

# POVERTY Prayer Guide

## THE ISSUE:

According to the World Bank, 767 million people—about 10 percent of the world’s population—live on less than \$1.90 per day.<sup>1</sup> This type of poverty is endemic, trapping families for generations. But poverty cannot simply be defined in financial terms. Lack can manifest itself in many different forms—hunger, malnutrition, disease, poor education, insufficient healthcare, and unemployment are common indicators. The world is making progress in improving these indicators, yet this has not solved the problem of poverty itself. Poverty is much more complex. The materially poor often use words like shame, humiliation and hopelessness to describe poverty. That is because the cause of poverty goes much deeper than physical needs.

*“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”*

- Colossians 1:19-20

At the root of poverty and human suffering are beliefs that don’t align to God’s truth. These beliefs impact what we do. They limit people from fulfilling their potential as image-bearers of God. They lead to broken relationships with God, family, neighbors, and even the rest of creation. Brokenness in these relationships affect people individually and have far reaching consequences, including unjust systems, oppression, corruption, and man-made disasters.

**There are many examples of how lies lock people into poverty. Here are a few:**

- A family that thinks God only cares about spiritual things might neglect their health or child’s education. They believe, *“God only cares about spiritual things, not our physical well-being.”*
- People don’t take initiative to improve their situation, because they feel it is the destiny of their lives to remain in poverty. They think, *“We were born poor, so we’ll always be poor.”*
- They wait for someone to come and help them, rather than finding a solution to their problem, because they believe, *“We can’t do anything ourselves; we need someone else to help us.”*
- They may feel like their situation is a punishment, and so can’t be changed. *“God has rejected us, we just have to accept His curse.”*
- A government official’s beliefs about poverty can cause him or her to use funds intended to benefit the community for personal gain. Corruption, and even slavery, flourish under the very broken beliefs: *“It’s ok for me to take advantage of those other people - they are poor and so don’t deserve anything anyway.” “Poor people deserve to be poor. It’s their own fault. They aren’t a concern of mine.” “They are cursed by the gods,” “they are lazy,” “they are alcoholics,” or “they’ve brought it on themselves.”*
- A family may sell their only cow to pay for a witchdoctor to do an ancestral ceremony for their business to flourish. They believe, *“I have no control over the destiny of my life; the ancestral spirits control it.”*
- Unfathomable brokenness—like selling a daughter into a trafficking situation to earn money for a family need—can stem from lies like, *“Women and children are possessions for me to use as I want.”*
- If they are subsistence farmers who believe their children will be farmers and their grandchildren will be farmers, they will see little point in educating their families or aspiring to something different. *“Being poor is our destiny.”*

*“Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?”*

- James 2:5

These lies reinforce to people in poverty that there is no hope, and so they resign themselves to live in poverty until they die (fatalism). Nurturing truth that dispels these lies is what breaks their power and restores hope.

Wrong beliefs have also crippled the Church's ability to fulfill her calling to disciple nations and bring justice for the vulnerable. While many have accepted the good news of salvation throughout the world, there have been fewer opportunities for believers to learn to fully understand and apply God's truth to every area of their lives. As a result, many Christians around the world continue with false beliefs that lead to bondage, impoverishment, injustice, and a hindered witness for God. There is little difference in the lives of believers and their communities before and after they come to Christ. Believing that God only cares about spiritual things, they continue the same patterns. As a result, their communities remain in poverty, churches are weakened, and God is not glorified as He should be.

In Colossians 1:19-20, God reminds us that Christ came to reconcile all things—not just our relationship with Him, but everything. In the Fall, all things were broken, and God's plan for redemption is for all things to be reconciled. As we align all areas of life (family, health, education, business, and government, as well as spiritual) to God's truth, we experience that reconciliation. Ultimately, the One who created all things also knows how best we can live and flourish.

