



UNIT 1: HUNGER IS A GOD ISSUE

The Fast That I Choose

A Bible Study On Hunger

GOD'S GENEROSITY

When it comes to issues of hunger, poverty, and wealth, many Christians operate on the same principle as the little boy with the dollar bill heading out to the drug store to buy a candy bar.

"Why don't you give your dollar to the poor," asked the pastor who was visiting at the time.

"I thought about it," the boy said. "But I think I'll buy the candy bar and tell the store owner to give the dollar to the poor."

One reason so many Christians act in such a way is that they buy into the world's economic order, which relies on scarcity. The world's view is that economics is about how people individually and collectively deal with the fact of scarcity. And scarcity exists when people's wants exceed their ability to satisfy those wants.

It is important to understand that according to the world's economic order, there are only wants. It does not recognize that there are needs. However, the truth is that there are needs. After all, without food, without clothing, without water, or without shelter people struggle simply to survive, people have no opportunity to live life abundantly, people are stripped of hope and robbed of their dignity, and sometimes people die.

God's economic order stands in stark contrast to the world's economic order. The world's economic order relies on scarcity, while God's economic order relies on righteousness. The world's economic order revolves around meeting people's wants, while God's economic order revolves around meeting people's needs. The world's economic order hinges on limited resources, while God's economic order hinges on unlimited love.

To put it simply, God operates on the economics of enough rather than the economics of scarcity. That is because God is generous beyond measure.

The story of manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16) illustrates this characteristic of God quite well. When the Israelites faced hunger in the wilderness, God provided food in the form of manna. However, no one was allowed too much manna, and no one ever received too little. Those who tried to hoard it found that it had spoiled. The point is, God generously provided enough for everyone.

God's generosity should come as no surprise since it is displayed throughout the Bible. For instance, when Jesus fed the 5,000 there were twelve baskets full of leftovers (John 6:13). When Jesus turned the water into wine, he made at least 120 gallons of excellent wine to serve to the wedding guests (John 2:6). The biblical witness makes clear that when God gives, God gives abundantly.

In like manner, God provides generously when it comes to global food production. It is a fact that God provides more than enough food for everyone in the world today. Indeed, "abundance" best describes the world's food supply. Enough food is available globally to provide at least 4.3 pounds of food per person daily.¹ That is enough food to make most people fat! That is how generously God has provided for us.

And that is not all. Enough food for the growing global population will continue to be produced into the foreseeable future. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations projects that growth in global agriculture should be more than sufficient to meet the increasing world demand.² So God's economics of enough is clearly in play when it comes to world food production.

GOD'S BROKEN HEART

Despite the world's abundant food supply, more than 923 million people across the planet experience the crushing effects of hunger.³ The human cost of hunger is measured in stunted physical and mental development, reduced opportunities, blighted health, shortened life expectancies, and premature deaths. Every year, maternal and childhood malnutrition accounts for more than one-third of childhood deaths across the planet.⁴



UNIT 1: HUNGER IS A GOD ISSUE

PURPOSE OF THIS UNIT:

- TO COME TO A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF THE REALITIES OF GLOBAL HUNGER.
- TO RECOGNIZE THAT HUNGER IS AN ISSUE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO GOD.
- TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO ADDRESS HUNGER.



Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land."
Deuteronomy 15:11

The reality of hunger in the world has got to break God's heart because there is no legitimate reason for hunger to exist and because the consequences of hunger are so devastating, especially to the world's children.

Key Hunger Terms:

TERM	DEFINITION
Hunger	A condition in which people do not get enough food to provide the nutrients (carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and water) for active, healthy lives.
Malnutrition	A condition resulting from inadequate consumption (undernutrition) or excessive consumption of one or more nutrients that can impair physical and mental health, and cause or be the consequence of infectious disease.
Undernutrition	A condition resulting from inadequate consumption of calories, protein and/or nutrients to meet the basic physical requirements for an active and healthy life.
Food Insecurity	A condition of uncertain availability of or ability to acquire safe, nutritious food in a socially acceptable way.
Food Security	Assured access for every person to enough nutritious food to sustain an active and healthy life, including: food availability (adequate food supply); food access (people can get to food); and appropriate food use (the body's absorption of essential nutrients).

SOURCE: Bread for the World, *Hunger Report 2004*

A GOD ISSUE

Hunger is truly a God issue. It is a God issue because the Lord has provided all the resources necessary to insure that no one ever goes hungry. That is how important it is to God that no one experiences hunger. God's part of the solution to hunger has been provided in God's typical manner—abundantly.

