



**UNIT 2:
HUNGER IS A
GLOBAL ISSUE**

*The Fast That
I Choose*

A Bible Study On Hunger

A VICIOUS CYCLE

Today nearly 17% of the developing world's people are undernourished. In some areas of the world more than one-third of the people are chronically hungry. And even though the percentage of people experiencing hunger globally has declined since 1992, the number of hungry people in the world has actually increased because of population growth.¹ For the most part, these people simply do not earn enough to provide for their basic food needs.

While it is clear that poverty causes hunger, it is also important to understand that hunger causes poverty. In fact, hunger and poverty actually feed off each other.

It is often said that the most abundant asset of the poor is their labor. However, people who are undernourished are unable to work to their full potential. At the same time, studies have shown that one of the surest ways to relieve poverty is through education. However, hungry, listless people do not learn as easily as the well-fed. Also, the hungry must invest almost all their time in activities that earn their daily bread and so usually cannot even attend education programs.²

Hungry children usually grow into hungry adults. That is because a person's work capacity is affected by his or her entire nutritional history. How an adult thinks and reacts to situations is seriously affected by their undernutrition as a child.³

The harsh realities of hunger mean that the impoverished often find themselves in a vicious cycle of hunger-poverty-hunger. And so hunger must be the first hurdle people cross on their way out of poverty.⁴

ONE HUMAN FAMILY

When facing the twin issues of global hunger and poverty, the Christian must recognize that all of humanity actually comprises a single human family. Some might resist this worldview. After all, they could argue, the Old Testament provisions for caring for the poor applied only to those living within the geographic boundaries of ancient Israel.

On top of that, they could point out that the concern of the early Christian community in tending to peoples' physical well-being seemed to focus only on taking care of the needs of their fellow Christians (Acts 6:1-6, for example. See also 1 Corinthians 16:1-4). These examples might make it hard for some to consider all of humankind as a single global family or for them to see any obligation to help the needy beyond those who are Christian or who are in the U.S.

While there is some truth to such a parochial perspective of "family" in the Bible, the idea of a single global family to which all humans belong is also rooted strongly in scripture. In fact, the theological concept of a single human family begins with the biblical account of the Creation. The Bible teaches that all human beings descend from a common ancestry, Adam and Eve. It follows that because of our common ancestry all human beings are related to one another, however distantly.

On top of that, we need to turn to what Jesus taught. It is true that Old Testament law applied only to those living within Israel. The supreme law that God established to regulate behavior between people in ancient Israel was "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18). Here, and generally in the Old Testament, "neighbor" means a fellow citizen of Israel.⁵

In the New Testament, however, the limitation of moral obligation to just one's fellow citizens is abolished. For instance, in the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus gave broad interpretation of "neighbor". He used the term to include those outside the ties of nation, even those whose nationality was despised (Luke 10:25-37).

Proportion of population living below \$1 a day, 1997 and 2007⁷

REGION	1997	2007
Sub-Saharan Africa	55.5	51.4
Southern Asia	51.5	31.5
Oceania	22.9	21.6
South-Eastern Asia	24.1	13.3
Eastern Asia	18.8	8.7
Latin America & the Caribbean	11.6	8.0
Asia	11.0	5.8
Western Asia	2.9	5.4

UNIT 2: HUNGER IS A GLOBAL ISSUE

PURPOSE OF THIS UNIT:

- TO SEE THAT WE ARE PART OF A SINGLE GLOBAL HUMAN FAMILY.
- TO RECOGNIZE THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF LIFE ON EARTH.
- TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO ASSIST “FAMILY” MEMBERS.



Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.

Acts 17:29

In the final analysis, Jesus showed that the relationship to one’s “neighbor” is a moral one rather than a physical one. In fact, Jesus’ teachings made “neighbor” equivalent to “family member.” Clearly, in Jesus’ eyes all of humankind comprises a single family that is loved by God.⁶

This view of all humans being in the same family culminates in Acts 17:16-33 where the Apostle Paul addresses the Greeks in Athens. Paul drew on pagan Greek poets to establish a point of contact, and then went on to proclaim God’s truth, beginning with the point that we all are God’s children.

THY WILL BE DONE

It was Catholic scholars who coined the phrase “God’s preferential option for the poor”. They used this term to describe a phenomenon found throughout both the Old and New Testaments: God’s partiality toward the poor and the disadvantaged. The list of verses on page 17 is just a small sampling that demonstrates the pervasiveness of this biblical theme.