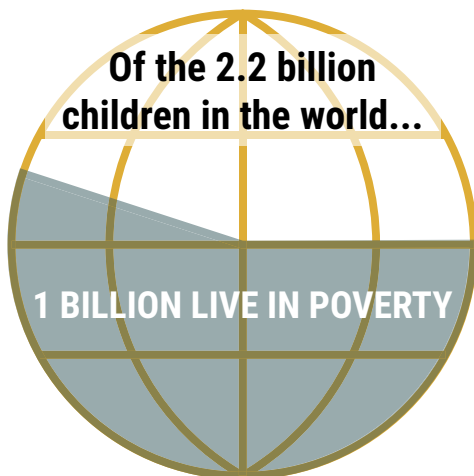
*"if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."*

- 2 Chronicles 7:14

## IN THE MAJORITY WORLD... \*

At least  
**80%**  
of humanity lives on LESS THAN  
**\$10 per day**

**1.1 BILLION PEOPLE** have inadequate access to water.



- 640 million children lack adequate shelter (1 in 3)
- 400 million children have no access to safe water (1 in 5)
- 270 million children cannot access health services (1 in 7)

\*According to a report on poverty by Global Issues<sup>2</sup>

# HOW TO PRAY:

- **Pray for churches in impoverished communities**—for a deeper revelation of God’s truth that will dispel lies like the ones above. Pray for them to see how God would have them live out His whole truth in all areas of life, so they may reach their God-given potential. Pray for them to have faith and courage to live it out, even when it is difficult. Pray for God’s blessings on the churches.
- Pray for the churches to specifically discern the truth of God that is needed in their own communities. Pray for them to have boldness to share these truths with others in their communities. Pray for them to encourage all people in their communities to live according to God’s truth so that their communities can flourish.
- Pray that the churches would discern what God would have them do in their communities to address the needs of the vulnerable. Pray for the hearts of believers to be turned to love and care for those in need. Pray for them to share the love of God in all areas of life. Pray that God would be glorified and churches strengthened.
- **Pray for those living in poverty.** Pray that they would experience God’s provision and protection, especially in times of crisis. Pray for their basic needs to be met. Pray for access to education, medical care, and income generation opportunities so they may fulfill their purpose as image-bearers of God. Pray for opportunities to learn to apply God’s truth to every area of life. Pray for a restoration of their own identity—to be released from shame, humiliation or fatalism that locks them in poverty.
- **Pray for the hearts of leaders** at the different levels of society to turn to God. Pray that leaders would turn to God’s truths and act on them, especially if they are believers. Pray for their conscience to lead them in the ways of God. Pray that they would seek justice for the vulnerable in their lands. Pray that love and servanthood would replace greed and pride.
- **Pray for governments**—for just systems to be put into place. Pray for laws to be enforced that protect those in poverty. Pray for governments to value all of their citizens equally. Pray for the breakdown of unjust and oppressive systems.
- **Pray for businesses** to operate with integrity to serve others with excellence rather than motivated by greed for profit. Pray for businesses to take responsibility for the care of their workers.
- **Pray for ministries** seeking to alleviate poverty, that they would have wisdom to understand the complexities of poverty and their particular context. Pray for God to refresh them in the midst of what can be draining work. Pray for Holy Spirit-inspired creativity and insight. Pray for them to have resources available to do what God has called them to do.
- **Pray that Jesus will bring reconciliation to all relationships.** Pray for truth to penetrate the lies that lead to broken relationships. Pray for a restoration of identity to all individuals, families, and nations. This will break down hopelessness, greed, and fatalism. Pray that each person would be equipped with the knowledge and strength to be good stewards of what God has entrusted to them. Pray that this restoration will flow into the realms of their family, community, and nation.

# SCRIPTURES:

Genesis 1-2  
2 Chronicles 7:14  
Proverbs 14:31  
Proverbs 31:8-9  
Isaiah 58:6-11  
Micah 6:8  
Luke 10:25-37

John 8:32  
John 10:10  
2 Corinthians 5:17-21  
Colossians 1:15-23  
James 1:27  
James 2:5

# SOURCES & OTHER RESOURCES:

World Bank, "Overview of Poverty" <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>  
Global Issues, "Poverty Facts and Stats" <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>

## **Videos:**

Truth Centered Transformation on poverty: <http://tctprogram.org/>  
"What is Poverty?": <https://www.chalmers.org/our-work/redefining-poverty/what-is-poverty>

## **Websites:**

Reconciled World on wholistic development: <http://reconciledworld.org/learn/>  
Free online course—Coram Deo School for Discipling Nations: <http://www.coramdeo.com/>

