

Economic Justice

Text: Deuteronomy 15:7-11 HCSB "If there is a poor person among you, one of your brothers within any of your gates in the land the LORD your God is giving you, you must not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. 8 Instead, you are to open your hand to him and freely loan him enough for whatever need he has. 9 Be careful that there isn't this wicked thought in your heart, 'The seventh year, the year of canceling debts, is near,' and you are stingy toward your poor brother and give him nothing. He will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty. 10 Give to him, and don't have a stingy heart when you give, and because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you do. 11 For there will never cease to be poor people in the land; that is why I am commanding you, 'You must willingly open your hand to your afflicted and poor brother in your land.'

The challenge before us:

Image of world economic distribution



1. According to the World Bank, half the world — nearly three billion people — live on less than two dollars a day.
2. The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the poorest 48 nations (i.e. a quarter of the world's countries) is less than the wealth of the world's three richest people combined.
3. Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names. Less than one per cent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000 and yet it didn't happen.
4. 51 percent of the world's 100 hundred wealthiest bodies are corporations.
5. 20% of the population in the developed nations, consume 86% of the world's goods.
6. In 1960, the 20% of the world's people in the richest countries had 30 times the income of the poorest 20% — in 1997, 74 times as much.
7. The developing world now spends \$13 on debt repayment for every \$1 it receives in grants.
8. A few hundred millionaires now own as much wealth as the world's poorest 2.5 billion people.
9. "The combined wealth of the world's 200 richest people hit \$1 trillion in 1999; the combined incomes of the 582 million people living in the 43 least developed countries is \$146 billion."
10. According to UNICEF, 30,000 children die each day due to poverty. That is about 210,000 children each week or just under 11 million children under five years of age, each year.

Image of pie chart explaining the global military expenditures



In the midst of this global economic catastrophe, The USA's military expenditure now accounts for almost half of the world total. The USA is responsible for 48 per cent of the world total, distantly followed by the UK, France, Japan and China with 4–5 per cent each. In fact, we actually spend more than the next twenty industrialized countries combined on our defense.

A. The right view of poverty

1. Poverty is not, in and of itself, a wicked or sinful thing.

- Psalms 37:16 HCSB Better the little that the righteous man has than the abundance of many wicked people.
- Proverbs 13:8 HCSB Riches are a ransom for a man's life, but a poor man hears no threat.
- Proverbs 19:1 HCSB Better a poor man who walks in integrity than someone who has deceitful lips and is a fool.
- Proverbs 19:22 HCSB A man's desire should be loyalty to the covenant; better to be a poor man than a perjurer.
- Proverbs 28:6 HCSB Better a poor man who lives with integrity than a rich man who distorts right and wrong.
- Isaiah 29:19 HCSB The humble will have joy after joy in the LORD, and the poor people will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

2. Simplicity of lifestyle and a lack of materialism can be a blessing.

- Ecclesiastes 4:6 HCSB Better one handful with rest, than two handfuls with effort and pursuit of the wind.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 HCSB to seek to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 12 so that you may walk properly in the presence of outsiders and not be dependent on anyone.

3. The Bible does not advocate preferential treatment for the poor. It does not teach that the rich are particularly blessed or the poor particularly cursed by God. He made them both and both great riches or grinding poverty can be a tough challenge.

- Proverbs 22:2 HCSB The rich and the poor have this in common: the LORD made them both.
- Matthew 19:21-24 HCSB "If you want to be perfect," Jesus said to him, "go, sell your belongings and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me." 22 When the young man heard that command, he went away grieving, because he had many possessions. 23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "I assure you: It will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven! 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."
- Mark 10:25 HCSB It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."
- James 1:9-10 HCSB The brother of humble circumstances should boast in his exaltation; 10 but the one who is rich should boast in his humiliation, because he will pass away like a flower of the field.
- James 2:1-4 HCSB My brothers, hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ without showing favoritism. 2 For suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring, dressed in fine clothes, and a poor man dressed in dirty clothes also comes in. 3 If you look with favor on the man wearing the fine clothes so that you say, "Sit here in a good place," and yet you say to the poor man, "Stand over there," or, "Sit here on the floor by my footstool," 4 haven't you discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

4. However, when poverty reaches a certain level it can cause a person to be at risk.

- Proverbs 10:15 HCSB A rich man's wealth is his fortified city; the poverty of the poor is their destruction.

