

Options**Together**[™]

A Biblical Guide to Engaging American Poverty



Facilitator's Guide



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Options Together Facilitator's Guide
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Forward

Over recent years, there has been an upsurge of involvement among followers of Christ on behalf of the poor, the marginalized and those treated unjustly. Perhaps this is being guided by Proverbs 31:8-9, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Yet, the fallen nature of our world produces injustices that perpetuate poverty in every generation.

So, what can we, followers of Jesus, do? We, who all bear His image, can first realize that we all experience poverty in differing degrees, both spiritually and physically. The disciple James says God chose the “poor of this world” to be “rich in faith.” As this study helps us understand His heart for the poor, it will also teach us much about how to be rich in faith!

People caught in the web of poverty often experience desperation and pain. In these places, many learn to trust God deeply. While those in material poverty are poor in the things of this world, their priceless dependency on God produces a richness of faith that ever more deeply reflects Jesus Christ’s image. That’s a lasting treasure no amount of “worldly wealth” could ever afford.

So, what is our lesson? It is valuable to study God’s heart for the poor because we get to learn lessons that will build a richness to our faith in Him and qualities that will transform us to become more and more like Christ! Additionally, the study of what God says about His heart for the poor equips us to view and engage our neighbors as fellow “heirs of the Kingdom” and frees us from seeing them as “second-class citizens.”

Options Together™ aims to motivate our heart, and engage our head and hands, toward loving all people stamped with His image. As a result, we will be more effective witnesses to the gospel. Ultimately, it is our hope and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this study to fill our hearts to love others as He has loved us!

Milton Massie

Executive Director/Steward

Cru Inner City

Introduction

Thank you for diving into the Options Together™ Bible Study! Since Jesus announced His ministry in Luke 4, He and His followers have made both proclaiming good news to the poor and setting the oppressed free integral in the call to make disciples of all nations. In recent years, it has become increasingly important to have both a deep biblical understanding around these issues, and a practical approach that leads to flourishing for all involved. The Options Together™ Bible Study is here to help!

This study has been created to engage both the head and the heart by diving into the biblical truths that run from Genesis to Revelation. In addition, we see examples of those who have enjoyed the riches of engaging with, and learning from, people who are on the margins of society.

Poverty in America, and all around the world, is not just a lack of money. Poverty can be defined by a lack of options: a lack of good options that lead to flourishing. These good options include access to relationships that work, to the opportunity to live out the *Imago Dei* (Image of God) and many others. The greatest option of all is the opportunity to know Jesus and to walk with Him and His people, the Church. We believe that as we create options together, in partnership with those who are on the margins of society, we bring glory to God and are blessed ourselves.

This study is not meant to be a comprehensive guide. In fact, in many cases, questions answered here will lead to more considerations and questions. The resource page at optionstogether.org is meant to offer you and your group additional means to go even deeper in these complex issues.

So, whether you are leading a small group, a large group or using Options Together™ for personal growth, our prayer is that God would use this tool to draw you close to Him and that He would guide and direct you as you engage in the world around you. Get ready for what could be the greatest adventure of your life!

Quick Start Module Plan Overview

Thank you for facilitating an Options Together™ Bible Study group. Here is a quick overview of a typical weekly study with some helpful tips. **Make sure everyone has a Group Guide, available from the resource page at optionstogether.org.**

🕒 5 MINUTES

Open

PRAY

Open your time in prayer. You can have one person pray or do group prayer.

PRACTICE

Ask if anyone wants to share their experience from last week's practice exercise(s) or how they felt about doing it.

THEME OVERVIEW

Each lesson contains a quote and introduction. Have someone read this aloud to your group.

🕒 20 MINUTES

Scripture

READING

Have a group member or members read the Scriptures from the Group Guide aloud. If you are short on time, select your favorites to be read aloud.

DISCUSSION

Choose your favorite questions or those the group is responding to the most. You don't have to complete every question. The most important aim of this segment is to highlight themes from the Bible content that will connect to the video content.

🕒 30 MINUTES

Watch

VIDEO

Play the 15-minute video for the module either with the enclosed DVD or online at optionstogether.org.

VIDEO DISCUSSION

Read the discussion questions. You can pick and choose based on your group. In this phase, try to bring the Bible study and video content together.

🕒 5 MINUTES

Practice

This is the homework you will point out and assign. It includes four imperatives: Read, Pray, Journal and Do. You may also review the previous modules practice questions if you have time left.

🕒 60 MINUTES TOTAL

Preparing and Facilitating Discussion

You will be responsible to lead a group of participants during the Discussion section of the study. It will last about 20 minutes. The study was deliberately created with an “open format” discussion time. There are no fill-in-the-blank answers or simplistic solutions. The essence of this principle is that learning about the poor is not a topic that will be resolved in the seven weeks of Options Together™. The Bible discussion is framed in such a way that every participant is able to begin the journey of studying what God says, in addition to watching those who are living out these biblical principles. Throughout the study, we can be asking ourselves what God might be inviting us to do to engage with those on the margins

Make sure each person in your group has a Group Guide. Go to optionstogether.org to obtain Group Guides.

Preparation

1. Go through the entire module on your own before you meet with your group.
2. Review each Scripture verse at least three times. The New International Version has been used in the study. You may find it helpful to read from other versions to round out the meaning, though you will want to stick to the same version during your actual group study for continuity and flow.
3. Answer all the questions in the Bible Study section.
4. Decide if there are questions you want to focus on and think a little more deeply about. Remember, there are not necessarily “right” or “wrong” answers but rather “stronger” or “weaker” answers.
5. Choose your top three questions based on what you feel will be helpful to your group and that you can comment clearly about.
6. Write out your answers in your own Group Guide booklet.