That God has taken care of the supply side of the hunger equation means that the rest of the solution is up to humankind.

WHY IS THERE HUNGER?

If hunger is not the result of insufficient food production, then why does it exist? There actually is a simple answer to that question: hunger exists only because we human beings permit it.

Therefore, instead of asking why there is hunger, the better question is why we permit it. That is the fundamental issue we deal with in Unit 1.

UNIT 1 OUTLINE:

The two lessons of Unit 1 make the claim that hunger is a God issue. The first lesson looks at the question, "Why is there hunger?" The second asks, "What does the Lord require?"

In the first lesson, we will examine the reality of God's abundance and the reality of global hunger. These two realities lead to the conclusion that the issue of hunger is largely an issue of food distribution.

The second lesson builds on the conclusion drawn from the first. If the issue is largely food distribution, what is our responsibility as the people of God in addressing hunger? In dealing with that question, we will examine the issue of God's justice and consider the connection between worship and wealth. Finally, we will look at the blessings Jesus promised the poor and hungry in contrast to the woes he promised to the rich and well fed.



Make sure to have the class materials recommended on page 7 ready for Unit 1.



Lesson 1 WHY IS THERE HUNGER?

UNIT 1: *Hunger is A God Issue*

A Bible Study On Hunger

TEACHING LESSON ONE

OPEN WITH WORSHIP

- Begin with a few moments of silent prayer.
- Conclude with reading **Genesis 1:29-31**

INTRODUCE THE COURSE OF STUDY

- Welcome the participants in the study
- Take care of any “housekeeping” matters as appropriate—restrooms, breaks, etc.
- Explain the structure of the course.
- Outline expectations:
 - Attend every lesson.
 - Complete reading assignments
 - Bring your Bible to each session.
 - **PARTICIPATE** fully in discussions and activities.

DISCUSS THE REALITY OF HUNGER

- Ask if any class members can cite an example of hunger in the world today.
- Ask the class why there is hunger in the world. Record the answers on a large piece of newsprint, chalkboard, etc., that everyone can see. Ask for elaboration as necessary to make sure everyone understands each reason for hunger offered by class members. Responses might include such things as:
 - Weather (drought, floods, etc.)
 - Lack of good farming techniques
 - War
 - Poor education
 - Politics
 - Pollution
 - Selfishness
- When the class has listed all reasons they can think of, ask them how many of the reasons they cited for hunger are God’s fault.
 - **TEACHING NOTE:** In the case of weather and other natural causes of hunger the problem is geographically localized. In other words, when there is a drought in one area of the planet, food is produced abundantly in another.

GOD’S ABUNDANCE

- Have someone read **Genesis 1:29-31**.
 - Point out that God blessed the man and woman and then told them to be fruitful and multiply, pointing out the abundance of food provided for them and the animals. Ask what this implies for us today.
 - Discuss what it means in the context of hunger when the writer of Genesis makes the claim, that the Creation was “very good”?
- Ask: Can you think of any examples of God providing abundantly?
- Have students break into three groups to look up the following scriptures (two per group):
 - **Matthew 14:15-21** (feeding the 5,000).
 - **2 Kings 4:42-44** (feeding the 100).
 - **Exodus 16:13-18** (manna and quail).
 - **John 2:1-11** (water turned into wine).
 - **Genesis 41:47-57** (preparing for famine).
 - **Psalms 145:14-16** (God gives food).
- Ask the groups to consider these questions for each scripture:
 - What does this scripture tell us about God’s generosity?
 - How does this scripture show that it is in God’s nature to provide abundantly?
- Ask each group to share with the class what they discovered.
- Point out that God continues to give abundantly even today. The world produces 4.3 pounds of food per person per day, enough to make most people fat!

TAKE A GLOBAL HUNGER QUIZ

- Give each member of the class a copy of the Global Hunger Quiz (page 14) to complete.
- Once all have finished, use *Global Hunger Facts*, page 13, as a guide in discussing the answers.
- Point out again that God has provided abundantly to insure no one ever goes hungry. Yet still hunger persists. Ask, how can that be?



*The only reason there is
hunger in the world is
because we permit it!*

UNIT 1, Lesson 1: WHY IS THERE HUNGER?



Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, “Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.”

