



### **Christian Perspective**

The following discussion is a great exercise for getting young people to talk about poverty and hunger in relation to those things that they consider necessary to live a successful life.

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### **Where is God on Hunger?**

***Hunger is wrong. It degrades humans. People die before their time.  
Where is God on this issue?***

#### **Objectives:**

Young people will be able to:

- Understand the parable of the final judgment especially that Christ is to be found in the poor and with those on the margin of society.
- Reflect on the implications of this parable for their own lives.

#### **Set Up and Materials:**

- Bibles – modern translation if possible – easier to understand and welcome youth from different religious backgrounds.
- Illustration: *Christ of the Breadlines*, 1950, by Fritz Eichenberg  
(Numerous Web sites feature this illustration; do a search for: “*Christ of the Breadlines.*”)
- Flip chart on stand, white board or chalk board, plus white board markers or chalk
- Unlined paper (A4 or letter size)
- Paint and/or markers and/or crayons and pencils
- Masking tape to adhere drawings/paintings to the wall
- Cards and pencils

Time: approximately 1 hour

#### **Class Session:**

1. What really counts in life?

- A car bumper sticker reads “The One with the Most Toys Wins.”
- Ask your group, “What do you think makes for a successful life?” Together, brainstorm ideas related to this question “***What makes for a successful life?***”
- Keep this brainstorm as a reference to come back to at a later time.

2. Show the Fritz Eichenberg illustration, *Christ of the Breadlines*; however, do not tell your group its’ title until later in the class.



*Christ of the Breadlines*, Estate of Fritz Eichenberg/VAGA, New York, 1950

Ask your group these questions:

- Who do you see in the picture?
- What might the picture be saying to you?

3. Read the parable in Matthew 25:31–46 together. Take turns, reading a verse at a time.

### Try this!

To avoid showing up a poor reader or a very shy person, say that anyone who wants to pass may do so by simply nudging the next person. Alternatively ask for several volunteers to read.



### **Parable Background:**

Jesus is telling this parable just before he is arrested. It appears throughout the gospels that Jesus knows he will be crucified. This is suggested, for instance, in Matthew 26:1–5, the verses immediately following this parable. Perhaps Jesus is thinking about what makes for a successful life in a big way just before he dies.

Some questions to consider in helping discussion of this passage are:

- What is this parable saying? What is the message?
- Is there anything unclear or confusing about this passage?
- Is there anything surprising in the parable?
- In whom is Jesus hidden? Is this surprising?
- If you wanted to meet Jesus, where might you find him according to this parable? Is this surprising?

Return to look at the Fritz Eichenberg illustration. Ask:

- f) In what ways does this picture express the parable?

Fritz Eichenberg was a German artist with a Jewish background who fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s to come to the United States. He became a Quaker and created art for a somewhat radical Christian group founded in the 1930s by a woman named Dorothy Day. The movement was called the Catholic Worker Movement and ran houses of hospitality. They believed that in their work with the poor they did not take Christ to the poor; rather they met Jesus among the poor. Jesus was one of the poor. This is what the artist was trying to convey in this illustration.

g) Return to the parable and ask “What other kinds of pictures or images are suggested within the parable?”

Introduce other kinds of mental images (e.g. hospital wards with Jesus in one of the beds; people in prison with Jesus as one of the prisoners; a group of immigrants from other countries with Jesus as one of them; hungry children in a poor country or the inner city with Jesus among them.

## Faith- Based Resources



Give out paper and marker pens, paint, or crayons for the youth to draw other pictures suggested in the parable. Encourage the youth to evoke feeling and presence. They do not have to be artists create something that conveys their feeling of meeting Jesus among one of the groups suggested in the parable. Spend about 10 to 15 minutes doing this. Then display the pictures on the wall with masking tape to hold them. Have everyone quietly walk around to view the various images.

### 4. Pulling things together

Gather and sit in a circle.

