

Welcome to the **Connecting Class**

Connecting with God

Connecting with His Church

Connecting with His World

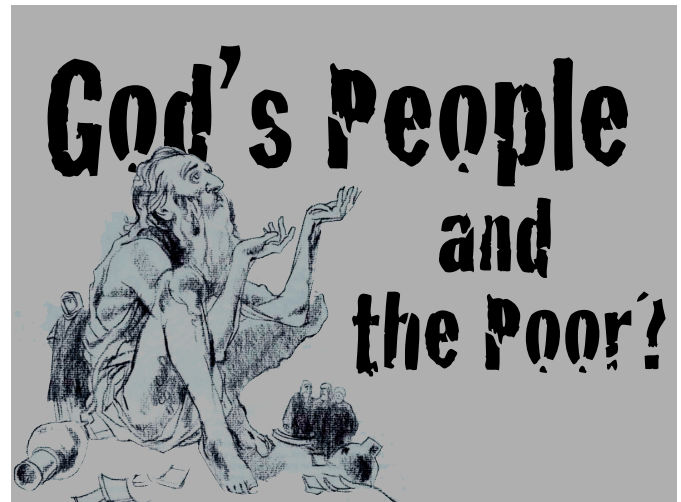
Through

Exposition of light in Scripture

Experience of life in community

Expression of love in ministry

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Key text #1

Galations 6:10

“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

Observation #1 *Christians have a primary responsibility to the Christian community.*

Observation #2 *Christians love and service is to extend to all who God loves.*

Observation #3 *Christian service is conditioned on time and opportunity. We are not called to reform society.*

Key text #2

Proverbs 29:7

“The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor; the wicked does not understand such concern.”

Observation #1 *Righteousness is about rights of those who are powerless.*

Observation #2 *Righteousness is a heart issue.*

Observation #3 *Like Jesus, our true nature is revealed in our response to the poor and powerless around us.*

Gracious, sensitive, generosity is not a gift it is a sign.

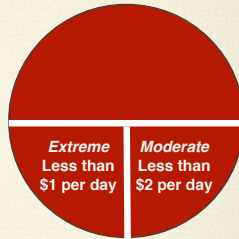
All who love God will also love people.

- **Recognize the importance of compassion in action.** This is close to God's heart and a mark of a true believer.
- **Respond from the heart to the core issues.** Justice and human dignity.
- **Expand your social network.** Make an effort to touch the lives of those in need.
- **Learn how to care and not to be consumed.** Provide tangible help but do not take responsibility for things you can't control.



Fact #1 *50% of the world is materially poor.*

The 500 wealthiest people in the world match the wealth of 50% (3 billion) of the world's people.



World population and income

Source: World Bank

% earning \$1 per day

Sub-Saharan Africa	48%
South Asia	40%
East Asia & Pacific	15%
Latin America	12%
USA	1%

Fact #2

Annual income = \$21,000

37 million
Americans

live below
poverty line.

0 25 50 75 100

But all
are not there
long term

But all
will not be helped
with more money

But all
are not
impoveryished

But all
are not victims

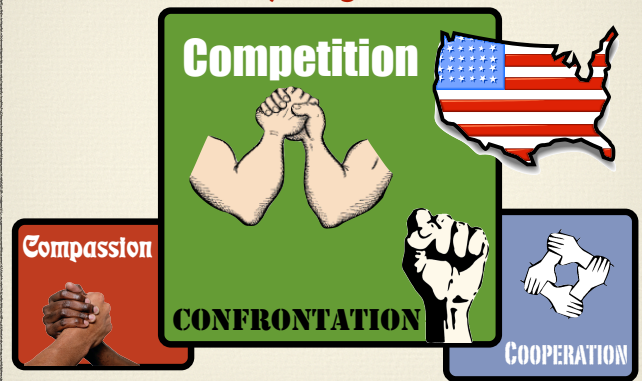
Fact #3 *Poverty has a profile.*

Percentage of each group that is under the poverty level.

