



UNIT 6: HUNGER IS MY ISSUE

The Fast That I Choose

A Bible Study On Hunger

GOD'S WILL

As we approach the end of this study we turn to look at what we as individuals can do about hunger in our world. This is possibly the most difficult unit of study because it challenges us to respond individually to the reality of hunger in light of our faith.

Throughout this study we have noted that it is God's desire that no one ever goes hungry. We have pointed out how God has given the world all the resources necessary to bring that desire into reality. And we have also shown that despite God's abundance, the world community has consistently failed to achieve a hunger-free world. Even progress toward that end is often stymied.

The result is that hunger remains an enormous problem across the globe. Hundreds of millions of people across the planet suffer daily from the consequences of grinding poverty and malnutrition. Even in the United States there are millions who experience hunger. So enormous is the hunger problem that it can seem to be as overwhelming as it appears to be intractable. Even so, it remains God's will that hunger come to an end.

LOVING GOD AND NEIGHBOR

When faced with a seemingly insurmountable problem, it is easy to simply give up. Yet that is exactly the wrong response for a Christian when it comes to the twin problems of hunger and poverty. It is the wrong response because a Christian should not be concerned about being successful in tackling such issues. Instead a Christian should be concerned only with being faithful in carrying out God's will.

The two great commandments Christians are called to obey are found in Matthew 22:34-40. First, we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind.



Our love for God actually is an answering love; it is in response to God's unfailing love for us. And our response should be to love God totally, with everything in us... with our intellect, with our emotions, with our every heart beat, with our every breath, with our every decision, with our every action, with our every thought.

Secondly, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. This love for others is closely tied to our love for God. In fact, it is so closely tied that our love for others actually springs out of our love for God. If our love for God is genuine, then we cannot help but love all others unconditionally. And this love for others, if genuine, will translate into action to improve their lives.

It is important to understand that as Christian individuals, we probably are not being called by God to end world hunger—or even hunger in America. That is because seldom are we called to achieve an end result. Instead, we are called simply to be faithful. In the case of hunger we are called to be a visible manifestation of God's love for the hungry and the impoverished. What precisely does that mean? It means we are to be engaged in doing something about hunger.

James makes the compelling case that there is a connection between our faith and our works. *If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?* (James 2:15-16). Since our faith rests on the principle of loving God and loving neighbor, our faith must result in some good being accomplished for our neighbor in God's name.

WORDS AND ACTION

There is much truth in the old saying, "Easier said than done." Often we see a huge gap between one's words and actions. For instance, the world's nations have agreed that the 22 richest nations would provide 0.7 percent of their gross national product for development assistance designed to lift the poorest nations out of poverty and to alleviate hunger amongst their populations.¹

By 2008 the only countries that have done met the 0.7 percent target are Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. Most of the aid donors hovered around 0.45 percent. The United States traditionally devotes a relatively small (0.15 percent) share of its GDP to foreign aid.²

UNIT 6: HUNGER IS MY ISSUE

PURPOSE OF THIS UNIT:

- TO RECOGNIZE THAT EVERYONE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT HUNGER.
- TO UNDERSTAND THAT ENDING HUNGER BEGINS WITH PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT.
- TO BECOME AWARE OF THE VARIETY OF WAYS AN INDIVIDUAL CAN ADDRESS HUNGER ISSUES.



What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you?

James 2:14

In contrast, authentic Christian discipleship does not permit a gap between our words and our actions. As people motivated by love for God and neighbor, the words at 1 John 3:16-18 must guide us:

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Jesus identified himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the prisoner, and so on when he said they were “members of my family” or “brothers of mine” (Matthew 25:34-40). Since we are called by our faith to be like Jesus, we too should identify with them (1 John 2:6).

With that in mind, it is no stretch to make the claim that every Christian is called by Jesus to do something about hunger. While it is true that not every Christian is called by Christ to do the same thing, each is called to do something. As Mother Theresa once said, “If you can’t feed one hundred people, feed just one.”