## **Poverty statistics:**

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>  
<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/3-MP-PovertyFacts-E.pdf>

## **Books:**

When Helping Hurts: Alleviating Poverty Without Hurting the Poor and Yourself by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert  
Generous Justice by Timothy Keller  
Walking with the Poor by Bryant Myers

# FROM POVERTY TO ABUNDANCE - ONE COMMUNITY'S JOURNEY

In 2005, Tai Ping was a typical rural village. The people were rice farmers, but there was never enough. Without roads to their fields, each family only harvested what they could carry over rugged hiking trails. There were no latrines. People rarely washed. Few children went to school. Domestic violence was the norm, even among church leaders. **The people were sick, hungry, and illiterate.**

The Christians in Tai Ping trusted Christ as their Savior, but had no knowledge of His plan for their lives. Ruled by the fatalism of their culture, they thought, "Sickness is normal, poverty is inevitable." They knew of many needs in their community, but said, "We're too poor to help. What's the point when nothing can change?"

**Then the church began studying TCT.** They learned that Jesus has lordship over every area of life, that God had given them resources and abilities, and that He wanted them to show His love to others. Using their own resources, the church began harvesting fields for the sick and giving food to widows and orphans. **People became more receptive to the Gospel as they saw these Acts of Love.**

As the church prayed, God showed them to build roads to their fields. Because the church now had a good reputation in the community, more than a hundred people volunteered to help. Using hand tools, they cut back the jungle and leveled the hiking trail into a road that was over a mile long. Over time, they built five more roads. The roads enabled farmers to transport their crops with handcarts. They could harvest more, so their incomes increased. Eventually, they were able to buy motorbikes, which made it possible to transport their rice to the main roads, where it sold at a higher price.

Throughout this time, TCT training continued. The church learned that their bodies were given to them by God to take care of, and that it was not God's plan for His people to be continually sick. The church incorporated the lessons on hygiene and treating common illnesses into their small groups.

As the church members applied the health lessons to their lives, their neighbors saw the benefits and began to do the same. Soon, everyone had and used a latrine, practiced good hygiene, and kept their homes clean. Every household began gardening and eating vegetables. Sickness became rare. Children no longer died from diarrhea. Because they could treat common illnesses at home, debt from hospital bills decreased.

The church continued serving—digging wells and building houses. **They saw each project as an act of worship and service to God,** and always prayed about what they should do next. In 2008, they felt called to build a bridge. Because the church had a reputation of serving, the government provided steel. Many church members gave money. But it wasn't enough. They decided to start the bridge anyway. Each day people brought money or supplies, so there was just enough to keep building. Finally the bridge was complete.

In 2009, a typhoon swept the bridge away. The church built a temporary bridge. Two months later, another typhoon washed *this* bridge away. Again the church rebuilt, this time on donated land in a safer area. The government was so impressed that they broadcast a news story across the country about the church who kept loving their community.

The church began to pray about building a school, but God said, "Wait." Soon after, the government announced it would build a school for the community as a reward for all their hard work. Now, children in Tai Ping graduate high school and some attend university—an achievement that no one could have imagined in 2005.

Meanwhile, the church received a TCT training about marriage. When they heard scripture's teaching that husbands must love their wives, one leader responded, "I've never loved my wife. It was an arranged marriage. I don't even like her." But because he wanted to obey God, he started treating his wife well. Their relationship improved quickly. When others in the church saw how happy the couple became, they began to show their wives kindness. Wives responded with love and respect, and parents began to show affection to their children.

**Over time, the church itself was transformed.** By 2010, 90 percent of the community (about 700 people) professed faith in Christ, attended church, and tithed regularly. The church continues to pray, plan, and do Acts of Love to this day. But now their focus is on surrounding villages, as there are no longer any needs in Tai Ping.

TCT provided no physical assistance of any kind to Tai Ping, yet the community transformed out of poverty. What we provided was **wholistic discipleship.** Biblical truth provided the critical why of making a change. Skills in things like agriculture and hygiene provided the *how.* **As the people of Tai Ping learned to walk in obedience in every area of life, God lifted them out of poverty.**