

# CARING FOR THOSE IN NEED

## GRADES 7-9 – Lesson 2

**GOAL:** Students will be encouraged to explore the meaning of poverty here in the United States as well as around the world. What does poverty look like? Why is help for the poor central to Jesus' message?

### Lesson:

Students will explore what is meant by poverty. They will see how Jesus wants them to treat those who are poor with dignity, care, generosity, and love. They will discuss what poverty looks like in the world around them (physical and spiritual). As Mother Teresa says, people can be just as hungry for love as they are for bread.

### Discussion:

Questions for later contrast between the truth about poverty vs the common conceptions.

- Ask students what verses/stories in the bible they remember that reference the poor.
- Is poverty a strong theme in the bible?
- What do you think the status of poverty is in the world right now? How much lives in wealth and how much in extreme poverty? A: 11% are wealthy and 9.2% live in extreme poverty
- What sort of ministries do you know of that serve the poor? Supplying water, food, shelter, or spiritual needs? Do you know organizations like this that exist in the US as well as developing countries? Do you know the difference between extreme and practical poverty?

**Watch:** [Biblical View of Poverty](#) (only first minute)

### Discussion:

- Did the amount the Bible talks about the poor surprise you?
- Why do you think Jesus chooses to focus so much on the poor and vulnerable?

- Because of the focus the bible shows on the poor we know that our mission as Christians must involve service to the poor. God wants the poor to be helped and He also wants Christians to be agents of his love and mercy.

Read this quote:

- “Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”  
~ Teresa of Ávila
- How can we use our eyes, feet, hands, and body to serve the poor as Jesus commands us?

**Watch:**

[Preferential Option for the Poor](#) and [Water from a Pipe?](#)

**Discussion:**

- Do you think you could live off of \$1 a day?
- What is the difference between extreme poverty (developing world) and practical poverty (in the United States)?
- What would it be like to have to drink water that might give you parasites every day?
- How do poverty and hunger affect the way children grow up?
- Do poverty and hunger have an impact on how children learn and grow?
- What is meant by a preferential option for the poor?
- What is our personal and cultural responsibility toward the poor and poverty?

**Activity:**

- Poverty takes many forms. There is no clear dividing line between “poor” and “not poor”. It is easy to lose perspective of what other people face when we may live in a very different experience.
- If students have access to computers or iPads, have them try budgeting at the poverty line with [Interactive Poverty Experience](#) in the US.

### Discussion:

- Did you make it through the month?
- What were the most important choices you had to make in the game? Why did you choose that?
- What surprised you about this game?
- Can we judge those who are poor? Why or why not?
- Do those who are poor have the same dignity and worth as those who have more? Why or why not?

### Activity:

- Have the students break into groups and research a saint who cared for the poor (e.g. Mother Teresa, St. Francis of Assisi, Dorothy Day, Mother Cabrini, St. Vincent de Paul)
- Each group creates a poster including a picture of the saint, quotes from them, and ways that they helped the poor during their lifetime. Each group will present their poster to the class.

### Further Action:

- Use the [Poverty USA Program](#) resources to challenge your class to do something about poverty and hunger in your community. Find other service opportunities on the Respect Life Office [website](#)!

### Prayer/Activity:

Ask students to repeat after you:

Jesus, help my eyes to look with Your compassion on the world.

Jesus, help my feet to walk to do good for You.

Jesus, help my hands to bless the world through You.

Jesus, help me to love others through my body as You wish them to be loved. Amen.