Facilitating

1. Open

- Have everyone sit facing one another, in a circle or at a table.
- Pray that God would bless the reading and let the Scriptures come alive in the discussion.
- During the Scripture reading, go around the circle, asking each person to read a Bible portion aloud.

2. Discussion

- Choose the top three questions most applicable to the needs and interests of the group ahead of time, or have the group choose the questions. If time permits, you can broaden to more questions.
- Read each question to the group.
- Encourage members of your group to respond. Try to draw each one into the conversation. Try not to let a few members dominate the discussion.
- Encourage everyone to write down their answers and others' comments that are helpful to them.
- Add your commentary and impressions, if you wish.
- Try to find a “take home” verse or theme to encapsulate your discussion.
- For homework, have your group members answer any questions not addressed in the group.

3. Closing

- If your discussion group is one of several in a larger number of groups, you may hear a two-minute warning from the Large Group Leader. At this point, take the final comments. Briefly close in prayer.
- If you are doing the study just as one group and time is sensitive, you could set a timer on your watch to remind you when your time is nearly up. Then you can make final comments and close in prayer.

General Use Ideas

Options Together™ can be used in a number of ways, giving you flexibility for your particular situation. You may wish to use this curriculum in a variety of environments, some ideas below. **Group Guides are available from the resource section of optionstogether.org.**

7-WEEK SUNDAY SCHOOL/CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CLASS

If you work through the material methodically and quickly, it will work well as a 7-module Sunday School Class. Seating around multiple, small round tables can work well for large groups. Seating in a circle or around one table would be great for smaller groups. The key here is to flow quickly and keep the discussion focused on the topic at hand. You may wish to do Module 7 as a special Saturday or Sunday brunch event

QUARTER OR SEMESTER CLASS

The curriculum can also be split into a 12–13 week study by using one half-module per week. This will allow for more intensive discussion. It would be ideal if you want to fill a complete quarter or semester. You could finish with Module 7 as a Sunday brunch event.

BIBLE STUDY GROUP

A Bible Study group is an ideal place to use this material. The majority of the study is centered on scriptural study and discussion. The informal and casual environment will draw out broad discussion and prayer emphases in remembering and caring for the poor.

MISSIONS TRAINING

This is a valuable training tool for missions teams who are preparing for ministry in the inner city or overseas. The biblical content combined with the videos will help the participants to follow these scriptural teachings in a modern missions context.

URBAN TRAINING

Options Together™ will serve you well as an urban training tool for new recruits and volunteers. Its primary purpose here would be to connect the day-to-day city outreach with biblical concepts.

PASTORAL AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Though created initially as a lay study program, you will find this is a helpful tool to introduce key biblical principles. This can assist you in understanding and explaining the biblical call to engage with poverty and in creating systems and/or practices within your church to address poverty in your community.

Tips for Course Leader

Options Together™ is not a lecture-style or fill-in-the-blanks type of Bible study. Its primary teaching method is group discussion with questions (the kind that don't always have right or wrong answers). This is especially true in the analysis questions on the media segments.

Options Together™ is not intended to be an exhaustive study on all the justice and poverty issues presented in Scripture and/or modern society. Seven modules are not enough for that. This particular curriculum is geared primarily for Christians who may be new to the topic, even though urban ministry specialists can also benefit from the study.

As the Leader/Facilitator, you play the critical role of ensuring that the discussion stays on topic. We are certain this curriculum will draw out emotions, thoughts, worldviews and opinions that may not have been faced before by people in your group. You will want to have a sensitive posture to encourage and motivate their spiritual discoveries.

Following are some suggestions:

- **Introduce the topic:** Each module has a short written statement that gives an overview. Ideally, this should be read in its entirety. You may add some additional thoughts, on that same theme, from your own study of the module (without sermonizing!). This theme is what should be tracked throughout the discussions and responses. The verses and questions have been chosen intentionally to build on the video segments. Sticking with the material will keep the continuity strong.
- **Pre-read the Bible verses before discussion:** Before answering any of the discussion questions, read all verses. Each verse supports the others on the theme of the session.
- **Discussion questions:** The discussion questions are meant to pull the group into a closer look at the Scriptures. Consistently pray that the Lord will give you wisdom as you lead the biblical discussion and decide on which specific questions to focus. The discussion questions will help the participants to process what the Scriptures are saying.
- **Other Scriptures:** We have suggested in the Group Guide that participants may wish to add other Scriptures that the Lord has brought to their attention. This is another way to enhance a journey of faith as we're learning about God's heart for the poor. Your job will be to ensure that additional verses actually do relate to the daily topic and do not distract or draw the discussion onto unintended tangents.
- **Prayer journey:** Begin and close your study with a prayer. In addition, feel free to stop at times to pray for specific needs that arise. You may want to pray for people living

in poverty in the neighborhood or for people encountered during the “task of the week.” You may want to pause to pray about the application of Bible verses and for the spiritual needs of people in your group as they process the poverty issue.

- **Enhanced study:** In addition to the Group Guide material, we have provided some self-study resources for you as the Facilitator. The optionstogether.com website contains up-to-date books and articles that will give you a deeper background in issues of poverty and the Christian response to them.
- **Practice:** The intention of the Practice section is to provide a “connecting point” between modules. You should conclude each module with a reminder of the practice to do in the coming week. Each Practice section includes opportunities to read, pray, journal and do.

Class Sizes

Options Together™ is well suited for a variety of class sizes, but you may need to make some adjustments to maintain good group dynamics.