Deuteronomy 15:11

RECAP THE LESSON THUS FAR

- Remind the class about the reality of God’s abundance.
- Note that more than enough food is produced to feed everyone on the planet.
- Point to the reasons for hunger that the class developed.
- Ask: How do you think God feels about the existence of hunger in the world today?
- Ask: What can be done to end hunger?

THE ISSUE OF FOOD DISTRIBUTION

- By now the class should be coming to the understanding that the world does not face a food production problem. Rather, it faces a food distribution problem.
- Ask: If it is true that the hunger issue is largely an issue of food distribution, what can be done to solve the problem?
- **TEACHING NOTES:**
 - It is important not to oversimplify that food distribution is the real issue when it comes to global hunger. The truth is that there are many complexities involved in food distribution, such as war zones, shipment costs, spoilage, etc. (A class discussion on those complexities might be in order if time permits).
 - Also, when we talk about food distribution, we do not necessarily mean that it should be accomplished only through charity. While charity has an important role to play in addressing hunger, the ideal solution also involves lifting people out of poverty so they can afford to purchase food while enjoying improved quality of lives.

OFFERING

- Explain that the class will take action to help the hungry by collecting an offering at each session and giving it to the Society of St. Andrew, a ministry that serves the hungry and created this study (or to another hunger relief organization).
- Collect the offering.

CLOSING

- Have the class locate current hunger hot spots on a world map or globe. Share with the class the information you obtained on these countries.

- Ask the class to keep the hungry of the world in their prayers through the week.
- Read aloud **Deuteronomy 15:11**. Challenge the students to find a way to open their hand to the needy during the week.
- Close with prayer.

Global Hunger Facts

(ANSWERS TO THE GLOBAL HUNGER QUIZ ON PAGE 14)

1. 923 million people do not have enough to eat — more than the populations of the USA, Canada, and the European Union.
2. In essence, hunger is the most extreme form of poverty, where individuals or families cannot afford to meet their most basic need for food.
3. In the developing world, more than 1.4 billion people currently live below the international poverty line, earning less than \$1.25 per day.
4. Six million children under 5 die every year from hunger. There are 6.2 million children under 5 in France and Italy.
5. More than 60 percent of chronically hungry people are women.
6. Hunger and malnutrition claim: 10 million lives every year; 25,000 lives every day; one life every 5 seconds.
7. Hunger and malnutrition are the number-one risk to global health killing more than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.
8. Poor families spend over 70% of their income on food.
9. With a world population of 6.7 billion, the 963 million people who experience hunger represent one out of every seven members of the global human family.
10. There are 146 million underweight children under age five years .



GLOBAL HUNGER QUIZ

The Fast That I Choose

A Bible Study On Hunger

1. How many people in the world are hungry?
 1.42 billion 923 million 532 million 234 million
2. When people experience hunger, it usually means they are so poor they cannot afford their most basic needs.
 True False
3. More than ____ billion people currently live below the international poverty line, earning less than \$1.25 per day.
 1.4 2.1 3.2 3.7
4. About how many children under five die every year from hunger-related causes?
 4 million 5 million 6 million 7 million
5. What percentage of the world's chronically hungry people are women?
 40% 50% 60% 70%
6. How many lives do hunger and malnutrition claim every day?
 25,000 2,500 250 25
7. What is the number 1 risk to global health?
 HIV/AIDS hunger and malnutrition malaria tuberculosis
8. What percent of their income do poor families on average spend on food?
 40% 50% 60% 70%
9. One out of every ____ people are hungry in the world today.
 5 7 8 10
10. How many children under the age of five in the world are underweight due to malnutrition?
 106 million 126 million 136 million 1146 million

SOURCES: U.N. World Food Programme, 2009
Bread for the World, 2009
Hunger Notes, 2009



Lesson 2 What does the Lord Require?

UNIT 1: Hunger is A God Issue

A Bible Study On Hunger

TEACHING LESSON 2

OPEN WITH WORSHIP

- Begin with a few moments of silent prayer.
- Conclude with reading **Deuteronomy 15:11**.
- Collect the offering.

WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE?

