



## *Bible Studies for Preparing Your Team*

Most people are woefully ignorant of what the Scriptures teach regarding the poor. When you discover the number of verses and chapters devoted to the poor and compare it with the amount of time spent studying them in classes, sermons and studies, you find that we don't spend nearly the time we should on the subject. Consequently, we begin to adopt the values, misconceptions and prejudices of our culture in relation to the poor.

### **Study A - Who Are You?**

The poor in Scripture and God's preferential disposition toward them.

On Mustard Seeds' website you will find a list of Bible verses in a study on the word "poor". This list has been condensed from a total of about 428 verses. Use this as a source for the study to follow.

**Hook. Brainstorming Activity.** (You need a flip chart or large blackboard or dry erase board.) Divide the board in half. Tell your group that you want them to sound off to you the words that come into their mind when you say the word "poor". List these on one side of the board. After a few minutes, tell them that now you want them to tell you why the poor are poor. List these responses on the other half of the board. (If you are using a flip chart, tape the pages on different halves of a wall.) Now, for the final part of brainstorming, ask the group to tell you what God says about the poor (tell them they have to refer to specific verses). List the ones mentioned. In no time at all you may find that they have little idea what God says or where He says it.

**Book.** Divide your group into four smaller groups. Assign them verses from the Word Study supplied. Have each group read the verses and summarize what they find. Each group should have a secretary or spokesperson who will be ready to share these with the larger group. Look carefully over the verses, some occur in the midst of whole sections of scripture which should be read to capture the whole context. Be sure you expand these verses to encompass context. After they have spent 20 -30 minutes on this activity call time and have them report their findings. List their findings on the flip chart.

**Look.** As each group reports on what they found, ask them questions to draw out their understanding of the verses. Your questions should help them discover the implications these verses reveal as to how we act or think toward the poor. You should also draw their attention to any consequences or results revealed in the verses. An example would be Prov 19:17. "He who gives to the poor lends to the Lord and He will repay him." In this verse God states that He will be in debt to the person who is kind to the poor. What are the implications of this? A contrast to this would be Prov 21:13. Be prepared for discussion on these issues.

**Took.** Go back to the lists you originally started on the poor and what makes them poor. How many of those observations or assumptions agree with what is found in scripture? How many of those observations or assumptions are harsh and judgmental in tone?

Focus their attention on your observations in the various verses you studied. Now, guide the whole group in coming to some practical actions they can do to follow through on what they have learned from these verses. What can they do to counter these harsh stereotypical judgments?

## Study B - Hangin' with the Homies

A look at those with whom Jesus decided to associate

**Hook. Brainstorming.** (You will need a blackboard, dry erase board or flip chart). Divide your board in half. Ask your group to begin to list for you the type of people who are considered losers and undesirables in society. List these on one side of the board. (You can play with this a little and get them stirred up or laughing. "What about people who squeeze toothpaste in the middle? etc. Loosen them up). You should get answers like "hookers", "drug dealers", etc.

**Book.** At this point you will divide the large group into smaller groups. Have them pick a leader/spokesperson. Assign each group some of the following scriptures. They are to *read each selection and determine what kind of person Jesus is dealing with*. They are to list these on a sheet of paper and be ready to share observations with the group. *They are also to observe how Jesus treated these same people*. You may add other Scriptures if you like. Take time to research the stigma associated with each of the categories below.

<b>Tax Collectors</b>	<b>Sinners</b>	<b>Lepers</b>	<b>Murderers</b>	<b>Thieves</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Gentiles</b>
Mt 9:10-13	Mt 21:31-32	Matt. 8:1-4	Acts 7:57-60 and 8:1-3 with 9:1-9	Luke 23:43	Luke 4:18-19	Mark 5:1-15
	Luke 7:36-50	Mt 26:6-13		Luke 19:1-10	Mt 25:31-46	Luke 7:1-10
	Luke 15:1-7					

**Look.** Once they are finished with their group study, have each group present what they found in the text. List their findings on the other half of the board. Once this is done, you must draw these varied scriptures together and relate them to today. You need to guide the group into finding if certain types of people they brainstormed as being undesirable can be placed in groups or categories. Take some time with them to do this. You may have categories like the sick, the mentally unbalanced, etc. When you have finished, see how many of these categories are similar to the ones they discovered in the scriptures. You may want to point out some dynamic equivalents such as leprosy being similar to AIDS, etc. The purpose of this exercise is for them to see that Jesus made it a point to be among and befriend some very unsavory people and that he treated them with respect and gentleness.

**Took.** What are the implications of the scriptures above? What do they say about how Jesus views "sinners" or undesirables? What do they say about how Jesus views those who treat these people with contempt? What are the practical lessons we can take from this? (Be sure that you guide the group to going beyond merely thinking or feeling rightly into acting rightly. Who are the despised they know at work or school and what should they do to minister to them?) Now they should examine how what they've studied may affect how they act on the *Mission as Life* trip.

## Study C - The Way Up is Down

Ambition in the Kingdom of Heaven.

*Hook.* (You will need a blackboard or dry-erase board or flip chart. You will also need an assortment of magazines like Forbes, Sports Illustrated, Vogue, Teen, Business Week, Time, etc. You will also need some poster board and glue along with some magic markers. ) Divide your group into smaller groups. Pass out magazines so that each group has about three or four different ones. The assignment for the groups is to go through each magazine and pick out pictures that represent greatness or success. They are to cut these out and make a collage on their poster along with words or slogans which relate to why the photos represent greatness or success. Each group will present their poster and explain it to the whole group.

*Book.* Once each group has shared their poster. Pin them up around the room or display them so all can see them. Assign each group the following Scriptures (do not give them the explanations listed below with them). You may want to take some time and add more if you like.

Luke 16:13--servants are devoted to one master.

Luke 17:7-9--Servants who only do their duty are considered unworthy servants.

Luke 22:27--Jesus as the model servant

John 13:14-16--Servant is not greater than his lord

Phil 2:5-12--Jesus the servant

Matt 18:2-4--Greatest in heaven is a child

Matt 20:26--Whoever is to be great must be a servant

Matt 23:12--humility leads to honor

Luke 18:13--Publican & Sinner

Luke 22:24-27--Servanthood the model for Christians

II Cor. 3:5--the servant's strength

Rom 12:1-3--the servant's view of himself

Eph 4:1-5--the servant's life style

Col. 3:12-17--the uniform of a servant

Each group is to look up these scriptures and determine what they say and how what is said relates to greatness or success. They are to list these on paper and be ready to share them with the group.

*Look.* Once each group has had time to read and comment on each scripture, get the full group's attention and begin to go through the scriptures with them extracting their insights and comments. Write the scripture reference down and their comments on the flip chart or board. Once you've finished with the scriptures, stand back and ask them if there are patterns they see.

You should guide them to understand that for the Christian, servanthood is not an option. To be great in the Kingdom and to gain God's favor, humility and servanthood are essential. As you look at the scriptures again with them, see if you can draw responses similar to any of the explanations listed after the scriptures above.

*Took.* So, now they must begin to generate practical ideas on how these concepts can be applied in their lives now and on the Mission As Life Trip. Have them **focus on the area of attitudes**--hurt feelings---not getting my way---responses when asked to do something, etc. Then have them **focus on actions** related to servanthood and humility---always trying to get the best seat in the vehicle---running to be first in line---taking the best pieces of food---how they do the work they are given, either well or slipshod---name calling and gossip---cliques---leaving the hard jobs for someone else, etc.