- **Small group format (5–11 people):** Do the study as one group.
- **Mid-size group format (12–30 people):** Divide into groups of 6–8 for the Bible study portion and appoint facilitators for each group.
- **Large group format (31+):** Divide into groups of 6-8 for the Bible study portion and appoint facilitators for each group. In addition, you need to have a large screen and good sound to ensure that the video segments have impact
- **One-on-one discipleship**
- **Personal Bible Study**

Who Are the Poor?

LEADER Make sure everyone has a Group Guide available from the resource page at optionstogether.org.

“God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.”

SAINT AUGUSTINE

 5 MINUTES

God has special concern for those trapped in poverty. Jesus himself demonstrated God's heart for the marginalized by the way He lived on earth. As a child, Jesus was a political refugee fleeing the tyranny of Herod. In His ministry, Jesus spent much of his time with the disabled, the sick, prostitutes, thieves and tax collectors; not with the wealthy or the religious elite. During his public ministry, He did not have a “place to lay his head” (Matt 8:20) and He did not have money enough to pay the temple tax (Matt 17:27).

Poverty is complex. At its root, poverty can be defined as a lack of options—a lack of good options that lead to flourishing in life. This study is meant to help us discover solutions as we learn to create options in the context of growing, Christ-centered relationships. You will hear from God's Word, watch others share their experience and have the opportunity to engage with those in your city who lack options.

Scripture

 5 MINUTES

Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people.

PSALM 113:5–8

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

JAMES 2:5

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

PSALM 9:9

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

LUKE 4:16-21

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

PROVERBS 14:31

 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. How does God describe the brokenness of poverty?

These verses describe poverty with some pretty strong language: in dust, in the ash heap, oppressed, prisoners, blind in need of good news, but also to be rich in faith.

2. What might the weight of poverty feel like based on these verses?

When people find themselves in a situation where they are in dust or an ash heap, oppressed, in prison and in need of good news, it has to feel like being powerless, alone, helpless, unable to change their circumstances on their own, in need of others to come alongside and help. Some people probably feel shame and guilt, some may feel stuck not knowing how to get out.

3. How does God relate to those in poverty? How is that different from society's relationship to them?

God has a special concern for the poor. He is aware of their circumstances and is willing to help. The Bible says He stoops down and lifts them up and seats them with princes and princesses. He gives them a special measure of faith. He has tied the value of His name to the way those in poverty are treated, God is honored when we are kind to the needy and is shown contempt when we dishonor those in poverty. Jesus announces His ministry as a ministry to the poor and oppressed and spent most of His time not only with those who were poor, but also lived in many of the same circumstances.

4. How well has the modern church related to those who live with few options?

LEADER *People may want to talk about what their own church is doing to help those in poverty. This is great, but pull people in to look at how the church in the U.S. is doing in ministry to the materially poor.*

In recent years, the church has been waking up to the call to engage with poverty. Christian ministries and organizations have been working with the homeless or those who have been affected by natural disaster and much more. Now, more than ever, people are waking up to the call to care for the poor. That's why having a good biblical understanding of this call is so important.

5. How is it that those who are materially poor can be rich in faith?

When you are low on options, it may be true that your only option for provision is from the Lord. This faith relationship can grow rich as God provides and more opportunity to trust Him becomes evident. People with few options frequently talk to the Lord about their needs and frequently talk about how God has met those needs, many times in miraculous circumstances.

 Watch

 15 MINUTES



VIDEO

“Who Are the Poor?”

 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. What are your initial impressions after watching the film?

LEADER *Let this be a free-form discussion. Try to draw out not only what people think, but also what they feel. Were there any particularly powerful moments or ideas from the film? It is okay to let a couple “rabbit trails” go here as long as they don’t take too much time.*

2. What lack of options did you see? How did it make you feel?

Wade, the young African American man, grew up in a situation where most things did not work: education, family, safety. There were few healthy models on his life. Renee Andrews, Charles Gilbert and James Labonte, the homeless people living on under the bridge, did not have many good options for shelter, relationships, safety, employment or food. Charles describes how some of his friends lost hope and jumped into traffic. Renee expressed concern for children and their vulnerability living on the streets.

LEADER *People may feel sad, guilty, ashamed, fearful or a variety of other feelings. The key here is to acknowledge those feelings whatever they may be.*

3. How do you identify with the pain shown in the video?

LEADER *Encourage people to share from their own experience. Many people in your group may never have been homeless or grown up in a dangerous neighborhood. But we have all felt afraid, been nervous for our financial future or believed we were out*

of options. The key is to help your group connect their experiences with those in the video.

4. What difference does trusting Jesus make to those in need?

James Labonte, the man in the cowboy hat, said that he counted on Jesus and that He kept him alive. Wade, the young man in Chicago, met a loving community that gave him hope and purpose because of the Christ-centered ministry there.

5. What questions or concerns come to mind when you consider engaging with those living in poverty?

LEADER *You want to encourage the people in your group to express their real concerns. Don't feel like you have to address their concerns at this point. It is simply good for everyone to express themselves.*

Hopefully, people will share their concerns and/or fears about engaging with those trapped in poverty. People often express concern that they don't have time, resources or even know anyone in an impoverished situation. Some may be afraid of being taken advantage of or tricked. Some may have concerns for their personal safety and others may not yet be convinced of the biblical mandate to care for the poor.

6. What advice did Charles Gilbert, the man under the bridge, offer about relating to those experiencing homelessness?

Charles Gilbert said, "Don't judge us, talk to us and make your judgement based on what you learn from us."

7. Andy Crouch said that he tries not to use the phrase, "the poor," and instead asked us to view others as people who are coming out of a story of poverty and to see how God is working in their story. Why would that distinction be important?