5. Sometimes the poor have brought the situation upon themselves.

- Proverbs 20:13 HCSB Don't love sleep, or you will become poor; open your eyes, and you'll have enough to eat.
- Proverbs 23:21 HCSB For the drunkard and the glutton will become poor, and grogginess will clothe them in rags.
- Proverbs 24:30-34 HCSB I went by the field of a slacker and by the vineyard of a man lacking sense. 31 Thistles had come up everywhere, weeds covered the ground, and the stone wall was ruined. 32 I saw, and took it to heart; I looked, and received instruction: 33 a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the arms to rest, 34 and your poverty will come like a robber, your need, like a bandit.
- Proverbs 28:19 HCSB The one who works his land will have plenty of food, but whoever chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.

6. Sometimes it poverty IS part of the consequences of our sin and is inflicted by God.

- Isaiah 1:7 HCSB Your land is desolate, your cities burned with fire; before your very eyes foreigners devour your fields--a desolation overthrown by foreigners.

7. There is a tendency to overlook or worse, to look down on the poor.

- Ecclesiastes 9:14-16 HCSB There was a small city with few men in it. A great king came against it, surrounded it, and built large siege works against it. 15 Now a poor wise man was found in the city, and he delivered the city by his wisdom. Yet no one remembered that poor man. 16 And I said, "Wisdom is better than strength, but the wisdom of the poor man is despised, and his words are not heeded."

8. Economic status cannot be used as a general litmus test for intelligence, moral character, wisdom or spirituality.

- Proverbs 28:11 HCSB A rich man is wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has discernment sees through him.
- Ecclesiastes 4:13-14 HCSB Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer pays attention to warnings. 14 For he came from prison to be king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom.
- Matthew 19:24 HCSB Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."
- Mark 10:25 HCSB It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."
- Luke 16:20-23 HCSB But a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, was left at his gate. 21 He longed to be filled with what fell from the rich man's table, but instead the dogs would come and lick his sores. 22 One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 And being in torment in Hades, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side.
- 2 Corinthians 6:10 HCSB as grieving yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing yet possessing everything.

B. The right view of our role:

1. When poverty stems from injustice the Ransomed must attempt to rectify the situation.

- Proverbs 13:23 HCSB The field of the poor yields abundant food, but without justice, it is swept away.
- Proverbs 18:23 HCSB The poor man pleads, but the rich one answers roughly.

- Proverbs 22:7 HCSB The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is a slave to the lender.
- James 2:6-7 HCSB Yet you dishonored that poor man. Don't the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? 7 Don't they blaspheme the noble name that you bear?

2. When poverty begins to bring social consequences we must intervene.

- Proverbs 19:4 HCSB Wealth attracts many friends, but a poor man is separated from his friend.
- Proverbs 19:7 HCSB All the brothers of a poor man hate him; how much more do his friends keep their distance from him! He may pursue them with words, but they are not there.

3. It is a mitzvah to care for the poor. Relief for the poor is as much an act of worship as church attendance or prayer.

- Deuteronomy 26:12-13 HCSB "When you have finished paying all the tenth of your produce in the third year, the year of the tenth, you are to give it to the Levite, the foreign resident, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. 13 Then you will say in the presence of the LORD your God: I have taken the consecrated portion out of my house; I have also given it to the Levite, the foreign resident, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all the commands You gave me. I have not violated or forgotten Your commands.
- Proverbs 19:17 HCSB Kindness to the poor is a loan to the LORD, and He will give a reward to the lender.
- Isaiah 58:6-7 HCSB Isn't the fast I choose: To break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and homeless into your house, to clothe the naked when you see him, and to not ignore your own flesh and blood?
- Nehemiah 8:8-10 HCSB They read the book of the law of God, translating and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was read. 9 Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all of them, "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go and eat what is rich, drink what is sweet, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, since today is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, because your strength comes from rejoicing in the LORD."
- Ezekiel 18:7-9 HCSB He doesn't oppress anyone but returns his collateral to the debtor. He does not commit robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing. 8 He doesn't lend at interest or for profit but keeps his hand from wrongdoing and carries out true justice between men. 9 He follows My statutes and keeps My ordinances, acting faithfully. Such a person is righteous; he will certainly live." This is the declaration of the Lord GOD.
- Matthew 25:35-40 HCSB For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you took care of Me; I was in prison and you visited Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or without clothes and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and visit You?' 40 "And the King will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.'

