

Bible study: Children in poverty

Topic: A Christian response to children in poverty

Key verses: James 1:27, Matthew 6:3-4, Luke 12:33-34, Acts 20:34-35

Question 1

- Warm up question: What do you think of when you hear the term 'child poverty'?
- Many people automatically believe child poverty is an overseas issue but it's also something that affects thousands of children here in Australia.

Introduction

- More than 761,000 Australian kids live below the poverty line according to the peak social service organisation, ACOSS¹. Rather than declining, this number is actually steadily increasing.
- Long-term unemployment, ingrained social issues, a lack of social and affordable housing, poor education, inflation, sickness and mental illness have consigned more than 3.31 million Australians to poverty².
- Children and young people deprived of adequate food, clothes and other necessities often face marginalisation and exclusion at school and within society. Generally speaking, poverty negatively impacts a child's health, development, education, and their long-term employment opportunities.
- Evidence shows reducing poverty leads to better health, education and employment outcomes for children, even if they have equal access to health and education.

Question 2

- What has been your exposure to child poverty, either personally or through someone you know?
- What is God's heart for those trapped below the poverty line?

¹ *Poverty in Australia 2022: A snapshot* is published by the Australian Council of Social Service, in partnership with UNSW Sydney

² *Poverty in Australia 2022: A snapshot* is published by the Australian Council of Social Service, in partnership with UNSW Sydney

Question 3

READ: James 1:27 – Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

- In Biblical times, being orphaned or widowed went hand-in-hand with poverty.
- What does this verse tell you about God's heart for the poor?
- What is our role to play in helping people?

Question 4

- **READ: Matthew 6:3-4** – But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.
- Why does Jesus tell believers to give secretly or quietly to the needy?

Question 5

- **READ: Luke 12:33-34** – Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- Think about your financial goals and your possessions. Do they hinder you from giving generously, loving others and serving God?
- How could you change the way you use your resources to respond more faithfully to Jesus' call in this passage?

Question 6

- **READ: Acts 20:34-35** – “You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”
- Do you see your job or your main source of income as a means of helping and blessing people in need? Does this perspective add extra meaning to your work?
- Given that we now have government safety nets in place, what role does the church have in helping people living below the poverty line?

Discuss: 3 ways you can help children in poverty

- 1. PRAY:** Pray for children and families struggling below the poverty line in Australia. Pray for organisations such as Mission Australia, which helps thousands of people across the country through services that aim to end homelessness and ensure people and communities in need can thrive.

Sign up to receive Mission Australia's prayer diary at missionaustralia.com.au/prayer

- 2. VOLUNTEER:** There are almost endless opportunities to help children and families, both in our community and beyond. You could consider informal ways of helping, like reaching out to a neighbour, local school or library to offer your time, or your church could serve alongside a Christian service organisation like Mission Australia.

For ideas, go to missionaustralia.com.au/churches

- 3. GIVE:** Give of your finances to support the work of God in this area. As Jesus said in **Matthew 25:35** "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in."

This could be through your local church's ministries or you can donate to Mission Australia securely online at missionaustralia.com.au or by phoning 1800 88 88 68.

Know someone who needs help?

You can find Mission Australia's local services for children and families at missionaustralia.com.au/find-support

You can search the Department of Social Services' emergency relief providers and providers of children and family services in each state at serviceproviders.dss.gov.au.