Refer to the brainstorming done at the beginning of the class period and remind the group of some of the ideas expressed regarding the question, "What makes for a successful life?" Then ask the following questions:

- If there is a message in this parable for you to take to heart, what is it?
- Where is God on hunger?
- "Imagine yourself at the end of your life. You have taken this parable to heart, what would your life reflect?" Pass out the blank cards. Say, "Write your thoughts on the cards. You do not have to share your answers with the group."

Give a few moments to complete the written exercise.

Invite people to share one thought they will take away with them from this class.

Ask one to three people to pray for the hungry of the world and to help those in the class to hear the call to make a difference.

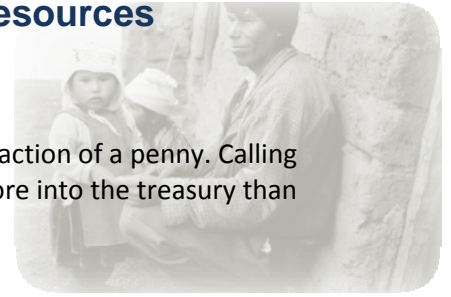
## Biblical references to Poverty and Hunger

Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

**Matthew 19:21**

Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

**Mark 10:21**



But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.

**Mark 12:42-43**

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

**Luke 19:8**

On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Romans 12:20-21**

### *Hebrew Perspective*

#### The Hebrew Response to Poverty

A divine charge for the children of Israel to respond to the needs of the poor and oppressed has always been an integral part of the Hebrew faith. The Exodus narrative itself is God's response to the cries of an oppressed people.

The Torah makes a provision for the poor and commands the people to share their harvests (Leviticus 19:9–11). The Torah also calls for debts to be forgiven every seven years and for all private property to be returned to the community and redistributed every fifty years (Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 14:28–15:11).

Psalm 146:4–9 describes the God of Jacob as one who implements justice for the oppressed and feeds the hungry. Proverbs 14:20–21 says that those who are kind to the poor are kind to God.

Isaiah 58:6–9 describes God's definition of faithful religious practice for the covenant community:

Is not this the fast that I choose?  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,

## Faith- Based Resources



and bring the homeless poor  
into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them,  
and not to hide yourself  
from your own kin?  
Then your light shall break  
forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall  
spring up quickly;  
your vindicator shall go before you,  
the glory of the Lord shall be  
your rear guard.  
Then you shall call and the Lord will answer;  
you shall cry for help,  
and He will say, Here I am.

...I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out...

**Exodus 3:1–12**

Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

**Leviticus 19:10**

However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.

**Deuteronomy 15:2–6**

But the needy will not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the afflicted ever perishes.

**Psalms 9:18**

But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream!

**Amos 5:24**

## Other Religious Perspectives

Visit the following web sites to gather information regarding views on poverty and hunger from the perspectives of other faiths.

## Faith- Based Resources



### **Buddhism**

“Buddhism and Poverty,” David R. Loy, [www.wfdd.org.uk/articles\\_talks/loy.pdf](http://www.wfdd.org.uk/articles_talks/loy.pdf)

“Happiness and Hunger,” Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, [www.wfb-hq.org/bud20b.htm](http://www.wfb-hq.org/bud20b.htm)

### **Islam**

“Zakat — A Solution for Muslim Poverty,” Ziaul Islam,

[www.contactpakistan.com/news/news188.htm](http://www.contactpakistan.com/news/news188.htm)

“Islam Solves World Poverty and Hunger,” [http://www.al-islami.com/islam/islam\\_solves\\_poverty.php](http://www.al-islami.com/islam/islam_solves_poverty.php)

“The Fast of Ramadan,” [www.holidays.net/ramadan/story.htm](http://www.holidays.net/ramadan/story.htm)

### **Hindu**

Poverty and Hinduism, [www.btinternet.com/~aurelia/povertyandhinduism.htm](http://www.btinternet.com/~aurelia/povertyandhinduism.htm)