- Dropping out of high school (36%)
- Single female with children (46%)
- African American (30%)
- Hispanic (31%)
- Native American (26%)
- Children under 18 years of age (22%)
- Elderly over 65 years of age (22%)
- From a poor home

Source: 2001 Current Population Survey annual Demographic Supplement data

Fact #4 *American values are not necessarily Kingdom values*



Kingdom values

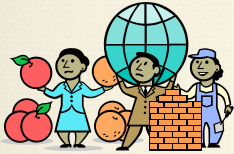


The American vision has been distorted.

The Declaration of Independence

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and **the pursuit of happiness.**"

**“pursuit of happiness”
has been redefined**



“economic
vocation and
civic virtue”



“search for short-
term comfort &
gratification”

**“pursuit of
happiness”**

Public Good
(Virtue)



responsibilities

**“pursuit of
happiness”** has been
indexed to **“liberty”**

which has been indexed to worldliness not Godliness

Public Good
(Virtue)



responsibilities

**“pursuit of
happiness”** has been
indexed to **“liberty”**

which has been indexed to worldliness not Godliness

Public Good
(Virtue)

PERSONAL GOOD
(entitlements)



responsibilities rights

**Fact #5 Responding to poverty is a
challenge with many points of tension
demanding wise balance.**

Spiritual needs	Physical needs
church family	biological family
individual freedom	community equality
equality of opportunity	equality of outcome
short term relief	long term recovery
domestic needs	international needs
The rich are blessed	God cares for the poor

**Fact #6 Many responses to poverty are
superficial and misleading.**

- **“Live simply so others can simply live.”** My consumption or lack thereof may do little to address the real problem.
- **The rich prosper at the expense of the poor.** The size of the pie can increase in a healthy economy.
- **Capitalism = greed and exploitation of the poor.** Capitalism is a key to addressing poverty but it can be abused.
- **Government is the answer to social injustice.** Government can be an important part of the answer but more often it promises more than it delivers.
- **Big business is the problem.** Big business involves all strata of society.
- **The poor remain poor.** Most of the poor are in and out of poverty over the period of a year.

- **The free market will correct itself.** History has taught us that some government controls is needed to keep things fair.
- **Socialist societies never work.** With some impressive exceptions - Singapore, Sweden, Denmark, France, etc.
- **Big government is the problem.** The problem with government is its inefficiency, insensitivity, and ineffectiveness.
- **The Bible favors the poor.** God is sensitive to the needs of the poor which are often different from those of the rich.
- **The gospel is about saving souls not about social justice.** God is concerned about a loving response to people who can't live by bread **alone**. This implies that "bread" is included.

A strategy for addressing poverty

- **Respect and dignity.** Focus attention on restoring and preserving personal dignity not just giving money.
- **Bipartisan.** Both the political right and left need to do more listening, less competing, and refocus on public service.
- **The family.** Promote and support the traditional marriage and family.
- **The economy.** Promote and support a growing economy.
- **The middle class.** Promote and support a healthy and growing economic middle class

International strategies

- **Civil rights.** Promoting the rights of women and children in third world countries would make a big difference.
- **Sanitation.** Clean water is perhaps the single biggest and solvable problem in the third world.
- **Capitalism.** Developing fair and free markets has proven to be the single best mechanism for creating wealth.
- **Representative and responsible government.** Corrupt government is a mammoth problem in the third world.
- **Emergency aid.** Prompt, generous, well directed aid from wealthy countries is needed to meet temporal crises.

Ecclesiastes 10:2

"A wise man's heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man's heart directs him toward the left."

Hard Questions



Public policy and community care

- Pursue the “real issues.”
- Promote the “common good.”
- Protect the “middle class.”
- Provide a “safety net.”

Fact #2 Poverty is measured in different ways.

- **Absolute** or the official measure - (cost of basic diet x 3 + inflation = 11% of the population) more sensitive to economic growth.

For a family of 4 = \$16,660 in annual income.



In this system, a *specific income level* will eliminate poverty.

