

On Saturday, we were traveling back from Kentucky when we stopped for gas and snacks. At the pump, Larry encountered two young adults, with a dog, panhandling for money. They had parked their car the pump and were asking everyone there for money.

As a counselor, my mind immediately turns to why are these two young, seemingly capable adults seeking strangers out for money? I know that some people are incapable of working due to emotional distress or physical limitations. Yet, I struggle with determining who are the ones truly in need. From all appearances, these two seemed to be making the choice to not work while expecting others to help them.

On Sunday, the Lord began to deal with my heart concerning them and my judgement of why they were doing what they were doing. I may not know much, but what I do know is that every person is created by God and deserves care and love. It doesn't matter to God how dirty they are, how drug infested, or even how broken emotionally they are. Throughout Scripture there is an overwhelming theme to help the poor.

God has a lot to say about how we treat the poor and Jesus told us that the poor will be with us always (Mark 14:7). Caring for the poor is one of the predominant themes of the Old Testament and New Testament.

In the Old Testament, tithes were collected and used as provision for the Levites, as well as for widows and orphans (Deuteronomy 14:28-29). God clearly informs the righteous to care about justice and the poor (Proverbs 29:7). He also goes on to say, "Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward them for what they have done (Proverbs 19:17). If you look at Proverbs 21:13, it is pretty unsettling because it warns those who ignore the cries of poor, will also cry out and not be answered. Ouch! Yet on the encouraging side, scripture tells us those who give to the poor will lack nothing (Proverbs 28:27).

In the New Testament, Jesus repeatedly admonish's to care for the poor among us and to care for our neighbor. In Acts 6, they selected seven men to care for a large population of widows—providing food for them. Paul and Barnabas were urged to go to the Gentiles with the gospel but also too remember the poor (Galatians 2:9-10). James taught the need for caring for widows (James 1:27).

Helping the poor and liberating the oppressed is the responsibility of each believer. However, caring for the poor is a voluntary action and sharing what you have been given is your choice.

Today, He wants you to feed the hungry, to clothe the needy, and to help those around you. He desires for you to show compassion to the poor and needy. Jesus commanded us to love one another (John 13:34–35), and what better way to demonstrate the love, kindness and compassion of Jesus by reaching out to the "least of these" among us.

After all, true saving faith provides for those in distress (Matthew 25:32-46). So go ahead, seek out that person in need and make a difference in their life today.

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