- Review with the class what was learned about world hunger in the first lesson and what was learned about God's generosity.
- Point out that in the face of global hunger, today's lesson seeks to answer the question: Do we as people of faith have any responsibilities?
- Have someone read aloud **Micah 6:6-8**. Discuss:
 - What does it mean "to do justice"?
 - What is God's justice with respect to hunger? (See *To Do Justice~To Act Justly* below).
- Have someone read aloud **Deuteronomy 15:7-11**.
 - Discuss what this scripture tells us about God's expectations of God's people.
 - **TEACHING NOTES:**
 - ◇ The "seventh year" refers to **Deuteronomy 15:1-2**.
 - ◇ While this passage specifically refers to members "of your community", the point to focus on is God's expectation that the needs of the poor be met. The following scripture reinforces that point and specifically includes "the alien".
- Have someone read aloud **Deuteronomy 24:19-22** and another read **Leviticus 19:9-10**.
 - Have students form into groups and use a Bible Dictionary to determine who "the alien, the orphan, and the widow" the scripture refers to were. Then discuss:
 - ◇ How do these scriptures support the idea of God's abundance?
 - ◇ Who might "the alien, the orphan, and the widow" be today?
 - ◇ Does the "law of gleaning" have any application today?
 - Discuss how the "law of gleaning" actually conferred a right to the poor and needy because the land and what it produced ultimately belonged to God.

WORSHIP AND WEALTH

- Ask the class to think for a moment about the abundance that God showers on each of them individually every day.
- Ask them to consider the abundance of possessions they have. Point out that by the world's standards, most Americans are extraordinarily wealthy.
- Note that the question facing us is whether those who are wealthy have an obligation to those who are not.
- Say: "Our key verse points out that there will always be some in need on the earth. Jesus made the same point in **John 12:2-8**."
- Have someone read **John 12:2-8**.
 - Ask: Is this scripture ever used as an excuse to NOT help the poor? Why?
 - Read *The Poor With Us*, on the next page, then discuss the points made in the article.
 - Point out that Jesus spent his ministry largely among the poor. The poor truly were WITH Jesus and his disciples. Then ask, are the poor WITH us in the church today? If not, why not?

To Do Justice ~ To Act Justly

Depending on the translation, Micah 6:8 might be rendered in English either "to do justice" or "to act justly". The prophets of the Old Testament saw justice in the broadest sense. To them it referred to one's ethical response to other people. To do justice or to act justly essentially means, "to do the right thing."

In every society some have an easier life than others, and some are disadvantaged. In ancient Israel the disadvantaged included widows, orphans, resident foreigners, and most especially the poor. The "justice" referred to by Micah and the other prophets was less a case of keeping the rules than of assisting and protecting disadvantaged people.

With respect to hunger in a world of abundance, "to do the right thing" means simply making sure that the hungry are fed.

UNIT 1, Lesson 2: WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE?

The Poor With Us

When it comes to helping those in need, all too often Christians point out that Jesus said, “You will always have the poor with you.” Usually when people quote that scripture, what they are really trying to say is that since hunger and poverty are insurmountable problems, there is nothing we can do about them. They are saying that we might as well not even try since we will always have the poor with us.

But that is not what Jesus meant. After all, God commanded the people to help the poor BECAUSE there would always be those in need (Deuteronomy 15:11).

The truth is that the anointing of Jesus’ feet with costly oil raises the issue of how our material wealth enters into worship. What Mary did — washing Jesus’ feet with expensive oil and wiping them with her hair — was nothing less than a remarkable act of devout worship. Mary was expressing her love and adoration for Jesus in a very profound way.

When Judas asked why the costly oil wasn’t sold and the money given to the poor, he raised a valid point. But Jesus answered Judas’ question by saying, “Leave her alone. You will always have the poor with you, but you won’t always have me.”

What Jesus meant when he said that was this: “Let Mary use her wealth to worship me in this way now... you can always use your wealth to worship me after I am gone. And you can do that, you can show your love for me after I am physically gone, by helping the poor.”

BLESSINGS AND WOES

- After pointing out that Jesus had a lot to say about the poor and the wealthy, have someone read **Luke 6:20-31**.
- In small groups, discuss:
 - Which specific conditions lead to blessings and which lead to woes? Why?
 - Jesus promises future blessings for those who suffer now, and future woes to those who thrive in the midst of suffering. When will these promises be fulfilled?
 - Jesus concludes the beatitudes with a call to action. How do we live out these commands of Jesus in our lives today?
 - Do these words of Jesus have any warnings for us?

WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE I?