There are a variety of ways for Christians to become involved in anti-hunger efforts, many of which are covered in the lessons of this unit. Among these many ways are five that practically every Christian can do: (1) pray, (2) become aware, (3) contribute financially to a hunger relief ministry, (4) volunteer your time to help feed the hungry, (5) lobby our government about hunger issues.

First on the list is praying. Including the hungry and impoverished as well as those who minister to them in our prayers is very important. However, our involvement in addressing the hunger problem should not end with prayer. There is a lesson for us in the account of the Israelites fleeing Egypt as Pharaoh's army bore down on them, God told Moses to stop praying and get moving! (Exodus 14:5-18)

While it is certainly true that praying should have a vital place in our lives, there is also a time for action. Sometimes we know what to do, but we pray for

more guidance as an excuse to postpone doing it. When it comes to hunger, as a consequence of this study we know what we should do. For us, it is now time to take action.

A COMMITMENT

1 John 2:6 points out that “whoever says, ‘I abide in him,’ ought to walk just as he walked.” That is why when we think about making a commitment to action about hunger, it is helpful to look at Jesus’ ministry for guidance.

While the Gospels record that Jesus withdrew frequently to pray and to have time alone with God, they also make clear that Jesus was a man of action.

The accounts of Jesus’ ministry teach us that he was constantly engaged in meeting people’s needs. He healed, he taught, and he challenged the norms of the day. If we are to “walk as Jesus walked” then we, too, need to be involved in meeting human needs and challenging the norms of our day. These last two lessons will guide us in looking at specific ways we can address hunger as disciples of Jesus Christ.

UNIT 6 OUTLINE:

The two lessons of Unit 6 turn our attention to the idea of hunger as a personal issue. The first lesson seeks to answer the question, “What can just one person do?” The second lesson invites the students to say when it comes to working to eradicate hunger, “Here am I, Lord!”

In the first lesson, we will consider the ways that Jesus met people in their need. We then will discuss the variety of ways we as individuals can fight hunger.

The second lesson examines what the Bible says about committing oneself to following Jesus. We conclude by asking each student to make a personal commitment to serve God by in some concrete way serving the hungry.



Make sure to have the class materials recommended on page 8 ready for Unit 6.



Lesson 1
WHAT CAN JUST
ONE PERSON DO?

UNIT 6: Hunger is
My Issue

A Bible Study On Hunger

TEACHING LESSON ONE

OPEN WITH WORSHIP

- Tell the class that this lesson begins the last unit of this study. The focus of this lesson is on hunger as a personal issue.
- Read aloud **James 2:14**.
- Say a prayer.
- Collect the offering.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

- Ask the class to define “love” from a Christian perspective. Record the responses on a chalkboard, white board, or newsprint.
- Have someone look up “Love” (or *Agape*) in a Bible Dictionary. Ask him or her to explain “Agape love” as defined in the dictionary.
- Compare the dictionary’s definition to that which the class came up with and discuss the differences and similarities.
- Have the class turn to **Colossian 3:12-17** and have them follow along as you read the text.
 - Ask the students to identify in this scripture the marks of Christian living.
 - Point out that Paul reminds us that as Christians we represent Jesus at all times.
 - Discuss:
 - ◇ What impressions do people have of Christ when they see or talk to you?
 - ◇ What happens to us when we “clothe ourselves with love?”
 - ◇ What happens to others when we do so?.
- Ask the class to turn to **John 14:12** and have someone read it aloud.
 - Discuss what it means to do the works that Jesus did.
 - Then discuss what it means to do greater works than Jesus did.
 - **TEACHING NOTE:** Don’t get bogged down by focusing on miracles like Jesus turning water into wine, or even turning five loaves and two fish into enough to feed 5,000. In other words, don’t focus on the means. Instead, focus on the results of what Jesus did. For instance Jesus fed 5,000. A single Christian ministry today can feed millions. Jesus healed a dozen lepers. Christian

sponsored vaccination and health programs can prevent leprosy for thousands.

- Ask: If we are to live the Christian life, how should we respond to the issue of hunger? Let the class respond.