And so we must recognize that the Bible makes clear that God’s intention is for no one on earth to ever go hungry. That is the will of God. Just one example is found in Isaiah’s prophetic vision:

In Jerusalem, the LORD Almighty will spread a wonderful feast for everyone around the world. It will be a delicious feast of good food, with clear, well-aged wine and choice beef. Isaiah 25:6(NLT)

As followers of Christ, when we pray, “Thy will be done,” we are praying for the day that hunger comes to an end.

UNIT 2 OUTLINE:

The two lessons of Unit 2 highlight the reality that hunger is a global issue. The first lesson looks at the question, “Who are my brothers and sisters?” The second asks, “Am I my brothers’ and sisters’ keeper?”

In the first lesson, we will examine the theological foundations that support the idea of humankind being a single family. We will also look at what obligations we have as members of the human family.

The second lesson begins with a look at whether we have an obligation to others and then examines two contrasting lifestyles in the human family. It concludes by asking about the responsibility of the rich toward other members of the human family.



Make sure to have the class materials recommended on page 7 ready for Unit 2.

A Traditional Jewish Story

A rich but miserable man once visited a rabbi seeking understanding of his life and how he might find peace. The rabbi led the man to a window and said, “What do you see?”

“I see men, women, and children,” answered the rich man.

The rabbi then took the man and stood him in front of a mirror. “Now what do you see?” he asked. “I see myself,” the rich man replied.

“Yes,” said the rabbi. “It is a strange thing, is it not? In the window there is a glass and in the mirror there is a glass. But the glass of the mirror is covered with a little silver, and no sooner is the silver added than you cease to see others, and see only yourself.”



Lesson 1 WHO ARE MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

UNIT 2: Hunger is A Global Issue

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TEACHING LESSON ONE

OPEN WITH WORSHIP

- Begin with a few moments of silent prayer.
- Conclude with reading **Genesis 5:1-2**.
- Collect the offering.

INTRODUCTION

- Begin the lesson by asking the class if any feel a sense of obligation toward their family members if they have a genuine need. Give some specific examples such as the ones below and discuss what those obligations might be.
 - Lost job, needs money to eat
 - Bad credit, needs co-signer for a car loan
 - Unmarried and pregnant, needs help with medical costs
 - Homeless, needs a place to stay
 - Drug addict, asks for money
- Tell the class that today's lesson seeks to answer from a biblical perspective the question: Who are my family members?

THE OLD TESTAMENT VIEW OF FAMILY

- Have someone read aloud **Leviticus 25:35-38**. Discuss the following, with the class using a Bible Dictionary as necessary to look up the terms:
 - In this passage, who are one's "kin"?
 - To whom does the term "resident alien" refer? (A foreigner living in Israel.)
- Ask: Why are a person's relatives who fall into difficulty to be treated as resident aliens?
 - Discuss whether it is a "good thing" or a "bad thing" to be treated as a resident alien.
 - You may want to discuss how we generally treat resident aliens in our society.
- Ask: In ancient Israel, how were resident aliens to be treated?
- Have someone read aloud **Leviticus 19:33-34**.
 - Point out that here God says that the Israelites should love the resident aliens as they love themselves.
- Have someone read aloud **Leviticus 19:18**.
 - Point out that here God says that the Israelites should love their neighbors as they love themselves.

- Ask to whom the term 'neighbor' refers.
 - ◇ **TEACHING NOTE:** The first part of the verse contains the answer. It refers to "your people", which means fellow citizens. "Neighbor" in this passage therefore refers to one's fellow citizens.
- Have someone look up "neighbor" in a Bible Dictionary and read the definition as it applies in the Old Testament.



Everyone in Israel was to be treated the same and the basic human needs of the poor were to be met by those who were able to help them.

- **Sum up:** The Old Testament Law referred to three types of people: Resident aliens, fellow citizens, and relatives. The Law required Israelites to love the resident aliens as themselves. It also required them to love their fellow citizens as themselves. And finally, it required them to treat their needy relatives as if they were resident aliens.
- Note that by making these connections between neighbor, citizen, alien, and family member, one can conclude that all people within the boundaries of Israel were, in God's eyes, members of a single family. Further, with family membership came certain obligations, including the obligation to help those in the "family" who were less fortunate.

THE NEW TESTAMENT VIEW

- Point out that Jesus challenged much of the thinking of his time, and that he continues to challenge us even today.
- Introduce the story of the Good Samaritan by explaining that Jesus was once asked the very question we have just been dealing with, "Who is my neighbor?"
- Assign roles to members of the class:
 - Narrator (reads everything but the lines of the other "cast" members).

