

Bread for the World: Clear Command, Complicated Task

Arthur Simon

But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth (1 Jn. 3:17-18).

God's command for Christians to feed the hungry is clear. From the earliest time humankind was given the responsibility not only for stewardship of the earth's abundance but for the care of one another.

As clear as the command is, the task is not so simple. How do Christians begin the great job of feeding one billion hungry people in the world? How can Christians translate the love of God that abides in them into deeds and truth?

One obvious and important way is through gifts to relief and development projects on both local and international levels. Most churches or denominations have relief and development agencies, and giving to these agencies must be encouraged. Yet there is a far larger hunger problem than charitable gifts can solve.

Bread for the World is a Christian citizens' movement based on the conviction that a part of Christian responsibility for the hungry lies in the use of political influence on their behalf. Christians can advocate the cause of the poor in the powerful political and economic systems where the poor are not heard.

Growing at a grassroots level, the seven-year-old movement has spread throughout the United States and now has a fellowship of more than 30,000 members studying hunger issues and urging their representatives in Congress to take appropriate action against hunger. Bread for the World members see themselves as an important part of the political process, and the political process as an important way to oppose hunger on a large scale.

But why should Christians become involved in public policy? What is the link between United States governmental decisions and hunger overseas?

The Cause of Hunger

To look at the link between United States public policy and hunger, Bread for the World began by studying the causes of hunger.

If a person does not have money to buy food or the land to grow food, that person will be hungry. If the person is a child, or an elderly person, then labor for food or income is also impossible. Poverty causes hunger. The struggle against hunger requires that poverty be reduced or eliminated, and that sources of income and food are found for the poor.

The sources of income and food production are tied directly

to the political and economic systems that govern the world. No political or economic systems at work today wield as much power as those of the United States.

A single action of Congress or one decision by the president can undo—or multiply many times over—the dollar value of all our voluntary contributions combined. To take an offering in church for world relief and quietly leave the big decisions to political leaders only encourages them to make the wrong decisions. Our silence is taken as indifference or hostility toward the poor when policies are hammered out. Hungry people become victims. In the ways we fail to hold these systems accountable and affect the decisions made within them, we become a part of the problem of hunger.

The Poverty Link

Why are there so many poor people? The first and most obvious answer is because of population growth. But that does not really explain the numbers and degrees of poverty we see today. Enough food was produced in the worst of the African famine of several years ago to feed all of Africa. The problem was the processes, economical and political, that determine how food is distributed.

The earth is capable of feeding all of its inhabitants. But onetime barter and trade economies in the Third World countries are now cash economies. When a bad year comes to West Africa, farmers who do not have money to buy reserves from grain dealers may simply starve.

Export cropping, encouraged by United States trade and aid policies and developed by multinational corporations, is another food production/poverty problem. The best land is often used to grow food for other countries. Many land holdings that once belonged to family farmers now belong to prosperous landowners or corporations. Under this land consolidation, some of the most fertile land, formerly used for growing beans, rice, and other food for domestic consumption, is now used to grow crops for overseas markets. The agriculture-export industries often do not provide jobs for the farmers. Without land, without work, they become part of the poverty-stricken billion of the world.

In other countries the land problem is one of division and not consolidation. The land remains in the family, but after years and years of farming it is worn out. Then the land is divided among the sons of a family and then divided among the next generation and the next, until plots are too small to support a family. Whatever the land-use pattern, a comprehensive approach to rural development, including reforms that enable the very poor to participate in development, is needed.

Urban hunger is also related to public policy. Many of the jobless in cities have migrated from the country when they could no longer live off the land. Sometimes the migration took place decades ago, but still the family has not been able to break

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the hunger cycle. The pace of migration to the cities is accelerating.

Foreign aid has in some places been useful, but contrary to the belief of most United States citizens, the foreign aid offered by this country is neither generous enough nor sufficiently aimed at helping the poor. Of the seventeen free-market donor nations, the United States ranks thirteenth where aid-giving is measured as a percentage of Gross National Product. About 75 percent of America's foreign aid is spent in the United States, in line with agreements that accompany the giving of aid.