KEEPING THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

- Remind the students that as we have talked about hunger in the world and the U.S., it can look like an insurmountable problem.
- Ask the class to find where it says in the Bible that Christians are to solve the hunger problem. Allow students to use concordances and other Bible study resources to find applicable scriptures.
 - **TEACHING NOTE:** There are no such scriptures. And that is the point. Christians are not called to solve problems like world hunger. However, we are called to feed the hungry and to work toward achieving God’s justice for the poor. In other words, we are not called to be successful but we are called to be faithful.
- Read the two quotes from Mother Theresa in the box below without saying who made them. Ask the students to guess who you quoted. Congratulate any who guessed correctly.
- Ask if Mother Theresa’s perspective is one we should adopt since it focuses on what we can do rather than on the immensity of the problem we face.

WHAT CAN JUST ONE PERSON DO?

- Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of these scriptures:
 - **1 John 14-15**
 - **Mark 11:22-24**
 - **Matthew 7:7-11**
- Ask each group to determine from their assigned scripture one thing that all Christians can do about hunger.

“I never take care of crowds, only of one person. If I stop to look at crowds, I would never begin.”

“If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one.”

— Mother Theresa

UNIT 6, Lesson 1: WHAT CAN JUST ONE PERSON DO?



What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you?

James 2:14

- Note: Each of these scriptures deals with prayer.
- Discuss who we should be in prayer for when it comes to the issue of world hunger or hunger in the U.S.
- Assign each group one of the following scriptures and repeat the process described above. These scriptures deal with hands-on ministry (good works) to those in need. Discuss what kinds of good works the students can do for the hungry and poor.
 - **Titus 3:14** ➤ **Matthew 5:14-16**
 - **Colossians 1:9-10**
- Continue the process with the following scriptures dealing with interactions with governmental powers on behalf of the poor and oppressed. Then discuss ways the students can interact with different governments (local, state, federal, world) to help the hungry.
 - **Exodus 3:9-10** ➤ **Amos 1:1, 2:6**
 - **Jonah 1:1-2**
- Finally, repeat the same process with the scriptures below that deal with giving to the poor. Then discuss different ways that the students can assist the poor through their financial contributions.
 - **Matthew 5:42** ➤ **2 Corinthians 9:7**
 - **Luke 12:33-34**
- Point out that we have discussed just four ways the Bible shows us that we as individuals can get involved in addressing hunger : Prayer, Volunteering, Lobbying, and Giving. There are more ways to get involved.
- Pass out a copy of *Ten Steps To Fight Hunger*, page 51, to each student. Ask them to consider during the next week which of these things they personally can do.

CLOSING

- Have someone read aloud **James 2:14**.
- Point out that we are indeed saved by faith. Then read **James 2:15-17**.
- Have the students to listen as you read the article “*Beggar*” at the bottom of this page. When you have finished, ask for their immediate reactions. Once everyone has responded, tell the class that we will discuss the issues raised by this reading in the next lesson.
- Close with prayer.

Beggar

She’s a regular, they tell me. Comes there every day at the same time. “Two dollars is all I need. Jus’ two dollars for the city bus. Two dollars.” She stammers the same chorus, tugging at her faded pink sweater. Her eyes dart nervously about and with a shaking hand she wipes the sweat from her forehead.

She caught me off-guard, the money in my hand: a 10 and a wad of ones. “Jus’ two dollars,” she pleaded. “For the city bus.” Before I had time to think, I passed her the two dollars, and she slipped off around the corner. I turned back to face the man gathering my food and was met by his scowl. “She’s a regular. Every night. The same thing.” His face insisted that my money was not going to the city bus. And for a moment, I was angry. He’s right. That money is not going to public transportation. It’s going to her next hit, or to her next drink, or something equally horrible. And then I remembered.

I am the beggar in the pink sweater, worrying at its fraying sleeve, stammering out a request. And my ever-gracious Father in Heaven gives, knowing that I will take His gift and twist it into a grotesque caricature of His intention. I will take the good He gives and use it for my own purposes. I will even misrepresent myself when I ask... I dare to come back again, time after time, boldly asking for more after I have abused His goodness. And still He gives. How amazing is that kind of grace and mercy?

