, World Vision sees children as a community's most precious resource and central to addressing poverty. Our development approach focuses on children and seeks to empower their families, local communities, and partners to address the underlying causes of poverty, so children and the community can prosper.

Since poverty is different in each context, World Vision works with communities, families, local leaders, and children themselves to identify solutions and transform lives. We are expanding our focus to fragile contexts because, although they are difficult places to work, they are also where the most vulnerable children increasingly live. By 2030, it is estimated that 67% of the world's extremely poor will live in fragile contexts.

As one of the largest Christian humanitarian organizations in the world, we have the infrastructure, experience, and relationships needed to bring about lasting change. With more than 70 years of fieldwork, we are helping make the fullness of life possible for children and families.

World Vision has 37,000 staff worldwide who work in nearly 100 countries. More than 95% of our staff work in their home regions. Our long-term presence in communities, the trust we establish, and our integrated community development model enable us to address many of the root causes of poverty.

In the past 200 years, the world has made tremendous progress in ending global poverty.

1820: The vast majority of the world lived in extreme poverty 200 years ago. Only a small elite segment enjoyed higher standards of living. Since then, economic growth has transformed our world, lifting more people out of poverty even while population numbers have multiplied sevenfold.

1945: Following World War II, representatives of 50 countries signed the U.N. Charter, which acknowledged that maintaining peace is

connected with improved social development and social justice.

1964: President Lyndon Johnson declared “war on poverty” in the United States.

1970: The number of people living in extreme poverty peaked at 2.2 billion.

1981: The World Bank began collecting data on global poverty. Mostly through household surveys, they found that 44% of the world lived in extreme poverty.

1990: The World Bank defined extreme poverty as people living on \$1 or less a day. Around 1.89 billion people, or nearly 36% of the world’s population, lived in extreme poverty. Nearly half the population in developing countries lived on less than \$1.25 a day.

1992: The U.N. adopted Agenda 21, committing to work together to combat global poverty using country-specific solutions.

1995: The United Nations brought together the largest gathering of world leaders until then, at the World Summit for Social Development, where leaders wrote the Copenhagen Declaration as a pledge to eradicate poverty.

1997: The U.N. General Assembly declared the First U.N. Decade for Eradication of Poverty from 1997 to 2006, taking the commitment from the Copenhagen Declaration and putting it into action.

2000: All 191 United Nations member states signed the Millennium Development Goals, eight goals to achieve by 2015, including reducing extreme poverty rates – then calculated as people living on less than \$1 a day – by half.

2008: The World Bank re-established the international poverty line as people living on \$1.25 a day, using 2005 prices for the cost of living. U.N. leaders declared the Second U.N. Decade for Eradication of Poverty from 2008 to 2017, expanding on the success of the first decade and focusing on jobs and income generation as a way to combat poverty.

2010: The Millennium Development Goal of reducing the 1990 extreme poverty rates by half was achieved five years earlier than expected.

2012: The U.N. General Assembly adopted a new resolution about the future they want, recognizing that, “Eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today.”

2015: The World Bank raised the international poverty line from

\$1.25 a day to \$1.90, based on 2011 prices for the cost of living. Also, United Nations member states adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, which include goals to end poverty and hunger in all their forms.

2020: Global poverty is expected to rise for the first time in 20 years. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to push 88 million to 115 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, with the total rising to as many as 150 million by 2021.

If we look at Matthew 10:11

the poor you will always have with you, but you will always have me.

sidenote: here Jesus brought back to mind Deuteronomy 15:11 "there will always be poor people in the land." this statement does not justify ignoring the needy of the poor. scripture continually calls us to care for the needy. the passage in Deuteronomy continues: "therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and sisters and towards the poor and the needy in your land." Rather, by saying this, Jesus highlighted the special sacrifice Mary made for him.

mankind willfully spreads suffering the toll of suffering from food shortages and disease is monumental, raw greed brings yet more suffering, yet it remains a cancer in many countries.

united nations estimate that more than 12 million people are enslaved today. other organizations believe the true number is more than double that. "millions of people around the globe, including children as young as six, are working in bondage in dangerous and degrading conditions that often involve 18-hour workdays, beatings and sexual abuse" Many more, although not held against their will, live in virtual slavery, trapped by economic circumstances and long work hours while eking out a meager living. such conditions crush the human spirit. imagine a life bereft of joy, an existence in which people never enjoy such simple pleasures as the sound of beautiful music, the fun of good humor, the feel of a new garment, or the comfort of a secure roof overhead.

greed takes a deadly toll in hundreds of more subtle ways, advertisers hawk products that can ruin our health and eventually kill us. Entertainment promotes selfish, arrogant lifestyles that focus on short-term pleasure even as they ultimately destroy personal relationships and ruin opportunities for long-term happiness. some businesses, manufacturers, and governments poison the air, land, and water with toxins that threaten others' health and safety." the list goes on and on.

many assume god angrily internees to punish us whenever we step

out of line when in reality he generally allows us to suffer the consequences of our own selfish, shortsighted behavior (see Jeremiah 2:19; 10:23)

2:19 your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the lord of god and have no awe of me"

10:23 I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.

sidenote to 10:23 god's ability to direct our lives well is infinitely beyond our ability. sometimes we are afraid of god's power and god's plans because we know his power would easily crush us if he used it against us. don't be afraid to let god correct your plans. he will give you wisdom if you are willing.

much of the world's suffering is caused by the misrule of tyrants. scripture shows that god can remove wicked men from power (daniel 2:21 he changes time and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.). he humbled and removed Babylon's king nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest ruler of his era. as an emperor over many conquered peoples, nebuchadnezzar "executed whomever he wished" (daniel 5:18-19). yet God brought him down to size, neutralizing his influence for seven years.

sidenote on daniel 2:21

1. if you ever think that you have much to learn in life, and if you ever wish that you knew about how to handle people, then look to God for wisdom. while educational institutions provide diplomas at great expense, God gives wisdom freely to all who ask. (see James 1:5 for more on asking when your requests are answered.)

2. when we see evil leaders who live long and good leaders who die young; we may wonder if God controls the world events. daniel saw evil rulers with almost limitless power, but daniel knew and proclaimed that God " sets up kings and deposes them," that he controls everything that happens. God governs the world according to his purposes. you may be dismayed when you see evil people prosper, but God is in control. let his knowledge give you confidence and peace no matter what happens.

god also explained to ancient Israel, the freedom to make choices is essential to developing righteous character (Deuteronomy 30:15-19).

the bible also points out many agonizing human experiences that are direct results of sin. one such example is military aggression. "where do war and fights come from among you? do they not come

from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? you lust and do not have, you murder and covet and can not obtain, you fight and war" (James 4:1-2).

many teenagers become sexually active, with millions of girls giving birth out of wedlock to children who may never see their fathers, studies have shown that children abandoned by their fathers are far more likely at an early age to turn to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, adopt criminal behavior and become sexually promiscuous in their own turn, bringing suffering on themselves and others.

many young mothers are often unmarried because the father ran from responsibility find themselves trapped in low-paying jobs with young mouths to feed and forced to rely on handouts, usually from the government or charities, to survive. all this repeats itself in a cycle of poverty over and over spanning in generations usually because of shortsighted personal choices and actions.

many post-Christians have a mindset and reject the traditional biblical view that hardship and pain through unpleasant and undesired can work to an ultimate good. expressions such as " by the standing firm you will gain life" (luke 21:19).and "we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom" of God (acts 14:22). though true, are no longer widely accepted.