When we talk about, "the poor" we could be tempted to view them solely from their economic status. But, if we see them as persons that God created and recognize that He is actively involved in their life story, then we value them as they deserve. Everyone created in His image has many things to contribute. Seeing them as God does elevates people to their rightful place as image bearers. (See Module 3)

Practice

 5 MINUTES

READ Psalm 69:30–33, Psalm 35:10, Isaiah 26:5–6 and Deuteronomy 15:11

PRAY Ask God to show you His heart for those in poverty and to give you the same heart.

JOURNAL Take time to write down your observations from these Scriptures.

DO Before the next module, talk with someone outside this group about what you are learning.

Who Is My Neighbor?

LEADER Make sure everyone has a Group Guide available from the resource page at optionstogether.org.

“The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’ But...the Good Samaritan reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., I’VE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAINTOP

 5 MINUTES

Teacher and former pastor John Piper says, “I believe it would not be too much to say that all of creation, all of redemption, all of history hang on these two great purposes—that humans love God with all our heart, and that from the overflow of that love we love each other.”

First century Christians fed the hungry, believers in the Middle Ages cared for victims of the Black Plague—Christians have been pouring out their lives for their neighbor for thousands of years. Loving our neighbor is a distinction of who we are as believers. Today, there are unique challenges for believers as they live out this call. This study will look at the Biblical call to love our neighbor and the practical realities of this call.

 Scripture

 5 MINUTES

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a

Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

LUKE 10:25–37

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

LEVITICUS 19:18

For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.

PSALM 72:12–14

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

PHILIPPIANS 2:3–8

 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. What was the heart condition of each person in the parable of the Good Samaritan?

The priest and the Levite were concerned with their own piety. Not wanting to be defiled by associating with an outsider, they could not act on the behalf of the man who had been robbed. The Good Samaritan was concerned about the man who had been beaten and robbed.

2. How does the Samaritan's response reflect what Jesus did on the cross?

Like the Good Samaritan, Jesus saw us and took pity on us. Jesus left the comfort of the Trinity and moved into harm's way. His care for us was costly. He demonstrated His love for us by taking action. Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves. The Good Samaritan did what the man who was robbed could not do for himself.

3. Why did the Samaritan act when the religious leaders did not?

Samaritans were viewed as not fully Jewish and were frequently cast aside by the Jews. So, it is possible that the Good Samaritan was more sympathetic to the suffering of the man who had been robbed and more willing to enter into his suffering. He may have been less likely to let ethnic and religious differences prevent him from helping the man.

Watch

 15 MINUTES



VIDEO

“Who Is My Neighbor?”

 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. What are your initial impressions after watching the film?

LEADER *Let this be a free-form discussion. Try to draw out not only what people think, but also what they feel. Were there any particularly powerful moments or ideas from the film? It is okay to let a couple “rabbit trails” go here as long as they don’t take too much time.*

2. Describe how Miss Pearl lives out God's love for her neighbors.

Despite their differences, Miss Pearl sees her neighbors as people whom she can help by providing safe day-care services, food and friendship. Miss Pearl is concerned with everyone on her block, even the drug dealers and their children.

3. How does the gospel inform both the Good Samaritan and Miss Pearl?

When we see how Jesus moved toward us when we were lost in our own sin, His love can motivate us to look past our own needs and wants to meet the needs of others. The gospel is a demonstration of setting aside our comfort to meet others' needs—needs that they cannot meet alone.

4. How does relying on God's provision and protection free us to love our neighbor?

If I believe that God will provide for and protect me, then I am free to step out and help to engage with others that may have needs. If I am overly focused on meeting my own needs and wants, then I am less likely to step out in faith and love. Trusting God to meet my needs frees me to step out in faith.

5. What qualities in Miss Pearl's approach to her neighbors were helpful in ministering to them?

Obedience! Ms. Pearl did not want to reach out to her neighbors at first, but she sensed that God was calling her to reach out to them and so she did. She accepted them for who they were. They were drug dealers and acted like drug dealers. She focused on connecting with them and pointing them to Jesus.

6. How could demonstrating God's love by meeting practical needs open doors to the gospel?

While some people may not be open to a spiritual conversation initially, demonstrating care and compassion by meeting physical needs can be a tremendous way to open the door to meaningful spiritual conversations.

7. In the video, Glen Kleinknecht talked about systems that lead to flourishing. What are some of the systems that lead to flourishing?

Poverty is complicated and the reasons people fall into poverty are many, including personal choices, circumstances and systems. The systems that we all rely on like church, education, transportation, food, healthcare and the justice system can either lead to human flourishing, or when they are not working as they should, can actually lead to poverty and suffering.

 Practice

 5 MINUTES

READ Timothy 6:17–19, Luke 18:18–30, Proverbs 11:25 and Luke 14:12–14

PRAY Ask God to give you opportunities to love your neighbor.

JOURNAL Take time to write down your observations from these Scriptures and any opportunities you have had to love your neighbor.

DO Meet a neighbor, coworker or student you do not yet know. If you know all these people, take the initiative to talk with one you don't know well and learn something new about them.

LEADER Make sure everyone has a Group Guide available from the resource page at optionstogether.org.

“It sounds extremely odd to our ears, but God’s intention all along was that the world be full of idols—full of images. More exactly, the world was meant to be full of representatives of its Maker. And the only adequate representatives of the Creator are the image bearers, not lifeless images, since only persons can adequately reflect the image of a relational, personal Creator.”

ANDY CROUCH, PLAYING GOD: REDEEMING THE GIFT OF POWER

🕒 5 MINUTES

In all of creation, men and women are the only ones created in the *Imago Dei*, Latin for the image of God. From the porcupine to platypus, none reflect God as we do.