Aid is not always aimed at developing self-reliance among the very poor. Much of it is "security supporting assistance"—aid given to support countries such as Israel and Egypt for strategic political purposes. Beyond that there is need to shape our assistance in ways that assure delivery of help to the very poor, and the kind of help that will give them access to land, jobs, and other economic resources. The aim should be to enable them to help themselves.

Other public policies deal with world banking systems, trade, and investment—issues that are often more important than aid in determining whether people eat or die. Christians must be informed to participate in making these policies. This is why education, research, and group study are part of the Bread for the World citizens' movement.

Public Responsibility

Privileges and responsibility have always been held in balance in the Christian journey. Jesus said, "To whom much is given, much is required."

The people of the United States, including we Christians, have been given much. We consume far more than our share of the world's natural resources. We have political power and business influence that reaches around the globe. But the greatest privilege of all may be the privilege of participation. Our government not only *encourages* people to participate in its affairs, but if our form of government is to work properly, people *must* participate.

Christians in the United States are part of this people-represented system, which can work either for or against hungry people. We can become advocates for hungry people by practicing a stewardship of public influence, just as we practice a stewardship of time, talents, or money. We can speak on behalf of the poor, who have little voice.

There are two hurdles Christians must cross to become a

part of the political process. The first is the belief that they are themselves poor. We may perceive ourselves as poor because we do not have all the modern appliances or because we have struggles in maintaining our lifestyle in the face of inflation. But we are not poor at all compared to the thousands on the sidewalks of any city in India who have no home whatever.

The second hurdle is the feeling that the government is a powerful giant and we are neither a part of it nor an influence within it. Bread for the World has shown that Christians joined together with a common purpose can influence legislation. Right-to-food resolutions, grain reserve legislation, and famine relief for Cambodia are just a few of the successful campaigns mounted by Bread for the World members.

The government is a powerful, mysterious giant only if we allow it to be. A letter to a representative, a phone call to an official, an informed letter to a local newspaper—all have influence and all are within the reach of every Christian in the United States.

These small efforts when multiplied by Christians all over the country become major political influence. The combined learning and doing of Bread for the World members can bridge the gap between government and citizens.

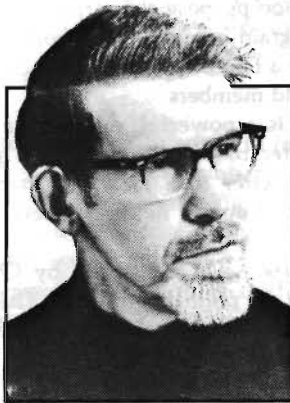
The Most Important Factor

The most important factor, though, is not just a new relationship between ourselves and our government, but the relationship between ourselves and God.

In response to the gospel we care for the poor and needy by our works, not our words; and as we respond with "faith that is active in love" our relationship to Him is cemented. "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the spirit which he has given us . . . beloved let us love one another, for love is of God and he who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 Jn. 3:23–24; 4:7).

Not only do the lives of the hungry hang in the balance of our action or inaction. So does the integrity of our own relationship to God. Putting it more positively, it is in the joy of celebrating the kingdom that we are free to place ourselves beside hungry brothers and sisters and advocate their cause.

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All these complicated matters require careful deliberation, and clear policy must be followed regarding each of these problems in order that the plan may work smoothly. 3. Mixed Economies. What most distinguishes command economies from market economies is the role of government and the ownership of the means of production. We have seen that in command economies factories, farms, stores, and other productive resources are government owned, have also noted that the economic questions of What, How, and Who are answered by government planners. In contrast, market economies look to the decisions of Start studying Command line. Learn vocabulary, terms and more with flashcards, games and other study tools. ^ an option for the remove command that stands for "recursive". It's used to delete a directory and all its child directories. be careful! ^ Ctrl + G opens a help menu. clear clears the terminal window, moving the command prompt to the top of the screen. How to open a new file in nano? \$ nano ~/.bash_profile. Task 3. Find the extra word in each line if there is one. Tick (V) the sentences that are correct. 1. Cant and Slang are as universal and world-wide. By their means is often said in a sentence what. 2. would otherwise take an hour to express to. ^ The formation of these secret tongues varies, of. 14. course, with the circumstances surrounding the speakers. Task 4. Complete using the words from the box. [jerome k. jerome]. 1. Another peculiarity of the German coachman is that he _ attempts to pull in or to pull up.