I don’t know where my two dollars went. And I don’t know where that woman went (although I sincerely hope it was the city bus...). But I know this: next time I go to the mall in the evening, I will have my two dollars ready.

— Dawn Morrow



Lesson 2 HERE AM I, LORD

UNIT 6: *Hunger is My Issue*

A Bible Study On Hunger

TEACHING LESSON TWO

OPEN WITH WORSHIP

- Tell the class that this lesson is the last of this study.
- Read aloud **James 2:14**.
- Say a prayer.
- Collect the offering. Announce to the class the total amount collected during the study.

GIVING TO THE POOR

- Tell the class that focus of this last lesson is on making a personal commitment to do something about hunger.
- Point out that sometimes actually doing something about hunger and poverty is difficult. Ask the class to discuss why that is the case.
 - **TEACHING NOTE:** If the issue does not come up naturally in the discussion, bring up how our own preconceived ideas, attitudes, and prejudices come into play in how we react to the poor. It is common for us to think that the poor bring their situation upon themselves by making poor choices, for example. The result of such an attitude is that we might think the poor don't deserve our help.
- Remind the class of the article *Beggar* that was read at the end of the last lesson. Ask if they remember their reaction to the article. Discuss briefly.
- Read *Beggar*, page 55, aloud again. Ask, what would you have done in the author's shoes? Then ask, would you have your two dollars ready the next time? Give everyone a chance to respond.
- Ask this question: "Imagine that I stop for a traffic light, and a rumpled, dirty, scraggly man with a crudely lettered sign made of torn cardboard approaches me with a plastic cup. The sign says, "I need food," but his breath smells of alcohol. Should I give him some money?" Discuss. Make sure that students are asked to give reasons for their answers.
- Have everyone turn to **Matthew 5:38-42**. Ask the class to follow along as someone reads the scripture aloud.

- Read aloud verse 42 again. Ask if anyone wants to change their answer from before based on this scripture.
- Divide the class into three groups and give each group a copy of *Give To Everyone Who Begg?*, page 57.
- Have someone in each group read aloud *Give To Everyone Who Begg?* and then discuss:
 - Why do you think Jesus tells us to give to everyone who begs?
 - How do our preconceived ideas, attitudes, and prejudices affect our personal decisions concerning the poor?
 - How can we overcome these ideas, attitudes and prejudices to become more like Christ?

HOW ARE WE DOING? A REPORT CARD

- Remind the class of the handout given at the last lesson about *Ten Steps To Fight Hunger* and of the "homework" assignment to consider which of those ten things they personally can do.
- Briefly discuss each of the items to make sure everyone understands what they involve.
- Pass out a copy of *Report Card*, page 58, to each student.
- Go over the instructions at the top of the *Report Card* and then ask each student to complete their *Report Card*, assigning grades in each column for every item.
 - **TEACHING NOTE:** Not all items will be a "perfect fit" for each column. Give whatever guidance is needed to help the students give scores. For instance "Raise Awareness of Others" by a local church might include efforts to raise awareness by other churches rather than raising awareness within its own congregation.
- Have each student double the total for each column to come up with a percentage score. A perfect score is 100.
- Ask the class to share and discuss their "grades" for each item in the ME column.
- After everyone has had a chance to share, develop a consensus grade for each item for MY LOCAL

UNIT 6, Lesson 2: HERE AM I, LORD!



What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you?

James 2:14

CHURCH and MY CHURCH DENOMINATION.
Record these grades on a chalkboard, white board, or newsprint.

- For every item with a consensus grade of three or less, ask the class to identify specific things they as individuals can do to raise the grade for their local church or their denomination.
 - Record responses on a chalkboard, white board, or newsprint.
- Ask the class if any students are willing to commit to actually doing any of the things listed. If so, mark them accordingly

COMMITMENT

- Ask the students to now consider the first column of grades they assigned. Ten things are listed. Ask them to identify any that they cannot do. Record their answers on a chalkboard, white board, or newsprint.
- Ask the class if they are willing to make a commitment to do all the items that they can do.
- Discuss the various commitments made by the students, focusing on specifics.