The Bible says that we bear the image of God. We are not God or a part of God, but we are more than just another kind of animal or a random collection of atoms brought together by chance. We are image bearers of the almighty, all-powerful Creator of the universe who poured Himself out on a cross to buy us back from sin and death.

Being an image bearer means that we reflect God’s glory and are his appointed representatives. Our purpose is to rule here on earth over God’s creation and serve as Jesus did. How well we do that is directly related to how well we see the image of God in ourselves and others.

Throughout this study, we will look at what it means to be an image bearer and how that informs the way we engage with poverty and those caught in its web.

📖 Scripture

🕒 5 MINUTES

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule

over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

GENESIS 1:26–28

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

ROMANS 5:18–19

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

PSALM 9:9

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

JOHN 13:3–5

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

PROVERBS 31:8–9

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

PROVERBS 14:31

🕒 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. Think about a photograph, what is the purpose of that image?

A photograph is a reflection or a reminder of an object or person, often of someone we love. The photograph is not the object of our affection, but reminds us of it.

2. According to Genesis 1, how does mankind reflect the image of God?

We are to fill the earth with our offspring and subdue or rule over the earth. God has given us a job and it is to cultivate the earth. We share this in common with God: He has created the earth and we create, He cares for the earth and we are to cultivate it. Ruling is a demonstration of power that God placed in everyone who bears His image.

3. What are some ways that we rule on earth?

Nearly every creative endeavor is an example of the way we rule and exercise power on the earth. The arts, farming, business, exploration and science are all examples of ruling. We can rule in our personal lives as well. Every godly, creative act is a demonstration of the image of God in each of us.

4. How has sin impacted the image of God in us and our method of ruling over creation?

Because the Fall, described in Genesis, did not impact our ability to rule but rather our ability to choose good or evil, our demonstration of power can either be tremendously good or selfishly evil. This is demonstrated in the beautiful art we produce but also in the hideous acts we perpetuate toward one another. Both are demonstrations of our God-given ability to rule.

5. How does Jesus demonstrate what it means to rule?

Jesus, unmarred by sin, demonstrates that ruling is an act of service to others. His ability to rule benefits those around him and leads to flourishing. Many times ruling or power is harmfully used, giving the impression that power is evil. But we see from the very first chapter of Genesis that ruling and power are God-given and meant for good. We reflect the image of God when we exercise power in the way Jesus did.

6. How might poverty impact people’s ability to rule over creation?

If poverty is defined by a lack of options, then experiencing poverty can impact people’s opportunity to exercise power for individual benefit and for the benefit of our world as well. In this way, poverty leaves a particular stain on the image of God in women and men.



Watch

🕒 15 MINUTES



VIDEO

“Imago Dei”

🕒 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. What did you see that stood out from the video?

LEADER *Let this be a free-form discussion. Try to draw out not only what people think, but also what they feel. Were there any particularly powerful moments or ideas from the film? It is okay to let a couple “rabbit trails” go here as long as they don’t take too much time.*

2. What prevents us from seeing people as image bearers of God?

Most often, our world is limited by seeing people merely by their appearance, ability, social and financial standing, language, ethnicity, even by their favorite sports team. Very little in our culture reminds us to see people as bearers of God’s image.

3. How could a deeper understanding of the image of God in mankind change the way we see people who come out of situations like Jimmy's?

Many times, the world views people like Jimmy primarily by their social status or by their circumstances: they are homeless or an ex-convict or grew up on the “wrong side of town.” But, if we see people as image bearers who reflect God, then they have immense value because God has immense value. We can see and relate to people as fellow rulers, placed here by God to reflect Him and His ways.

4. In what ways do we see Jimmy reflecting the image of God by ruling?

Jimmy demonstrates the image of God in the way he lives his life. By providing for his family, ministering to the homeless, loving his wife and giving leadership in his church.

5. How is poverty particularly damaging to the image of God?

Because poverty limits people's options and opportunities to rule, reign, cultivate and create; it limits their ability to fully live out God's intent for their lives. Since this is the primary way we live out the image of God, poverty is a particularly powerful limitation and impairment on the image of God in us.

6. How could the work of justice, mercy and evangelism (motivated by an understanding of the image of God in others) better honor God by reflecting His image?

Justice is a God-focused endeavor that helps ensure that people can rule and live out the image of God without being unjustly treated, or even imprisoned; thus hampering their ability to reflect Him and steward their portion of creation.

Mercy is a God-focused effort to reduce the effects of poverty and maximize people's potential to rule and flourish.

Evangelism creates an opportunity, for those who don't know God, to be restored to the relationship they were created to enjoy. Evangelism also restores the purpose that comes with knowing that you are an image bearer. Sharing our faith is the greatest act of kindness possible because of the holistic transformation that occurs.

 Practice 5 MINUTES

READ Genesis 1:26–28, Genesis 9:6, Colossians 1:15, James 3:9 and Revelation 5:1–10

PRAY Ask God to give you a vision to live, reign and rule in ways that reflect the image of God in you, for the benefit of others.

JOURNAL Take time to write down your observations from these scriptures and additional insights the Lord gives you about the image of God in every person.

DO Challenge yourself to recognize the image of God in those you encounter this week. Intentionally consider those you might normally avoid.

The Scars of Racism

LEADER Make sure everyone has a Group Guide available from the resource page at optionstogether.org.

WARNING The video story in this study describes difficult issues surrounding race, racial violence and sexual abuse. There are no graphic images, but the content may be difficult for those who have experienced racism or sexual abuse. As a leader you should preview the video prior to showing it to your group.