Note: Income figures are from 2000

- **Relative** or comparative disadvantage - (50% of median family income = 17% of the population) more sensitive to income equality.

For a family of 4 = \$25,283 in annual income.



In this system, a *certain percentile of the population* will always constitute “the poor.”

Note: Income figures are from 2000

- **Quasi-relative** or The National Academy of Sciences - (14% of the population) a more sophisticated combination of Absolute & Relative measures.



This system is perhaps the most helpful and realistic.

Note: Income figures are from 2000

A socialist society

is willing to sacrifice individual liberty and material productivity for material and social equality.

A capitalist society

is willing to sacrifice material and social equality for individual liberty and material productivity.

A Christian society

views liberty and productivity as a responsibility more than a right - and compassion with cooperation as important as competition.

Christians can “do good” in both capitalist and socialist societies.

Christian capitalists

Competition that is fair

It is motivated by the pursuit of efficiency, and effectiveness as stewards more than personal comfort and power as consumers.

Cooperation that is proactive

It is sensitive to the well-being of the community as well as the family and the individual.

Compassion that is sacrificial

It is free to be generous and sensitive in addressing the true needs of others, especially those without power or dignity.

The religious left is tempted to:

- Give the state a Messianic role in the live of people. **The state functions as the source of life.**
- Define the human dilemma in material terms. **Salvation = more money and education.**
- Promote the Kingdom without the King. **Ethics is about saving bodies more than souls.**
- Promote community apart from the Spirit of Christ. **Poverty is strictly a material issue.**
- See the poor as (primarily) victims of the greedy rich and a capitalistic system that takes unfair advantage of them. **The poor need a hand and a handout.**
- Wealth is not created it is divided. **As the rich get richer it is always at the expense of the poor.**

The religious right is tempted to:

- Make uncritical nationalism a sacred calling. **Our country is always right.**
- Define God's blessing in terms of personal peace, material prosperity, and social excitement. **The Kingdom is the American dream.**
- Promote the King without the Kingdom. **Ethics is about saving souls more than bodies.**
- Promote individualism, autonomy, and privacy apart from self-sacrificing service to others. **We each get what we deserve.**
- See the poor as (primarily) lazy and irresponsible who could change their state if they would only work harder, and smarter. **The poor only need opportunity.**
- Wealth is created. **The fact that some get rich has little or no negative effect on those who do not.**

How is poverty measured?

- **Absolute** or the official measure - (cost of basic diet x 3 + inflation = 11% of the population) more sensitive to economic growth. ***This poverty can be eliminated.***
For a family of 4 = \$16,660 in annual income.
- **Relative** or comparative disadvantage - (50% of median family income = 17% of the population) more sensitive to income equality. ***This poverty will always present.***
For a family of 4 = \$25,283 in annual income.
- **Quasi-relative** or The National Academy of Sciences - (14% of the population) a more sophisticated combination of the above two.

Note: Income figures are from 2000

Who pays income tax and how much?

Percentile ranked by AGI	AGI threshold on percentiles	% of Federal income tax paid
Top 1%	\$295,495	34.27%
Top 5%	\$130,000	54.36%
Top 10%	\$94,891	65.84%
Top 25%	\$57,343	83.88%
Top 50%	\$29,019	96.54%
Bottom 50%	below \$29,019	3.46%

Charitable giving in America

All charitable giving	\$249 (billion)
Individuals	\$188
Foundations	\$29
Corporations	\$12
Other	\$21
All charitable giving	
Religion	\$88
Education	\$34
Other	\$27

89% of American households give an average of \$1,620 per year.
Total giving has increased in 39 of the last 40 years.

American government expenditures on poverty

Breakdown by Anti-poverty category	2001	2005	Increase
Health care assistance	\$133,073	\$186,849	40%
Food assistance	\$34,053	\$50,833	49%
Housing assistance	\$30,091	\$37,899	29%
Cash & other assistance	\$88,496	\$121,353	37%
Total anti-poverty spending (millions)	\$285,713	\$396,934	39%

