

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR ADVOCACY TO END HUNGER



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Nine Biblical Themes That Guide Our Mission

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice, urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. Moved by God's grace in Jesus Christ, we reach out to our neighbors, whether they live in the next house, the next state, or the next continent.

Introduction

We experience God's grace and love through our faith in the saving power of Jesus' death and resurrection. "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another" (1 John 3:16).

In the Gospels, Jesus was compassionate to all people, especially the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the hungry, the poor, and the infirmed—the most vulnerable in society. Jesus loved all people—rich and poor—and actively cared for people in need. He urged his disciples to do the same.

As followers of Christ, we express and embody God's reconciling love at all times and in all places. Throughout the Scriptures, God speaks of our purpose to rebuild, restore, and renew all that is broken (Isaiah 61). We are called to work to end the brokenness of hunger and poverty in our communities, in our country, and in other countries.

Throughout the Scriptures, God calls people into community and sets the expectation that leaders (whether they are kings, pharaohs, or govern-

ments) should care for their people (Psalm 72:2). Therefore, we also reflect God's love by challenging individuals and institutions given the power to change laws and structures that keep people vulnerable. We work toward a just world in which every person has an opportunity to thrive. We participate in showing God's love and honor the dignity and worth of our neighbors.

FIND YOUR PERSONAL INSPIRATION

This brochure presents the broad themes from the Bible that guide the mission of Bread for the World in working to end hunger. In addition to the Bible verses and passages cited here, there are many other references to people who are poor and hungry in the Bible, and Jesus spoke many times about caring for other people. As you consider the actions you might take in advocating for an end to hunger, you are invited to find inspiration or motivation in a favorite Bible story or verse or to explore the Bible on your own. Use this brochure as a guide for finding your own basis as a Christian for answering this call.

1 **God loves us. Jesus' greatest commandments are that we love God and each other.**

The Old Testament and Gospels contain the two greatest commandments. First, we are to love God (“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul...”) and, second, we are to love our neighbors (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:31; Luke 6:27-31), who include our enemies and those who hate and persecute us (Matthew 5:44) and anyone who is in need (Luke 10:25-37: the parable of the Good Samaritan). Our neighbors also include people who live near us and people who live far from us. We love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19), and since God loves us so much, we also ought to love one another (1 John 4:7). We hunger “to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,” so that we “may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).



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2 **Humankind was created out of God's love and in God's image, so we are to respect the dignity of every person.**

Humankind was created out of God's love and in God's image (Genesis 1:26). God's willingness to step out of eternity into time, in the person of Jesus, bestowed on humanity a dignity not of our own making. In his humility, Jesus suffered the indignity of death, even death on the cross (Philippians 2:7-11). As a result, we are able to appreciate and respect the dignity of others as well as ourselves (1 Thessalonians 5:12-18).

Jesus' encounters with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-30), Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2-5), and the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:20-22) transcended race, gender, and class. Jesus treated all people with dignity and respect.

3

God has a special concern for poor and vulnerable people.

Throughout the Old Testament, God sees, hears, and responds to the cries of poor and vulnerable people (Exodus 2:23-25; Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Isaiah 3:13-15).

The Scriptures portray the Lord as upholding the cause of those who are oppressed and providing for hungry and poor people (Psalm 146:5-9; Psalm 72; Proverbs 22).

Jesus came into the world in humble circumstances (Luke 2:7). Fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah, he preached good news to poor people—proclaiming freedom for prisoners, sight for the blind, and the release of the oppressed (Isaiah 61:1-2; Matthew 11:2-6; Luke 4:18-21).

4

God provides out of God's abundance.

From God's divine abundance all people have been blessed. Scripture highlights that our world and even our breath are gifts from God (Genesis 1-2). In the Old Testament, God provided by raining manna from heaven onto the Israelites (Exodus 16). In the Gospels, Jesus fed 5,000 people (Matthew 14:13-

21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14), turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11), and filled the disciples' nets with a miraculous catch of fish (John 21:1-13).

Jesus announced that he came to give life abundantly (John 10:10). We can place our trust in God's promise of provision, as Paul told the Philippians: "God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to God's riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).



5

All creation is reconciled with God through Jesus Christ, and we are to be agents of reconciliation.

The message of reconciliation has always been foremost in the mind of God, from the separation of Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 3:9) to the hope of the New Jerusalem, when “God will dwell with them; they will be his peoples” (Revelation 21:3). God so loved us that he sent Jesus, Immanuel, to be God with us (Matthew 1:23).

The ultimate act of reconciliation between God and humankind is Christ’s life, death, and resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). In Christ there is peace with God, with our brothers and sisters, and even with creation itself. In Jesus, God reconciled all things (Colossian 1:15-20). One of the early marks of the Church was its care for those who had need (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35) and its understanding that an essential component of ministry is caring for the marginalized. (James 1:27; Acts 6:1). Just as Jesus is now our advocate (1 John 2:1-2), we can be advocates for those in need of justice (Micah 6:8).

6

God loves justice and requires us to do justice and love kindness.

The Lord is “a God of justice” (Isaiah 30:18). God loves justice (Isaiah 61:8; Psalm 99:4; Psalm 33:5) and requires us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8; Amos 5:22-24). Our individual actions and societal structures should enable all to share in God’s provision: “... do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor” (Deuteronomy 15:7-11).