“Tragically, too often in the past evangelical Christians have turned a blind eye to racism or have been willing to stand aside while others take the lead in racial reconciliation, saying it was not our responsibility. (I admit I share in that blame.) As a result, many efforts toward reconciliation in America have lacked a Christian foundation and may not outlive the immediate circumstances that brought them into existence. Our consciences should be stirred to repentance by how far we have fallen short of what God asks us to be as his agents of reconciliation.”

BILLY GRAHAM

🕒 5 MINUTES

Poverty is one of many scars left by our country's history of racial injustice. While racial and ethnic tensions are longstanding problems in every culture, here in the United States our history of enslaving people, Jim Crow era segregation and ongoing racism have had lasting effects on many people of color. These effects leave many without the options and opportunities that people of the dominant culture have benefited from for generations. The Bible has much to say on the issue, and Christ's death and resurrection offer a potent path for healing.

This study is meant to be a first step in understanding this complicated issue. We will be reminded that God created all nations and that one day every nation will be represented in heaven. We will examine God's call to Christians to step into the pain of our brothers and sisters from every tribe, tongue and nation and live out the unity we have in Christ.

 Scripture

 5 MINUTES

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

ACTS 17:26

All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.

PSALM 86:9

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

ROMANS 10:12-13

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

JAMES 2:8-9

Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.”

ACTS 10:34-36

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

REVELATION 7:9

Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

GALATIANS 6:2

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:26

🕒 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. Acts 17:26 states that God created all mankind through one man. How should we view people from different ethnic backgrounds?

Women and men from all tribes, tongues and nations have been made to be God's image bearers here on earth. God has a plan for every person and so each has infinite value and worth.

2. What is God's heart for the people of the world?

The gospel is for everyone. God has made it clear that He has a plan and is calling people from every corner of the world into relationship with Himself.

3. How do we define favoritism?

To show favoritism is to choose one person or group of people over another because of their ethnicity, wealth, social standing, education or any other criteria.

4. How could favoritism keep us from loving others as ourselves?

When we are freed from favoritism, that means we are freed from categories in which we naturally place people. We are freed to see people as God sees them and are more free to love others as ourselves.

5. Why do you think God preserves tribes and nations in heaven?

This is incredible, that the godly aspects of culture and ethnicity will be preserved for eternity. The diversity we see reflected in people and culture will be preserved as a rich mosaic and reflection of the diversity and creativity of God Himself.

6. How well has the American church suffered with and carried the burdens of those who are wounded by racial and ethnic hatred?

Historically, different parts of the church have carried the burdens of racial injustice in different ways. The black church has been a refuge for African Americans during the slavery and post-slavery era. The black church was also instrumental in helping to enact legislation to end Jim Crow era segregation laws.

The majority-culture church’s response over the years has been mixed, at best. Sometimes standing up for those who were unjustly persecuted but many times benefiting and even participating in systems and activities that have deeply hurt our brothers and sisters in Christ. In recent years, there has been an awakening to these sins and a desire to learn, repent and stand with brothers and sisters of color.



🕒 15 MINUTES



VIDEO

“The Scars of Racism”

WARNING *The video story in this study describes difficult issues surrounding race, racial violence and sexual abuse. There are no graphic images, but the content may be difficult for those who have experienced racism or sexual abuse.*

🕒 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. What are your initial reactions to the video?

LEADER *Let this be a free-form discussion. Try to draw out not only what people think, but also what they feel. Were there any particularly powerful moments or ideas from the film? It is okay to let a couple “rabbit trails” go here as long as they don’t take too much time.*

- 2. Cynthia explained that her experience of sexual abuse aligns closely with her experience of racism. What similarities did Cynthia describe between wounds of racism and abuse?**

Cynthia describes the pain of sexual abuse and racism as similar in the way it changes how you see yourself. Both can strip away your dignity, both can strip away power and authority and both have long-lasting negative effects.

- 3. How is an understanding of the Image of God helpful in motivating us to seek justice?**

If we see all injustice as a mark against God's image on earth then we can be doubly motivated to seek the welfare of all. The higher we view God, the higher we view His image bearers and the more we can seek justice for all.

- 4. How does Soong-Chan Rah model “suffering with those who suffer” as he reflects on the Tamir Rice shooting?**

Even though he or his children have not suffered the same kind of racial injustice, he put himself and his son in the place of Tamir Rice. He was able to empathize with the suffering of someone who comes from a different situation to stand with them and speak out on their behalf.

- 5. Andy Crouch speaks to individual attitudes of racism and the systemic legacy of racism. Why is it important to understand both?**

Sometimes we don't see systems that benefit one ethnicity over another because we don't believe that we personally show favoritism. However, if we can see that there is such a thing as systems that are built to protect one ethnicity over another then we can see the injustice and work to rebuild systems that benefit everyone.

 Practice 5 MINUTES

READ Ephesians 2

PRAY Ask God to reveal times in your life when you have shown favoritism. Take time to confess anything that the Lord has shown you. Pray for God to reveal systemic favoritism in our culture. Pray for opportunities to build relationships and listen well to those from different ethnic backgrounds.

JOURNAL Write down your observations from Ephesians 2, as well as observations about personal or systemic favoritism you have observed or experienced.

DO (*Choose one or more*) Rent a movie about slavery or civil rights era. Watch the news and take note of any favoritism or injustice. Learn something new about how Native, Asian, Hispanic or others who have been marginalized in American culture. Look at the resource page of optionstogether.org for more information on ethnic minority marginalization.

LEADER Make sure everyone has a Group Guide available from the resource page at optionstogether.org.

“You are loved with an everlasting love. And underneath are the everlasting arms.”

