

REFLECTIONS ON POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA - QUO VADIS?

READ : Chapter 12 in "The Here and Now Christian"

Three points that I think are important in this chapter are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

READ : Mark 25:14-30

We are reminded that each one of us has the ability to use the gifts/talents given to us in order to build the Kingdom of God. It is not acceptable to "opt out" and think that there is nothing you can do for such a major problem as poverty in South Africa.

Yes, it IS a major problem. We are told that recent surveys show that more than 55% of South Africans live below the poverty line. This means they have less than R75 per month to survive on.

Discussion:

What can you buy for R75?

Is it possible to survive on this amount?

Why are there so many families living in poverty?

Is poverty linked to illness and disease?

Can you justify crime in order to survive?

On the TV programme "Carte Blanche" some time ago, a young man was interviewed in Johannesburg. He had been caught stealing a BMW. He said he felt he had done no wrong. His reasoning was that he could sell the car for at least R4000 which would feed his extended family for a month and pay for their basic needs. The owner of the car would have insurance and so would be paid out the value of the car. He saw this as a win-win situation.

Discuss this from the point of view of the young man.

How would you explain to him that stealing is always wrong?

What could you do to assist him?

Consider the following:

List three of your favourite possessions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Is it wrong to like nice things?

Read Mark 14:3-9

What makes you happy and confident?

Using the information from these three questions, let us examine our immediate community and discuss some practical ways in which we could act for Jesus.

Many churches have feeding schemes. There are soup kitchens, daily sandwiches for local schools, collections of non-perishable food for local families etc...

It is relatively easy to take a bag of mealie meal to church or to donate some money.

These schemes are good and definitely fulfil a need , but, can we do more?

Here is a suggested way to fight poverty that will be sustainable:

- Involve those affected in the community
- Create an organised group eg. Begin a market garden, sell home made crafts/ beadwork etc
- Identify the issues that are critical and act on the simple issues
- Help those in the community to realise that with guidance they cansolve their own problems
- Acknowledge that this takes time

Do you know of any successful schemes?

Find out what the Hurley Centre in Durban does for the poor in the centre of the city.

How do they involve the community to ensure that these projects succeed?

How can YOU get involved?

What did Chapter 12 say about corruption ?

What do you think is the reason for the corruption in our community?

Does corruption contribute to poverty? How?

What can you do about this ?

HERE AND NOW.....

- **Support** local feeding schemes
- **Recycle** – including clothes
- **Pay** a fair wage to your employees
- **Get involved**

Read Revelation 7 : 9-17

Say together this Prayer for Poverty:

*God of Justice, open our eyes
to see you in the face of those in poverty.
Open our ears to hear you
in the cries of those exploited.
Open our mouths to defend you
in the public squares as well as in private deeds.
Remind us that what we do to the least ones, we do to you.
Amen*

(From Being Neighbor: The Catechism and Social Justice, USCCB, April 1998)