In Exodus 16:13-19, God instructs the Israelites not to take more manna each day than they need. In Leviticus 23:22, the Israelites reserved a corner of their fields for those who needed food. Jesus spoke of the importance of justice as an element of faithfulness: “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others” (Luke 11:42). The community in Acts 2:44-45 “had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.” In 2 Corinthians 8:13-15, Paul reminds the church to balance “...your present abundance and their need....”

7

Jesus said, “Whatever you do for the least of these you do for me.” We do Christ’s work when we act with and for hungry and poor people.

God teaches us, through the prophets, that we are not to withhold nourishment from anyone (Nehemiah 5:1-13; Isaiah 58:6-10; Zechariah 7:8-10), not to harden our hearts, but to give to those who are poor with an open hand and an open heart (Deuteronomy 15:10). In the Gospels, Jesus invites potential disciples to “follow” him, making it clear that discipleship entails action—particularly service (Matthew 20:26-28).

Jesus urges us to act on God’s behalf and provide the necessities of life for all people (Matthew 25:35-40). We continue Christ’s work when we “go and do likewise” (Luke 10:32-38).

8

We hear God’s voice in Scripture and respond with the faithful use of our own voices.

Proverbs says, “Speak out for those who cannot speak” (Proverbs 31). Moses and the prophets spoke to those in authority (Exodus 5; Amos; Jeremiah). God took away the voice of the priest Zechariah because he failed to trust the angel. Zechariah’s voice returned after he named his son John (Luke 1).

When John the Baptist grew up, he challenged the scribes and Pharisees. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus spoke with authority. On the day of Pentecost, the early followers of Jesus spoke so that each person heard the good news in his or her own language (Acts 2). We are to be faithful and persistent in using our voices (Luke 18:1-8: the parable of the persistent widow; Matthew 15:22-28: the Canaanite woman seeking healing for her daughter). We are stewards of God’s grace by speaking and serving with strength (1 Peter 4:10-11).

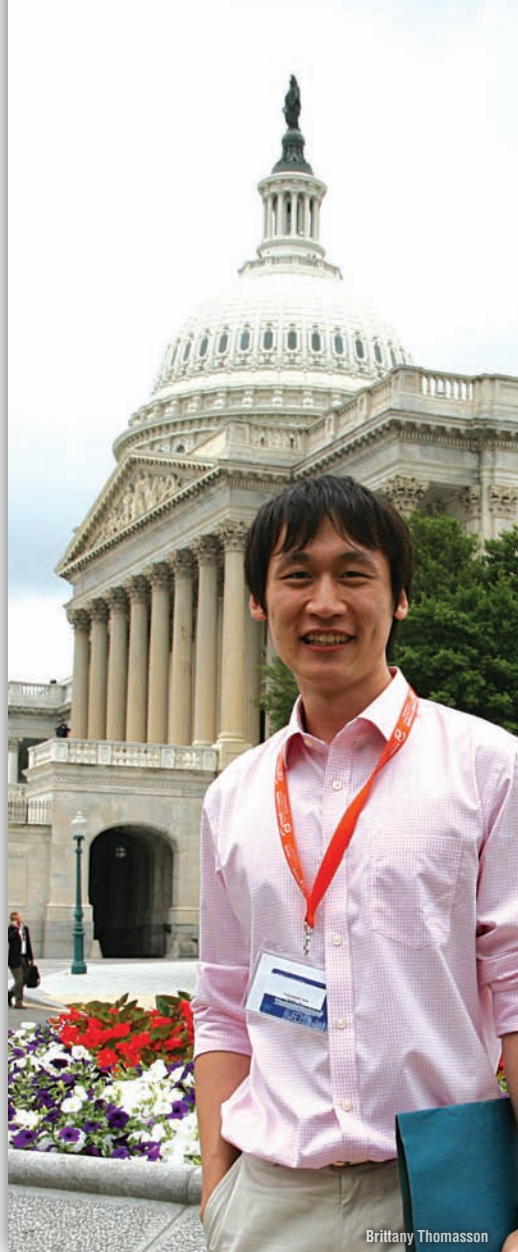


9

God has a role for government to play in the protection and development of people.

Old Testament law established a structure for society with deep, divine concern for poor people and disapproval of systems that keep or make people poor. This structure was to stand as a witness to all societies (Deuteronomy 4:5-8). The prophets spoke out against injustice and condemned the lack of concern for poor people, regardless of the structure of government in which they were living (Isaiah 32:7; Ezekiel 16:49; Amos 4:1-3, 8:4-7).

The Scriptures speak to the role and responsibility of leaders in caring for poor people (Psalm 72; Jeremiah 22; Proverbs 31:8-9). In the New Testament, Jesus calls his followers to love their neighbors (Matthew 22:39-40) and warns that the nations will be held accountable and judged for the ways they have treated the least among them (Zephaniah 3:8,13). Both Psalm 72 and Romans 13 emphasize the role and responsibility of leaders. These passages suggest that our leaders are servants for the good, whether or not they acknowledge that their authority comes from God. As Paul exercised his power as a Roman citizen, so too can Christians advocate for government to protect and provide for all its people (Acts 21-26).



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