- Remind the class of the key verse, **Deuteronomy 15:11**.
- Discuss what responsibilities we have as Christians to feed the hungry.
 - **TEACHING NOTE:** Remember that the issue here is not “how” to feed the hungry. Instead, the issue is whether Christians have a responsibility to give food to those in need. Try to keep the students focused on that topic.
- Point out that the class has only touched on a few Bible passages related to hunger and justice.
- Give each student a copy of page 17 for their further study.

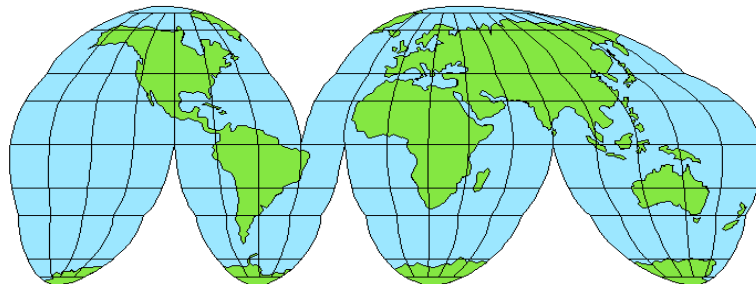
CLOSING

- Remind the class of the world’s hunger hot spots.
- Ask the class to keep the hungry of the world in their prayers through the week.
- Read **Deuteronomy 15:11**.
- Close with prayer.



Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, “Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.”

Deuteronomy 15:11





**Selected Bible
Passages Related to
Hunger and Justice**

***The Fast That
I Choose***

A Bible Study On Hunger

Genesis 1:29-30	God gives the world's food	Matt. 6:25-34	Seek first the kingdom of God and righteousness
Exodus 3:7-12	Moses asked to go to Pharaoh	Matthew 14:14-21	Feeding the multitude (also Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, and John 6:1-14)
Exodus 16:1-12	The manna lifestyle—economics of enough	Matt. 23:23	You have neglected justice, mercy and faith
Leviticus 19:9-11	The law of gleaning—leave food for the poor	Matt. 25:31-46	I was hungry and you gave me food
Deut. 10:17-19	God executes justice	Mark 8:1-9	Feeding the 4,000
Deut. 14:28-15:11	The law of tithe helps the poor	Luke 1:46-55	Mary's <i>magnificat</i> —He has filled the hungry with good things
2 Kings 4:42-44	Feeding the 100	Luke 6:20-26	Blessed are you who are poor
Psalms 72:1-14	How to pray for a just government	Luke 10:25-37	The story of the good Samaritan
Psalms 82	Justice to the weak and destitute	Luke 12:15	Watch out for all kinds of greed
Psalms 140:12-13	God maintains the cause of the needy	Luke 12:35-48	To whom much is given, much is required
Psalms 146:5-9	God is just and feeds the hungry	Luke 14:12-14	Invite the poor to your dinner
Proverbs 14:20-21	Happy are those who are kind to the poor	Luke 16: 19-31	The story of the rich man and Lazarus
Proverbs 19:17	Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord	Luke 18:18-30	Give to the poor
Proverbs 21:13	Listen to the cry of the poor	Luke 19:1-10	Zacchaeus' radical generosity
Isaiah 1:16-18	Seek justice – correct oppression	John 13:1-20	Jesus washing disciples' feet
Isaiah 3:13-15	Why do you grind the face of the poor?	Acts 2:42-47	Sharing in the early church
Isaiah 5:1-7	I expected justice but found bloodshed	Acts 6:1-7	Dispute over the distribution of food
Isaiah 10:1-4	God's anger at unjust government	1 Cor. 11:17-34	Selfishness in the Christian community
Isaiah 58:1-12	The fast that I choose	1 Cor. 16:1-2	Put aside for the needy each Sunday
Jeremiah 22:13-16	To do justice is to know the Lord	2 Cor. 8:12-15	A balance between need and abundance
Lamentations 4:9	It is better to die by the sword than by hunger	2 Cor. 9:6-15	God loves a cheerful giver
Ezekiel 16:49	Sodom was guilty of neglect of the poor	Galatians 2:10	Remember the poor
Ezekiel 34:16-22	God will judge between the fat and lean sheep	1 Tim. 6:17-19	The wealthy are to be generous
Amos 5:10-24	Let justice roll down like waters	James 2:1-7	God's bias toward the poor
Amos 8:4-7	God will not forget those who trample on the needy	James 2:14-17	Faith without works is dead
Micah 6:8	Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly	1 John 3:17-18	Love in truth and action, not just word
		1 John 4:19-21	Loving God means loving neighbor