



# The Bible and Poverty-Focused Development Assistance

Poverty is the principle cause of hunger. The World Bank estimates that 1 in 7 people in the world lives on less than \$1.25 a day or less. More than 805 million people around the world—1 out of 10—suffer from chronic undernourishment. Through the poverty-focused development assistance (PFDA) it provides, the U.S. government supports life-saving programs for millions of hungry people around the world.

## Introduction

Poverty-focused development assistance supports people caught in humanitarian crises such as a civil conflict or famine. It also helps developing countries build capacity and self-sufficiency over the long-term. With this assistance, the world's poorest countries can meet the challenges of food insecurity and malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and illiteracy. It bolsters U.S. national security and promotes trade and job creation both here and abroad. Poverty-focused development assistance uses less than 1 percent of the total U.S. federal budget.

When we urge Congress and the administration to sustain and strengthen our nation's foreign assistance and related policies, we demonstrate and live out love for our neighbors on other continents.

## Scriptural Reflection

“Such is the confidence we have through Christ toward God....Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness....” These words from the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 3:4 and 12) speak to the confidence and hope that enable us to work together to end hunger. In Christ, we experience



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God's grace and love, and so we are able to be bold and persistent in seeking solutions to hunger and poverty.

Poverty is one consequence of human and structural sin, and it results in hunger, disease, sexual exploitation, lack of education, crime, and premature death. Poverty violates right relationships among human beings and with God.

But the Bible presents another view of human life: “The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” (Psalm 24:1) Every human being is made in God's image and carries a sacred dignity and immeasurable worth (Genesis 1:27-31). Human beings are infinitely precious to God.

Exodus 2 depicts a God who hears and responds with compassion to the moans and misery of suffering people. Moses first appeals to the Egyptian government on behalf of the exploited Jewish people before finally leading the Hebrews on a God-ordained escape from Egypt.



Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, we see God's consistent concern for poor people and the systems that keep or make people poor. The prophets repeatedly denounce economic injustice and lack of concern for vulnerable people (Isaiah 32:7; Ezekiel 16:49, 22:29; Amos 4:1-3, 8:4-7). In Micah 6, we hear that doing justice and showing mercy to people who are poor is what God requires of those who would claim to love and worship him.

Psalms 72, Jeremiah 22, and Proverbs 31:8-9 speak to the role and responsibility of government leaders in caring for poor people. These leaders are responsible not only for their own people, but also for those in other countries. Isaiah's praise of the policies of Cyrus (Isaiah 45) points to the possibility that a benevolent world power can bring good rather than harm to people under its dominance.

In Nehemiah 1-2, the faithful Nehemiah responds to the generous protection and provision made available through Cyrus to the Jewish people. Nehemiah led his people to use those opportunities to move themselves out of poverty, insecurity, and injustice.

In 2 Corinthians 8-9, we read about the Apostle Paul's collection of an offering for international famine relief among the New Testament churches. In the Gospels, Jesus calls his followers to love God unreservedly and their neighbors as themselves (Matthew 22:39-40). Jesus repeatedly offers healing to people of other nationalities—among them the Syro-Phoenician woman in Mark 7:24-30, the Centurion's son in Luke 7, and the Samaritan leper in Luke 17:11-17.

The book of Acts makes it clear that God's new age ushered in through Christ's resurrection is good news for *all people throughout the world*.

### What You Can Do

1. Pray for members of Congress, that they will be moved to enact measures that enable people who are poor and hungry around the world to improve their lives.
2. Learn more about and support the work of church-related organizations engaged in international development.
3. Communicate with your members of Congress, and urge them to continue to support poverty-focused development assistance.

### Prayer

O God, we give thanks for the abundance of your creation, which provides the nourishment that enables us to flourish. We pray for people in developing countries who struggle to grow enough food to feed their families. May their farms prosper and their harvests increase. Bless the efforts of the church agencies at work in those countries as they help people who are hungry become self-sustaining. We pray also for Congress and the president, that they would sustain and strengthen measures to improve agriculture in developing countries. Grant, too, that we persist in urging our nation's leaders to support these promising developments. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

## WHAT IS BREAD FOR THE WORLD?

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger and poverty at home and abroad. God's grace in Jesus Christ moves us to reach out to our neighbors, whether they live next door, in another state, or on another continent. With letters, emails, phone calls, and visits, we urge Congress and the administration to change the policies and conditions that allow hunger to persist.

The individuals and churches involved in Bread for the World represent a broad range of Christian traditions. We embrace and reflect the growing diversity of culture, ethnicity, and religious practices. The empowerment of women and those most affected by hunger give depth and breadth to our witness to God's love and care for all.

In our efforts to create hope and opportunity for people who are hungry, we find insight and inspiration from the Scriptures. For many Bread members, the sacraments, the ancient creeds, and the liturgy are sources of strength and joy as we seek to share God's abundance with those who struggle with hunger and poverty.

### JOIN US

Bread's work is made possible by contributions from tens of thousands of individuals and thousands of churches across the country. We invite you to join us by visiting [www.bread.org/join](http://www.bread.org/join) or calling 800/822-7323.

Also, join us in praying for an end to hunger—and receive suggested prayers every other week—by visiting [www.bread.org/prayer](http://www.bread.org/prayer).