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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is designed to spur additional reflection. When a session ends, turn to the matching chapter and dive in. You can also use the opening sections of the PovertyCure Statement of Principles at the back of this booklet to generate further discussion and reflection. The statement describes the economic and biblical insights that animate the PovertyCure Initiative.

## ABOUT THE POVERTYCURE INITIATIVE

PovertyCure is an initiative of the Acton Institute that seeks to ground the battle against local and global poverty in a proper understanding of the human person and society, and to encourage solutions that foster opportunity and unleash the entrepreneurial spirit that already fills poverty-stricken areas of the developed and developing world alike.

The Acton Institute, PovertyCure's parent entity, is a research and education organization dedicated to promoting a free and virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles. To learn more, visit <http://acton.org>

## JOIN THE NETWORK

We have developed a network of organizations that affirm the PovertyCure Statement of Principles and seek to perform their work in accordance to those same Principles.

To learn about the PovertyCure network and become a partner, go to <http://povertycure.org>

## DIG DEEPER

If you wish to learn more about the issues of charity, development, and economics brought up in the video series, visit <http://povertycure.org> to learn more. Here, you will find videos and articles that accompany the video series that allow viewers to expand their knowledge about what is required for the material poor to flourish.

## CONTACT US

To get in touch, send us an email by going to <http://povertycure.org>

You can also follow PovertyCure on Facebook and Twitter.

# THE POVERTYCURE SERIES: INTRODUCTION

In an age of instant global media, great strides have been made in raising awareness about the problem of extreme poverty. This has sparked a growth in short-term mission campaigns, private charities, social entrepreneurship, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as tens of thousands of people have contributed money, vacation time, and whole careers to working with the poor. At the same time, during the past 60 years, the developed world has sent trillions of dollars in assistance to poor countries.

Many of these efforts have done tremendous good. Unfortunately, some have not had the positive effects that were hoped for. This begs a fundamental question: How do we connect our desire to help with strategies that actually work? This is what we set out to explore in the PovertyCure Series.

One of PovertyCure's key themes is the dignity and creative capacity of the human person created in the image of God. Understanding this is the foundation for everything we will explore, and it directly connects with a primary goal of the series—to recover and illuminate the Christian tradition's rich treasury of resources for helping the poor thrive.

We explore the moral, theological, and economic foundations that allow people to create prosperity and get out of poverty, and do so in clear terms illustrated with stories by and about people who live and work in some of the world's poorest regions.

The goal throughout is to develop both hearts and minds for the poor.

# PART 1: CHARITY THAT HURTS

## SUMMARY

Nearly a billion people around the world live in extreme poverty. The love of God stirs us to help, and yet both private and public aid often goes awry. In this session, several voices from the developing world discuss some common pitfalls of humanitarian assistance, and then point the way toward strategies that connect our good intentions with things that actually work—relationships focused on unleashing the creative capacity of our fellow man, human beings made in the image and likeness of God.

## PART 1 QUESTIONS:

1. In 2 Cor. 9:1-15, Paul discusses the Corinthian church's collection for famine-stricken Christians in Judea. What are some positive things he says there about generosity?
2. Musician Bob Geldof, who works with Bono and other celebrities to raise money for international poverty relief, once said, "We need to do something, even if it doesn't work." His commitment and advocacy for the poor is an example for us, but what possibility does Geldof's remark overlook?
3. What are some examples from this film session where a humanitarian effort had unintended consequences? Did any of those examples surprise you or make you see something in a new way?
4. When thinking about foreign aid, one important distinction to keep in view is between emergency relief for unexpected natural disasters and long-term assistance. What are some dangers if the two forms of assistance get confused?
5. What are some practical insights from this session we can use in helping the poor?
6. What role should prayer play in our efforts to help people in poverty?

## PART 2: THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CALLING

### SUMMARY

When we understand that people are made in the image and likeness of God with creative capacity, it transforms the way we understand wealth and poverty. This transformed understanding has led Christian organizations such as Hope International, Hopeline Institute, and Partners Worldwide to focus on financing, training, and collaborating with aspiring entrepreneurs in the developing world so that they can pursue business as ministry and create jobs and prosperity in their communities.

Unfortunately, many see the poor mainly as consumers, as many mouths competing for scarce resources. This outlook feeds into a fixed-pie view of wealth that has encouraged various population control schemes. These include abortion on demand and even forced sterilizations.

Tragically, even some Christian organizations have signed on to these plans. It's time for Christians to recover a fully Christian understanding of man, and celebrate the God-given creativity and wealth-generating capacity of rich and poor alike.

### PART 2 QUESTIONS

1. Peter Greer tells the story of Jeff Rutt and his church bringing goods to a struggling Zaporosia, Ukraine after the fall of Soviet Communism. Two years into this effort, a pastor there took Jeff aside and said, "Your help is hurting." What was the pastor talking about?
2. Put yourself in Jeff Rutt's shoes. How might you have reacted in a similar situation? How did Jeff Rutt react?
3. The microfinance experts in this session named at least three things that characterize successful Christian microfinance programs:  
(1) They carefully vet potential borrowers before lending.

