

Dear God, why don't you make enough food to feed all the starving children in the world? Leviticus 19:9-10, Deuteronomy 15:10-11, James 1:27, 2:8, 14-18

Portions of this sermon were adapted from "World Hunger & Us" by Rev. John Piper, 1981. ©2012 Desiring God Foundation.
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Dear God, why don't you make enough food to feed all the starving children in the world? The answer may surprise you.

Here's a clue from the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 – perhaps I am reading into it, but I couldn't stop thinking about this parable as I worked on today's message.

Jesus was teaching a large crowd out in the countryside. As the evening comes on, the Disciples urge Jesus to send them away to nearby towns and villages so that they might buy food for themselves. To which Jesus replies:

'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Matthew 14:15-21

Have you ever wondered why Jesus would first tell the disciples to feed all those people – I no longer think that this was just because Jesus was trying to set them up for his next miracle.

Rather, I have come to the conclusion that Jesus said it this way, because "feeding people" was a responsibility that God first gave to Adam and Eve – in other words this is our job.

And then in taking what little food the disciples could gather, multiplying it, and giving it back to them to distribute. Jesus was showing them that God can and will always be glad to help ... any of such efforts done in accordance with His will. But notice, Jesus still left the task of distributing, collecting, and accounting for to the disciples.

So the short answer to "why isn't there enough food for all the starving children" is that God has made plenty of food available, or potentially available, to feed all the people in all the world ... but he gave the responsibility for such feeding to us.

The problem of world hunger is not due to lack of food but rather because we humans are not doing our part in honorably distributing it. **World hunger is not God's fault.... It's our fault.**

OK preacher, now you've got our attention, perhaps even gotten us mad, so explain yourself. How can the starving children in Africa be our responsibility, our fault?

Fair enough. Here's proof of our responsibility.

When God first created the world and us humans as its caretakers, He declared it "very good" God had set up a system that worked (enough food to go around)

Then he blessed his caretakers and told them: *'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'* God said, *'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.'* And it was so. (Genesis 1:28-30)

And what God meant when He said "fill, subdue, & have dominion – wasn't for us to use the place to suit only our needs, but rather for us to take care of the place for all of creation's needs. Because God's idea of dominion always means responsible caretaking, it means stewardship ... properly managing the resources for another's benefit. We were placed here to play a vital role in caring for planet and especially for each other.

And my proof for all this is to point out that God did not stick Adam and Eve in a castle, next to a Burger King, but rather, in a garden with the instructions to farm it and to take care of it (Gen 2:15). So, even before the Fall, Adam was expected to work for his supper ... after the Fall, this just got a lot more difficult.

And when God set up the Hebrew Nation as a witness to the world, they were given specific instructions for farming and land use so that even though there might be rich or poor in the land --- there never need be anyone who went hungry.

[and God said] When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:9-10

our entire Bible is filled with such Godly instruction of how, in fulfillment of our stewardship roll, we are to be generous with our resources – especially our food – to care for those in need.

*[and God said] Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. **Since***

there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.' Deuteronomy 15:10-11

He who oppresses a poor man insults his maker, but he who is kind to the needy honors him. Proverbs 14:31

And Isaiah the prophet warns: *If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your desire with good things, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters fail not.* Isaiah 58:10

And Jesus instructs us: *He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food let him do likewise.* Luke 3:11

And James his brother would later write: *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world ... What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.* (James 1:27-2:18)

There you have it. The responsibility for feeding the hungry is completely ours. And God has given us sufficient resources and promises to bless our efforts. So whose fault is it if there are children lacking food?

But I know you want more proof... so let's look at some of the myths and realities behind world hunger.

Myth 1. With rapid world population growth there's not enough food for every one.

The truth is that the rate of world population growth has been dramatically slowing since the mid-1960's. Future predictions have the world either stabilized at 9.2 billion or even decreasing in population by 2050. (7 billion now)

And according to the Institute for Food and Development Policy "Enough food is [currently] available to provide at least 4.3 pounds of food per person a day worldwide: two and half pounds of grain, beans and nuts, about a pound of fruits and vegetables, and nearly another pound of meat, milk and eggs - enough to make most people fat! The problem is that many people are **too poor to buy readily available food**. Even most "hungry countries" have enough food for all their people right now. Many are net exporters of food and other agricultural products.

So the main problems of hungry children of the world are not due to scarcity but rather to affordability, and distribution.

What causes affordability problems?

financial inequality among people. There will always be food for those who have money. People in poor countries often can't afford to buy food, or they grow crops for export rather than food crops for local consumption – Ethiopia example (coffee, poinsettias) rather than corn, yams. This brings outside cash into the country but it doesn't put food on the local table.

And while poor countries grow luxury food to sell rather than food to eat, one of the wealthiest countries is growing food for gas.

It seemed like a good idea at the time, but growing corn for ethanol production has become a highly subsidized and very inefficient, cost prohibitive way of producing fuel. In essence it takes 1 gallon of fuel to produce 1.3 gallons of ethanol from corn; sugar cane can produce ethanol at a 1 to 3 ratio. But to protect our local industry, the U.S. slaps a high tariff on ethanol imports. This is one industry we should let go over seas ... but too many people have invested too much money and are now getting too big a profit by dubious means – to let it fail.