ELISABETH ELLIOT

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

🕒 5 MINUTES

So far in this study, we've learned that poverty is not just a lack of money, but a lack of healthy options that lead to flourishing. As we dive into the Bible, we see that even when we have resources and access to good options, we do still have a problem. Our problem is universal. It's spiritual poverty that keeps us from living the full and abundant life God intends for us.

In this segment, we will come face-to-face with our own spiritual bankruptcy. We'll see how the “playing field” is level at the foot of the cross. As we recognize Jesus as the only solution to our spiritual poverty, we realize we have more in common with those experiencing material poverty than we might have imagined. That realization offers us fresh insight about the ways we might care for people without hopeful options.

📖 Scripture

🕒 5 MINUTES

As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

ROMANS 3:10-12

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

ROMANS 3:23-24

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

PSALM 51:16-17

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 6:23

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved

ROMANS 10:9-10

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. Romans 3 states our spiritual poverty. How has our sin made us spiritually poor?

All of us have turned away from God and the good things we have done are worthless in the eyes of the Lord. We all have a spiritual poverty that makes us helpless in our own power. We have all fallen short of the glory of God.

2. What kind of death is Romans 6 talking about?

The wages, or what we earn for our deeds, are death and spiritual separation from God. We deserve to be separated from God forever because of our sinful nature. We have a spiritual poverty that we cannot undo on our own.

3. Why does God prefer a broken and contrite heart over sacrifice?

There is nothing we can do to earn favor with God. Our “good deeds” are simply not good enough to cover our sins. All we can do is know that we cannot fix ourselves and humble ourselves before God. We can ask Him to make us right in His eyes.

4. According to John 3:16, what does God do about our spiritual poverty?

Despite our spiritual poverty, God loves us and sent his Son, Jesus, to buy us back from sin and death. All we have to do is trust in Him and we receive eternal life.

5. How can we be saved from our spiritual poverty according to Romans 10?

We need to declare with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead and we will be saved from our spiritual poverty.



🕒 15 MINUTES



VIDEO

“We Are All Poor”

 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. What are your first impressions from the video? How did it make you feel?

LEADER *Let this be a free-form discussion. Try to draw out not only what people think, but also what they feel. Were there any particularly powerful moments or ideas from the film? It is okay to let a couple “rabbit trails” go here as long as they don’t take too much time.*

2. What were some of the insights about people who are materially poor and people who appear to be wealthy?

Stevie Boy said that poor is a state of mind and that it is much more than just how much money you have. No matter how much money you have, you can help anyone at any time.

Andy Crouch says that people who are living in poverty don’t see poverty as the main truth about their lives. People in poverty may have significant sources of relationship, connection and meaning in their lives. Many people who have material wealth may be incredibly lonely and isolated and are in fact, poor.

3. In the film, Kim struggles to see the beauty in herself that God sees. In Christ, how does God see us?

Many of us struggle with the way we view ourselves. When we see that God loves us and sent His Son to die for us (John 3:16), we see that we have incredible value and worth. The Creator of the universe paid the highest price for us so we could live in relationship with Him. Brian’s painting is a beautiful reminder of God’s love for us.

4. How does Brian live out 1 Timothy 6?

Brian is putting his hope in God and demonstrating God’s love for Kim and the others to whom he reaches out. He is using his gifts and abilities to bless others.

5. Take a minute to think about where you are at in your own spiritual journey. Reflect on Romans 10. Do you remember when you “believed in your heart and confessed with your mouth” that Jesus was Lord?

LEADER *This is a good time to find out where everyone is at, spiritually. Be sensitive to the group dynamics and whether it is appropriate to have people share about their faith journey. If it is clear that some people have never come to faith in Christ, encourage them to ask Christ into their life, either right there in your group or sometime soon.*

If you are leading a large group with multiple small groups in it, it might be appropriate to lead people in a time of silent prayer; offer people time to express faith in Christ.

 Practice

 5 MINUTES

READ Matthew 25:31-46

PRAY Ask God to show you how you can use your time, talent and treasure to bless others.

JOURNAL Write down your thoughts about the connection between demonstrating our faith in Christ and how we treat others on the margins of society. How does what we read in Matthew 25:31-46 inform what God says in Romans 10:9-10?

DO If this study encouraged you to take the next step in your faith journey and follow Christ, take time to share with someone (perhaps your leader) about your decision. We saw how Brian used his God-given gift of art to bless others. Take time this week to list the ways God could use you to be a blessing to others who might be materially poor.

Creating Options Together

LEADER Make sure everyone has a Group Guide available from the resource page at optionstogether.org.

“The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community.”

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, LIFE TOGETHER: THE CLASSIC EXPLORATION OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

🕒 5 MINUTES

Trillions of dollars have been spent to end poverty in this country, with little effect. Poverty continues to ensnare generations of individuals and families. Yet, God’s call to His people, to care for those caught in poverty’s web, is unchanged. The solution is rooted in the very nature of God and in the way Jesus lived out His ministry.

The Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—who lives in perfect peace, purpose and relationship, demonstrate the fundamental power of living in community. Jesus was intimately acquainted with those among whom He ministered. His continual interaction with people in need is not meant to be simply inspirational, but rather, instructive in the way He calls us to live.

Becoming an options creator starts by building relationships with those who live in systems and situations that make it difficult to flourish. God is calling us to approach the complexity of poverty first as a learner and then, rather than attempting to “fix” the problem, to be in relationship and partnership with those on the margins. We’ll explore the blessings for those who choose to orient their lives in this way. The following Bible study will help us understand the impact that arises from becoming options creators.

📖 Scripture

🕒 5 MINUTES

Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose

the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. “If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

ISAIAH 58:6-12

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

1 JOHN 4:19-21

 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. What was wrong with the first kind fasting?

