



Day 1: Loving Others In Word and Deed

Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:18

Statistics. Love is tangible. It can be seen and felt. Poverty is also tangible. It can be seen and felt all over the world. In the Western world, poverty is sometimes confined to particular areas of cities or rural counties. But in much of the world, material poverty is more broadly evident. Children are orphaned by war, aids, and disease. Families lack clean water and food. Schools lack books and desks. While the average American lives on more than \$90/day, approximately one billion people live on less than \$1/day, and 2.6 billion—40% of the world's population—live on less than \$2/day. What do we do with such information?

Call. To those overwhelmed by the command to serve the poor, Jesus speaks tenderly, though emphatically: "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." He says that when we see and help the poor, we bear witness to His love within us. Statistics and abstract talk of "the poor" must lead us to action in a particular time, place, and situation. As author Frederick Buechner said:

"Jesus is apt to come, into the very midst of life at its most real and inescapable. Not in a blaze of unearthly light, not in the midst of a sermon, not in the throes of some kind of religious daydream, but. . . at supper time, or walking along a road."

Jesus calls us to open our hearts and lay down our lives for the poor, the very particular poor, the ones walking along the road to Kigali or sharing a meal in a homeless shelter, the very ones in front of us.

Charge. Though the scale of poverty is immense, you are called to engage in God's work of serving the poor and the oppressed. Recognize God's provision in your life and ask Him to reveal how He would have you steward your resources (time, talent, and treasure) on behalf of the materially poor. Ask Him to reveal ways you can take action in your own community and to grant you wisdom as you do so. To see the poor is the beginning of a response.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for your abundant provision for all our needs. Help us, out of our abundance, know how to wisely respond to the poor among us. Fill our hearts with compassion, that we may love those whom You love and testify to Your work in our hearts and in the world. Let us love in word and deed.