



Week 1: What is Poverty?

Poverty is a touchy subject. It is politicized, used as a guilt-trip, trivialized, and easily misunderstood. Paradoxically, some ways that we may try to help the materially poor can cause harm to them... and ourselves.

The way we understand poverty informs how we try to alleviate it. Poverty is complicated, and it can be difficult to discover the root causes amidst the symptoms. Poverty is also very much a spiritual issue, which is why it is so often referenced in the Bible. We all personally experience poverty.

Four Broken Relationships

Poverty can be understood as a set of broken relationships, as outlined by Bryant Myers. All of us experience brokenness in these relationships in different ways.

“Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings.”

– Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor*

Relationship with God

- Lack of belief/commitment to God.
- Idolatry: Placing our security, trust, and belief in false gods.

Relationship with Self

- God-complexes: Believing we are in control, provide our own security, or don't otherwise need God.
- Low self-esteem: lack of dignity and hope.



Relationship with Others

- Self-centeredness
- Exploitation and abuse of others

Relationship with Creation

- Loss of sense of purpose
- Laziness/workaholics: unhealthy relationship with work
- Poor stewardship and use of resources

Learn More on the Website

Short Video - Dr. Brian Fikkert gives a great explanation of poverty from a Christian perspective.

Infographic: Material Poverty in the United States - How well do you understand poverty in the U.S. and how it is perceived?

Visit:

<http://gospel.link/helping1>