God is not looking for one day that we bow our head and deny ourselves. Rather, He is looking for a lifestyle of humble sacrifice. We demonstrate our love and reliance on the Lord by the way we give our lives in service to the marginalized.

2. In these passages what does true fasting look like?

To set the oppressed free and break every yoke, to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter. When you see the naked, to clothe them, and not turn away from your own flesh and blood.

3. What word or phrase really stands out to you from these passages? How did that make you feel? How does that relate to your life right now?

LEADER *This is a good place for open discussion.*

4. How does being loved by God invite us to “set the oppressed free”?

The depth to which we understand God’s love for us is the depth to which we can love others. If we have trouble loving others we likely have trouble understanding God’s love for us. Our ministry to the marginalized of society is motivated by God’s love and not by a sense of duty or obligation.

 Watch

 15 MINUTES



VIDEO
“Creating Options Together”

 15 MINUTES

Discussion

1. What are your first impressions from the video? How did it make you feel?

LEADER *Let this be a free-form discussion. Try to draw out not only what people think, but also what they feel. Were there any particularly powerful moments or ideas from the film? It is okay to let a couple “rabbit trails” go here as long as they don’t take too much time.*

2. What is appealing to you about the small group in Denver?

LEADER *Let people share freely.*

3. What is similar or different in your personal experience from that of the small group shown in the video?

LEADER *Let people share freely.*

4. How could you benefit or how have you benefited from relationships with people from different racial and economic backgrounds?

LEADER *Let people share freely. Hopefully, people will draw on lessons learned in previous modules.*

5. How can your identity in Christ overcome social awkwardness?

As Glen in the video said, "If I know that I am embraced by the most important person in the universe then I can work through that awkwardness."

6. How could a relational partnership with those who are marginalized be helpful in meeting needs?

If we are in relationship with those who are living on the margins then we will be able to collaborate together to find solutions and create options for everyone involved.

7. How could our cities and churches be transformed by relationships like this?

In any part of our culture, it is rare for relationships that cross ethnic and socioeconomic lines to exist. If more people in the Church had friendships across ethnic and socioeconomic lines, it would be a great demonstration of the love and power of Christ.

 Practice

 5 MINUTES

READ Read Module 7: What's Next?

PRAY Take time to pray and ask God for direction. What might He be inviting you to do as a result of this study?

JOURNAL As you pray, read and listen to the Lord around Module 7, write down your feelings, impressions, questions, concerns and action points.

DO We will discuss what God is leading you to do during the next session.

LEADER Make sure everyone has a Group Guide available from the resource page at optionstogether.org.

“God has always wanted the vulnerable in society to be cared for. He never intended for them to languish in poverty, abuse, slavery, homelessness, or other types of devastation. When we care for individuals who are trapped in these ways, when we show them love and help them move toward freedom and wholeness, we participate in bringing a little part of God’s Kingdom back into alignment with His greater plan. We do justice and God smiles.”

JOHN PERKINS, DREAM WITH ME: RACE, LOVE AND THE STRUGGLE WE MUST WIN

🕒 5 MINUTES

You have completed the Options Together™ Bible Study! As you have prayed, studied and watched, you have likely grown in your understanding of people who experience poverty. You’ve also learned about ways God may be calling you to engage with those on the margins. So, what’s next?

In this module, you will have an opportunity to discuss what you have learned. Then, we will take time to pray and ask God to help you process your thoughts, feelings and calling to next steps.

📖 Scripture

🕒 5 MINUTES

Looking at his disciples, He [Jesus] said, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

LUKE 6:20

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 JOHN 3:16-18

🕒 15 MINUTES

Discussion

LEADER *This is a time for your group to share what they have learned from the study.*

1. During this study, what ideas were new to you?
2. What story from the videos did you find to be impactful? Why?
3. What Scripture verse or verses have been meaningful to you? Why?
4. In what ways do you feel better prepared to engage with issues of poverty? In what ways do you still want/need to learn and grow?
5. What have you seen in this study that has caused you to grieve?
6. Which of these emotions are you feeling as we think about putting what we have learned from this study into action: excitement, fear, guilt, worry, anticipation, hope, love, sadness, confidence? How could these emotions help or hurt us in being obedient to what God is calling us to do?

 Pray

 10 MINUTES

LEADER *This time will be most effective as a group prayer time, where people in your group take turns praying through the ACTS acronym. As you lead this time of prayer, try to focus the group's prayers around the issues of the study. For example, during the adoration section, you can praise God for his care for those who have been marginalized, etc.*

Adoration *Praise God for who He is and what He is doing*

Confession *Corporate or personal confession around issues raised during the study*

Thanksgiving *Thank God for what He has shown you during the study*

Supplication *Ask God to direct you in what He has placed on your heart to do*

 Action Items

 20 MINUTES

LEADER *This is meant to be a time of application—for people, and perhaps the whole group, to share how they believe God is leading them to act in response to the study. When appropriate, feel free to set dates, assign roles and create some accountability for those who would like it.*

- How can you continue to be in prayer about what you have learned?
- Who else would benefit from this study and how can you help them connect to it?
- How can you act on what you have learned?
- How might your financial giving reflect what you have learned?
- What skills and abilities could you bring to the table to address this issue?
- Who can you invite to join you in the next phase of your journey?
- Is there anyone in particular that God might be calling you to pray for, show care to or share with?
- What opportunities to serve are available in existing ministries in your city?
- Is there the possibility of a church partnership that could be established in your city?
- Others?

Resources

Go to the resource page of optionstogether.org for a full and updated list of additional resources.

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