- Luke 12:33-34 HCSB Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won't grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- Luke 14:12-14 HCSB He also said to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a lunch or a dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers, your relatives, or your rich neighbors, because they might invite you back, and you would be repaid. 13 On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."
- 2 Corinthians 9:6-14 HCSB Remember this: the person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each person should do as he has decided in his heart--not out of regret or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work. 9 As it is written: He has scattered; He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever. 10 Now the One who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness, 11 as you are enriched in every way for all generosity, which produces thanksgiving to God through us. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many acts of thanksgiving to God. 13 Through the proof of this service, they will glorify God for your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with others. 14 And in their prayers for you they will have deep affection for you because of the surpassing grace of God on you.

4. Care for the poor, the payment of debt and economic justice is a way to determine whether or not salvation has truly been realized.

- Ezekiel 18:7-9 HCSB He doesn't oppress anyone but returns his collateral to the debtor. He does not commit robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing. 8 He doesn't lend at interest or for profit but keeps his hand from wrongdoing and carries out true justice between men. 9 He follows My statutes and keeps My ordinances, acting faithfully. Such a person is righteous; he will certainly live." This is the declaration of the Lord GOD.
- Matthew 25:33-46 HCSB He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you took care of Me; I was in prison and you visited Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or without clothes and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and visit You?' 40 "And the King will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.' 41 Then He will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels! 42 For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger and you didn't take Me in; I was naked and you didn't clothe Me, sick and in prison and you didn't take care of Me.' 44 "Then they too will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?' 45 "Then He will answer them, 'I assure you:

Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me either.' 46
"And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

- Luke 12:33-34 HCSB Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won't grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- Luke 14:12-14 HCSB He also said to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a lunch or a dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers, your relatives, or your rich neighbors, because they might invite you back, and you would be repaid. 13 On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."
- Luke 19:8-9 HCSB But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord! And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I'll pay back four times as much!" 9 "Today salvation has come to this house," Jesus told him, "because he too is a son of Abraham."
- Galatians 2:9-10 HCSB When James, Cephas, and John, recognized as pillars, acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They asked only that we would remember the poor, which I made every effort to do.
- James 2:14 HCSB What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works? Can his faith save him?
- 1 John 3:17 HCSB If anyone has this world's goods and sees his brother in need but shuts off his compassion from him--how can God's love reside in him?

5. Often greed is the underlying reason for our choice to ignore the social injustice of poverty.

- John 12:4-6 HCSB Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot (who was about to betray Him), said, 5 "Why wasn't this fragrant oil sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?" 6 He didn't say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it.

6. There will be serious, personal and societal consequences if we choose to look the other way.

- Proverbs 21:13 HCSB The one who shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will himself also call out and not be answered.
- Proverbs 22:8-9 HCSB The one who sows injustice will reap disaster, and the rod of his fury will be destroyed.
- Proverbs 28:8 HCSB Whoever increases his wealth through excessive interest collects it for one who is kind to the poor.
- Proverbs 28:27 HCSB The one who gives to the poor will not be in need, but one who turns his eyes away will receive many curses.

7. There will also be substantial rewards for those who choose to care for the poor.

- Proverbs 22:9 A generous person will be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.
- Proverbs 28:27 HCSB The one who gives to the poor will not be in need, but one who turns his eyes away will receive many curses.
- Proverbs 29:14 HCSB A king who judges the poor with fairness--his throne will be established forever.

- Isaiah 58:10-11 HCSB and if you offer yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted one, then your light will shine in the darkness, and your night will be like noonday. 11 The LORD will always lead you, satisfy you in a parched land, and strengthen your bones. You will be like a watered garden and like a spring whose waters never run dry.
- Daniel 4:27 HCSB Therefore, may my advice seem good to you my king. Separate yourself from your sins by doing what is right, and from your injustices by showing mercy to the needy. Perhaps there will be an extension of your prosperity."

C. So what should we do?

1. We should first of all seek to be financially independent ourselves.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 HCSB to seek to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 12 so that you may walk properly in the presence of outsiders and not be dependent on anyone.
- Romans 13:7-8 HCSB Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor. 8 Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

2. We should take care of our families first and foremost. We are primarily responsible to care for the poor in our own families, secondarily those in our community and thirdly those in the community at large.