UNIT 2, Lesson 1: WHO ARE MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS?



Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.

Acts 17:29

- Jesus
- The lawyer
- The robbers
- The Levite
- The Samaritan
- The priest
- Have the class act out the parable of the Good Samaritan, **Luke 10:25-37**.
- After acting out the scripture, have the class discuss the lessons of the parable. Try to address these issues:
 - Where does the lawyer's answer to Jesus' question about the law come from? (**Deuteronomy 6:4-5** and **Leviticus 19:18**.)
 - What do you think it means when the scripture says the lawyer wanted to "justify himself" in asking "Who is my neighbor"?
 - How did Samaritans feel about Jews and vice-versa?
 - According to the scripture, who was the neighbor?
 - Why was he a neighbor?
- Have students break into small groups to look up each of the following scriptures:
 - **Matthew 12:47-50**
 - **Matthew 7:3-5**
 - **1 John 4:19-21**
 - **Ephesians 3:14-15**
 - **Acts 17:22-29**
- Consider these questions for each scripture:
 - What does this scripture tell us about God's view of neighbor or "brother and sister"?
 - How does this scripture show that all humans comprise a single family?
- Have someone read aloud **Matthew 22:36-40**
 - **TEACHING POINTS:**
 - ◇ In the Old Testament, being a neighbor was based on kinship or national ties. By contrast, Jesus taught that the relationship is instead a moral one.



- ◇ Christ and the apostles gave the names "brother and sister" to all Christians, and "neighbor" to all the world.
- ◇ The connections between neighbor, citizen, alien, and family member in the Old Testament remain valid, which means in God's eyes all people are members of a single global human family.

FAMILY OBLIGATIONS

- Remind the class about the earlier discussion of family obligations. Ask: According to the Bible, what kind of obligations do we have toward our fellow human beings? Record the answers where all can see.
- Have someone read aloud **Luke 14:12-14**. Discuss what this scripture tell us about our obligation to others.
- Have someone read **Matthew 23:23**. Ask if this verse tells us anything about our obligation to do justice and extend mercy.
 - You may want to review with the class the last lesson's discussion of justice.
- Ask the class to read along in their Bibles as you read aloud **Matthew 25:31-46**. Make the point that this scriptures indicates that how we treat the poor and hungry reveals how we truly feel about Jesus.



How we treat the poor and hungry reveals how we really feel about Jesus.

- Point out that roughly 20% of the global human family in developing areas lives on less than one dollar per day. Many of these people live in such abject poverty that they cannot buy enough food to live healthy lives. Then ask if we have any obligation to these people. Let the class respond.

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 aloud **Acts 17:29**. Underscore the point that Paul says we are all God's offspring.
- Read aloud *Growing Good Corn* (see following page).
- Close with prayer.

Growing Good Corn



There was a Nebraska farmer who grew award-winning corn. Each year he entered his corn in the state fair where it won a blue ribbon.

One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors.

"How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?" the reporter asked.

"Why sir," said the farmer, "didn't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn."

He is very much aware of the connectedness of life. His corn cannot improve unless his neighbor's corn also improves.

So it is in other dimensions. Those who choose to be at peace must help their neighbors to be at peace. Those who choose to live well must help others to live well, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. And those who choose to be happy must help others to find happiness for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all.

The lesson for each of us is this: if we are to grow good corn, we must help our neighbors grow good corn.

Author Unknown



Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.

Acts 17:29



Lesson 2
AM I MY
BROTHERS' AND
SISTERS' KEEPER?

UNIT 2: Hunger is
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TEACHING LESSON TWO

OPEN WITH WORSHIP

- Begin with a prayer.
- Conclude with reading **Genesis 4:8-10**.
- Collect the offering.

INTRODUCTION

- Remind the class that in the previous lesson we explored the theological foundations for looking at all people as belonging to a single human family.
- Point out that we also looked briefly at the question of “family obligations” in the context of global hunger.
- Tell the class that today we will examine the issue of family obligations more thoroughly.

