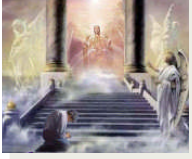
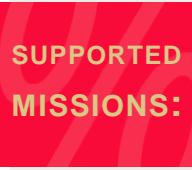




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Agape Love Way Ministries

ADDRESSING THE SPIRITUAL GROWTH NEEDS OF THE MODERN CHRISTIAN, AND SECURING A FUTURE IN GODLY HOPE.

The War for and against caring for the poor

There seems to be a rather strange war going on in many of our churches, one between competing factions on both sides of the debate about the poor in our society (and in some cases in our very churches themselves). For every story of some church involved in ministry to serve the needs of the poor and less fortunate (witness churches in Victoria, Canada that are working with local civic organizations to provide affordable housing to low-income members of their community, or a church in Howell, MI establishing a medical clinic in war-torn Sudan after that country's devastating civil war) there are also stories of excessive and questionable spending that do nothing



Source: <http://thegospelcoalition.org>

to support the poor, but rather only serve the needs of the church leadership. A recent story surfaced of a church in Boston purchasing a \$3.6 million condo to house its pastor. This decision naturally caused major consternation and disapproval among some factions of the congregation who felt the money could be better used to advance the social mission of the church, while

by **Keith R. Thompson**

others felt that enough had already been done for the poor.

Even within the Catholic Church Pope Francis has re-opened the debate about the church's role in dealing with the world's poor. In one of his first messages soon after becoming Pope last March Francis called for a church "that was poor, and of the poor." Needless to say this message has not gone down well within some quarters of the Catholic diaspora. In one recent example American Cardinal Raymond Burke openly criticized some of Pope Francis' teachings and was subsequently removed from a key Vatican position.

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Editor's Note

Agape Love Way Ministries is a ministry devoted to the principles and practices of the First Century Church, and the Great Commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely: Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul & strength, and Love your neighbor as yourself [Matt. 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28].

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The War for and against caring for the poor

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Clearly therefore the issue of fighting poverty and ministering to the needs of the poor have not found wide-spread acceptance within many of our churches.

Here are some arguments from the Bible that each side have relied upon to further their case.

In Support of the Poor

Teachings on supporting and dealing with the poor:

- Gal. 2:9/10 reads “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to [Paul], they gave [him] and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.” Paul reminded the Galatian church that when he was first accepted into the church their main advice to him was for him to remember his service to the poor, which he was already very attuned to.
- II Corinthians. 9:6-9 states that “...He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver...As it is written: ‘He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.’” The Apostle Paul was here teaching that giving to the poor is equivalent to investing (sowing) in their lives, and will be richly rewarded.
- James 2:5 states “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” The Apostle James has reminded us that the poor have a special place on God’s kingdom (as evidenced from JESUS’ Sermon on the Mount when he declared “Blessed are the poor...”)
- Luke 11:39-41 reads “Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.” JESUS taught that instead of worrying about what we look like on the outside we should instead focus on our character and give alms (to the poor) as a means of transforming us from the inside to out.

In Opposition to supporting the Poor

- ◇ Matt. 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8 — “[T]he Poor you will always have with you, ...but me (JESUS) you do not always have.” The context of the message was that his disciples (led by Judas) were criticizing a woman called Mary who used an expensive perfume to wipe JESUS’ feet. Judas felt that the perfume could have been sold and the funds given to the poor (even though he didn’t really care for the poor). JESUS was teaching that Mary’s actions were a symbolic act in preparation for his burial. In some circles within the church this message is interpreted as the church need not expend too much resources on the poor, as they should serve the needs of the Lord (and by extension his representatives) while they are still with us. This interpretation of the scripture is clearly a questionable one.
- ◇ Gen. 3:19 “...In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread...” This scripture explains that Adam’s punishment for disobeying the commandment of the Lord in the Garden of Eden was that he had to toil (work hard) in order to survive, compared to having God provide all of his material support before his fall from grace. Many within the church now interpret this passage of scripture as the church should not be giving to the poor, instead we should be encouraging them to work for their ‘keep’. While the concept of working to support ones family and ones self is consistent with the scriptures it is also clear that this passage cannot be interpreted as us not giving to the poor. The lesson from GOD was that Adam (and by extension mankind) would now have to provide for their own survival, as opposed to relying upon GOD as before.
- ◇ I Corinthians. 13:3—“And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” This scripture is one of the great truisms about our Christian walk. We do not perform good works (including giving to the poor) just so that we can be saved. Instead we perform such good works (also

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The War for and against caring for the poor

In Support of the Poor, contd.

- Luke 14:12-14 reads “Then [JESUS] said ..., “When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” This scripture is clearly self-explanatory as it teaches that if you give for the express purpose of getting repaid then there is no blessing to get from God.
- Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22—This is the story of the Rich young ruler who having done well to keep all of the commandments of the Law still lacked one thing, giving to the poor. In fact JESUS counseled him that if he wants to be perfect then he had to include significant donations to the poor as a part of his spiritual practices.

In addition to many other teachings on giving to the poor are scriptures that commend those who do as we see below. These individuals had their donations to the poor memorialized before the Lord:

- ◇ Cornelius (Acts 10:4)
- ◇ Tabitha (Acts 9:36)
- ◇ Zacchaeus (Luke 19:8/9)

In many respects the biggest concern with the poor seems to be based on what the face of the poor looks like. Are they on welfare, or are they simply unfortunate enough to be unemployed? Are they people of color, or not? Are they young single mothers with kids, or do they belong to a nuclear family? Whatever the poor look like the Bible doesn't discriminate against them and neither should we.