- Leviticus 25:25 HCSB If your brother becomes destitute and sells part of his property, his nearest relative may come and redeem what his brother has sold.
- Deuteronomy 15:2-11 HCSB This is how to cancel debt: Every creditor is to cancel what he has lent his neighbor. He is not to collect anything from his neighbor or brother, because the LORD's release of debts has been proclaimed. 3 You may collect something from a foreigner, but you must forgive whatever your brother owes you. 4 "There will be no poor among you, however, because the LORD is certain to bless you in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance-- 5 if only you obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow every one of these commands I am giving you today. 6 When the LORD your God blesses you as He has promised you, you will lend to many nations but not borrow; you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you. 7 "If there is a poor person among you, one of your brothers within any of your gates in the land the LORD your God is giving you, you must not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. 8 Instead, you are to open your hand to him and freely loan him enough for whatever need he has. 9 Be careful that there isn't this wicked thought in your heart, 'The seventh year, the year of canceling debts, is near,' and you are stingy toward your poor brother and give him nothing. He will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty. 10 Give to him, and don't have a stingy heart when you give, and because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you do. 11 For there will never cease to be poor people in the land; that is why I am commanding you, 'You must willingly open your hand to your afflicted and poor brother in your land.'

Note: Compare this passage to Deuteronomy 24:12-21

- Romans 12:13 HCSB Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality.
- Romans 12:19-21 HCSB Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay, says the Lord. 20 But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head. 21 Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.

Note: We should also provide for the poor of the community at large. In fact, Yahweh expects us to relieve the poor – even when they are our enemies.

- Galatians 6:9-10 HCSB So we must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.
- 1 Timothy 5:8 HCSB Now if anyone does not provide for his own relatives, and especially for his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
- James 2:15-17 HCSB If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself.

3. We should determine in our hearts to not take advantage of the poor. We should not make money off of their weakness. We should not oppress them out of a “that’s just good business” philosophy.

- Zechariah 7:9-10 HCSB "The LORD of Hosts says this: Render true justice. Show faithful love and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the stranger or the poor, and do not plot evil in your hearts against one another.

4. We should not merely be intellectually engaged in the care for the poor. We should be passionate about it.

- Exodus 22:26-27 "If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as collateral, return it to him before sunset. 27 For it is his only covering; it is the clothing for his body. What will he sleep in? And if he cries out to Me, I will listen because I am compassionate.
- Job 30:25 HCSB Have I not wept for those who have fallen on hard times? Has my soul not grieved for the needy?
- Luke 11:41 HCSB But give to charity what is within, and then everything is clean for you.

Note: Jesus was rebuking the Pharisees for their mechanical and legalistic view of charity. They were trying to determine where the loopholes were, what the minimum they could get away with was. The Master taught that charity is a matter of the heart. You first and foremost give of your heart to the poor. If you do, then giving of your finances will not be difficult.

- 1 Corinthians 13:3 HCSB And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

5. We should not be stingy about it.

- Psalms 37:21 HCSB The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous is gracious and giving.
- Psalms 37:26 HCSB He (*the righteous*) is always generous, always lending, and his children are a blessing.
- Psalms 112:5-6 HCSB Good will come to a man who lends generously and conducts his business fairly. 6 He will never be shaken. The righteous will be remembered forever.
- Matthew 5:42 HCSB Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.
- 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 HCSB Remember this: the person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each person should do as he has decided in his heart--not out of regret or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.

6. We should seek to provide for those who will never be able to pay us back.

- Luke 14:12-14 HCSB He also said to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a lunch or a dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers, your relatives, or your rich neighbors, because they might invite you back, and you would be repaid. 13 On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

7. Even the poor should be taught to place Christ's kingdom first and to give toward its furtherance.

- Mark 12:41-44 HCSB Sitting across from the temple treasury, He watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. 43 Summoning His disciples, He said to them, "I assure you: This poor widow has put in more than all those giving to the temple treasury. 44 For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she possessed--all she had to live on."
- 2 Corinthians 6:10 HCSB as grieving yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing yet possessing everything.

8. We should extend interest-free loans to the poor so that they can free themselves and become financially independent.

- Exodus 22:25-27 HCSB "If you lend money to My people--to the poor person among you, you must not be like a moneylender to him; you must not charge him interest. 26 "If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as collateral, return it to him before sunset. 27 For it is his only covering; it is the clothing for his body. What will he sleep in? And if he cries out to Me, I will listen because I am compassionate.
- Leviticus 25:35-40 HCSB "If your brother becomes destitute and cannot sustain himself among you, you are to support him as a foreigner or temporary resident, so that he can continue to live among you. 36 Do not profit or take interest from him, but fear your God and let your brother live among you. 37 You are not to lend him your silver with interest or sell him your food for profit. 38 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God. 39 "If your brother among you becomes destitute and sells himself to you, you must not force him to do slave labor. 40 Let him stay with you as a hired hand or temporary resident; he may work for you until the Year of Jubilee.