- (2) They incorporate training focused on discipleship and business skills. (3) They charge interest on the loans. What reasons did the microfinance leaders give for each component?
4. What is the daughter deficit? How can Christians encourage reform in societies where unborn girls are being selectively aborted?

## SESSION 3: JUSTICE FOR THE POOR

### SUMMARY

The poor often lack the property rights and rule of law that would free them to pursue opportunities and escape poverty. They lack justice. The church should focus on this problem even though it rarely provides photo ops or quick fixes. This is not a call to a fleeting development fad. The Bible provides a strong foundation for property rights and the rule of law, and insists that human legal systems should protect every class of society, not just for the rich or well-connected. As the prophet Amos says, “Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (NIV).

### PART 3 QUESTIONS

1. “God affirms private property,” Stephen Grabill noted. “He gives us boundary markers, mile markers, stones that mark one person’s property from another person’s property. Think about it. You cannot be generous with somebody else’s stuff. You can only be generous with your stuff, which means it has to be your own property that you give away.” Why would God care about private property? Is his concern connected to the role he has given us as stewards of creation?
2. Hernando De Soto did a study in Peru to see how long it would take two college students to register a small sewing business. It

took 289 days! His organization works to streamline the process for the poor to get title to property and register businesses so they can get access to all the benefits of property rights and the rule of law. How do such efforts compare to simply giving material resources to the poor?

3. Can you think of any political or voluntary experiments in abolishing private property? How did those work out?
4. In Exodus 23:6, God says, “Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits” (NIV). In some parts of the world, the poor have little protection from criminals. La Cava, in Argentina, is such a place. But it is easier to bring food, clothing, and medical supplies to such communities than to encourage the growth of what they most need to escape poverty—the rule of law. What are some ways Christians can encourage the rule of law to take root in such places? Why is there a tendency to ignore such work in favor of typical forms of charitable activity?

## PART 4: CIRCLES OF EXCHANGE

### SUMMARY

The biblical call to solidarity with the poor urges us to connect with the poor in broader circles of exchange. The modern history of Ireland illustrates why. Ireland remained stuck in poverty until it was able to connect to broader markets and encourage entrepreneurship and investment. Globalization comes with dangers, of course, particularly if it is misshapen by cronyism. We see this when farmers in poor countries are walled out of markets and then must compete locally with food aid shipped in from the West. This destroys their farming jobs while mainly benefiting large corporate farms in wealthy countries.

## PART 4 QUESTIONS

1. When the poor get access to the rule of law and broad circles of exchange, they tend to move out of poverty in one or two generations. Unfortunately, many people in the poorest regions of the world remain disconnected from these things. How has the spread of Christianity and Christian mission at its best helped to break down these barriers? How can mission work continue to help break down these barriers?
2. For decades, Ireland protected its markets from outside competition and their economy stagnated. When they opened their markets to outside competition, their economy took off. According to those interviewed in the session, what were some of the ingredients of this economic success story?
3. What dangers does globalization pose for cultures? What are some of the opportunities?
4. Globalization brings some pretty sleazy forms of popular media into the laps of people who had been relatively free from that sort of thing. What can Christians do to counter this onslaught and make globalization an experience that builds up rather than tears down?
5. Doug Seebeck of Partners Worldwide asks, “In this rapidly integrating world, how do I best love my neighbor so that everybody has the ability to have what I have?” He then answers his own question: “It doesn’t mean by giving it away. It means by allowing them to succeed.” What does he suggest is something we could do to give the poor more freedom to succeed? Do you agree with Seebeck’s assessment?



# PART 5: THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

## SUMMARY

Making disciples of all nations is a central commission of Christianity. At the same time, the Gospel encourages human flourishing in ways no amount of foreign assistance ever could. This is illustrated in the story of Immaculée Ilibagiza, who lost her family in the Rwandan genocide. While hiding in a tiny bathroom during the genocide, she learned to forgive the killers by praying the Lord's Prayer. She and others are now helping Rwanda heal and live in peace through the power of forgiveness and the grace of Christ. Their stories illustrate a truth easily forgotten: Christians focused on heavenly things are often the ones who have the greatest positive impact here on earth.

## PART 5 QUESTIONS

1. Peter Greer said, "There's got to be more than just change in a wallet for significant change to happen." He said spiritual transformation is often crucial to helping the poor. However, some poor people are spiritual giants. How can charitable work promote spiritual transformation without falling into the false and destructive idea that the poor are necessarily to blame for their poverty?
2. Several in this session spoke of Christianity's power to give the poor "hope and a future." If you had a fatalistic worldview from birth, how might the Gospel transform your outlook?
3. One way the Gospel encourages development is by replacing anger and hatred with forgiveness and reconciliation. Did Immaculée Ilibagiza's story of forgiveness and reconciliation instruct or convict you in any way? How so?
4. C.S. Lewis calls attention to a great paradox:  
Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles them-

selves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’: aim at earth and you will get neither.<sup>1</sup>

What are some ways we can apply C.S. Lewis’s insight to the way we seek to help the poor?