What then can our churches do to strengthen and promote our ministry to the poorer members of society. In her book *The Invisible: What the Church can do to find and serve the least of these*, Arloa Sutter, founder of Breakthrough Urban Ministries in

'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

MATTHEW 25:40 (NKJV)

Chicago, identified these three steps that Churches can employ:

1. Develop a theological framework about poverty. Too often our churches teach about every other issue involving the church, except serving the needs of the poor, which incidentally is one of the most taught topics by Jesus during his time on Earth.
2. Organize groups from your church to volunteer at local ministry organizations. Our church

In Opposition to supporting the Poor, contd.

...contd. from previous page

including giving to the poor) after we've become saved or said another way because we ARE saved. Any of these works of charity that we do we MUST do them out of love for the individuals involved, and NOT as an obligation. Even giving to the poor and the less fortunate must not be done for any other reason than 'the Love of God that's shed in our hearts.' (Rom. 5:5).



members need to see the church in action when it comes to serving the needs of the underprivileged.

3. Make care for the poor a spiritual discipline. Like prayer and fasting and continuing to fellowship with each other caring for the poor is something that should be encouraged at every opportunity. It is not something to practice only once a year, like feeding the poor at Thanksgiving. That does very little to fulfill the mandate from the Lord. Instead setting up a food pantry or soup kitchen to provide meals for the less-fortunate goes a long way towards supporting the mission of the poor.

§ Word of Wisdom Section §

The War for and against caring for the poor

In summary, serving the needs of the poor is not merely a luxury that some churches can afford. It is not something that should rank behind the building fund drive, or behind visiting a partner church. In essence serving the needs of the poor IS A PART OF A CHURCH'S EVANGELISTIC MISSION. Serving the needs of the poor is a primary way of winning the battle for their souls. Jesus taught us in Matthew 25:40 "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*" (KJV) Basically you win the heart of the Lord when you serve the needs of his most vulnerable people.



Many Christian believers also do not expend significant resources to serve the needs of the poor because that does not accord with their own

political views. It is one thing to espouse a view on the 'Role of the State' that is minimalist, with a limited government involvement. However it is quite another thing for that political view to overrule the biblical views on the 'Role of the Church.' Serving the needs of the poor (including widows and orphans) is a primary responsibility of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not mix political views with solid biblical teachings. It is NOT what Jesus would do. §

Below is a crucial passage of the Holy Scriptures that emphasizes the importance of our work towards the poor and the destitute as one that is central to our Christian walk.

Matthew 25

New King James Version (NKJV)

The Son of Man Will Judge all Nations

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats.

³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'*

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?' ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?

³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ *And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*

⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

⁴⁴ "Then they also will answer Him, ^[d] saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, '*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.*'

⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

(*italics, bold and underlined added for emphasis*)

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR SUPPORTED MISSIONS:



Homeless Solutions, Inc. was created as a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization providing beds and meals to the homeless in the region around Morristown, NJ. Today, they provide shelter for homeless men, women, families and Safe Haven guests. These guests receive services including case management, transportation to work and necessary appointments, money management and employment assistance, housing search assistance and daily living skills training.

Administrative Offices-
6 Dumont Place, 3rd Floor
Morristown, NJ 07960
Phone: 973.993.0900
Shelter - 540 West Hanover
Ave., Suite 100 Morristown

The **Community FoodBank of New Jersey** began humbly in 1975 when founder Kathleen DiChiara began distributing groceries out of the trunk of her car. Today, the Community FoodBank distributes 40 million pounds of food a year to more than 1,000 non-profit programs, as well as more than 400 programs served by its Partner Distribution Organizations (PDOs). Through their combined efforts, they feed 900,000 hungry people in 18 New Jersey counties.

Community FoodBank of New Jersey
31 Evans Terminal,
Hillside, NJ 07205
Phone: (908) 355-3663

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:8 (KNJV)



Agape Love Way Ministries
123 Main Street, Suite 2-72
Denville, NJ 07834

More About Agape Love Way Ministries

Agape Love Way is a Christian-based non-profit organization established to promote charity care initiatives within a religious context, and according to the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes the underlying precept of the Great Commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely "Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul & strength, and Love your neighbor as yourself."

Agape Love Way engages in services that support the homeless and those in need of basic food sustenance. As such we aim to help individuals in all areas of accommodation needs, food aid, and basic social services, all the while promoting the Word and the work of the Lord. We also provide financial, organizational and administrative support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are engaged in such services. To learn more about who we are and what we do send us an email at:

info@agapeloveway.org

Agape Love Way is led by its Executive Director, Keith Thompson, who is also a Professor of Business, Economics and Finance at a local NJ college. Professor Keith Thompson is a man anointed and inspired to teach the Word of God through Love. Email him at:

ExecDirector@agapeloveway.org

If you have an article or a recipe or even a testimony that you believe the Body of Christ will benefit from or be blessed by then submit it to us for consideration in this newsletter at: newsletter@agapeloveway.org

If you like something about this Christian newsletter, or even if you just have a comment to share then we look forward to hearing from you so email us at:

contact@agapeloveway.org

To help us fulfill our mandate and support our various ministries please consider donating to the cause. We accept cash and in-kind donations such as food items, lightly-worn clothing and household appliances that are no longer needed. 100% of ALL donations will go to our various charities. To learn more about how to donate please send us an email at: donations@agapeloveway.org

Help Agape Love Way Ministries support our various ministries. We financially and directly support food banks, homeless centers, and other agencies that help the less fortunate.

Please consider sending a donation of \$10, \$20, \$30, \$50 or any other amount to us at our address below.

123 Main Street, Suite 2-72, Denville, NJ 07834

**We are a tax-exempt organization
TIN 46-3772599.**

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