9. We should establish systematic means for the poor to be able to gain access to and use some of our surplus.

- Exodus 23:10-11 HCSB "Sow your land for six years and gather its produce. 11 But during the seventh year you are to let it rest and leave it uncultivated, so that the poor among your people may eat from it and the wild animals may consume what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.
- Leviticus 19:9-10 HCSB "When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to reap to the very edge of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 You must not strip your vineyard bare or gather its fallen grapes. Leave them for the poor and the foreign resident; I am the LORD your God.

Note: God did not command them to give a certain portion of the harvest to the poor. He wanted the poor to actually go out into the fields and work in order to gain access to the grain or grapes. This is a working principle. Nothing is simply given to the poor because this simply teaches laziness and dependence. The system must include some means for the poor to trade in kind (i.e. labor or services for goods).

- Deuteronomy 26:12-13 HCSB "When you have finished paying all the tenth of your produce in the third year, the year of the tenth, you are to give it to the Levite, the foreign resident, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. 13 Then you will say in the presence of the LORD your God: I have taken the consecrated portion out of my house; I have also given it to the Levite, the foreign resident, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all the commands You gave me. I have not violated or forgotten Your commands.

10. We should establish systematic standards by which we determine who we help. There will always be more poor than we can actually help. We have limited resources and we do not want to waste them on the lazy or those who lack character.

- 1 Timothy 5:9-10 HCSB No widow should be placed on the official support list unless she is at least 60 years old, has been the wife of one husband, 10 and is well known for good works--that is, if she has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to every good work.
- 1 Timothy 5:16 HCSB If any believing woman has widows, she should help them, and the church should not be burdened, so that it can help those who are genuinely widows.

11. Benevolence is to be a regular part of our budgets.

- Deuteronomy 14:28-29 HCSB "At the end of every three years, bring a tenth of all your produce for that year and store it within your gates. 29 Then the Levite, who has no portion or inheritance among you, the foreign resident, fatherless, and widow within your gates may come, eat, and be satisfied. And the LORD your God will bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.
- 1 Corinthians 16:2-3 HCSB On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and save to the extent that he prospers, so that no collections will need to be made when I come. 3 And when I arrive, I will send those whom you recommend by letter to carry your gracious gift to Jerusalem.

12. We tend to think of our jobs as simply a means to “bring home the bacon” and care for our own, but the Bible teaches that one of the purposes of our work is to be able to care for those who are in need.

- Ephesians 4:28 HCSB The thief must no longer steal. Instead, he must do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need.

13. We are to provide means for the poor to recover from their debts and get reestablished.

- Leviticus 25:26-28 HCSB If a man has no family redeemer, but he prospers and obtains enough to redeem his land, 27 he may calculate the years since its sale, repay the balance to the man he sold it to, and return to his property. 28 But if he cannot obtain enough to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of its purchaser until the Year of Jubilee. It is to be released at the Jubilee, so that he may return to his property.

14. We are not to give to the poor to the point where it damages our ability to provide for our own. The Bible teaches equality – giving out of excess – not giving to the point of damage.

- Luke 3:11 HCSB He replied to them, "The one who has two shirts must share with someone who has none, and the one who has food must do the same."
- 2 Corinthians 8:12-15 HCSB For if the eagerness is there, it is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. 13 It is not that there may be relief

for others and hardship for you, but it is a question of equality-- 14 at the present time your surplus is available for their need, so that their abundance may also become available for your need, that there may be equality. 15 As it has been written: The person who gathered much did not have too much, and the person who gathered little did not have too little.

D. Two final points to keep in mind:

1. We do not preach a social gospel. We do not believe in salvation by good works. We must not allow social works to become our primary purpose. Our goal is to worship the Lord and obey Him. We must keep our priorities straight.

- Mark 14:7 HCSB You always have the poor with you, and you can do good for them whenever you want, but you do not always have Me.
- 1 Corinthians 13:3 HCSB And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

2. We know that “the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it.” And “narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.” Still we try to win as many souls as we can. Similarly, in our struggle with economic injustice we are fighting a rear guard war against a bitter and determined enemy and we know that as long as sin exists the problem will continue. The war against poverty is ultimately unwinnable. There will always be poor people among us. This fact should not deter us because we are trying to save individuals from poverty, not conquer poverty itself. We are not called to personally win the battle but to fight the battle bravely and wisely.

- Matthew 7:13-14 HCSB "Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. 14 How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.
- Deuteronomy 15:11 HCSB For there will never cease to be poor people in the land; that is why I am commanding you, 'You must willingly open your hand to your afflicted and poor brother in your land.'
- Matthew 26:11 HCSB You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.