- Record the commitments made by each student. Tell the class you will provide copies of all the commitments to everyone so we can hold one another accountable for meeting the commitments we have made.

CLOSING

- Have someone read aloud **Exodus 14:5-18**.
- Point out that there is a lesson for us from that scripture:
 - God basically told Moses to quit praying and to get moving.
 - Point out that as we have come to learn about the reality of hunger in our world, we need to keep praying but we also need to get moving.
 - God is calling us to action as God's people to do something about hunger.
- Tell the class that as this study ends, each of us knows what we should do. Now it is time for each of us to take action.
- Close with prayer.

Give To Everyone Who Begg?

Matthew 5:38-42

I see a beggar. I size him up. If I decide that he will likely misuse my gift, then I don't give to him. After all, I don't want to be taken advantage of. On the other hand, if I decide that he will use my gift appropriately, if he will use it in the way I want him to, I do give to him.

Think about what is actually happening in this scenario. My relationship with the beggar hinges on whether I think he will respect and honor me by using my gift appropriately. If I think he will insult me by abusing my gift, I won't give to him. It is only when I think he will treat me properly by respecting my gift that I will give.

The problem with acting this way is that Jesus tells us that how we relate to other people should never depend upon how they treat us. Instead, it should depend solely upon our relationship with God.

Now someone might protest that in this scenario if I give the money to the beggar he will use it for some evil purpose, for alcohol or drugs or whatever. But here is the hard lesson: Jesus said, "But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer.... Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you."

A few words in the passage were left out to highlight the fact that Jesus commands us to give to those who beg even when they are evildoers! He commands us to give money to the beggar who will misuse it, and to lend to the borrower who will not return it!

We might think that this teaching is over the top. But guess what? It is no more over the top than loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us. And that is exactly what Jesus tells us to do in the verses following these!

The truth is that you and I do not need to be commanded to give to those who are "worthy." So why on earth would Jesus bother to tell us to do things we are prone to do anyway? The answer is, he wouldn't. Instead, Jesus tells us to do the hard thing. He tells us to give to those who don't deserve it.

And in the final analysis that makes sense. After all, if it did not matter to Jesus whether we were worthy of our salvation, why should it matter to us if the rumpled man on the street corner is worthy of our five-dollar bill?



The Fast That I Choose

A Bible Study On Hunger

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. For each of the items listed on the Report Card, give a grade between 0 and 5 for you, your local church, and your church denomination. A score of 0 means that the item is not done at all. A score of 5 means that it is done all the time, and/or it is done very well.
2. After you have assigned a grade in each block, total the scores in each column.

Report Card	Me	My local church	My church denomination
Pray for the hungry daily			
Pray for at least one hunger ministry daily			
Become more informed about hunger and poverty issues			
Discuss hunger with family members/congregation			
Raise awareness of others about hunger			
Form a local hunger action group			
Contribute financially to one or more hunger ministries			
Work toward a more responsible lifestyle			
Become an advocate for the hungry			
Volunteer to help at a local hunger ministry			
TOTALS:			



ENDING THE STUDY

The Fast That I Choose

A Bible Study On Hunger

WRAPPING UP

When the study concludes the class leader has a few follow-up tasks to perform. These include:

1. Processing the class offering in accordance with church policies. If you have decided to support the publisher of this study, send the check to the Society of St. Andrew, 3383 Sweet Hollow Road, Big Island, VA 24526. Otherwise, send it to whatever the other ministry the class has chosen. Make sure you indicate that the donation is a Bible Study offering.
2. Getting a copy of the class commitments to each student.
3. Encouraging students to follow through on their commitments.

FEEDBACK

The Society of St. Andrew is very interested in hearing your thoughts about the study you have just completed. You may call 800-333-4597, email your comments to sosahra@endhunger.org, or write to:

Bible Study
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