Currently 40.6% of U.S. corn crop goes into ethanol production (that means for every 10 ears of corn: 2 are eaten by humans, slightly less than 4 eaten by livestock and slightly more than 4 go into ethanol).

And raising corn for ethanol contributes to rises in food prices because of competition for arable land to grow food. Thus the price of grains and other agricultural products increase. These price increases directly hurt poorer countries ability to buy food.

Food wastage – Society of Saint Andrews found 45-50 of farm produce never gets to table.

In the west Factory farms – time their harvest for most profit and leave a large remainder of food in the field. But how can the city's poor get out to the fields to glean. That's why SoSA – now runs gleaning missions in tomato & potato fields and orchards.

Food inequality: Eating "western" High beef consumption is only a recent phenomena even in the U.S. (within the last 50 years). But as more countries begin to "eat western" all other food prices increase.

- Beef is the least efficient source of protein that can be farmed.

- The ratio of food to product for beef is 8/1, yet beef protein is only 1.4 times more nutritious than plant protein.
A better way to understand this is that it takes 20 lbs of grain to produce one pound of beef. One pound of beef will make one good meal, but 20 pounds of grain can feed you for a week.
- Pork is 4/1
- Chicken, rabbits, fish are 2/1
- 70% of U.S. grain overall is fed to livestock

Myth 2. Droughts, floods, and other natural disasters cause food shortages.

Yes they do... but only locally and temporarily. There is always relief food available but often it is prevented from getting to the people due to politics, warfare, or just plain greed.

Example: Myanmar (Burma) refused international tsunami relief because Govt. did not admit to having need, did not want foreigners giving aid.

Example: Last few years, Somalia famine relief food either commandeered or blocked by warring factions who wanted to starve their opponents.

Example: Haiti while large quantities of food relief were stolen and resold for profit. The bigger problem comes from mismanaged aid. Giving the Haitians what they don't really need.

Before the earthquake, Haiti grew most of its own rice. Now 60% of its rice is imported from U.S. aid. The country is now flooded with imported rice, because Corporations benefit from selling rice to the Govt. for distribution to Haiti rather than teaching them once again to grow their own.

So the problem of world hunger has little to do with scarcity, or disaster but much to do with warfare, politics, distribution, affordability, and greed (all of which are human caused and have human solutions).

And yes the problem of world hunger is a complex issue with complex solutions. But I'm not standing up here just trying to make you feel guilty and helpless to do anything. There is much that we can do, here in Bedford to help feed the world.

1) We all need to educate ourselves about the problem and the many things Christians are doing to help. One of the greatest continuances of world hunger is ignorance or apathy on our part.

- Read: The Hole in our Gospel. Rich Sterns (President of World Vision) . Or a classic book like Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger by Ronald Sider.
- Then you might want to join Bread for the World, "*a Christian Citizen's Movement in the USA*," and get their newsletter and learn how to respond politically. <http://www.bread.org/>
- See also the insert in today's bulletin about developing a fair U.S. Farm policy and the PCUSA's urging to write your representative
U.S. Representative Paul Simon said, "Someone who sits down and writes a letter about hunger . . . almost literally has to be saving a life

2) Besides education we can change some of our own eating habits, or at least be more aware of them and eliminating wastage in our homes.

- If we Americans substituted chicken for 1/3 of our own beef consumption and the cattle-people responded appropriately, this could provide enough grain to feed 100,000,000 people for a year.
- One of the best ways to stay thin and healthy and maintain empathy with the world's needy is to make a practice of eating one helping and never eating between meals.

Rev. Rick Warren, Saddleback Community Church, noticed how fat the entire congregation was getting – with Dr. Oz developed a Biblically based diet. Free information is available online the Daniel Plan: <http://www.danielplan.com/>

- We should think hard about how often we eat out since you can usually eat for several days on what you pay for one meal at a restaurant.

3) We should engage in regular prayer and fasting. If fasting was ever in order, it is today. Prayer is enlivened and deepened by fasting. Fasting unites us to God in the dependence of hunger, and it unites us to with the hungry of the world in the fellowship of hunger. And so our love and our prayers are more fervent and effectual.

4) Some of us should go see the world and bring back stories. Any inclination you have, young or old, to cut loose and fly into an adventure with God should be pursued. **Lori Stetson** went with CEDEPCA to Guatemala.

Michelle Hughes spent a year in China. And wants to share her adventure with us (July 29th potluck)

We sponsor Missionaries Lee & Gracie Murphree in Honduras. They keep a website **Heart of Christ: - El Corazon de Cristo** <http://heartofchristhonduras.org/>

There are opportunities for all kinds of professions as well as the traditional missionary. The need **is** for people passionately eager to magnify Christ through sacrificial loving service.

- 4) But we all can consciously and intentionally share more from our abundance. 5 cents a meal. Is great.

If your raising children, or if you have raised your children: why don't you also sponsor a 3rd world child. Get to know that child's country, pray for that child, watch that child grow up. Adopt a child through **World Vision. (\$30 monthly)** <http://www.worldvision.org> or **Children International** <http://www.children.org>

So the bottom line is, if we are concerned enough, to ask God, about world hunger.

Then it is up to us to do something about it.
And there is a lot we can do about it.
And God promises to help us in accomplishing this task.
But it has always been our responsibility.
And God is hoping that we live up to it.

Galatians 6:7-10

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.