FAMILY MATTERS

- Have the class refer to **Genesis 4:8-10**. Ask: When God asked Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” what did he mean?
 - **TEACHING NOTE:** God was not seeking Abel’s location since verse 10 shows that God knew Abel was dead. God was actually asking Cain to account for his treatment of his brother.
- Discuss Cain’s reply to God’s question using this guide:
 - Note the word “keeper”. Ask the class to define the word. Have someone look it up in a Bible Dictionary.
 - In this context, keeper is understood to mean one who “guards, protects, or attends to.”
 - Point out that Cain’s reply was designed to deflect responsibility from himself.
- Discuss God’s answer to Cain’s question.
 - Point out that God’s reaction certainly suggests he expected Cain to guard, protect, or attend to his brother. Cain, in God’s eyes, was his brother’s keeper indeed.
- Have someone read aloud **1 John 3:11-18**. Note how this says that if we do not treat our brothers and sisters properly, then we become like Cain.

CONTRASTING LIFESTYLES

- Have someone read aloud **Luke 16:19-31**.
- Divide the class into two groups. Have one group list the lifestyle attributes of the rich man and the other list the lifestyle attributes of Lazarus. Have each group consider at least:
 - Clothing
 - Shelter
 - Food
 - Health
- Have each group share its list. Record the information in two columns on a chalkboard, white board, or on newsprint that all can see.
- Discuss what happened to the rich man and Lazarus when they died.
- Ask the class what sin the rich man committed that led to him going to Hades. Allow the class to discuss.
 - **TEACHING POINTS:**
 - ◇ Refer to *The Rich Man’s Sin* at the top of page 24.
 - ◇ There are several other theological points that can be taken from this scripture. However, try to keep the discussion centered on the issue of the rich man’s responsibility to Lazarus and his failure to meet it.
 - ◇ Make the point that the rich man was his brother’s (Lazarus’) keeper and that he failed in that responsibility.



Indifference is a sin! Jesus calls us to a discipleship where we seize every opportunity to be an instrument of God’s grace.

AN ACCIDENT OF BIRTH

- Point out that in large measure in the world today, living in poverty is a consequence of where a person is born. Acknowledge that there are exceptions.
- Note that in the world today, those who live on less than one dollar per day live in abject poverty and

UNIT 2, Lesson 2: AM I MY BROTHERS' AND SISTERS' KEEPER?

The Rich Man's Sin

From the scripture we learn that Lazarus lay powerless and helpless at the gate of the rich man. In fact, Lazarus lay at the precise location where every time the rich man left his home or returned, he would pass by him. But the rich man not only passed by Lazarus. He also passed him by. We can infer that in the rich man's eyes Lazarus became simply part of the landscape.

The rich indolent man had no concern for others. He got all he could and kept it all to himself. Every single day the rich man had the opportunity to minister to Lazarus. But he did not do anything to help the poor beggar. The rich man would not even give Lazarus the scraps from his table.

So the rich man's sin was his indifference. He turned his back on every opportunity to become an instrument of God's grace to those in need. And in the end the rich man suffered the consequences of his daily indifference.

face malnourishment every day.

- On a chalkboard, white board, or on newsprint, recreate the table shown at the bottom of page 18.
- Ask: From this table, on which continent is a child most likely to experience hunger? Least likely? Why?
- Ask: Who gets to choose where they are born?

CONTRAST TWO LIFESTYLES

- Hand out copies of *Contrasting Lifestyles*, page 25.
- Have the class locate each of the countries listed on a world map or globe. Point out that one country has been selected for each continent.
- Note especially the differences in the infant death rates and life expectancies between the countries.
 - Ask the class if they can account for the differences. Record their answers on a chalkboard, white board, or on newsprint.
 - **TEACHING POINT:** Two of the major factors that affect infant mortality rates and life expectancy are access to good health care and a healthy diet.
- Ask each class member to complete the section of *Contrasting Lifestyles* that says "My Lifestyle."
 - **Food:** What kind of food do you eat? How many meals per day? Any snacks?
 - **Shelter:** What kind of house do you live in? How many bedrooms? What kind of heating system? Do you have air conditioning?
 - **Water:** What kind of water do you drink? Where do you get it? Do you use bottled water or a filter?
 - **Health Care:** Do you have health insurance? When was the last time a member of your family saw a doctor? Do you have a dentist? An optometrist? How often do you go?
 - **Transportation:** What kind of car do you have? How new is it? Do you ever travel by air or rail?

➤ **Education:** What is the highest grade you completed? Has anyone in your family gone to pre-school? How many in your family can read and write?

- After everyone has finished "My Lifestyle" ask the class to record the same kind of information for the "Typical Lifestyle in ____" as you read the article on page 26, *Life in Somalia*.
- Ask the class to discuss the difference between their lifestyle and the typical lifestyle in Somalia.
- Point out that from a global perspective, Somalia is very much like Lazarus and the United States is like the rich man.
- Ask: Do we Americans have any obligation to the people of Somalia?