## PART 6: CHURCHES, COMMUNITIES AND CULTURE

### SUMMARY

This session extends the focus of the fifth session by exploring the cultural/spiritual resources essential for communities to thrive—a culture of trust, a culture that encourages thrift, honesty and enterprise, and one that respects the dignity and capacity of people and the value of work.

The session illustrates the positive role the cultural resources play in development through the stories of four mission efforts. One of them works to remind materially poor churches in the developing world that they, too, are called to generous giving and stewardship. The other three take care of orphans, raising up young men and women to be productive stewards.

### PART 6 QUESTIONS

1. Peter Heslam says the virtue of thrift is key to escaping poverty. “Thrift, at its core, is about the delay of gratification,” he said. “It’s saying no to consuming things today for the sake of a better tomorrow.” Are there charitable activities that might actually undermine this virtue?

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco: 2001), p. 134. Originally published in 1952 and based on a series of BBC recordings delivered during World War II

2. Brett Elder discussed how International Steward encourages even materially poor churches to embrace their calling to be generous stewards. Bishop Hannington's congregation in war-torn Uganda illustrates the results. What would have been some pros and cons of solving that community's material needs with a quick infusion of resources from material-rich Christians in the West?
3. When James 1:27 says that looking after orphans is part of true religion, the Greek word translated "visit" or "look after" carries the sense of being attentive to someone's needs. How did Tom Davis's attentiveness to the spiritual needs of orphans lead him to change his organization's model of charity?
4. The session ends with a quotation from C.S. Lewis:

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.<sup>2</sup>

Why is it important to remember this in our efforts to help the poor?

## POVERTY CURE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES<sup>3</sup>

### THE CHALLENGE OF GLOBAL POVERTY

We are called to a loving and generous concern for the poor. Yet for many of us with a heart for the poor, the statistics are almost overwhelming. More than 800 million people live on less than \$1.90 a day. Every year, millions of men, women and children die from AIDS, malaria and other preventable diseases. Tens of millions lack clean water and go to bed hungry.

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<sup>2</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2001), p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> The full version is at: <http://povertycure.org>

There is, however, reason for hope. Although we cannot create heaven on earth, we know what it takes for the poor to be able to create new wealth for themselves and rise out of poverty. Indeed, there exist powerful tools that could allow us to make enormous strides in creating prosperous societies. It is time to rethink poverty. It is time to put the person, made in the image of God, at the center of the economy. It is time to help unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of the developing world.

## THE POVERTYCURE VISION

When we put the person at the center of our economic thinking, we transform the way we look at wealth and poverty. Instead of asking what causes poverty, we begin to ask, what causes wealth? What are the conditions for human flourishing from which prosperity can grow? And how can we create and protect the space for people to live out their freedom and responsibilities?

It is time to move:

- From aid to enterprise
- From poverty alleviation to wealth creation
- From paternalism to partnerships
- From handouts to investments
- From seeing the poor as consumers or burdens to seeing them as creators
  - From viewing people and economies as experiments to pursuing solidarity with the poor
- From viewing the poor as recipients of charity to acknowledging them as agents of change with dignity, capacity, and creativity
- From encouraging dependency to integrating the poor into networks of productivity and exchange
- From subsidies and protectionism to open trade and competition
- From seeing the global economy as a fixed pie to understanding that human enterprise can grow economies

## CHARITY, GLOBAL POVERTY AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The Judeo-Christian tradition has always emphasized solidarity with the poor. But solidarity means more than simply providing relief. It means viewing the poor as partners and joining together with them in networks of productivity and exchange. Charity and almsgiving play an indispensable role in our efforts to help the poor, and yet the goal for charitable organizations should be to help the poor move beyond dependency. No country ever became wealthy and self-sufficient through foreign assistance—public or private. In the long run, sustainable supplies of food, clean water, health, and education are created by local wealth-creating economies integrated into interdependent networks.

Christians have always been involved in helping the poor through charity, almsgiving, and service. In recent decades, Christians have sometimes looked to large, secular political entities and international organizations as the key for helping the poor. This is an understandable but inadequate response. First, many of these groups begin with a mistaken vision of the human person. If we are going to help the poor, we must first understand the nature, calling, and destiny of human beings. Second, despite many good intentions, large-scale foreign aid plans have been largely ineffective. Trillions of dollars in aid over the last sixty years have been unable to lift the poorest countries out of extreme poverty. It is time to change.

### POVERTYCURE: TAKE ACTION

- Think before you act.
- Think biblically.
- Pray and seek wise counsel.
- Realize that good intentions alone don't solve poverty.
- Learn the fundamental truths of economics.
- Get involved: educate yourself on the principles of effective compassion and then put the principles into action, using your time, talents and resources.

- Educate others about the principles of effective compassion.
- Investigate the charitable institutions you are considering supporting and hold them accountable for practicing effective compassion.
- If you have relevant expertise, consider looking for ways to invest in business in the developing world, perhaps through organizations that specialize in identifying promising small and medium-sized enterprises or in extending microcredit – providing micro financial services. As with charitable giving, study before you invest, holding the organizations or investment recipients to high standards of moral probity and business competence.
- Join the PovertyCure Network and spread the word.