RULES FOR THE RICH

- Have someone read aloud **1 Timothy 6:17-19**.
- Note that in contrast to almost the entire world, Americans can only be described as "rich."
- Discuss the obligations and the blessings that come with being rich.

CLOSING

- Read aloud the key verse, **Acts 17:29**. Highlight the teaching that we are all God's offspring.
- Remind the class that Somalia is just one of the world's many impoverished nations. Ask the class to keep the world's hungry and especially Somalia's hungry in their prayers through the week.
- Read aloud *A Traditional Jewish Story*, page 19)
- Close with prayer.





CONTRASTING LIFESTYLES

The Fast That I Choose

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Source: CIA Fact Book 2008	Somalia		Cambodia		Guyana		Tuvalu		France		United States	
	Africa	Asia	South America	Oceania	Europe	North America						
Continent	9,832,017	14,494,293	772,298	12,373	64,057,792	307,212,123						
Population	109.19	54.79	26.65	18.43	3.33	6.26						
Infant Death Rate*	49.63 years	62.1 years	66.68 years	69.29 years	80.98 years	78.11 years						
Life Expectancy	\$7.756 billion	\$29.24 billion	\$3.082 billion	\$14.94 million	\$2.097 trillion	\$14.58 trillion						
GDP	\$600	\$2,100	\$4,000	\$1,600	\$32,700	\$48,000						
Per Capita GDP												

*deaths/1,000 live births

The Typical Lifestyle in _____:	My Lifestyle:
Food:	Food:
Shelter:	Shelter:
Water:	Water:
Health Care:	Health Care:
Transportation:	Transportation:
Education:	Education:

UNIT 2, Lesson 2: AM I MY BROTHERS' AND SISTERS' KEEPER?

Life in Somalia

Background:

Somalia is a dry, sparsely populated country that has been in a state of civil war and anarchy since 1991, when the central government was overthrown. Overgrazing, deforestation, and periodic drought have led to severe soil degradation in Somalia, rendering much of the land unsuitable for agriculture.

About 70 percent of Somalis are nomadic or semi-nomadic people who depend upon livestock for their livelihood. The remainder are either crop farmers or inhabitants of the few urban centers. A typical home for the herder is a collapsible shelter built of wood and animal skins, with grass mats on the floor. Farmers usually live in villages of one-room, thatched mud huts. A house with a metal roof is a sign of prosperity. In the few cities, Somalis may have larger homes with Arab- or Western-style furnishings.

Staple foods in urban areas consist of locally produced meats and imported rice. In farming areas, sorghum, millet, maize, and sesame are common staples. Among the nomads, milk from camels and goats is the main food available, supplemented with grains bought with money from the sale of animals.

Hospital and clinic services are free in Somalia. However, the long civil wars have largely exhausted medical resources and primary health care is an urgent need in the countryside.

Less than 10 percent of school-aged children are enrolled in school in Somalia. About 38% of the population can read and write.

Current Situation:

Somalia remains one of the most dangerous places in the world, and a country with massive humanitarian needs – not least for food assistance. As a result of conflict and displacement, drought and hyperinflation, the number of Somalis in need of humanitarian assistance in August 2008 rose 3.25 million – a 77 percent increase over those needing assistance at the beginning of that year. The United Nations reported the level of human suffering in Somalia was shocking, with one in six children under the age of five acutely malnourished, and the numbers rising.

Over ninety percent of all emergency food for Somalia is delivered by sea. However, because of piracy in Somali waters, shippers are nervous of delivering into Somalia, and frequently refuse to do so.

Somalia is a least developed, low-income, food-deficit country. Acute malnutrition rates are very high, with rates above 20 percent in some areas such as Juba Valley and the Gedo, Bakol and Bay regions of the south. The situation in this region is aggravated by civil strife, insecurity and poor rains, while areas along the Juba River suffer from floods. Somalia has some of the world's worst health indicators. Life expectancy at birth is 46.2 years. A quarter of children die before they reach five.

Sources:

"Somalia," Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2008. <http://encarta.msn.com> © 1997-2008 Microsoft Corporation. All Rights Reserved.

"Somalia," The World Factbook, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. 2008. (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>)

"U.N. World Food Programme Country Profile: Somalia. January 2009. (<http://www.wfp.org/countries/somalia>)

